

# Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban Proposed Nature Reserve

## Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban Proposed Nature Reserve

### Alternative site name(s)

Van Ban

### Province(s)

Lao Cai

### Area

31,189 ha

### Coordinates

22°05'N, 104°05'E

### Agro-ecological zone

North-eastern

### 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

Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban is not listed on any government decision regarding the Special-use Forests system, nor is it included on a list of Special-use Forests to be established by the year 2010, prepared by the FPD of MARD (FPD 2003). However, Lao Cai Provincial FPD, with support from the WWF *Strengthening Protected Areas Management in Vietnam Project*, have proposed the establishment of a nature reserve at the site (SPAM 2002). This proposal has been incorporated into the approved provincial management strategy for Special-use Forests (Lao Cai PPC 2003).

According to Lao Cai Provincial FPD (*in litt.* 2003), Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban proposed nature reserve covers 31,189 ha in Nam Xay, Nam Xe and Minh Luong communes, Van Ban district. In addition, a 31,128 ha buffer zone is proposed in Tham Duong, Duong Quy, Dan Thang and Nam Chay communes. To date, however, a management board has not been established, and the site remains under the management of Van Ban District FPD.

## Topography and hydrology

Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban proposed nature reserve is situated in the Hoang Lien mountains, 40 km south-east of Mount Fansipan, the highest mountain in Vietnam. The proposed nature reserve is mountainous,

with many peaks over 2,000 m. The highest point (2,875 m) is in the north of the proposed nature reserve, on the border with Hoang Lien National Park. The district is bisected by a river valley, which runs from south-west to north-east. Elevations along this valley are less than 200 m.

## Biodiversity values

Remote sensing data reveal that Van Ban district supports the largest area of natural forest in the Hoang Lien mountains of Vietnam. In addition, Van Ban district is one of the few parts of the Hoang Lien mountains to support significant areas of hill evergreen forest, a vegetation type that has been almost entirely lost from Hoang Lien National Park (Tordoff *et al.* 1999), and is scarce in other parts of the Hoang Lien mountains and elsewhere in northern Vietnam.

Hill evergreen forest is distributed at elevations between 600 and 1,400 m. While this habitat has been degraded by selective timber extraction, the forest canopy is still closed in most areas. Elevations between 1,400 and c.2,200 m support lower montane evergreen forest. Upper montane evergreen forest is distributed at elevations between c.2,200 and at least 2,650 m. Lower montane evergreen forest is characterised by the presence of the globally near-threatened conifer *Fokienia hodginsii*. In addition, anthropogenic habitats, including grassland, scrub and agricultural land, are present at various elevations (Averyanov *et al.* 2002a).

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Between 2000 and 2002, a series of field surveys were conducted by the Fauna & Flora International (FFI) Vietnam Programme, BirdLife International and other organisations, during which a number of globally threatened mammal species were recorded in and around the proposed nature reserve, most notably Black-cheeked Crested Gibbon *Hylobates concolor* and Owston's Civet *Chrotogale owstoni* (S. Swan verbally 2002). The site was also found to be important for bird conservation, as it supports a number of species of conservation concern, including the globally vulnerable Beautiful Nuthatch *Sitta formosa* (Tordoff *et al.* 2002). Consequently, the site qualifies as an Important Bird Area (Tordoff 2002). Furthermore, the site supports Vietnamese Salamander *Paramesotriton deloustali*, a globally vulnerable amphibian species, currently known only from northern Vietnam (Tordoff *et al.* 2002). Finally, a number of globally threatened plant species have been recorded at the site, including the globally vulnerable conifer *Taiwania cryptomerioides*, which is known from no other site in Vietnam (Farjon 2002, Nguyen Tien Hiep *et al.* 2002).

## Conservation issues

A total of 1,275 people live inside the proposed nature reserve, and a further 9,533 people live in the buffer zone (Lao Cai Provincial FPD *in litt.* 2003). Many of the inhabitants of Van Ban district practice wet rice cultivation in valley bottoms; however some households still practice shifting cultivation on hill slopes. Local people engage in a number of activities with negative impacts on biodiversity, including hunting and selective extraction of high value timber species, particularly *Fokienia hodginsii*.

One human activity with potentially significant impacts on biodiversity in Van Ban district is cardamom cultivation. Although some canopy trees are retained in cardamom plots, canopy cover can be reduced by up to 80%, through indiscriminate removal of trees, and current methods of drying cardamom pods require more firewood than can be generated within the plots. Indirect impacts include hunting and exploitation of non-timber forest products by farmers staying in the forest for extended periods during the planting and harvesting seasons.

Van Ban district is bisected by a river valley, along which runs provincial road 279. Forest has already been cleared along this road for cultivation and human settlement, isolating forest areas in the north of the district from those in the south.

Some of the most extensive areas of relatively undisturbed evergreen forest, particularly hill evergreen forest, are located in the south-east of Van Ban district, outside of the proposed nature reserve. These areas support important populations of a number of species of global conservation concern, including Black-cheeked Crested Gibbon, Vietnamese Salamander and *T. cryptomerioides*, and should be placed under appropriate conservation management, through either Special-use Forest designation or local stakeholder-based approaches. It is of particular concern that some of these forest areas are designated as production forest, and have quotas for the extraction of high value timber species, including *F. hodginsii*.

## Other documented values

Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban proposed nature reserve protects part of the catchment of the Red River.

## Related projects

Between 2001 and 2003, the FFI Vietnam Programme has implemented a conservation project in Van Ban district, with funding from the Darwin Initiative of the UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

In 2003, the FFI Vietnam Programme, in collaboration with Lao Cai and Yen Bai Provincial FPDs, Lao Cai Provincial DARD and Hoang Lien National Park began implementation of a European Commission-funded project to promote conservation in the Hoang Lien mountains. A number of project activities will be implemented in Van Ban district, including community-based natural resources management and further protected area development.

## Conservation needs assessment

A conservation needs assessment has not been conducted for the site.

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## 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>	NH1 - Hoang Lien Mountains
A <sub>II</sub>	VN058 - Van Ban
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	

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