

# Vu Quang National Park

## Alternative site name(s)

None

## Province(s)

Ha Tinh

## Area

55,029 ha

## Coordinates

18°09' - 18°26'N, 105°16' - 105°33'E

## Agro-ecological zone

North Central Coast

## 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

During the French colonial period, Vu Quang was designated as a forest reserve, with an area of about 30,000 ha. Because of this classification, the area was closed to local communities. In the 1960s, Trai Tu Forest Enterprise was established, incorporating much of what is now Vu Quang Nature Reserve. In 1977, Trai Tu was divided into Trai Tu and Vu Quang Forest Enterprises. The area of Vu Quang Forest Enterprise was 32,000 ha, and the main management objective was forest exploitation; commercial logging activities continued at Vu Quang until 1993 (Eve 2000).

On 9 August 1986, Vu Quang was included on Decision No. 194/CT of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers as a 16,000 ha nature reserve (MARD 1997). In 1993, an investment plan was prepared by the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute and WWF, which proposed establishing a 55,950 ha nature reserve (Anon. 1993). On 16 March 1994, this investment plan was approved by Ha Tinh Provincial People's Committee, following Decision No. 483/QD-UB. Subsequently, on 14 June 1994, a management board was established by the provincial people's committee, following Decision No. 829/QD-UB. Finally, on 18 May 1998, responsibility for managing the nature reserve was transferred to the management board, following Decision No. 562/QD-UB-NL2 of the provincial people's committee (Eve 2000).

Following Decision No. 102/TTg of the Prime Minister, the management category of Vu Quang was revised from nature reserve to national park. According to the Prime Minister's Decision, the total area of the national park is 55,029 ha, comprising a strict protection area of 38,800 ha, a forest rehabilitation area of 16,185 ha and an administration and services area of 44 ha.

In 2000, a draft management plan was prepared for the nature reserve by the *WWF Indochina Programme-Vu Quang Conservation Project* (Eve 2000). Vu Quang National Park is currently under the management of Ha Tinh Provincial People's Committee. The management board has 92 members of staff, based at 10 guard stations (Vu Quang National Park Management Board *in litt.* 2003).

Vu Quang is included on a list of Special-use Forests to be established by the year 2010, prepared by the FPD of MARD, as a 55,029 ha national park (FPD 2003); this list has not yet been approved by the government.

## Topography and hydrology

Vu Quang National Park is located in Huong Son and Huong Khe districts, Ha Tinh province. The national park is situated in the northern Annamite mountains. The national park contains an elevation gradient of over 2,000 m, from 30 m in the lowlands in

the north-east of the national park to 2,286 m at the summit of Mount Rao Co, on the border with Laos.

Vu Quang National Park contains the catchments of three rivers: the Nam Truoi, Rao No and Khe Tre rivers. These rivers originate in the south of the national park, as steep, narrow, fast-flowing streams, although, as they flow north, they become broader and more placid.

## Biodiversity values

At low elevations, the landscape of Vu Quang National Park is largely anthropogenic and consists of many elements including human habitation, agricultural land, grassland and scrub. There are also a few remaining patches of natural forest on steep and inaccessible slopes, and isolated stands of trees and bamboo along rivers and streams. At medium elevations, deeper within the national park, the landscape consists of open secondary forest and other seral forest formations. Between 100 and 500 m, much of the forest has been selectively logged, although, above 500 m, the slopes are covered by primary forest (Eames *et al.* 2001).

There are five major forest types at Vu Quang National Park. Lowland evergreen forest, which formerly covered much of the national park, is distributed at elevations between 100 and 300 m in the north and north-east of the national park. Lower montane evergreen forest is distributed at elevations between 300 and 1,000 m in the centre of the national park, with some small patches in the north and north-east. Medium montane evergreen forest is distributed at elevations between 1,000 and 1,400 m, along a narrow strip, stretching from the west to the south-east of the national park. This forest type is dominated by broadleaf trees but supports some coniferous species in the Podocarpaceae and Cupressaceae families, such as *Fokienia hodginsii*. Upper montane evergreen forest is distributed at elevations between 1,400 and 1,900 m on steep slopes and ridges in the south and south-west of the national park. This forest type supports some conifers but is dominated by members of the Elaeocarpaceae, Fagaceae, Lauraceae and Magnoliaceae families. At 1,500 m, near the Laotian border, the forest is characterised by the presence of the conifer *Keteleeria evelyniana*. Elfin forest is

distributed at elevations between 1,900 and 2,200 m in the southernmost part of the national park. At these elevations, continuous cloud cover and high precipitation favour the development of forest dominated by *Rhododendron*, together with members of the Fagaceae, Lauraceae, and Elaeocarpaceae families (Eames *et al.* 2001).

In 1992, the attention of the world scientific community was focussed on Vu Quang, following the discovery of a previously undescribed large mammal species, Saola *Pseudoryx nghetinhensis* (Vu Van Dung *et al.* 1993). In 1993, this discovery was followed by that of another large mammal species, Large-antlered Muntjac *Muntiacus vuquangensis* (Do Tuoc *et al.* 1994). In the years since these discoveries, however, both species have been recorded at a number of other sites in Vietnam and Laos (e.g. Le Trong Trai *et al.* 1999). Consequently, the importance of Vu Quang as a site for mammal conservation may not be as high as was at one time supposed, although the site does support populations of a number of other globally threatened mammal species, including Gaur *Bos gaurus* and Red-shanked Douc *Pygathrix nemaeus* (Eve 2000).

In addition to the mammal discoveries, five previously undescribed fish species have been discovered at Vu Quang National Park since 1992: *Parazacco vuquangensis*, *Crosscheilus vuha*, *Pararhoedus philanthropus*, *P. equalitus* and *Oreoglanis libertus*. Moreover, two species of amphibian and 15 species of reptile recorded at Vu Quang are listed in the *Red Data Book of Vietnam* (Eve 2000).

A total of 273 bird species are known from Vu Quang National Park, including several globally threatened and near-threatened species (Eames *et al.* 2001), and the site qualifies as an Important Bird Area (Tordoff 2002). Vu Quang National Park lies in the Annamese Lowlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA) (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998). However, the site only supports three restricted-range species, Crested Argus *Rheinardia ocellata*, Short-tailed Scimitar Babbler *Jabouilleia danjoui* and Grey-faced Tit Babbler *Macronous kelleyi*, none of which are restricted to the EBA. In addition, results of a complementarity analysis with 13 other protected areas in the Annamese Lowlands EBA reveal that Vu Quang National Park

does not fall within the critical sub-set of sites necessary to conserve maximum avifaunal diversity, and should not, therefore, be considered to be of the highest regional importance for bird conservation (Eames *et al.* 2001).

## Conservation issues

According to the draft management plan prepared by Eve (2000), a variety of human activities threaten the biodiversity of Vu Quang National Park. Clearance of forest for agriculture and the development of human settlements are destroying natural habitats and fragmenting forest cover at the national park. Concomitant with human encroachment is the increase of a number of other prime threats such as hunting, grazing of livestock and logging.

Hunting, often to supply the illegal wildlife trade, is the greatest direct threat to the fauna of the national park. Hunting at Vu Quang is intensive and nearly every species of mammal and bird is potential prey for hunters. Illegal timber extraction takes place throughout the national park and logging trails can be found everywhere. The national park meets the fuelwood requirements of about 6,000 households in eight neighbouring communes. The quantity of firewood removed from the national park each year is equivalent to the clear-felling of about 428 ha of forest. Cattle can be found throughout the national park at all times of year, and are left to graze freely at all times. Bamboo and rattan are exploited from forest areas close to human habitation. Finally, the extraction of fragrant oil from *Cinnamomum parthenoxylon* and other tree species is an extremely destructive process (Eve 2000).

A major threat to biodiversity is the recent development of National Highway 2, which bisects the buffer zone of Vu Quang National Park. Besides fragmenting natural habitats and facilitating access to the forest, the construction of this road may facilitate human settlement close to the core areas of the national park, placing increased pressure on natural resources.

At the landscape level, Vu Quang National Park is an important link in the northern Annamites, between Pu Mat National Park to the north and Nui Giang Man proposed nature reserve to the south. Vu Quang, together with Nakai-Nam Theun National Protected

Area in Laos, protects the central section of what is the largest remaining block of contiguous natural habitat in northern Indochina.

## Other documented values

Vu Quang has historical values because the revolutionary Phan Dinh Phung, who led a resistance movement against the French colonial regime, established a base there between 1885 and his death in 1896 (Eve 2000).

According to the draft management plan prepared by Eve (2000), the national park has three main non-biodiversity values for local communities: catchment protection, non-timber forest products (particularly medicinal plants) and fishing.

## Related projects

Between June 1995 and June 2000, the *WWF Indochina Programme-Vu Quang Conservation Project* was implemented with funding from the Royal Netherlands Embassy. Project activities during the first three years included guard-station construction, road upgrading and other infrastructure development, and socio-economic and biological research. Project activities during the final two years included field surveys and community development activities, including irrigation, infrastructure development, planting of fruit trees, apiculture, community forestry and community farming. By the end of the project, over 2,000 households had been involved in project activities (Eve 2000).

## 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 eligible for VCF support because it meets criteria A, B and C.

Criterion	Eligibility
A <sub>I</sub>	NA4 - Northern Annamites
A <sub>II</sub>	VN022 Vu Quang
B <sub>I</sub>	Decision No. 102/TTg, dated 30/07/02
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	

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