

Nam Neun

Criteria: A1 & A3

Province(s): Houaphan
Protected area: Nam Et NPA
Area: 85,450 ha

Latitude: 20°18'N
Longitude: 103°31'E

General description

The IBA is located inside Nam Et National Protected Area, in northern Lao P.D.R. The IBA comprises the upper Nam Neun catchment and adjacent areas in the south-west of the national protected area. The topography of the IBA is mountainous, and elevations range from 800 to 1,500 m asl. Below 1,000 m asl, the vegetation of the IBA comprises mixed deciduous forest and stands of bamboo. Above 1,000 m asl, the vegetation is dominated by mixed deciduous forest and dry evergreen forest with occasional conifers. Many areas of forest have been degraded, particularly at lower elevations, while forest has been cleared from significant areas in the west of the IBA and replaced by secondary grassland (Davidson 1998). To the west, the IBA is contiguous with Phou Louey IBA (LA003). The site was selected as an IBA primarily on the basis of the presence of a large number of biome-restricted species, a significant proportion of which have recent confirmed records from few other sites in Lao P.D.R., although this may, in part, reflect a relative lack of recent ornithological study of montane habitats in the Northern Highlands. In addition, the Nam Neun and its tributaries support Blyth's Kingfisher *Alcedo hercules*.

Key bird species

Species	IBA criteria	Global threat status	Lao threat status	Notes
[Great Hornbill <i>Buceros bicornis</i>]	A1	NT	ARL	The occurrence of the species in Nam Et National Protected Area was reported by local people in 1998; due to high levels of hunting, the species is believed to be very rare in the area, and may be on the brink of extinction (Davidson 1998). There is, therefore, no evidence that the IBA regularly supports a significant population of this species.
Blyth's Kingfisher <i>Alcedo hercules</i>	A1, A3	NT	PARL	At least five birds were seen along a 10 km stretch of the Nam Neun between 770 and 850 m asl, in suitable breeding habitat, in March 1998 (Davidson 1998). As the species is probably widespread in northern Lao P.D.R., the population at the IBA is of low national and global significance.

Note: [] = unconfirmed record.

Biome-restricted species: The site qualifies under criterion A3 because it supports 40 species restricted to the Sino-Himalayan Subtropical Forests (Biome 08) and one species restricted to the Indo-Gangetic Plains (Biome 12) (Davidson 1998). See Appendix 3 for details.

Threats to biodiversity

One of the major threats to biodiversity at the IBA, particularly to populations of many biome-restricted species, is conversion of forest to shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation is widely practiced by local people, and is the biggest cause of forest loss within Nam Et National Protected Area. Because of the long history of shifting cultivation, most parts of the national protected area have been affected, and little old-growth forest remains (Davidson 1998). Shifting cultivation is not, however, necessarily a threat to all biome-restricted species at the IBA. A very small number of species of conservation concern, perhaps only Jerdon's Bushchat *Saxicola jerdoni*, appear to benefit from annual burning of forest and adjacent habitats, which maintain and promote swathes of tall grass and herbs (Davidson 1998). Hunting is another major threat to biodiversity at the IBA, particularly to populations of large mammals, any hornbills which may remain, and, possibly, ground-dwelling birds. Potential future threats to biodiversity include infrastructure development and human resettlement within or close to the IBA (Davidson 1998).

References

Davidson, P. ed. (1998) *A wildlife and habitat survey of Nam Et and Phou Louey National Biodiversity Conservation Areas, Houaphan province, Lao P.D.R.* Vientiane: CPAWM/WCS.