

Ha Tien

Criteria: A1 & A3

Province(s): Kien Giang
PA Status: None

Latitude: 10°25'N
Longitude: 104°35'E
Area: 6,981 ha
Altitude Range: 0-2 m asl

EBA / SA:

None

Priority Landscape:

LMF2 - North-western Mekong Delta Wetlands



General Description

Ha Tien IBA is situated in the north-west of the flat, coastal Ha Tien plain, which is one of the last remaining extensive areas of seasonally inundated grassland in the Mekong Delta¹. The IBA is located to the north-west of Ha Tien town and supports a mixture of grassland communities and naturally regenerating *Melaleuca* scrub on acid sulphate soil and old alluvial sediments². Species-poor *Eleocharis dulcis* grassland forms the most extensive grassland community at the site, although several other more species-rich communities are also present. *Melaleuca* scrub generally consists of trees between 2 and 6 m tall, but locally reaching up to 12 m, and possesses a ground flora of varied species composition depending upon soil and water conditions². Swamp vegetation, dominated by the aquatic palm *Nypa fruticans* also occurs at the site, in areas of brackish water².

Bird Fauna: Key Features

Based on feathers and reports from local people^{2,3,4}, the presence of Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* has been confirmed at Ha Tien IBA. As such, the IBA constitutes one of only two sites in Vietnam where relict populations of this species are currently known to occur, the other being Tram Chim IBA in Dong Thap province¹. Although the precise status of the species at Ha Tien is not yet known, the IBA may support one of the last remaining viable populations of the species in Vietnam². In addition, reports from local people indicate that the IBA is a stop-over area for Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* migrating between the Mekong Delta and northern Cambodia⁵.

Species	IBA Criteria	Global Threat Status	Other IBAs	Notes
†Bengal Florican <i>Houbaropsis bengalensis</i>	A1	EN	1	In 1997, a hunter produced feathers of a bird killed two or three years previously ³ . Local people reported the presence of the species during a visit in 1999 ² .
[Sarus Crane <i>Grus antigone</i>]	A1	VU	5	In March 2002, local people reported the presence of a flock of around 20 birds at the site ⁵ .

Notes: [] = unconfirmed; † = not confirmed to regularly occur in significant numbers.

Biome Restricted Species: The site qualifies under criterion A3 because it supports one species restricted to the Indo-Gangetic Plains (Biome 12). See Appendix 4 for details.

Secondary Criteria

The site does not qualify under any secondary criterion.

Threats to Biodiversity

At Ha Tien IBA, the seasonally inundated grassland is under severe and immediate threat of conversion to rice agriculture, shrimp aquaculture and forestry. This is a particular problem as this is the preferred dry season habitat of Bengal Florican. In addition, most of the remaining large areas of grassland are

Threat	Severity
Afforestation	• •
Agricultural intensification / expansion	• • •
Aquaculture / fisheries	• • •
Hunting	• •

currently earmarked for resettlement and agricultural conversion. However, the acid-sulphate soils of the area render the majority of it unsuitable for rice cultivation, and there is a real risk, therefore, that the last remaining areas of extensive seasonally inundated grassland in the Mekong Delta will be converted to marginal agricultural land².

Conservation Actions

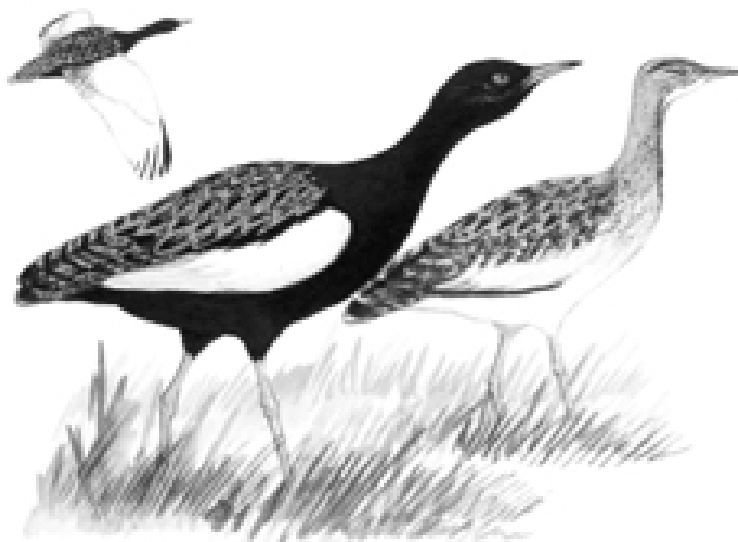
- In 1999, BirdLife International and the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources proposed the establishment of a national protected area at the site².
- In June 2001, Kien Giang Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, hosted a workshop in Kien Giang province to discuss the conservation and utilisation of natural resources in the Ha Tien plain, at which the provincial authorities announced a plan to establish a protected area in the Ha Tien plain, which would not necessarily include the IBA.
- Ha Tien IBA is not under any form of conservation management, and there are currently no on-the-ground conservation activities being implemented¹.

Recommendations

- Ha Tien IBA should be included within a national protected area².
- Human resettlement, conversion of grassland to agriculture, and afforestation of grassland with *Melaleuca* and *Eucalyptus* should cease with immediate effect².
- Effective controls on hunting of Bengal Florican should be introduced.
- Surveys should be conducted to assess the precise status of Bengal Florican at the IBA and identify other sites for this species within the Ha Tien plain.

References

1. BirdLife International and the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute (2001) *Sourcebook of existing and proposed protected areas in Vietnam*. Hanoi: BirdLife International Vietnam Programme and the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute.
2. 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.
3. Nguyen Duc Tu, Nguyen Cu and Buckton, S. T. (2001) Wetlands and waterbirds in the Mekong Delta. *OBC Bulletin* 33: 30-33.
4. R. Safford *in litt.* 1997.
5. Tran Triet *in litt.* 2002.



Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*