October 21, 2014, Phnom Penh and New York City – Earlier this month, a pair of endangered pileated gibbons that were released into the forest surrounding the Angkor Temple Complex in Siem Reap, Cambodia, gave birth to their first baby in the wild. The released gibbons were mother-raised at Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center (PTWRC), and were successfully rehabilitated and reintroduced into the protected forest of Angkor Archaeological Park in December 2013. Since their release, the gibbons have been closely monitored, and it has been quite remarkable how quickly they have adapted to their new life in the forest. Success of a reintroduction program is evaluated on the basis of survival and reproduction, and so far the gibbons are doing extremely well. They are completely self-reliant and have not required supplementary food since the first week of their release. They remain a closely bonded pair, and the latest addition to their family is a clear indication that they are thriving in their new home!

The reintroduction of gibbons and the birth of this baby gibbon in particular is an exciting and vital step towards the conservation of this endangered species. With less than 35,000 individuals left in the wild, gibbon populations are plummeting due to hunting and habitat fragmentation. With approval from the Forestry Administration and the Apsara Authority that manages the World Heritage site, we will be releasing a second pair of gibbons into the forest before the end of the year. In July 2014, Bayon and Tevy were transferred to their release enclosure in Angkor Thom, where they are acclimating to their new surroundings. Once they are ready, their enclosure will be opened and these gibbons will also be free to roam the forest.

This reintroduction program at the Angkor Archaeological Park is the first of its kind in Cambodia, and we are thrilled with the results so far. For over a decade now, Wildlife Alliance has been a leader in wildlife conservation, rescuing over 60,000 animals from the illegal wildlife trade and rehabilitating over 20,000 wounded victims. Joining forces with Apsara and the Forestry Administration signals a renewed, collective impetus to protect Cambodia’s natural heritage. With better management and enforcement of the law, the Angkor forest has now become a safe haven for wildlife.

About Wildlife Alliance:
Wildlife Alliance was founded by Suwanna Gauntlett to offer direct protection to forests and wildlife through cutting edge conservation programs. The organization provides technical assistance and critical thinking to governments and strives for stakeholder consensus in achieving solutions to multiple environmental threats, including animal trafficking, economic land concessions for agro-industrial plantations and mining, and community encroachment on forestland. Wildlife Alliance is the leader in direct action in the Southeast Asian tropical belt.