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New crocodile hopes in Cambodia

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The discovery in Cambodia of rare Siamese crocodiles has excited conservationists

Conservationists say there is fresh hope for one of the world's rarest reptiles.

DNA tests have found 35 pure-bred Siamese crocodiles at a wildlife sanctuary in Cambodia.

There are fewer than 250 of the species left in the wild, but the crocodiles at the sanctuary could now form the basis of a captive-breeding programme.

Siamese crocodiles may be smaller than some other species, but they're easily capable of breaking human limbs.

So for the conservationists at the Phnom Tamao wildlife rescue centre, taking DNA samples was a hazardous task.

In February this year, they wrangled and wrestled 69 of the beasts so they could gather genetic information.

And now it turns out all the hard work was worth it.

Thirty-five crocodiles have been confirmed as pure-bred Siamese - including six adults which may be suitable for starting off a captive breeding programme.

And more than two dozen younger crocs may be released into the wild when they are old enough.

The discovery continues a remarkable comeback for the species.

Siamese crocodiles were declared extinct in the 1990s - before a small population was discovered in Cambodia's Cardamom Mountains.

But the conservation organisation Fauna and Flora International has warned that any celebrations would be premature.

Siamese crocodiles mature slowly.

So it will take 15 years before the breeding programme comes to fruition.

And in the meantime, everything from poaching to hydroelectric projects pose a threat to crocodiles and their habitats.