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## Continued efforts for the conservation of small carnivores in Vietnam

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**BirdLife International<sup>1</sup> Vietnam Programme** – This week, BirdLife would like to highlight a project that is unrelated to birds, and has no BirdLife involvement, but is part of an important initiative to increase knowledge of threatened species across Vietnam.

During 3-7 July, 2006, the Small Carnivore Conservation Program (SCP) of Cuc Phuong National Park<sup>2</sup> hosted the IUCN Global Mammal Assessment (GMA)<sup>3</sup> Vietnam Small Carnivore workshop in partnership with the IUCN/SSC Small Carnivore Specialist Group<sup>4</sup> and the Institute of Applied Ecology, Italy. The workshop brought together renowned experts with a complimentary mix of knowledge on taxonomy, distribution, threats, and conservation actions, to help review data and conduct global IUCN Red List assessments for the Old World small carnivores. There were 106 species assessed, with preliminary results indicating 3 Endangered, 16 Vulnerable, 3 Near Threatened, 11 Data Deficient, and 73 Least Concern species. There are especially high levels of threat to Southeast Asian small carnivores, with many widespread and currently Least Concern species facing significant population declines in large portions of their ranges. The information gathered from this workshop will make a significant contribution to the conservation of small carnivores, and help set a benchmark for knowledge of these species.

Northern Vietnam is highlighted in the IUCN/SSC Action Plan for Mustelid, Viverrid and Procyonids as a core area for small carnivore conservation. The country holds the core range of the Vulnerable Owston's Civet *Chrotogale owstoni*. Furthermore populations of the Data Deficient Hairy-nosed Otter *Lutra sumatrana* and the elusive Least Concern Large-spotted Civet *Viverra megaspila*, Least Concern Spotted Linsang *Prionodon pardicolor*, Vulnerable Fishing Cat *Prionailurus viverrinus*, Vulnerable Marbled Cat *Pardofelis marmorata*, Vulnerable Asiatic Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii*, and Least Concern Back-striped Weasel *Mustela strigidorsa* can still be found in Vietnam's remaining forests and waterways.

*“It is a sad fact that the illegal hunting and trade in wildlife are threatening almost all species of small carnivore in the Indochina region and levels are thought to be at an all time high as a result of a growing demand for meat from wild animals. Recent wildlife trade surveys have shown that small carnivores represent one of the largest proportions of the wildlife trade in Vietnam, and that illegal trade may even threaten the local survival of common species in some areas. For example, in just nine restaurants surveyed in Vietnam it was estimated that up to one tonne of civet meat was sold*



Vulnerable Owston's Civet *Chrotogale owstoni*. Photo: Small Carnivore Conservation Program (SCP), Vietnam

each month. Considering the number of wildlife meat restaurants in Vietnam it is clear there is a serious conservation problem”, said Mr. Tran Quang Phuong, the SCP Coordinator.



Workshop participants at Cuc Phuong National Park. Photo: Small Carnivore Conservation Program (SCP), Vietnam

Current conservation activities in Vietnam do not adequately take small carnivore conservation into account due to a lack of awareness of their plight, and a dearth of reliable data on their distribution and conservation requirements. However, the results of the recent GMA workshop include a comprehensive collection of such information on all small carnivores of the country which will help to provide a basis for improved conservation measures which are urgently needed for this overlooked group of animals.

Additionally, the SCP of Cuc Phuong National Park has been working on the conservation of Mustelids and Viverrids for the last nine years and has carried out a range of *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation activities for these species. As the SCP moves into its tenth year, the director and steering committee have decided to increase the program's focus to include more species of small carnivore and to increase the number of conservation activities and outputs.

BirdLife recognises that many key areas for small carnivores in Indochina overlap with key areas for birds, and thus hopes that the continued conservation efforts of the SCP and other wildlife conservation programmes operated in Vietnam, will have benefits for small carnivores, birds, and all biodiversity.

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#### NOTES FOR EDITORS

- 1) BirdLife International is a global alliance of conservation organisations working in more than 100 countries worldwide who, together, are the leading authority on the status of birds, their habitats and their conservation. Further information about BirdLife's work in Vietnam can be found at [www.birdlifeindochina.org](http://www.birdlifeindochina.org).
- 2) The Small Carnivore Conservation Program (SCP) of Cuc Phuong National Park works to improve the conservation of small carnivores in Vietnam, utilising capacity building, awareness-raising, *ex-situ* interventions and scientific research, with a focus on empowering and supporting local stakeholders to engage in and commit to sustainable conservation activities. Contact the SCP coordinator Mr Tran Quang Phuong for more information ([carnivore@vnn.vn](mailto:carnivore@vnn.vn))
- 3) The Global Mammal Assessment (GMA) is a project coordinating a major reassessment of the conservation status of all of the world's 5,000-plus mammal species, with the intention of conducting updated Red List assessments using the latest version of the IUCN Red List categories and criteria (for a description of the GMA, see <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/>). The GMA is a project supported through the Biodiversity Assessment Unit of IUCN's Species Survival Commission, Conservation International's Center for Applied Biodiversity Science, and the University of Virginia. The GMA follows on the heels of the recently completed Global Amphibian Assessment, which released its initial findings to the world in 2004 (<http://www.globalamphibians.org/>).

- 4) The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of some 7,000 volunteer experts from almost every country in the world, all working together towards achieving the vision of "A world that values and conserves present levels of biodiversity." The IUCN/SSC Small Carnivore Specialist Group (formerly Mustelids, Viverrids & Procyonids Specialist Group) deals with Viverrids, Herpestids, Mustelids (excluding otters) and Procyonids. The group and its web site (see <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/sgs/mvpsg/>) aim at raising interest in this fascinating group of animals, and coordinating efforts for their conservation.