

Nghia Hung Proposed Nature Reserve

Alternative site name(s)

None

Province(s)

Nam Dinh

Area

7,600 ha

Coordinates

19°56' - 20°00'N, 106°07' - 106°12'E

Agro-ecological zone

Red River Delta

Decreed by government

No

Management board established

No

Investment plan prepared

No

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

This site comprises the coastal zone of Nghia Hung district. A survey of 18 coastal wetland sites in the Red River Delta by BirdLife International and FIPI in 1996 identified Nghia Hung as the second most important site for wetland conservation (Pedersen and Nguyen Huy Thang 1996). As a result of this survey, FIPI and BirdLife proposed establishing a nature reserve at Nghia Hung.

To date, however, an investment plan has not been prepared for the site, and a nature reserve management board has not been established (Nam Dinh Provincial FPD *in litt.* 2003). In addition, the site is not included on a list of Special-use Forests to be established by the year 2010, prepared by the FPD of MARD (FPD 2003). The site is currently under the management of Nam Dinh Provincial FPD (*in litt.* 2003).

Topography and hydrology

Nghia Hung lies in the coastal zone of the Red River Delta. The site covers 12 km of coastline, and is bordered to the west by the Day river and, to the east, by the Ninh Co river. Adjacent to the Ninh Co estuary is an area with sandy beaches, dunes and salt-marsh, to the west of which there is an area of aquacultural ponds. Along the Ninh Co river, there is an area of salt-ponds. Outside of the main dyke, there is an intertidal area of about 3,500 ha. Five kilometres offshore, there

are two small sandy islands covering 25 ha that support dunes and, in the case of the southern island, salt-marsh (Pedersen and Nguyen Huy Thang 1996).

Biodiversity values

Nghia Hung supports 13 different habitats and is one of the most diverse areas in the coastal zone of the Red River Delta. The main habitats found at Nghia Hung include mangrove plantation of *Kandelia candel*, mudflats, large sandy beaches and dunes. Beyond the main dyke, there is a large area of aquacultural ponds, which support reedbed *Phragmites* sp. or patches of mangrove (Pedersen and Nguyen Huy Thang 1996).

Nghia Hung supports a number of globally threatened or near-threatened waterbird species, including Spotted Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*, Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*, Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*, Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi*, Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*, Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes* and Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* (Pedersen and Nguyen Huy Thang 1996). Maximum counts of 41 Black-faced Spoonbills and 260 Saunders's Gulls were made during 1994 (Tordoff 2002). In April 1994, it was estimated that the site supported more than 30,000 shorebirds (Pedersen *et al.* 1996). Although, in recent years, there are few data on waterbird numbers from the site, it qualifies as an Important Bird Area (Tordoff 2002).

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Conservation issues

The main threats to biodiversity at Nghia Hung are hunting, over-exploitation of marine products and disturbance (Le Trong Trai verbally 2000). Hunting is a particular threat to populations of waterbirds. During February 1999, 20 km of mist-nets were observed in the intertidal area of Nghia Hung district. Hunters also use airguns and shotguns. The main quarry species are reportedly ducks and geese, which are sold for export to China (Pedersen and Nguyen Huy Thang 1996). Despite the introduction of a hunting ban, levels of hunting have remained high at Nghia Hung because local people depend heavily on exploitation of natural resources and do not understand why the ban was introduced, and because the local authorities have not implemented the ban strictly (Le Trong Trai verbally 2000).

Pedersen and Nguyen Huy Thang (1996) identified several constraints to management at Nghia Hung, including the absence of a coastal zone management plan for the district, lack of technical capacity among the district FPD staff, and lack of awareness of the biological value of mangrove and intertidal mudflats. Furthermore, the authors noted that aquacultural development is unregulated, there is a lack of baseline data to monitor trends in bivalve populations, and there is no enforcement of regulations prohibiting bird hunting.

Pedersen and Nguyen Huy Thang (1996) recommend that a management plan be developed for the site that seeks to promote the sustainable exploitation of marine products, fully taking into account the importance of mudflats as feeding areas for threatened species, and the importance of offshore islands as roosting areas for migratory shorebirds.

Other documented values

The Day and Ninh Co estuaries are important stocking areas for fish and other marine animals central to the local economy. Also, the mangroves at Nghia Hung are a feeding and nursery area for fish, shrimp and crabs, and have, therefore, played an important role in maintaining inshore marine productivity. A large proportion of the mangrove at the site has been enclosed within aquacultural ponds, which are

managed for the mangrove crab *Scylla serrata* and other products.

During 1996, about 1,000 people were observed collecting shellfish at low tide in an intertidal area of 1,500 ha. The most common species collected were *Meretrix* sp., *Hitula diplos* and *Mactra quadrangularis*. An additional economic activity at Nghia Hung is salt production: there are 50 ha of salt ponds in the north of the site (Pedersen and Nguyen Huy Thang 1996).

Related projects

Mangrove afforestation is taking place at Nghia Hung. Prior to 1999, this was funded by the national 327 Programme, while, since 1999, it has been funded by the national 661 Programme. The Danish Red Cross have also funded a mangrove afforestation project at the site.

The Mangrove Ecology and Research Division of the Centre for Natural Resources and Environment Studies are currently developing a medium-sized Global Environment Facility (GEF) project through UNDP. This project, which is entitled *Conservation of coastal wetlands in the Red River Delta, Vietnam*, is expected to be implemented at five sites in three provinces: Ninh Binh, Nam Dinh and Thai Binh. The objective of this project will be the long-term conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the coastal zone of the Red River Delta.

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

Nghia Hung is not currently eligible for VCF support because it is not under appropriate conservation management.

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Criterion	Eligibility
A _I	
A _{II}	VN012 Nghia Hung
B _I	Proposed Special-use Forest
B _{II}	Nature Reserve
B _{III}	Under provincial management
C _I	
C _{II}	

Social screening requirements

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

Criterion	Eligibility
A	
B	
C	
D	

Literature sources

Lao Dong [Labour] (2000) [Spoonbill, a rare bird, is disappearing from Vietnam]. Lao Dong [Labour] 15 June 2000. In Vietnamese.

Le Dien Duc (1992) Final report on monitoring of hunting pressure on waterbirds on the Red River Delta, Vietnam. Unpublished report to Asian Wetlands Bureau.

Pedersen, A. and Nguyen Huy Thang (1996) The conservation of key coastal wetland sites in the Red River Delta. Hanoi: BirdLife International Vietnam Programme.

Pedersen, A., Nielsen, S. S., Le Dinh Thuy and Le Trong Trai (1996) Northward migration of shorebirds through the Red River Delta, Vietnam, in 1994. *Stilt* 28: 22-31.