

# Mui Ca Mau National Park

## Alternative site name(s)

Bai Boi, Ca Mau, Dat Mui, Duoc Ca Mau, Ong Trang, Tam Giang, Trang Sao

## Province(s)

Ca Mau

## Area

41,862 ha

## Coordinates

8°32' - 8°49'N, 104°40' - 104°55'E

## Agro-ecological zone

Mekong 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

Mui Ca Mau National Park is located in Dat Mui, Vien An and Dat Moi communes, Ngoc Hien district, Ca Mau province. During the French colonial period, part of the site was designated as Tam Giang Ornamental Forest. In 1983, the southern part of the site was designated as Dat Mui Nature Reserve by the provincial people's committee. This nature reserve was included on Decision No 194/CT of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, dated 9 August 1986, under the name Ca Mau (MARD 1997). In 1990, an investment plan was prepared for Dat Mui Nature Reserve, and, subsequently, a management board was established under Ca Mau Provincial FPD.

Prior to 2003, the northern part of the site was designated as Bai Boi Coastal Protection Forest, and managed with the aim of preventing coastal erosion and protecting inland areas from flooding and other severe weather conditions. A management board for the coastal protection forest was established under the management of Ca Mau Provincial FPD.

In 2003, Dat Mui Nature Reserve and Bai Boi Coastal Protection Forest were combined, together with adjacent areas of natural habitat, to form Mui Ca Mau National Park, which was decreed by Decision No. 142/TTg of the Prime Minister, dated 14 July

2003. Mui Ca Mau National Park is included on a list of Special-use Forests to be established by the year 2010, prepared by the FPD of MARD, with an area of 41,862 ha (FPD 2003); this list has not yet been approved by the government.

The national park management board currently has 49 members of staff, based at eight guard stations. The national park is under the management of Ca Mau Provincial People's Committee (Ca Mau Provincial FPD *in litt.* 2003).

## Topography and hydrology

Mui Ca Mau National Park is situated at the southernmost tip of Vietnam. The site was originally covered in natural mangrove forest but the vast majority was destroyed during the Second Indochina War and, later, by conversion to aquacultural ponds and agricultural land. Most of the aquacultural ponds have been abandoned, and now support extensive areas of re-colonising mangrove forest. There are extensive mudflats, which are also being colonised naturally by mangrove. The site is continually growing due to accretion rates along the coastline of up to 50 m per year in places (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

The site is bisected by the Lon river, in the mouth of which two islands (Con Trong and Con Ngoai) have been formed by the accretion of sediment. To the north

of the site is the estuary of the Bai Hap river, one of the largest rivers in Ca Mau province.

## Biodiversity values

Mui Ca Mau National Park contains extensive areas of intertidal mudflat, and large areas of mangrove forest, dominated by *Avicennia alba*, *A. officinalis*, *A. marina*, *Rhizophora apiculata* and *Kandelia candel*. Also, *Bruguiera* sp. and *Sonneratia* sp. occur sporadically (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

Some small areas of old growth *Rhizophora apiculata* mangrove remain at Mui Ca Mau. This vegetation type probably covered much of the area in the past. Evidence of over-exploitation is abundant, with many old logged bases of large *Rhizophora apiculata* trees present. There are still some big trees over 10 years old, though generally the habitat is degraded. Signs of mangrove forest regeneration, however, have been observed at Mui Ca Mau. There are also extensive *Rhizophora apiculata* plantations at the national park, the stocking density of which varies from one to six trees per square metre (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

Mui Ca Mau National Park is considered to be an important site for a number of migratory waterbirds. Globally threatened and near-threatened migratory waterbird species recorded at the site include Far Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis*, Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*, Chinese Egret *Egretta eulophotes*, Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*, Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis* and Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*. In addition, large concentrations of Eurasian Curlew *N. arquata* have been recorded at the site (Tordoff 2002). Consequently, Mu Ca Mau contains two Important Bird Areas: Dat Mui and Bai Boi (Tordoff 2002).

The habitats of particular importance for migratory waterbirds at Mui Ca Mau include exposed mud, and remnant and regenerating mangrove forest (Buckton *et al.* 1999). As intertidal habitats are rapidly accreting, the site will continually enlarge, and its importance as a site for migratory waterbirds may increase (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

The mangrove bird community at Mui Ca Mau is dominated by common mangrove species, including Ashy Tailorbird *Orthotomus ruficeps*, Golden-bellied Gerygone *Gerygone sulphurea*, Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosa* and Pied Fantail *Rhipidura javanica* (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

## Conservation issues

The mangrove forests of Mui Ca Mau have been severely degraded in the last 10 years, largely as a result of illegal encroachment and conversion to aquacultural ponds. Considerable effort has been made to restore the site and many illegal settlers have been evicted. However, there are still substantial numbers of people living in or around the site and encroachment, even into the strict protection area, frequently occurs. Mangrove is still exploited where it remains, and all areas of mature mangrove forest at the site are severely degraded (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

One potential threat to the site is afforestation of intertidal mudflats with mangrove, with the objective of coastal protection. This activity would be incompatible with biodiversity conservation because it would destroy the key habitat for migratory waterbirds. Therefore, Buckton *et al.* (1999) recommend that a management regime consistent with biodiversity conservation be implemented, and that, in particular, no mangrove planting be carried out on accreting mudflats, because this is an important habitat for migratory waterbirds, which would otherwise be naturally recolonised by mangrove at rates that are unlikely to compromise the biodiversity values of the national park. Furthermore, Buckton *et al.* (1999) recommend that Mui Ca Mau should be designated as a site of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

## Other documented values

The mangroves at Mui Ca Mau perform an important coastal protection function, which is why there has been a strong emphasis on coastal protection in the management of the site to date. The national park also has high potential for recreation, ecotourism, conservation education and scientific research. Although present visitor use of the national park is low, visitor numbers are likely to increase in the future.

One attraction to visitors is the fact that Mui Ca Mau is the southernmost tip of mainland Vietnam.

## Related projects

Prior to 1999, the national 327 Programme was the main source of investment funding for the activities of the management boards of Dat Mui Nature Reserve and Bai Boi Coastal Protection Forest. Since, 1999, the 327 Programme has been replaced by the 661 Programme as the most important source of investment funding for management activities at the site.

A coastal wetland development and protection project, funded by the World Bank, is currently being implemented in four provinces in the Mekong Delta, including Ca Mau. Mui Ca Mau National Park may be included in this project, with an emphasis on coastal mangrove protection. Any of the activities of this development project have the potential to disturb the natural environment with negative repercussions on the biodiversity value of the site. Safeguards need to be incorporated into this project to mitigate this threat.

## 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

Mui Ca Mau is eligible for VCF support because it meets criteria A, B and C.

Criterion	Eligibility
A <sub>I</sub>	
A <sub>II</sub>	VN001 - Bai Boi; VN002 - Dat Mui
B <sub>I</sub>	Decision No. 142/TTg, dated 14/07/03
B <sub>II</sub>	National Park
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

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