

Upper Nam Ou

Criteria: A1

Province(s): Phongsali
Protected area: Phou Dendin NPA
Area: 126,880 ha

Latitude: 22°03'N
Longitude: 102°17'E

General description

The IBA comprises the upper Nam Ou and its catchment, within Phou Dendin National Protected Area in northern Lao P.D.R. The topography of the IBA is mountainous, with the highest elevations being in the north-east of the IBA, along the international border with Vietnam. Large parts of the IBA, particularly along the Nam Ou above the confluence with the Nam Khang, are uninhabited, and the slopes flanking the river support unbroken dry evergreen forest (Duckworth *et al.* 1998). The IBA has only been the focus of a few brief surveys, which were constrained by time limitations and inclement weather. As a result, insufficient ornithological information is available to characterise the bird communities of the IBA (Thewlis *et al.* 1998). However, the available data indicate that the Nam Ou and its tributaries are important for a number of riverine species, including Blyth's Kingfisher *Alcedo hercules*, Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*, Lesser Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga humilis* and Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii* (Duckworth *et al.* 1998). Although small numbers of River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii* have been recorded at the IBA (Thewlis *et al.* 1998), given the lack of suitable habitat, it is unlikely that the IBA is of high importance for the conservation of sandbar-nesting birds (Duckworth *et al.* 1998). The available data from forest habitats indicate that the IBA supports Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*, Brown Hornbill *Anorrhinus tickelli* and Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis* (Duckworth *et al.* 1998). However, given the high hunting pressure believed to be operating and the relative isolation of the IBA from other significant areas of suitable habitat, it is not certain that the IBA can support populations, at least of the two larger species, that are viable in the long term.

Key bird species

Species	IBA criteria	Global threat status	Lao threat status	Notes
Great Hornbill <i>Buceros bicornis</i>	A1	NT	ARL	One bird was seen flying over the Nam Ou, just outside of the IBA, in May 1995 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). The population at the IBA is probably of low national and global significance.
Brown Hornbill <i>Anorrhinus tickelli</i>	A1, A3	NT	PARL	A flock of at least five birds was seen over the Nam Ou, just outside of the IBA, in May 1995, and one bird was heard 2 km south-east of Ban Muanghat-Hin in March 1996 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). The population at the IBA is of low global significance and, given the larger populations in the Annamite mountains, also of low national significance.
Rufous-necked Hornbill <i>Aceros nipalensis</i>	A1, A3	VU	ARL	Two birds flew over the Nam La, from one forested ridge to another, in March 1996 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). Given that the population at the IBA is likely to be relatively small, and not of the same magnitude as that in the Annamite mountains, it is probably of moderate to low national significance and low global significance.
Blyth's Kingfisher <i>Alcedo hercules</i>	A1, A3	NT	PARL	Four records, probably representing two to three pairs, were made along the Nam Sin in March 1996 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 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.
Lesser Fish Eagle <i>Ichthyophaga humilis</i>	A1	NT	ARL	Four birds were seen at three sites along forested stretches of the Nam Ou in May 1995; in addition, three unidentified fish eagles were seen during this period (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). Two birds were seen along forested stretches of the Nam Ou in March 1996 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). Finally, a single bird seen along the Nam Ou in March 1992 may have been within the IBA (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). The population at the IBA is probably of moderate to low national significance and low global significance.

Species	IBA criteria	Global threat status	Lao threat status	Notes
*[Yellow-vented Warbler <i>Phylloscopus cantator</i>]	A2			Duckworth <i>et al.</i> (1999) erroneously listed the species as confirmed to occur at Phou Dendin National Protected Area, whereas the provisional record in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> (1998) had already been reconsidered and dismissed by Thewlis <i>et al.</i> (1998).

Notes: [] = unconfirmed record; * = does not qualify under criterion A2.

Biome-restricted species: Based on information currently available, the site does not qualify under criterion A3 (Duckworth *et al.* 1998, 1999), although, with more comprehensive ornithological survey coverage, it probably would do. See Appendix 3 for details.

Threats to biodiversity

Although there are no roads or large human settlements within the IBA, there are a number of small villages, whose inhabitants practice shifting cultivation (Duckworth *et al.* 1998). Shifting cultivation and associated fires have probably been responsible for the conversion of significant areas of forest within Phou Dendin National Protected Area to grassland and other secondary habitats. In addition, hunting is probably a major threat to biodiversity at the IBA. However, there has been no assessment of human impacts on the IBA since the mid 1990s, since when the situation may have changed significantly.

References

- Duckworth, J. W., Salter, R. E. and Khounboline, K. eds. (1999) *Wildlife in Lao P.D.R.: 1999 status report*. Vientiane: IUCN, WCS and CPAWM.
- Duckworth, J. W., Tizard, R. J., Timmins, R. J., Thewlis, R. M., Robichaud, W. B. and Evans, T. D. (1998) Bird records from Laos, October 1994-August 1995. *Forktail* 13: 33-68 (including errata sheet distributed with *Forktail* 14).
- Thewlis, R. M., Timmins, R. J., Evans, T. D. and Duckworth, J. W. (1998) The conservation status of birds in Laos: a review of key species. *Bird Conserv. Internat.* 8(suppl.): 1-159.