

# Attapu Plain

Criteria: A1 &amp; A3

**Province(s):** Attapu  
**Protected area:** None  
**Area:** 71,400 ha

**Latitude:** 14°48'N  
**Longitude:** 106°58'E

## General description

The IBA is situated on the Attapu plain, immediately outside of Dong Ampham National Protected Area, in southern Lao P.D.R. The vegetation of the IBA is dominated by dry dipterocarp forest, with smaller patches of mixed deciduous forest. Although the IBA is, in general, very dry, with a gravelly substrate and few permanent watercourses, there are a number of seasonal pools of varying sizes scattered throughout it (Davidson *et al.* 1997). The major permanent watercourses in the IBA are the Xe Khaman, which flows through the centre, and the Xe Xou, which flows through the south. The avifauna of the IBA is characteristic of dry forest landscapes in central Indochina. The IBA is thought to support small numbers of White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* and Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus*. While, by itself, the IBA is almost certainly not large enough to support viable populations of these two species in the long-term, it forms part of a network of sites throughout southern Lao P.D.R. and northern Cambodia that may be able to. In addition, the IBA may be used, at least periodically, by large waterbirds (R. J. Timmins *in litt.* 2002). Furthermore, the rivers within the IBA are known to support Lesser Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga humilis*, and may also be important for a number of other riverine species.

## Key bird species

Species	IBA criteria	Global threat status	Lao threat status	Notes
Lesser Fish Eagle <i>Ichthyophaga humilis</i>	A1	NT	ARL	Three separate individuals were seen over the Xe Xou on a single day in January 1997, and, in the same month, a single bird was seen by the Xe Xou at a different location (Davidson <i>et al.</i> 1997). It is difficult to assess the significance of the population at the IBA, since it is part of a larger population in river systems in southern Lao P.D.R. However, it is probably of at least moderate national significance.
White-rumped Vulture <i>Gyps bengalensis</i>	A1, A3	CR	ARL	One was seen soaring over the Xe Xou in January 1997, and seven were seen congregated around a domestic buffalo carcass c.15 km east of Attapu town in May 1997 (Davidson <i>et al.</i> 1997). The population of this species is probably small, although, given the severe decline this species has experienced throughout its global range, it is of at least moderate national and global significance nonetheless.
Red-headed Vulture <i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	A1, A3	NT	ARL	Two adults (possibly a breeding pair) were seen circling over Phou Phanom and a single bird was seen feeding on a domestic buffalo carcass, together with seven White-rumped Vultures, c.15 km to the east of Attapu town in May 1997 (Davidson <i>et al.</i> 1997). The population of this species is probably small, although, given the severe decline this species has experienced throughout Indochina, it may be of at least moderate national and global significance nonetheless.
White-rumped Falcon <i>Polihierax insignis</i>	A1, A3	NT	PARL	The species was assessed as relatively common during surveys in January and May 1997 (Davidson <i>et al.</i> 1997). The population at the IBA is of moderate national significance but low global significance.

**Biome-restricted species:** The site qualifies under criterion A3 because it supports 18 species restricted to the Indo-Malayan Tropical Dry Zone (Biome 11) (Davidson *et al.* 1997). See Appendix 3 for details.

## Threats to biodiversity

The major threats to biodiversity at the IBA are clearance of forest for agriculture and human settlements, and hunting, of which the latter is probably the main direct threat to the remaining vultures. Underlying all these threats

is human population expansion. The Attapu plain is currently under consideration as a resettlement area. Such a large increase in the human population in and around the IBA would very likely to lead to increased pressure on natural resources (Davidson *et al.* 1997), and, probably, the extirpation of the remaining vulture populations.

**References**

Davidson, P., Robichaud, W. G., Tizard, R. J., Vongkhamheng, C. and Wolstencroft, J. (1997) *A wildlife and habitat survey of Dong Ampham NBCA and Phou Khathong proposed NBCA, Attapeu province, Lao P.D.R.* Vientiane: CPAWM/WCS.