

Upper Xe Bangfai

Criteria: A1, A2 & A3

Province(s): Khammouan
Protected area: None
Area: 31,300 ha

Latitude: 17°07'N
Longitude: 106°19'E

General description

The IBA is located in the upper catchment of the Xe Bangfai, immediately to the south of Hin Namno National Protected Area, in central Lao P.D.R. In contrast to Hin Namno National Protected Area, the geology of the IBA is principally non-calcareous. The vegetation of the IBA is dominated by semi-evergreen forest and dry evergreen forest, although the forests around the headwaters of the Xe Bangfai are probably more strongly influenced by monsoon rains crossing from Vietnam and, thus, wetter (Walston and Vinton 1999). Parts of the IBA were heavily bombed during the Second Indochinese War, as a result of which there is a large amount of unexploded ordnance in the area. Due to the presence of unexploded ordnance, survey coverage of the IBA is poor. However, results of surveys to date, coupled with anecdotal information from local people, indicate that the IBA supports a potentially significant population of Crested Argus *Rheinardia ocellata*. In addition, Siamese Fireback *Lophura diardi*, Lesser Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga humilis* and, provisionally, Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis* have been recorded at the IBA. Moreover, there are convincing reports of the occurrence of Saola *Pseudoryx nghetinhensis* from the IBA (Walston and Vinton 1999). To the east, the IBA is contiguous with Truong Son IBA (VN041) in Vietnam, which supports populations of many of the key species found at Upper Xe Bangfai IBA (Le Manh Hung *et al.* 2002).

Key bird species

Species	IBA criteria	Global threat status	Lao threat status	Notes
Siamese Fireback <i>Lophura diardi</i>	A1, A3	NT	PARL	Feathers from a male were found in Ban Lai in February 1998 (Walston and Vinton 1999). The population at the IBA is of low national and global significance.
Crested Argus <i>Rheinardia ocellata</i>	A1, A2	VU	ARL	In February 1998, one bird was seen and three were heard calling close to the headwaters of the Xe Bangfai, and local people reported the species to be common close to the border with Savannakhet province (Walston and Vinton 1999). Due to a lack of data from areas close to the international border with Vietnam, it is difficult to assess the significance of the population at the IBA. However, it is probably of moderate to low national significance and low global significance.
[Rufous-necked Hornbill <i>Aceros nipalensis</i>]	A1, A3	VU	ARL	A single hornbill, provisionally identified as this species, was seen in February 1998 (Walston and Vinton 1999). Although it is difficult to assess the significance of the population at the IBA, it is possibly of moderate national and global significance.
Lesser Fish Eagle <i>Ichthyophaga humilis</i>	A1	NT	ARL	One bird was seen along the Xe Bangfai in February 1998 (Walston and Vinton 1999). The population at the IBA forms part of a larger population, which also includes Hin Namno IBA (LA018). The combined population of the two IBAs is probably of moderate national significance and moderate to low global significance.

Note: [] = unconfirmed record.

Biome-restricted species: The site qualifies under criterion A3 because it supports eight species restricted to the Indochinese Tropical Moist Forests (Biome 09) (Walston and Vinton 1999). See Appendix 3 for details.

Threats to biodiversity

One of the main threats to biodiversity at the IBA is conversion of forest to unsustainable agriculture. Outside of the IBA, the forest has been extensively cleared for cultivation, particularly along the banks of the Xe Bangfai. As a result, very little forest remains and the vegetation is dominated by secondary scrub and grassland, and stands of bamboo (Walston and Vinton 1999). While the IBA remains extensively forested, the potential for human settlement along the Xe Bangfai and conversion of forest exists, although the presence of unexploded ordnance may act as a

deterrent to some degree. Another threat to biodiversity at the IBA is hunting, which may be a particular threat to large-bodied birds, such as hornbills and Crested Argus, certain large mammals, such as Saola, and turtles.

References

- Le Manh Hung, Pham Duc Tien, Tordoff, A. W. and Nguyen Dinh Dung (2002) *A rapid field survey of Le Thuy and Quang Ninh districts, Quang Binh province, Vietnam*. Unpublished report to the BirdLife International Vietnam Programme and the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources.
- Walston, J. L. and Vinton, M. D. eds. (1999) *A wildlife and habitat survey of Hin Namno National Biodiversity Conservation Area and adjacent areas, Khammouane province, Lao P.D.R.* Vientiane: WWF Lao Project Office and WCS Lao Program.