

## Siphandon

Criteria: A1, A2 &amp; A4i

**Province(s):** Champasak  
**Protected area:** None  
**Area:** 37,320 ha

**Latitude:** 14°04'N  
**Longitude:** 105°50'E

**General description**

The IBA is located along the Mekong River, in southern Lao P.D.R. The IBA covers the widest stretch of the Mekong River in Lao P.D.R., from Don Khong island to the international border with Cambodia. This stretch is extensively braided, with thousands of islands, and several sets of waterfalls and rapids. The banks of the river and the main islands are mainly steep, well vegetated, and lined with cultivation and scrub. Smaller islands generally support more natural vegetation, including scrub, grassland and seasonally flooded woodland, and some islands have extensive sand beaches or bars (Evans *et al.* 2000). Stretches of rapids support channel mosaic habitat, with rocks and bushes. To the south, the IBA is contiguous with Mekong River from Kratie to Laos IBA (KH010) in Cambodia, which supports similar riverine habitats. A number of key bird species have been recorded at the IBA, including Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*, and the recently described endemic Mekong Wagtail *Motacilla samveasnae*. The IBA supports a suite of riverine birds, including, probably, at least 1% of the world population of Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*. In addition, there are records of White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*, Long-billed Vulture *G. tenuirostris* and Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus* from the IBA (Thewlis *et al.* 1998). While it is very unlikely that the IBA, by itself, could support populations of these species in the long-term, it forms part of a network of sites in southern Lao P.D.R. and northern Cambodia that may be able to. Finally, the IBA is one of only two places in Lao P.D.R. where Irrawaddy Dolphin *Orcaella brevirostris* still occurs (Duckworth *et al.* 1999), although the population is believed to be down to less than 10 individuals (I. G. Baird *in litt.* 2002).

**Key bird species**

Species	IBA criteria	Global threat status	Lao threat status	Notes
Small Pratincole <i>Glareola lactea</i>	A4i		PARL	Several high counts of this species have been made at the IBA, including between 80 and 150 birds around the Khonphapheng falls in February 1993 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). Given the availability of suitable habitat, it is very likely that the IBA meets criterion A4i. The population at the IBA is of moderate to high national significance but moderate to low global significance.
[Black-bellied Tern <i>Sterna acuticauda</i> ]	A1	NT	ARL	A single bird was provisionally recorded at the Khonphapheng falls in February 1993 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). There have been no subsequent records of the species from the IBA, and it is unlikely that it regularly supports a significant population.
[Grey-headed Fish Eagle <i>Ichthyophaga ichhyaetus</i> ]	A1	NT	ARL	A single unidentified fish eagle was seen at Ban Hangkhon in November 1997 (Cunningham 1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). The population at the IBA is of moderate to national significance and low global significance.
White-rumped Vulture <i>Gyps bengalensis</i>	A1, A3	CR	ARL	At least one bird was seen in a mixed party of 10 vultures on the bank of the Mekong River near Ban Hangkhon in April 1996 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). The species has also been seen near Ban Hangkhon by Cunningham (1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). The population at the IBA is of moderate to high national and global significance.
Slender-billed Vulture <i>G. tenuirostris</i>	A1, A3	CR	ARL	At least one bird was seen in a mixed party of 10 vultures on the bank of the Mekong River near Ban Hangkhon in April 1996 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). The species has also been seen near Ban Hangkhon by Cunningham (1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). The population at the IBA is of moderate to high national and global significance.

Species	IBA criteria	Global threat status	Lao threat status	Notes
Red-headed Vulture <i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	A1, A3	NT	ARL	At least two birds were seen in a mixed party of 10 vultures on the bank of the Mekong River near Ban Hangkhon in April 1996 (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). The species has also been seen near Ban Hangkhon by Cunningham (1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). The population at the IBA is of moderate national and global significance.
†White-rumped Falcon <i>Polihierax insignis</i>	A1, A3	NT	PARL	A shot bird was seen in the possession of a hunter at Don Khong in August 1996; the bird presumably originated from plains nearby (Thewlis <i>et al.</i> 1998). Given the lack of suitable habitat at the IBA, it is unlikely that it regularly supports a significant population of this species. The population at the IBA is of low national and global significance.
Oriental Darter <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	A1	NT	ARL	Small numbers (less than 10) were seen regularly around Ban Hangkhon between May and July 1997 but not during other months (Cunningham 1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). This pattern is consistent with other recent sightings of the species from Lao P.D.R., which suggest that it is a wet-season visitor. The population at the IBA is of high national significance but low global significance.
[Painted Stork <i>Mycteria leucocephala</i> ]	A1	NT	ARL	A single bird was provisionally recorded near Ban Hangkhon in December 1996 (Cunningham 1998 cited in Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). If the IBA supports a population of this species, it is unlikely to be of anything other than low global significance.
Grey-faced Tit Babbler <i>Macronous kelleyi</i>	A2			The species has been recorded on the east bank of the Mekong channel at Ban Hangkhon (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 1999). The population at the IBA is very low national and global significance.
Mekong Wagtail <i>Motacilla samveasnae</i>	A1, A2	NT		At least one bird was seen at the Khon falls in April 1993, and a pair was seen there in February 1999 (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 2001). Juvenile wagtails, possibly belonging to this species, were also seen at the Khon falls in May 1997 (Duckworth <i>et al.</i> 2001). The population at the IBA is of high national significance and moderate global significance.

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

**Biome-restricted species:** Based on the information currently available, the site is not known to qualify under criterion A3 (Evans *et al.* 2000), although, with more comprehensive ornithological survey coverage, it may do. See Appendix 3 for details.

### Threats to biodiversity

Hunting and the conversion of natural riverine vegetation along the Mekong River in order to make riverbank gardens during the low water season are the main immediate threats to many species of birds. Camping by fishermen and trampling by livestock may also disturb breeding places of birds that nest on sand banks in the dry season, including River Tern *Sterna aurantia*, River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii* and Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris*.

### References

- Duckworth, J. W., Alström, P., Davidson, P., Evans, T. D., Poole, C. M., Seta, T. and Timmins, R. J. (2001) A new species of wagtail from the lower Mekong basin. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 121(3): 152-182.
- Duckworth, J. W., Salter, R. E. and Khounbolin, K. eds. (1999) *Wildlife in Lao P.D.R.: 1999 status report*. Vientiane: IUCN, WCS and CPAWM.
- Evans, T. D., Towll, H. C., Timmins, R. J., Thewlis, R. M., Stones, A. J., Robichaud, W. G. and Barzen, J. (2000) Ornithological records from the lowlands of southern Laos during December 1995-September 1996, including areas on the Thai and Cambodian borders. *Forktail* 16: 29-52.
- 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.