

Cat Ba National Park

Alternative site name(s)

None

Province(s)

Hai Phong

Area

15,200 ha

Coordinates

20°44' - 20°51'N, 106°58' - 106°45'E

Agro-ecological zone

Red River Delta

Decreed by government

Yes

Management board established

Yes

Investment plan prepared

Yes

VCF eligibility criteria met

A, 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

The establishment of Cat Ba National Park was decreed by Decision No. 79/CT of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, dated 31 March 1986 (MARD 1997). The area given in this decision was 15,200 ha, comprising 9,800 ha of Cat Ba and several smaller islands, and 5,400 ha of surrounding marine waters.

An investment plan for Cat Ba National Park was approved on 1 August 1991, by Decision No. 237/CT of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Subsequently, a national park management board, with management responsibility for both the terrestrial and marine components was established. The management board currently has 86 members of staff, based at 15 guard stations, and is under the direct management of MARD (Cat Ba National Park Management Board *in litt.* 2003).

In 2002, Hai Phong Provincial People's Committee nominated the Cat Ba archipelago as a biosphere reserve (Vietnam News 2002, 2003). On 10 July 2003, the Cat Ba archipelago was recognised as Vietnam's third biosphere reserve by the Standing Committee of the Man and the Biosphere Programme of UNESCO.

Cat Ba is included on a list of Special-use Forests to be established by the year 2010, prepared by the FPD of MARD, as a 15,200 ha national park (FPD

2003); this list has not yet been approved by the government.

Topography and hydrology

Cat Ba National Park is located in Cat Hai district, Hai Phong city. The national park is centred on Cat Ba island, a 28,500 ha island, which lies 20 km due east of Hai Phong city and immediately to the west of Ha Long bay. The national park also incorporates some of the small islands and marine waters situated to the east of Cat Ba island.

Like Ha Long bay, the landscape of Cat Ba National Park is dominated by karst limestone islands rising abruptly from the sea. The topography is rugged and marked by steep outcrops and areas of bare rock. The national park ranges in elevation from sea level to 331 m at the summit of Mount Cao Vong.

As is typical in well developed karst landscapes, drainage patterns are complicated by subterranean passages, which probably account for most of the drainage in the national park. The centre of Cat Ba island is no more than 5 km from the coast, and surface drainage is poorly developed and seasonal.

Biodiversity values

Cat Ba National Park supports a diversity of natural habitats, including forested hills, small freshwater

lakes, freshwater swamp forest, mangroves, sandy beaches and coral reefs. The main natural vegetation type on Cat Ba island is limestone forest. However, the forest has been subjected to high levels of disturbance, and large areas have been replaced by limestone scrub or bare rock. In addition, there are some areas of mangrove along the shore of Cat Ba island, although most of these lie outside of the national park, and have mostly been enclosed within aquacultural ponds. To date, 839 vascular plant species have been recorded at the national park, including 25 species listed in the *Red Data Book of Vietnam* (KNCCN, IEBR and HNU 1997).

Due to the isolated nature of the island and high levels of hunting, the diversity and abundance of mammals at Cat Ba are low compared to other national parks in Vietnam. Nadler and Ha Thang Long (2000) report that the only ungulates on the island are Southern Serow *Naemorhedus sumatraensis*, Eurasian Wild Pig *Sus scrofa* and Red Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak* but that only the former is common. Of highest importance from a conservation perspective, Cat Ba National Park supports the only known population of Cat Ba Leaf Monkey *Trachypithecus poliocephalus* in the world. The results of a detailed survey of this endemic primate in 1999 and 2000 indicate that the total population of Cat Ba Leaf Monkey is only between 104 and 135 individuals, including only 50 to 75 adults (Nadler and Ha Thang Long 2000).

The limestone habitats at Cat Ba National Park are important for a number of invertebrate taxa. A survey in 1998, for instance, revealed that, because of an abundance of suitable moist niches within the limestone forest, the national park had a rich and diverse snail fauna (Vermulen and Whitten 1998).

Conservation issues

Prior to 1979, the human population of Cat Ba island was relatively low. However, since this time, a large number of migrants from the mainland have settled on the island. Currently, 12,303 people inhabit the buffer zone of Cat Ba National Park, and a further 850 people inhabit the national park itself (Cat Ba National Park Management Board *in litt.* 2003). While 70% of the residents of Cat Ba island live in Cat Ba

town, and are mainly employed in the fishing, trade or service industries, the inhabitants of the villages inside of or close to the national park are farmers, and exploit forest resources intensively. The forest resources most widely exploited are timber, fuelwood, honey, bamboo shoots, edible roots, frogs and geckos (Nadler and Ha Thang Long 2000).

Until 1989, a forest enterprise extracted timber from Cat Ba island, which resulted in loss of forest cover from some valleys and the south-west of the island. Commercial logging activities are no longer viable because too few large timber trees remain, although small-scale timber extraction continues for local use. Honey collection takes place in the forest between August and November and in May, and often results in forest fires, threatening key habitats for Cat Ba Leaf Monkey (Nadler and Ha Thang Long 2000).

Nadler and Ha Thang Long (2000) consider hunting to be the main threat to animal populations on Cat Ba island, and particularly the population of Cat Ba Leaf Monkey. Between 1970 and 1986, an estimated 500 to 800 leaf monkeys were killed, and, during the 1990s, and at least 90 individuals were killed or captured. Nadler and Ha Thang Long (2000) conclude that, unless protection measures are improved and the remaining leaf monkey population is carefully managed, the primate faces imminent extinction.

In recent years, tourism has become central to the local economy. However, uncontrolled tourism development has begun to pose a threat to the island's environment, a fact now acknowledged by the national park staff (M. Appleton *in litt.* 2000). If developed with environmental sensitivity, however, tourism has the potential to make a positive contribution to conservation at Cat Ba National Park, by generating revenue and raising environmental awareness.

Other documented values

Each year, Cat Ba island receives large numbers of domestic and overseas tourists. A significant proportion of these tourists visit the national park, either on foot, along one of the hiking trails, or by boat, through the marine component. The national park can, therefore, be considered to be making an important contribution to the island's economy.

Related projects

Between 1999 and 2000, the WWF Indochina Programme implemented a small-scale environmental education project at Cat Ba National Park. Project activities included developing an environmental education centre at the national park headquarters, and making some small infrastructural improvements to the visitor reception facilities. Occasional visits were made to schools in Cat Ba town to raise awareness about the national park and its activities. The project was funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy, with contributions from WWF and Cat Ba National Park.

Between 2000 and 2002, the Fauna & Flora International Vietnam Programme implemented the *Cat Ba Conservation Awareness Project*, with funding from the British Embassy. The project had three sub-programmes: (i) a school-based programme with school children, teachers and national park staff; (ii) a village-based programme with villagers and FPD staff; and (iii) a public relations programme, including articles on national radio and newspapers, and visitor information boards on the biodiversity values of the island and threats to them. The project also aimed to raise awareness among the general public about conservation issues on the island. Furthermore, in collaboration with the German NGO, DED, the project monitored the impacts of income-generating activities involving bee-keeping on biodiversity (Tran Thi Binh verbally 2003).

In 2001, the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations began implementing the *Cat Ba Langur Conservation Project*. Activities of this project to date have included monitoring of the Cat Ba Leaf Monkey population and *in situ* protection of Cat Ba Leaf Monkeys.

In 2002 and 2003, Cat Hai District Women's Union implemented a project entitled *Contributing to Biodiversity Conservation in Cat Ba NP through Community Activity*, with support from the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme. The activities of this project included awareness raising, strengthening links between local authorities and the national park management board, and contributing to the conservation of a local variety of citrus fruit.

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

Cat Ba meets eligibility criteria A, B and C. However, as a centrally managed Special-use Forest, it will only be eligible for VCF support if the Investment Plan and Operational Management Plan demonstrate a high proportion of government support directed towards conservation activities.

Criterion	Eligibility
A _I	NH4 - Cat Ba
A _{II}	
B _I	Decision No. 271/CT, dated 01/08/91
B _{II}	National Park
B _{III}	Under central management
C _I	Management board established
C _{II}	

Social screening requirements

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

Criterion	Eligibility
A	
B	
C	
D	

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