

# Sao La Proposed Nature Reserve

## Alternative site name(s)

None

## Province(s)

Thua Thien Hue

## Area

58,000 ha

## Coordinates

16°01' - 16°17'N, 107°24' - 107°39'E

## Agro-ecological zone

North Central Coast

## 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

Sao La is not included on any government decision or official set of proposals regarding the national Special-use Forests system (MARD 1997, FPD 2003). However, Thua Thien Hue Provincial FPD have proposed establishing a 58,000 ha nature reserve in A Luoi, Nam Dong and Huong Thuy districts, for the conservation of the globally endangered Saola *Pseudoryx nghetinhensis* (Thua Thien Hue Provincial FPD verbally 2003). To date, however, a nature reserve investment plan has not been prepared and a management board has not been established (Thua Thien Hue Provincial FPD verbally 2003).

## Topography and hydrology

The proposed nature reserve is situated on the northern flank of a ridge of mountains, which extends eastwards from the main chain of the Annamite mountains to the East Sea at the Hai Van pass. From this ridge, a number of smaller ridges extend northwards, dividing the proposed nature reserve into a number of separate catchments.

## Biodiversity values

The main natural habitats at Sao La proposed protected area are lowland evergreen forest and lower montane evergreen forest. Remote sensing data

indicate that forest at lower elevations is generally more degraded than forest at elevations, and that the lowest elevations, along valley bottoms, have been cleared for cultivation, leaving the most intact forest on ridges. Despite degradation and loss in some areas, Sao La proposed nature reserve still supports one of the largest areas of lowland evergreen forest remaining in the Annamese lowlands.

Studies of the biodiversity of the proposed nature reserve to date have concentrated on evaluating the status of a few key species. One recent survey by Xuan Mai Forestry College and Hue University found evidence of Saola in several localities in the proposed nature reserve (Thua Thien Hue Provincial FPD verbally 2003). Although there have been no detailed ornithological surveys there to date, Sao La proposed protected area lies within the Annamese Lowlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA), and it is likely that the site supports several of the restricted range bird species characteristic of this EBA, including, possibly, Edwards's Pheasant *Lophura edwardsi*. For this reason, Tordoff (2002) considers that the site is likely to qualify as an Important Bird Area.

## Conservation issues

Little specific information is available about threats to biodiversity at Sao La proposed nature reserve. However, habitat degradation and loss is presumably a threat, particularly given patterns of land cover change

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in lowland areas elsewhere in Vietnam. In addition, as elsewhere in its limited global range, hunting is presumably the major threat to the remaining Saola population at the site.

Thua Thien Hue Provincial FPD (verbally 2003) identify the large number of forest land owners at the site as an obstacle to future nature reserve establishment. Parts of the site are designated as watershed protection forest (WFP), and are allocated to local households for protection and reforestation. Other parts are managed by a number of forest enterprises, some of which are scheduled for restructuring as WFP management boards

## Other documented values

Forest at the proposed nature reserve has an important role in protecting the upper catchments of the Huong and Bo rivers (Thua Thien Hue Provincial FPD verbally 2003).

## Related projects

During 2002, a series of village interviews were conducted in and around Sao La proposed nature reserve, as part of an economic study of hunting practices of communities around Phong Dien proposed nature reserve (Le Trong Trai *et al.* 2002).

Sao La proposed nature reserve lies within the project area of the medium-sized World Bank/GEF project *Green Corridor: Meeting Global Conservation Targets in a Productive Landscape*. The aim of this project is to protect some of the most important areas of lowland evergreen forest remaining in central Vietnam, and the species and communities they support, particularly Saola, Edwards's Pheasant and other endemic taxa. To this end, the project will provide the additional resources required to demonstrate and ensure that, by improving the management of productive landscapes, global conservation targets can be met while sustaining benefits to local communities and provincial coffers. The project will have a duration of four years, and is scheduled to begin implementation in 2004.

## 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 currently ineligible for VCF support because it is not under appropriate conservation management.

Criterion	Eligibility
A <sub>I</sub>	CA1 - Central Annamites
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>	
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

Le Trong Trai, Dang Thanh Long, Phan Tanh Ha and Le Ngoc Tuan (2002) Economic study of hunting practices of local communities living adjacent to Phong Dien Nature Reserve. Hanoi: WWF Indochina Program, Central Annamites Initiative.

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.