



ANNUAL REVIEW 2017

VIET NAM COUNTRY OFFICE



INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE

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Preface

I am delighted to have the opportunity to write this preface to the 2017 annual report of IUCN's Vietnam Country Program. 2017 was another excellent year in terms of impacts at both the field and policy levels, notably IUCN's contribution to the Mekong Delta Conference in Can Tho in September 2017 and the Prime Minister's Resolution 120 that sets a new direction for land and water management in the Mekong Delta.

2017 also saw the start of a major collaboration with the Stimson Center, a Washington, DC-based think tank, on energy futures in the Mekong and how new power generation technologies combined with increased energy efficiency and regional power trade could allow countries to achieve energy security at much lower impact on fisheries, food security, and biodiversity.

IUCN's program in Vietnam remains focused on relatively few areas of work where we feel we can be most effective. A new area of work is forest landscape restoration and the need to transition Vietnam's forestry sector from an exclusive focus on forest area to a greater consideration of forest quality. In 2017, we started work on forest landscape restoration assessment in Quang Tri Province, which you'll be able to read about in the 2018 annual report.

Jake Brunner
Head, IUCN Indo-Burma Group

IUCN Viet Nam in numbers

www.iucn.org/vietnam

1993

MoU signed between IUCN and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Viet Nam
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment was assigned as focal point of MoU
IUCN Country Office was opened in Ha Noi, Viet Nam

2011

IUCN Coordination Office was set up in Ho Chi Minh, Viet Nam

1980s

IUCN started working in Viet Nam

2018

IUCN 70 years
IUCN Viet Nam 25 years



5

Thematic programmes in Viet Nam

- Marine and coastal conservation
- Water and wetlands management
- Forest conservation
- Biodiversity conservation
- Business and biodiversity

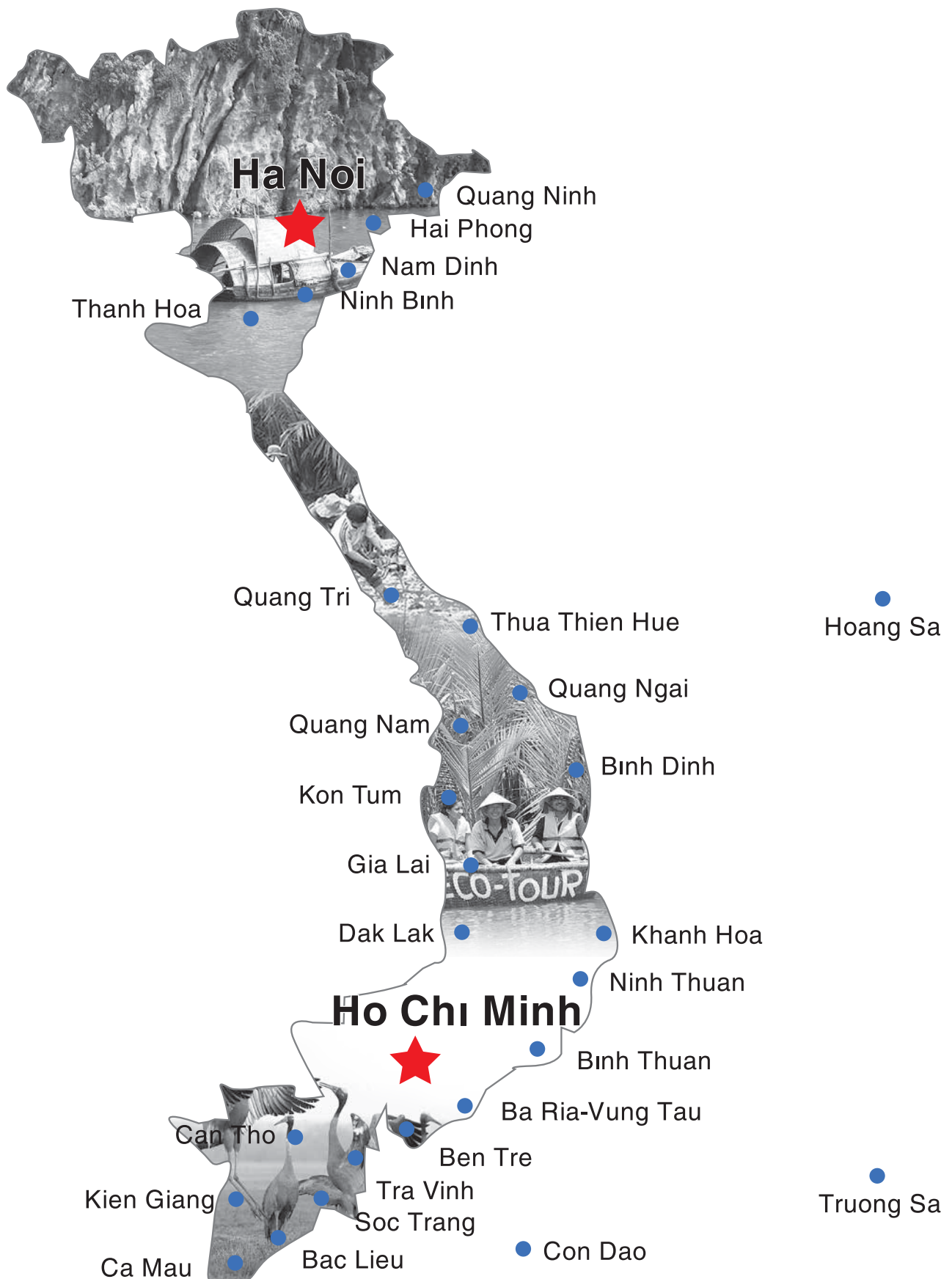
17

Staff number in IUCN Viet Nam

7

IUCN members number in Viet Nam

Project locations





Membership

IUCN Viet Nam has the total of seven members including one state member and six local NGOs/ research institutes:

1. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) – state member
2. Institute for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (VNU-CRES)
3. The Institute of Ecological Economy (ECO-ECO)
4. Centre for Marine Life Conservation and Community Development (MCD)
5. Centre for Environment and Community Research (CECR)
6. GreenViet Biodiversity Conservation Center (GreenViet)
7. Live & Learn Viet Nam (L&L)

In 2017, IUCN Viet Nam witnessed some changes in membership development. ACCD withdrew membership from IUCN as it no longer operated as a NGO status but changed the operation model to a voluntarily based organisation. Meanwhile, Live and Learn and GreenViet – two local NGOs – expressed their interest to join as IUCN members. Both GreenViet and Live & Learn were approved by IUCN Council to become IUCN members in July and September 2017 respectively.

During the year, IUCN Viet Nam Office organised three National Committee meetings. Two out of three were hold with the participation of Mr. Mangal Man Shakya - IUCN Asia Regional Councillor and Prof. Antonio – Chair of IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (IUCN WCEL).

The meetings with the Chair of IUCN WCEL were aimed to bring in more members for WCEL; to engage Viet Nam in the commission’s upcoming new projects; explore capacity building programs in Viet Nam; to inform on the on-going establishment of WCEL Special Groups on Forest; and to inform members on the recent launch of the “Global Judicial Institute for the Environment” in April 2016.

This initiative is the collaboration between IUCN, UNEP, the Organization of American States, the Asian Development Bank, the International Association of Judges, the Brazilian Association of Judges, the Supreme Court of the State of Rio de Janeiro and other key partners. Sixty countries have participated in the initiative, however Viet Nam has not yet joined.

During the visit of the IUCN Asia Regional Councilor, the Councilor visited MCD - a member’s office - and met with members there. The meeting focused on the need to further build capacity for members as most of the members are new and dynamic NGOs with many young staff. Thus, it is essential for IUCN to enhance their capacity through trainings, regional conferences or global congresses organized by IUCN such as MPA Congress, WCPA, etc not only WCC and RCF which are designed for members. Cost-sharing mechanism can be applied for joining these events. These are good chances for members to further engage in our work and show their privilege as IUCN members. Members should also be further facilitated to access funding schemes from IUCN such as CEPF, MFF and others.

A scenic view of a limestone karst coastline. The upper portion of the image shows a steep, grey limestone cliff face with patches of green vegetation. Below the cliff, a body of water transitions from a brownish-yellow hue near the shore to a clear, vibrant turquoise color. In the foreground, two traditional wooden boats are visible. The larger boat on the right has a distinctive thatched roof structure. The smaller boat on the left is a simple wooden hull. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

Highlights

Marine and Coastal Conservation

Ha Long – Cat Ba Alliance

As a long-term goal of the Ha Long-Cat Ba Alliance (HLCBA), the ***proposed re-nomination of Ha Long Bay WHS to include the Cat Ba Archipelago*** and add criterion (x) on biodiversity was added to the national World Heritage Site (WHS) Tentative List: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6177/>.

Under business engagement scheme, during January, IUCN collaborated with Bhaya Group, Coca-Cola, and the Ha Long City People's Committee to organise a clean-up of four beaches inside the Ha Long Bay WHS; the same beaches that we cleaned up in June 2016. The clean-up, which involved 100 volunteers as well as U.S. Ambassador Ted Osius, attracted substantial media coverage. Prior to the clean up, we assumed that the trash that had been cleared in June 2016 was the remaining trash. This turned out not to be the case. Upon our arrival we were once again greeted with trash covering the beaches, with a large concentration of expanded polystyrene. The ***IUCN is working with two provincial governments to replace the use of expanded polystyrene with substitutes which don't break up.***

The third beach clean-up in HLB was organised in August with 110 volunteers. More than two tons of trash was collected in less than two hours, mostly expanded polystyrene and plastic bottles. Compared with the previous clean-ups, more hazardous waste was collected including hypodermic needles, lighters, and chemical bottles. On August 30, we organised Greenovation Challenge competition funded by Coca-Cola and coordinated by the Foreign Trade University to promote innovative ideas to address plastic waste. Six teams of students from Hanoi and Quang Ninh presented their ideas. These ranged from behavioral change such as using glass rather than plastic bottles to technical solutions such as bio-plastics and trash bins in the ocean. Local people were engaged through games on trash lifespan and the redeeming of old plastic bottles for free drinks.



In additions, ***IUCN also worked with guides and tour operators to conduct a second training on biodiversity.*** The training took place in Cat Ba and was led by Dr. Jaap Vermeulen, a biodiversity and geomorphology specialist. This training focused on the karst processes that formed Ha Long Bay – Cat Ba Archipelago (HLB-CBA) and the adaptation and endemism of species associated with different stages of sea lake formation. ***The trainees can now explain how stalagmites and stalactites are formed rather than saying they are the ‘stuff of legends’.***

The leadership committee meeting is one of the important milestones of the project. In May, IUCN organised the fifth HLCBA Leadership Committee meeting in Hai Phong. The meeting attracted considerable media coverage and unleashed a wave of media questioning, much of it critical, of proposed large-scale tourism development in Cat Ba, which is home to the endemic CR Cat Ba langur with a total global population of 56. The timing is particularly sensitive because two international consultants arriving in Vietnam in early June to assist Hai Phong prepare the dossier to expand Ha Long Bay WHS to include the Cat Ba Archipelago. ***IUCN’s position as reported in the media is that tourism development is welcome provided it doesn’t threaten the global conservation values of the expanded WHS.***

On IUCN’s recommendation, in June, two biodiversity specialists Paul Williams from New Zealand and Jaap Vermeulen from the Netherlands visited Cat Ba to support the re-nomination of Ha Long Bay WHS to include Cat Ba Archipelago, which is a major objective of the HLCBA. IUCN assigned staff to join the group. Their visit was funded by the Hai Phong government, which is leading the re-nomination process. The consultants concluded that ***CBA and HLB exhibit every possible stage of marine inundation of karst depressions, from hanging karst depressions with primary monsoon forests, to sea lakes gradually merging into the open sea. Nowhere else in the world is this process so well illustrated in all its variations*** and with such a wide range of associated micro-ecosystems. It has been hypothesized that as sea level has risen and fallen, species have become isolated in these depressions and either disappeared or evolved into new species. ***The amount of solid waste across CBA, however, reflects a serious management failure.***

In August, IUCN organised a scientific workshop on “Values and Conservation of biodiversity in Ha Long Bay – Cat Ba Archipelago” in Hai Phong. Dr. Jaap Vermeulen, one of three international experts who visited Cat Ba in June to assist preparation of the HLB-CBA WHS re-nomination dossier, gave a fascinating presentation on the OUVs under criteria viii and ix, and to a lesser extent x, linked to the large number and diversity of sea lakes. He proposed a WHS boundary based on the distribution of the potential Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs), which may overlap with the proposed cable car. In consultation with IUCN headquarter, ***IUCN Viet Nam office wrote to the city government explaining that any tourism development must take into account these boundaries and any impacts on OUVs.***

<https://www.iucn.org/asia/countries/viet-nam/ha-long-cat-ba-alliance>

Mangroves for the Future:

IUCN organised a visit to Cu Lao Cham MPA in April by Darren Cameron, Manager of Sustainable Fishing, Reef Recovery, Biodiversity Conservation, and Sustainable Use at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority **to discuss expansion of the strictly protected area from 0.5% to 10% of the Marine Protected Areas (MPA)**. Through a series of workshops and site visits, the team gained a clear idea of the challenges and opportunities. Tourism has taken off with 3,000-5,000 visitors a day, who brought in \$1.5 million in entrance fees in 2016. Half goes to the Hoi An People's Committee (which has authority over the MPA) and half to the MPA, of which 2% (\$30,000) is invested into local communities. Therefore, there is ample cash flow. But the state of the MPA continues to deteriorate. The key cause is fishing by outsiders over which the MPA has no control; they can inform the local government but can't take action. Local fishers, who see outsiders fish with impunity, are reluctant to expand the strictly protected area. The core issue is not awareness or money but social justice. In one village, Bai Huong, there is successful local participation in protection of a Locally Managed Marine Area established through an MFF Medium Grant Facility, which we can build on. But this too is threatened by large-scale tourist development as families sell up and move out. ***IUCN will support an 18-month workplan to re-zone the MPA including engaging the coast guard and other key stakeholders to prevent illegal fishing.***



As part of Mangroves for the Future, IUCN organised a workshop in Da Nang to discuss the state of MPAs in the country with the participation of MARD Vice-Minister Vu Van Tam and officials from 10 out of 16 MPAs. Major challenges remain in improving management effectiveness of MPAs. Only 12 have any staff at all. Although the 2010 prime ministerial decision establishing a national MP system explicitly cited their role in fisheries recovery, they have been viewed almost exclusively as sources of tourism income. Where fishing free zones have been established, they are typically tiny. In Cu Lao Cham, where the fishing free zone covers 0.5% of the MPA, local fishers are unwilling to cooperate on expanding this zone unless trawlers and night-dive fishers are stopped entering the MPA illegally. Many barriers to better management were discussed, such as inconsistent laws, lack of information, insufficient staff and equipment, etc. But in a highly decentralized country, the real issue seems to be the lack of local political support; it was suggested that effective MPA management be included in the TOR of provincial leaders. ***One interesting model is Ly Son, Vietnam's newest MPA, part of which is managed by Doan Anh Duong, a social enterprise. The firm has already invested over \$1M and is actively working with local fishers to reduce coral blast fishing.***

www.mangrovesforthefuture.org





Water and Wetlands Management



Integrated Planning for Climate Change and Biodiversity

Within the framework of Integrated Planning for Climate Change and Biodiversity (IP), in January, IUCN met the Dong Thap Provincial People's Committee to **the discuss an ambitious initiative to restore 700,000 hectares of the Plain of Reeds (POR), a huge wetland that used to operate as a sponge moderating the Mekong's highly seasonal flow, a capacity that's been lost having been heavily engineered for intensive rice farming.** As part of a new approach to inter-provincial cooperation, Dong Thap is leading this initiative on behalf of Long An and Tien Giang Provinces. Its transformative nature, together with the substantial biodiversity and disaster risk reduction benefits, may make it suitable for GCF financing. **The concept has received strong support from other development partners and we will meet the Green Climate Fund National Designated Authority (GCF NDA) to discuss further.**

IUCN also cooperated with the MONRE and the Dutch Embassy to organize a field trip and workshop to develop a water retention strategy for the Mekong Delta. This interest in water retention through smarter land and water use, as opposed to investment in large-scale drainage channels, to address flood risk reflects growing understanding within government of the attractive cost-benefit of nature-based solutions.

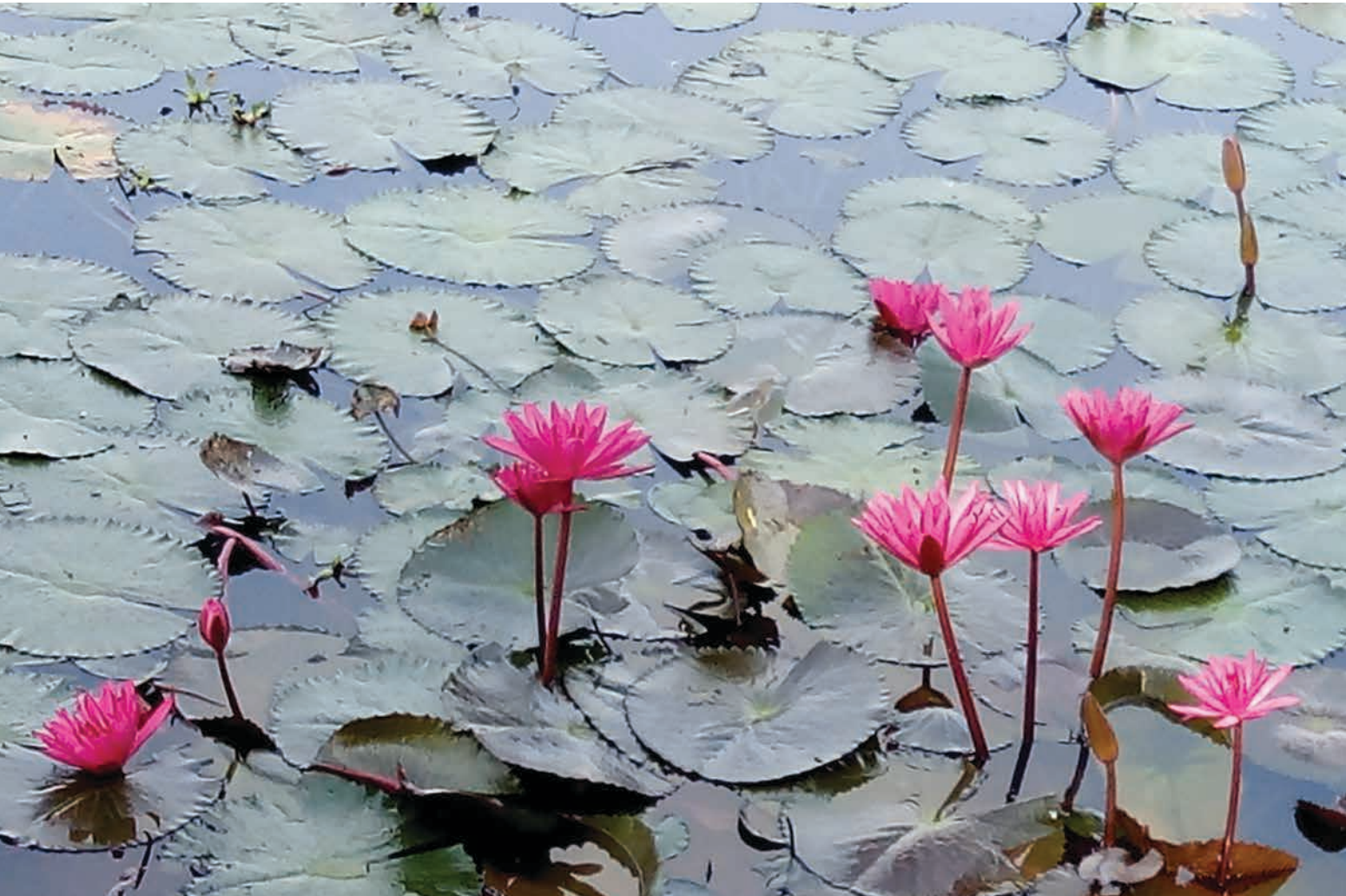
During February, IUCN staff with IP project advisors met An Giang and Kien Giang government officials to discuss IUCN assistance with a high-level visioning workshop for the Long Xuyen Quadrangle (LXA) within the framework of the PM's Decision 593 on regional planning and inter-provincial cooperation. This followed a successful visioning workshop that we facilitated for the 700,000-hectare Plain of Reeds, covering Dong Thap, Long An, and Tien Giang Provinces, in October 2016. The LXQ visioning workshop is scheduled for late April. As with the POR, **this workshop is an opportunity for the provinces of An Giang, Kien Giang, Can Tho, and Hau Giang to set a vision to transform over 500,000 hectares from intensive rice to flood-based crops, thereby increasing the delta's resilience to extreme floods while increasing farmer incomes.**

IUCN made an important speech during **the third Mekong Delta Forum in September in Can Tho, which was chaired by the Prime Minister.** There was a huge turn-out of senior government officials, political leaders, mass organizations, and businesses. The PM's speech made clear the need to live with and adapt to, rather than try to fight, floods and droughts; that brackish water is a resource not a threat; and that ministries should re-evaluate the efficacy of sea dikes. **IUCN's development partner statement, which argued that the greatest challenge facing the delta is the lack of a clear and coherent government strategy, was well received by Ministers and Prime Minister.**



IUCN representative attended the annual IP planning meeting in Bogota/Cartagena, Columbia with staff from ELC, IUCN ROSA, and GPAP. Planning for the fourth and final year of the project was discussed with a focus on delivering an on-line training course for land use planners and protected area managers based on the project results. The team presented their country experiences to the project's Columbian partners and participated in a meeting of the multi-stakeholder Colombian Land Use Planning Commission.

<https://www.iucn.org/theme/environmental-law/our-work/land-use/integrated-planning-climate-change-and-biodiversity>



Development and implementation of a communication and information dissemination strategy for the principles and recommendations in the Mekong Delta Plan (MPD Communications Strategy)

MDP Communications Strategy project held a kick-off workshop in November at Can Tho University for 13 provinces in the Mekong Delta. With Dutch government funding, IUCN and other project partners have developed a communications strategy based on the recommendations of the 2013 Mekong Delta Plan, and a training curriculum on the urgent need to respond to climate change with nature-based solutions such as flood-based agriculture and mangrove polyculture.

Building River Dialogue and Governance (BRIDGE)

As part of BRIDGE in February, IUCN, Stimson, and the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam organised a workshop in Hanoi. Opened by the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and the U.S. Ambassador, this was the first of a series of workshops to build government understanding and support of a strategy of reorienting Vietnam's energy development plans to include the option of substantially increasing imports of hydropower from Lao PDR (from a very low base and while demand from Thailand, by far its largest export market, flatlines) in exchange for a veto on dams that threaten the productivity of the Mekong Delta. ***Feedback from the workshop indicates that we have not yet convinced the government that Vietnam can leverage its market demand power (monopsony) to influence hydropower planning in Lao PDR.***

In June, with the support from the US Embassy in Hanoi, IUCN team and staff from Stimson Center, TNC, and University of California at Berkeley organised a series of half-day workshops at MARD, MONRE, MOIT, MPI, MOFA, and the National Assembly ***to present a strategy to influence hydropower development in Lao PDR that is based on Vietnam substantially increasing its imports of Lao hydropower in order to give it market power that would allow it to veto construction of dams that threaten the economically vital Mekong Delta.*** Agreements for some the most threatening dams are actually with Vietnamese firms. This approach, which was broadly accepted by all the government agencies we met, builds on Stimson's research showing the declining economic viability of many hydropower projects in Lao PDR as a result of changes in regional power supply and demand and the collapse in the price of renewables. Given its game changing potential, ***IUCN has been asked to send a letter to the Prime Minister outlining the strategy, which complements the traditional BRIDGE focus on international water law.***

During November, IUCN staff joined SDC Vice-Director Ambassador Pio Wennubst and Eileen Hofstetter, who manages BRIDGE, in Hanoi for meetings with the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam and the Vietnam National Mekong Committee to discuss BRIDGE support. The team then visited a SDC/Nestle project on sustainable coffee intensification in the Central Highlands, which provides training to farmers about how to reduce water use by two-thirds, thereby improving coffee quality and reducing dry season water shortages as a result of falling water tables. As Vietnam is the world's second largest coffee producer, it is a key source country for Nestle during times of steadily growing demand.

Also with BRIDGE co-funding, IUCN and Stimson organised a regional energy security workshop in December hosted by the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam in Hanoi. The workshop brought together participants from Cambodia, Lao, and Vietnam, TNC and UC Berkeley, and businesses keen to invest in non-hydro renewables and transmission in the region. Simply put, arguments for cooperative transboundary river management on the basis of international law and cost-benefit analyses haven't influenced hydropower development. But energy security arguments that show that all ***three countries can benefit from the dramatic reduction in price of solar and wind and efficiency gains from regional power trade*** (the Chinese government and Convalt, a US energy firm, have submitted competing bids to build a Lao national grid) could dramatically reduce the number of dams that need to be built to meet regional energy demand.

<https://www.iucn.org/theme/water/our-work/current-projects/bridge>



Nexus Trade-offs in the 3S River Basins

IUCN organised the launch workshop and first technical advisory group meeting of the 3S nexus assessment in Hanoi in Mar, together with project partners ICEM and IWMI. A key result was recognition of the importance, with the completion of the Lower Sesan 2 dam, of the Xe Kong, which is now the last major free-flowing tributary of the Mekong. ***Now that the Sre Pok and Se San have been blocked, there are reports of increased passage of migratory fish through the Xe Kong, which therefore becomes of critical importance to regional fisheries and food security.*** IUCN, ICEM and IMWI met the MRC CEO in Vientiane to discuss how best to cooperate.

On March 20, IUCN team met Greg Thomas, Executive Director of the Natural Heritage Institute, in Vientiane. Greg is advising the Lao government on hydropower options in the Xe Kong. ***Five dams are planned on the river; the lowest one is owned by the Vietnamese company Hoang Anh-Gia Lai and would cut the river in two. Of key relevance to Vietnam is the fact that the Xe Kong supplies about 20% of the sediment/nutrient to the Mekong Delta.***

<https://www.iucn.org/asia/countries/lao-pdr/nexus-trade-offs-3s-river-basins>



Green List

Under Green List (GL) project, IUCN organised a roundtable with potential National Expert Assessment Group for Green List (EAGL) members, and visited Van Long Wetland Nature Reserve and Ha Long Bay, two candidates of Green List sites.

In May, IUCN worked with MARD officials and Cat Tien National Park to introduce the IUCN GL Programme to park managers. Cat Tien will be the second GL site in Vietnam after Van Long Nature Reserve, stronghold of the CR Delacour's langur.

IUCN team also joined the Global Protected Area Programme (GPAP) team at a GL workshop and 4 International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC4) in Chile. At IMPAC4, a proposal on MPA management effectiveness with a case study in Cu Lao Cham with the Waitt Foundation was proposed. This could help Cu Lao Cham, Vietnam's best managed MPA, achieve GL status.

<https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/our-work/iucn-green-list-protected-and-conserved-areas>





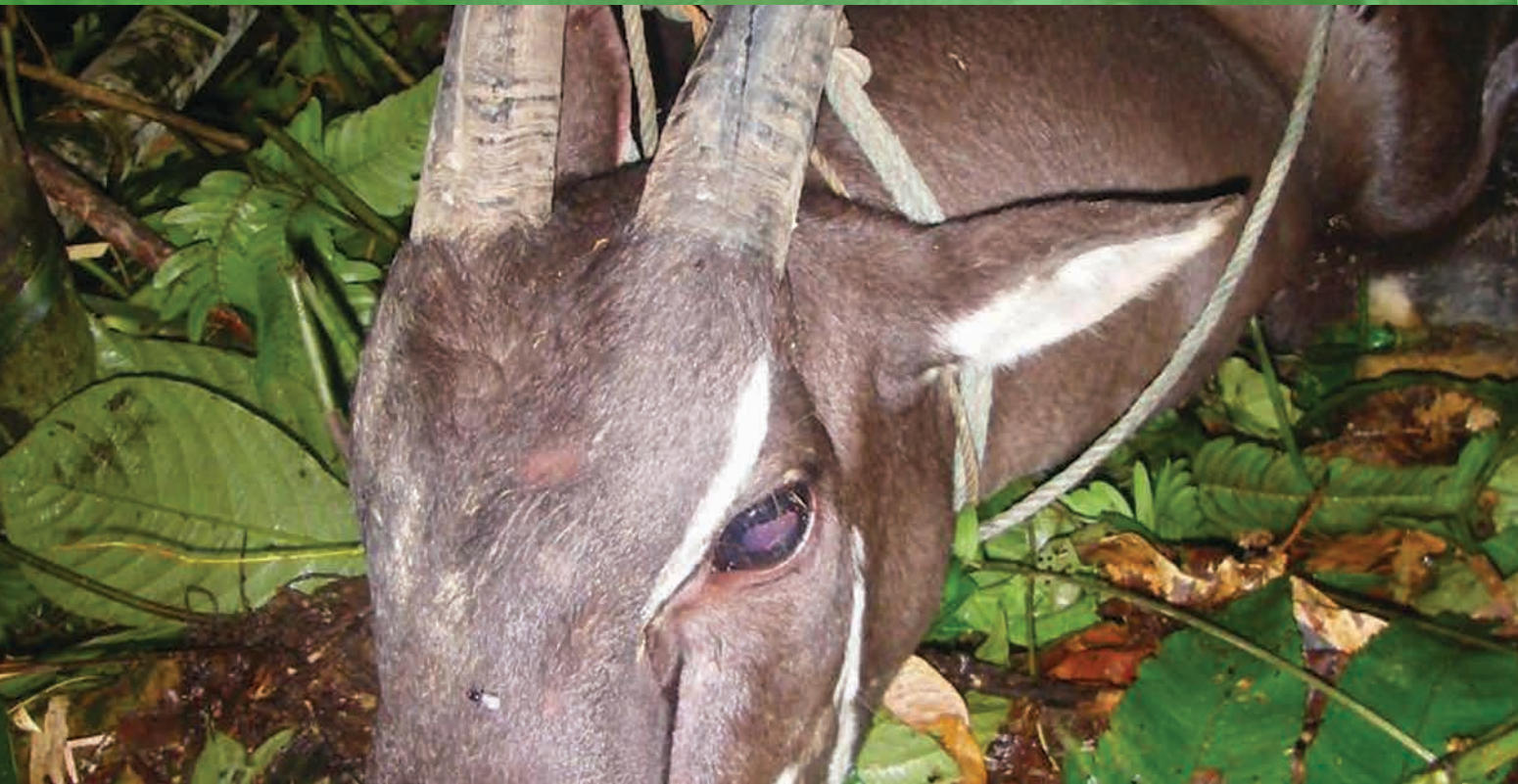
Forest Conservation



Sao La Working Group

In February, IUCN attended a meeting with the Saola Working Group (which is part of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC), Asian Wild Cattle Specialist Group) in Hue *to discuss the establishment of a Saola and Endangered Ungulates Captive Breeding Centre in Bach Ma National Park*. In March, IUCN and Sao La Working Group Coordinator Bill Robichaud met MARD to discuss the center, which will be a joint initiative of MARD and IUCN SSC. The next step is to finalize the MOU between MARD and IUCN.

<https://www.savethesaola.org/>



Forest Landscape Restoration

IUCN team and consultants worked on the ROAM assessment for Quang Tri. The team developed a series of maps that identify Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) priorities based on slope, location upstream of reservoirs, forest degradation, and expansion of protected areas. ***IUCN is developing a standardized technical approach for three on-going ROAM assessments in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar.***

The ROAM assessment for Quang Tri included a visit to Quang Tri on May 15-18 to meet the provincial government, forestry research center, and local farmers to discuss FLR options. The greatest challenge is the massive expansion of 4-year cycle acacia (for wood chip), often intercropped with cassava on steep slopes. These cause soil erosion, have no biodiversity value, and the acacia monocultures are increasingly vulnerable to disease. Even though native species bring higher profit over a 20-year cycle, the short-term cash that acacia generates makes it very attractive to poor farmers.

<https://www.iucn.org/theme/forests/our-work/forest-landscape-restoration/restoration-opportunities-assessment-methodology-roam>



Policy advocacy

In June, IUCN Director General sent the Prime Minister a letter about poorly planned and environmentally destructive tourism development in Son Tra, stronghold of the EN Red-shanked duoc langur, near Da Nang in central Vietnam. In September, the party leaders of Da Nang were fired and in November the Prime Minister ordered an audit of all investment projects in Son Tra, which is now underway. CEPF grantee and an IUCN member - GreenViet - played a major role in putting public pressure on the government to take action.

Photo credit

Cover page: Fishing boats in Ly Son MPA, Quang Ngai Province, Viet Nam © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 7: Mr. Jake Brunner, Head of IUCN Indo Burma Group met Founder of GreenViet Biodiversity Conservation Center – an IUCN member - at IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawaii © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 9: Fishing boats in Ha Long Bay, Quang Ninh Province, Viet Nam © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 10: Volunteers joined IUCN coastal cleanup in Vung Ha islet, Ha Long Bay, Viet Nam © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 12: IUCN staff visited the MFF Small Grant Facility project site in Tra Vinh Province, Viet Nam © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 13: Picturesque landscape in Small island, Binh An Commune, Ly Son MPA, Viet Nam © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 14: IUCN Viet Nam staff joined farmers and experts to construct the first piloted floating vegetable garden in An Giang Province © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 15: H.E Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc (middle) chaired the 3rd Mekong Delta Forum in Can Tho, Viet Nam © GVP Quang Hieu

Page 16: Water lily in Tram Chim National Park © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 17: Hydropower plant in Song Tranh II, Quang Nam Province © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 18: Sekong river © IUCN ARO

Page 19: Trang An Scenic Landscape Complex, Ninh Binh Province, Viet Nam © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 20: Deforestation in Quang Tri Province, Viet Nam © IUCN Viet Nam

Page 22: Critically Endangered Sao La © Bolikhamxay/Provincial Conservation Unit

Page 23: Red-shanked douc langur in Son Tra, Da Nang city, Viet Nam © IUCN Viet Nam

Back cover: Volunteers are trying to pull out a huge pile of waste during an IUCN coastal cleanup in Ha Long Bay, Quang Ninh © IUCN Viet Nam



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