

## Dat Mui

Criteria: A1 &amp; A4i

**Province(s):** Ca Mau  
**PA Status:** Nature Reserve

**Latitude:** 8°38'N  
**Longitude:** 104°45'E  
**Area:** 4,388 ha  
**Altitude Range:** 0-2 m asl

**EBA / SA:**  
 None  
**Priority Landscape:**  
 None



### General Description

This IBA comprises Dat Mui Nature Reserve, which is situated on the Ca Mau peninsula, the southernmost tip of Vietnam. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the site was covered in natural mangrove forest dominated by *Rhizophora apiculata*. However, as a result of the effects of the Second Indochina War and expansion of aquaculture and agriculture, much of the original mangrove forest was lost. In recent years, most of the aquacultural ponds have been abandoned, allowing recolonisation by mangrove. Dat Mui also supports extensive, continually accreting mudflats, which are being colonised naturally by mangrove<sup>1</sup>. Dat Mui borders Bai Boi IBA to the north.

### Bird Fauna: Key Features

Dat Mui IBA is an important staging area for migratory shorebirds, egrets, gulls and terns<sup>2</sup>. Surveys to date have confirmed the occurrence of six globally threatened and near-threatened bird species at the site. In addition, the site supports significant concentrations of three congregatory waterbird species: Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes*, Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* and Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*. While only one of these species is currently confirmed to exceed the 1% population threshold required to meet the A4i criteria, taking into account bird turnover and the limited survey coverage to date, the other two species are also likely to exceed the 1% population threshold<sup>1</sup>. Large concentrations of Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* and Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* have also been recorded at the site, with one single count of the latter species constituting up to 2.1% of the East and South-East Asian population of the nominate subspecies *caspia*<sup>1</sup>.

Species	IBA Criteria	Global Threat Status	Other IBAs	Notes
Chinese Egret <i>Egretta eulophotes</i>	A1, A4i	VU	6	Nine birds were recorded in March 1999 <sup>1</sup> . A total of 83 birds were recorded at this site and Bai Boi IBA in March 2000 <sup>3</sup> . At least 30 birds were recorded in December 2000 <sup>3</sup> .
Spot-billed Pelican <i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>	A1	VU	6	Twenty six birds were observed feeding inshore in September 1993 <sup>4</sup> . A single individual was recorded in August 1999 <sup>1</sup> .
Far Eastern Curlew <i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	A1	NT	4	Two birds were recorded in March 1999 and one in August 1999 <sup>1</sup> . Six birds were recorded in December 2000 <sup>3</sup> .
Asian Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i>	A1, A4i	NT	5	A maximum count of 144 birds was made in August 1999 <sup>1</sup> . The site probably meets the 1% threshold for this species.
Black-headed Ibis <i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>	A1	NT	8	'Substantial numbers' were recorded in August 1999 <sup>1</sup> . At least 30 individuals were recorded in December 2000 <sup>3</sup> .
Painted Stork <i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	A1	NT	10	'Substantial numbers' were recorded in August 1999 <sup>1</sup> .
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	A4i		1	A maximum count of 322 birds was made in August 1999 <sup>1</sup> . The site probably meets the 1% threshold for this species.

**Biome Restricted Species:** The site does not qualify under criterion A3. See Appendix 4 for details.

**Secondary Criteria**

The site does not qualify under any secondary criterion.

**Threats to Biodiversity**

The mangrove forests of Dat Mui have been severely degraded in the last 10 years, largely as a result of illegal encroachment and conversion to aquacultural ponds. Considerable effort has been made to restore the site and many illegal settlers have been evicted. However, there are substantial numbers of people living in or around the site, who frequently encroach it and exploit the remaining mangrove<sup>1</sup>. In addition, illegal fishing, which has been documented as being widespread at the site, is thought to cause significant disturbance to the avifauna<sup>3</sup>. If unregulated, this activity could also potentially lead to declines in abundance of local marine life<sup>3</sup>. The largest potential threat to biodiversity at Dat Mui is afforestation of the intertidal mudflats with mangrove or of areas of disused agricultural land (which is also an important habitat for migratory birds) with tree species.

Threat	Severity
Afforestation	• • •
Aquaculture/ fisheries	• •
Disturbance to birds	• •
Natural events	• •
Selective logging/ cutting	• •

**Conservation Actions**

- Since 1999, the national 661 Programme has provided budgetary support to Dat Mui Nature Reserve<sup>2</sup>.

**Recommendations**

- Dat Mui should be combined with Bai Boi Coastal Protection Forest as a single protected area, which should be nominated as a Ramsar site<sup>1,3</sup>.
- Dat Mui should be nominated under the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Network<sup>1,3</sup>.
- The boundaries of the nature reserve should be clearly demarked so that local people are aware of its presence and nature reserve staff can manage it accordingly<sup>1,3</sup>.
- Human activities at the site should be strictly controlled to minimise disturbance to migratory waterbirds<sup>1</sup>.
- No afforestation should be carried out on accreting mudflats or disused agricultural land, as these provide important habitats for migratory waterbirds<sup>1,3</sup>.
- No further development of aquaculture should be permitted within the boundaries of the nature reserve<sup>1</sup>.
- Awareness-raising activities should be conducted among local communities to promote understanding of the importance and fragility of the biodiversity of the site and stimulate interest and motivation towards sustainable use of local natural resources<sup>3</sup>.
- The potential for ecotourism at the site should be investigated<sup>3</sup>.

**References**

1. Buckton, S. T., Nguyen Cu, Nguyen Duc Tu and Ha Quy Quynh (1999) *The conservation of key wetland sites in the Mekong Delta*. Hanoi: BirdLife International Vietnam Programme.
2. BirdLife International and the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute (2001) *Sourcebook of existing and proposed protected areas in Vietnam*. Hanoi, Vietnam: BirdLife International Vietnam Programme and the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute.
3. Moores, N. and Nguyen Phuc Bao Hoa (2001) *Vietnam Mekong shorebird site survey 2000*. Unpublished report to Wetlands International Asia-Pacific and Can Tho University.
4. Eames, J. C. and Tordoff, A. W. (in prep.) *Recent records and a conservation status review of some threatened and near-threatened bird species in Vietnam*.