

Mu Cang Chai Proposed Nature Reserve

Alternative site name(s)

Che Tao

Province(s)

Yen Bai

Area

20,293 ha

Coordinates

21°38' - 21°48'N, 103°55' - 104°09'E

Agro-ecological zone

North-eastern

Decreed by government

No

Management board established

No

Investment plan prepared

Yes

VCF eligibility criteria met

A, B

Social screening criteria met

None

Conservation needs assessment prepared

No

Operational management plan prepared

No

Tracking tool completed

No

Map available

Yes

Management history

Mu Cang Chai is not included on any government decision regarding the national protected areas system, nor is it included on a list of Special-use Forests to be established by the year 2010, prepared by the FPD of MARD (FPD 2003). In 2002, however, Yen Bai Provincial FPD, with support from the Fauna and Flora International (FFI) Vietnam Programme and the Forest Resources and Environment Centre of the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute, prepared an investment plan for a 20,293 ha species/habitat conservation area (a sub-category of nature reserve) at the site (FREC 2002b). This investment plan was approved by MARD on 29 April 2003, following Decision No. 985/BNN-KH. Mu Cang Chai is the first protected area in Vietnam to have a mandate from MARD for collaborative management between the FPD and local communities in the buffer zone (S. Swan *in litt.* 2004).

To date, however, a management board has not been established, and the site is under the management of Mu Cang Chai District FPD.

Topography and hydrology

Mu Cang Chai proposed protected area is situated in the south of Mu Cang Chai district. The topography of the proposed protected area is dominated by a horseshoe-shaped ridge of mountains, which includes a

number of peaks above 2,000 m. The southern part of this ridge forms the border between Yen Bai and Son La provinces. The lowest elevations in the proposed protected area are in the south-west, where there are a number of valleys below 500 m.

Biodiversity values

Although little forest remains at lower elevations, as a result of clearance for shifting cultivation, Mu Cang Chai proposed protected area supports significant areas of upper and lower montane evergreen forest, characterised by the presence of the conifer *Fokienia hodginsii*. Although significant areas have been degraded by timber extraction, more inaccessible valleys and plateaus still support pristine forest, with no signs of human activity (Tordoff *et al.* 2001).

Mu Cang Chai proposed protected area supports a number of globally threatened mammal species, including what is thought to be the largest population of Black-cheeked Crested Gibbon *Hylobates concolor* remaining in Vietnam (Long *et al.* 2000). The site has also been confirmed to support a population of Phayre's Leaf Monkey *Trachypithecus phayrei* (Tordoff *et al.* 2001). In addition, the proposed protected area is important for bird conservation, supporting a number of restricted-range species and one of only two populations of the globally vulnerable Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis* known in Vietnam (Tordoff *et al.* 2001). Together with adjacent

Mu Cang Chai Proposed Nature Reserve

forest areas in Muong La district, Son La province, Mu Cang Chai proposed protected area qualifies as an Important Bird Area (Tordoff 2002).

Conservation issues

Hunting was previously a major threat to populations of species of conservation concern at the proposed protected area. However, levels of hunting, at least of Black-cheeked Crested Gibbon and Rufous-necked Hornbill, have apparently been minimal since the initiation of a community-based conservation project at the site. Furthermore, Mu Cang Chai District FPD implemented a district-wide gun confiscation scheme in 2003, which resulted in the collection of 2,618 guns. This represents a c. 90 % reduction in gun possession, however, the impact of this gun control scheme on hunting remains to be assessed. Steel leg traps and cable snares are still prevalent and gun control could cause a shift towards increased hunting by indiscriminate trapping methods (S. Swan *in litt.* 2004).

Other major threats to biodiversity include clearance of forest for shifting agriculture, selective timber extraction, forest fire and infrastructure development. Of these risks, the latter is perhaps the most immediate, as a route to villages surrounded by the proposed protected area has recently been upgraded to a motorable road, and other road developments are planned. Such developments threaten to facilitate exploitation of natural resources within the proposed protected area, particularly of high value timber species.

Another conservation issue is the construction of the Black River dam in Son La province, which is displacing several tens of thousands of people from the inundation zone. Some of these people may settle into areas close to the proposed protected area, increasing pressure on natural resources.

Other documented values

No information.

Related projects

The FFI Vietnam Programme and Yen Bai Provincial FPD are currently implementing the *Community-based Conservation of the Hoang Lien Mountains Ecosystem Project*, at Mu Cang Chai proposed protected area. Activities implemented under this project to date include biological and human ecological surveys, community-based conservation initiatives, environmental awareness raising, and preparation of a protected area feasibility study.

In 2003, the FFI Vietnam Programme, in collaboration with Lao Cai and Yen Bai Provincial FPDs, Lao Cai Provincial DARD and Hoang Lien National Park, began implementation of a European Commission-funded project to promote conservation in the Hoang Lien mountains. A number of project activities will be implemented at Mu Cang Chai proposed protected area, including community-based natural resources management and further protected area development.

Conservation needs assessment

A conservation needs assessment has not been conducted for the site.

Operational management plan

An operational management plan has not been prepared for the site.

Eligibility against VCF criteria

Mu Cang Chai is not currently eligible for VCF support because it is not under appropriate conservation management.

Criterion	Eligibility
A _I	NH1 - Hoang Lien Mountains
A _{II}	VN018 - Che Tao
B _I	Proposed Special-use Forest
B _{II}	Nature Reserve
B _{III}	Under provincial management
C _I	
C _{II}	

Mu Cang Chai Proposed Nature Reserve

Social screening requirements

A social screening report has not been prepared for the site.

Criterion	Eligibility
A	
B	
C	
D	

Literature sources

Dang Tang Long (2002) Herpetile diversity survey of Che Tao commune, Mu Cang Chai district, Yen Bai province, Vietnam. Unpublished report to Fauna and Flora International Vietnam Programme.

Do Tuoc and Ngo Tu (1980) [Fauna of north-western Vietnam.] Hanoi: North-west Territorial Survey Programme, National Science and Technology Commission. In Vietnamese.

Do Tuoc and Dang Thang Long (2002) Fauna of Che Tao proposed protected area, Mu Cang Chai district, Yen Bai province. Unpublished report to Fauna and Flora International Vietnam Programme.

FREC (2002a) Botanical survey report of Mu Cang Chai proposed species/habitat conservation area. Hanoi: Forest Resources and Environment Centre, Forest Inventory and Planning Institute.

FREC (2002b) An investment plan for Mu Cang Chai Species/Habitat Conservation Area. Hanoi: Forest Resources and Environment Centre, Forest Inventory and Planning Institute.

Geissmann T., Nguyen Xuan Dang, Lormée, N. and Momberg, F. (2000) Vietnam primate conservation status review 2000, part 1: gibbons. Hanoi: Fauna and Flora International, Indochina Programme.

Hardcastle, J. E. and Mai Dang Khoa (2001) Black and white: community-based conservation initiatives to protect the Western Black Crested Gibbon by the white Hmong people of Che Tao forest. Unpublished report to Fauna and Flora International Vietnam Programme.

Le Trong Dat, Trinh Dinh Hoang, Tallents, L. A. and Luong Van Hao (2001) Report on the third survey for Western Black Crested Gibbon *Nomascus concolor*

and other animals in Che Tao commune, Mu Cang Chai district, Yen Bai province. Unpublished report to Fauna and Flora International Vietnam Programme.

Long, B., Le Khac Quyet and Le Trong Dat (2000a) The mammalian and avian diversity of Che Tao commune (Mu Cang Chai district, Yen Bai province) with notes on the reptiles and amphibians. Unpublished report to Fauna and Flora International Vietnam Programme.

Long, B., Tallents, L. and Tran Dinh Nghia (2000b) The biological diversity of Che Tao commune, Yen Bai province, Vietnam. Unpublished report to the Fauna and Flora International Indochina Programme.

Nadler, T., Momberg, F. Nguyen Xuan Dang and Lormée, N. (2003) Vietnam primate conservation status review 2002, part 2: leaf monkeys. Hanoi: Fauna and Flora International Vietnam Programme and Frankfurt Zoological Society.

Ngo Van Tri and Long, B. (2000) A survey of the Black Gibbon *Nomascus concolor* in Son La province, north Vietnam. Unpublished report to the Fauna and Flora International Indochina Programme.

Tallents, L. A., Le Trong Dat, La Quang Trung and Trinh Dinh Hoang (2000a) Survey for Western Black Crested Gibbon *Nomascus concolor*, Che Tao commune, Mu Cang Chai district, Yen Bai province. Unpublished report to the Fauna and Flora International Indochina Programme.

Tallents, L. A., Le Trong Dat, La Quang Trung and Trinh Dinh Hoang (2000b) Report on the second survey for Western Black Crested Gibbon in Che Tao forest. Unpublished report to the Fauna and Flora International Indochina Programme.

Tallents, L. A., Le Trong Dat, Luong Van Hao, La Quang Trung and Trinh Dinh Hoang (2001) A survey for Western Black Crested Gibbon in Nam Pam, Hua Trai and Ngoc Chien communes, Che Tao-Nam Pam forest. Unpublished report to the Fauna and Flora International Indochina Programme.

Tordoff, A. W. ed. (2002) Directory of important bird areas in Vietnam: key sites for conservation. Hanoi: BirdLife International in Indochina and the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources.

Mu Cang Chai Proposed Nature Reserve

Tordoff, A. W., Le Trong Dat and Hardcastle, J. (2001) A rapid biodiversity survey of Che Tao commune, Mu Cang Chai district, Yen Bai province, Vietnam. Unpublished report to the BirdLife International Vietnam Programme and the Fauna and Flora International Indochina Programme.

Tran Dinh Nghia and Doan Hoai Nam (2000) Floral characteristics, plant diversity and vegetation of Che Tao Commune and adjacent areas in Mu Cang Chai district, Yen Bai Province, Vietnam. Unpublished report to the Fauna and Flora International Indochina Programme.