

# Than Xa-Phuong Hoang Proposed Nature Reserve

### Alternative site name(s)

Hang Phuong Hoang, Phuong Hoang-Than Xa

### Province(s)

Thai Nguyen

### Area

11,220 ha

### Coordinates

21°43' - 21°52'N, 105°53' - 106°10'E

### Agro-ecological zone

North-eastern

### Decreed by government

No

### Management board established

Yes

### Investment plan prepared

Yes

### VCF eligibility criteria met

B, C

### Social screening criteria met

None

### Conservation needs assessment prepared

No

### Operational management plan prepared

No

### Tracking tool completed

No

### Map available

Yes

## Management history

In 1991, Hang Phuong Hoang (Phuong Hoang cave) was included on Decision No. 3211/QDVH-BVH of the Ministry of Culture and Information, as a 6,000 ha cultural and historical site (FPD 1998). However, the site has never been decreed as a Special-use Forest by the government (MARD 1997).

In 1996, an investment plan to establish a nature reserve at Than Xa-Phuong Hoang, a site that includes Phuong Hoang cave, was prepared (Anon. 1996). On 7 December 1999, a nature reserve management board was established for Than Xa-Phuong Hoang, following Decision No. 3890/QD-UB of Thai Nguyen Provincial People's Committee (Vo Nhai District FPD *in litt.* 2003). Subsequently, Than Xa-Phuong Hoang was included on a list of Special-use Forests to be established by the year 2010, prepared by the FPD of MARD, as a 11,220 ha nature reserve (FPD 2003); this list has not yet been approved by the government.

Than Xa-Phuong Hoang proposed nature reserve is situated in Phu Thuong and Than Xa communes, Vo Nhai district, Thai Nguyen province. The proposed nature reserve comprises two sectors: Phuong Hoang in the east, which covers 3,867 ha; and Than Xa, about 10 km to the west, which covers 7,353 ha (Anon. 1996). The management board currently has 13 members of staff, based at one guard station, and is under the management of Vo Nhai District FPD (*in litt.* 2003).

## Topography and hydrology

Than Xa-Phuong Hoang is situated in an extensive limestone karst area distributed in Thai Nguyen and Lang Son provinces. The Than Xa sector is centred on Mount Coc Chem, the summit of which is 731 m in elevation. The highest point in the sector is, however, a 755 m peak, 3 km to the south of Mount Coc Chem. The lowest elevation at the site is about 50 m in the stream valley that forms the sector's western boundary. The Phuong Hoang sector is bisected by the valley of the Mo Ga stream, through which National Highway 1B runs. The highest point in this sector, Mount Nam Long at 890 m, lies to the north of this valley, while elevations to the south of the valley reach only about 500 m.

## Biodiversity values

Very little information is available about the biodiversity values of the site. The natural vegetation is limestone forest. The Than Xa sector supports 4,247 ha of forest, equivalent to 58% of the total area of the sector. The Phuong Hoang sector, however, supports only 1,053 ha of forest, equivalent to 27% of the total area of the sector (Anon. 1996).

Historically, Black-cheeked Crested Gibbon *Hylobates concolor* may have occurred in the Than Xa-Phuong Hoang sector. However, during a survey in March 1998, Geissmann and Vu Ngoc Thanh (1998) did not see or hear any gibbons, and obtained only one

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first-hand report of a recent gibbon sighting, which dated from 1997. The authors considered the continued occurrence of gibbons in the area unlikely, and added that, if gibbons did still occur, they were unlikely to survive the next decade.

## Conservation issues

Thai Nguyen Provincial FPD (2000) consider the main threats to biodiversity at Than Xa-Phuong Hoang to be clearance of forest for agriculture, hunting and collection of forest products. They also mention unmanaged tourism as a threat to the cultural values of the site.

During a survey of the Than Xa sector in March 1998, Geissmann and Vu Ngoc Thanh (1998) repeatedly encountered hunters and loggers in the forest. The authors noted that hunting pressure appeared to be particularly high in the area. The forest at Than Xa is home to about 10,000 immigrant gold miners, who have greatly intensified the hunting pressure in recent years. Geissmann and Vu Ngoc Thanh (1998) also reported that use of chemicals by gold miners was polluting the watercourses in the area. This can be expected to be having severe negative impacts on aquatic ecosystems, and may well be affecting the health of downstream water users.

## Other documented values

Phuong Hoang is a popular destination for domestic tourists, as the site has beautiful scenery with numerous caves. Thai Nguyen Provincial People's Committee intend to further develop tourism at this site.

## Related projects

No information.

## 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

The site is ineligible for VCF support because it does not meet the criteria for supporting forest biodiversity of international importance.

Criterion	Eligibility
A <sub>I</sub>	
A <sub>II</sub>	
B <sub>I</sub>	Proposed Special-use Forest
B <sub>II</sub>	Nature Reserve
B <sub>III</sub>	Under provincial management
C <sub>I</sub>	Management board established
C <sub>II</sub>	

## Social screening requirements

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

Criterion	Eligibility
A	
B	
C	
D	

## Literature sources

Anon. (1996) [Investment plan for Phuong Hoang-Than Xa Nature Reserve, Thai Nguyen province]. Xuan Mai: Xuan Mai Forestry College. In Vietnamese.

Geissmann, T. and Vu Ngoc Thanh (1998) Preliminary results of a primate survey in north-eastern Vietnam, with special reference to gibbons. Unpublished report to Institute for Zoology, Hanover Zoological College.

Geissmann, T. and Vu Ngoc Thanh (in press) Preliminary results of a primate survey in north-eastern Vietnam, March 1998, with special reference to gibbons. Asian Primates.