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## Changing attitudes of local people towards wildlife in Chin State, Myanmar

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**BirdLife International<sup>1</sup> Indochina Programme** – The Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA), the BirdLife Affiliate in Myanmar has just launched an awareness-raising project in the buffer zone of Natmataung National Park, which lies within an Important Bird Area (IBA). This project is funded by the US Embassy in Yangon and is part of a wider programme funded by the UK Government's Darwin Initiative and the Royal Netherlands Government. The awareness-raising project is led by Daw Khin Ma Ma Thwin, the General Secretary of BANCA, and assisted by U Moe Zaw Thwin, BANCA member.

Following an informal workshop for local schoolteachers last May, the project team developed the environmental educational materials based on discussions with local school-teachers and the national park warden.



Local teachers actively discuss to save Natmataung IBA at the workshop in Kanpetlet village. Photo: Moe Zaw Thwin

On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2006 two workshops were held in Kanpetlet and Mindat townships in the buffer zone of Natmataung National Park. About one hundred local school-teachers participated. In the first session of the workshops, after the opening ceremony, exercise books specially printed with wildlife conservation messages were given to the participants and their schools. The workshops were attended by the local school-teachers, town elders, community-based conservation groups, departmental personnel and park staff. After attending the workshops the teachers will be sharing the knowledge they have gained with their pupils and fellow villagers. The teachers actively participated in the workshops and are keen to share their newly acquired knowledge.

BANCA and BirdLife have already established six Site Support Groups<sup>3</sup> (SSGs) in the Natmataung IBA and have plans to establish more in the future within the scope of a larger project involving more partners and donors. Two new SSGs have recently been established at this site.

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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) **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) **Site Support Groups (SSGs)**: Site Support Groups are groups of local stakeholders who share a common commitment to the conservation of an IBA. In many cases, participation is voluntary. Stakeholders become involved in SSGs because of the economic, cultural, religious, recreational or livelihood benefits provided by the IBA. BirdLife is aiming to develop networks of SSGs to promote exchange of experience and skills in IBA conservation.