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A comprehensive biological survey for the first time in Chu Yang Sin National Park

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Montane pine forest in the Chu Yang Sin National Park. Photo: Nguyen Truong Son

BirdLife International¹ Vietnam Programme – In March 2006, a field expedition to survey and assess the biodiversity status parts of the Chu Yang Sin National Park (CYS NP) in Central Highlands of Vietnam was carried out by a joint team of BirdLife staff, NP staff, and other scientists. This activity was a part of the Global Environment Fund/World Bank (GEF/WB) funded *Integrating Watershed and Biodiversity Management in Chu Yang Sin National Park, Dak Lak Province, Vietnam* project. Information gained during the survey will be a foundation for the establishment of a biodiversity monitoring programme and management plan for CYS NP.

Primary vegetation spreading out from 800m elevation to the Chu Yang Sin peak (2,442m) remains undamaged. In these elevations, Vietnamese rare and endemic conifer species of global conservation significance were recorded, including *Pinus dalatensis* (globally considered Vulnerable), *Pinus krempfii* (Vulnerable), and *Fokienia hodginsii* (Near Threatened). The zoological survey results also indicated the conservation importance of Chu Yang Sin National Park. In only a small area of c. 2,500ha surveyed, eight groups of Yellow-cheeked Gibbon *Nomascus gabriellae* (Near Threatened), one group of Black-shanked Douc Langur *Pygathrix nemaeus nigripes* (Endangered species) were recorded. In addition, other primate species were recorded during the survey, such as Stump-tailed Macaque *Macaca arctoides* (Vulnerable) and Long-tailed Macaque *Macaca fascicularis* (Near Threatened). A group of about three or four Gaur *Bos gaurus* (Vulnerable) were also recorded. During the expedition, for the first time, the bat and small mammal faunas were surveyed. As a result, a mole (Talpidae) was found that might be a new species to science. Six of ten species that originally qualified Chu Yang Sin as an Important Bird Area² (IBA) were recorded during the survey: Collared Laughingthrush *Garrulax yersini* (Endangered); Black-hooded Laughingthrush *Garrulax milleti* (Near Threatened); Grey-crowned Crocias *Crocias langbianis* (Endangered); Short-tailed Scimitar Babbler *Jabouilleia danjoui* (Near Threatened); Germain's Peacock Pheasant *Polyplectron germaini* (Vulnerable); and Crested Argus *Rheinardia ocellata* (Near Threatened).



A Blyth's Kingfisher *Alcedo hercules* recorded during the survey. Photo: Nguyen Truong Son

Despite of the fact that this site still qualifies as an IBA in the Da Lat Plateau Endemic Bird Area³ (EBA), the integrity of CYS NP and its biodiversity values are under severe human pressure, most seriously from hunting/trapping activities by H'Mong people who spontaneously migrated to this area from mountainous provinces in northern Vietnam.



NP staff learned new techniques during the survey. Photo: Dang Ngoc Can



Joint survey team of BirdLife staff, NP staff, and other scientists. Photo: Nguyen Truong Son

Through participating in this survey, the staff of CYS NP were trained in biodiversity survey and assessment skills. This was the first time they had an opportunity to learn how to collect baseline biodiversity data. It was also a chance for them to learn identification of many rare and endemic fauna and flora species in the NP. BirdLife's experts were very pleased at the enthusiasm and desire to learn of the NP staff who joined the field survey. In the future, these staff themselves will carry out a biodiversity monitoring programme for the NP.

“At present, in April and May 2006, this team is undertaking an additional biodiversity survey in CYS NP, focusing on fish and butterfly faunas. As both taxonomical groups are studied in the first time in Chu Yang Sin National Park, BirdLife strongly hope that many new discoveries for science will be made during the survey”, said Mr. Le Trong Trai, BirdLife's Conservation Planner for this project.

ENDS

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.
- 2) **Important Bird Areas (IBAs)**: With the aim of conserving sites of global biodiversity importance, BirdLife International has a programme to identify and conserve Important Bird Areas (IBA). IBAs are areas of international importance for bird conservation that meet internationally recognised criteria. IBAs are not only important for birds but, typically, support a wide range of other important animal and plant species.
- 3) **Endemic Bird Areas (EBAs)** are global priorities for biodiversity conservation. EBAs are areas that include the entire breeding ranges of two or more restricted-range bird species. A restricted-range bird species is a species with a global breeding range of 50,000 km² or less.