

Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau Proposed Nature Reserve

Alternative site name(s)

None

Province(s)

Lai Chau

Status

Proposed

Management board established

No

Latitude

22°19'N

Longitude

103°43'E

Bio-unit

10b - Northern Indochina



Conservation status

Decision No. 194/CT of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, dated 9 August 1986, decreed the establishment of a 5,000 ha nature reserve called Nui Hoang Lien (see Hoang Lien Son-Sa Pa site card). According to this decision, however, the nature reserve was in the former Hoang Lien Son province (now Lao Cai and Yen Bai provinces) (MARD 1997). Consequently, the establishment of a nature reserve on the Lai Chau side of the Hoang Lien mountains has not been decreed by the government.

In October 2000, an investment plan was prepared by North-western Sub-FIPI, which proposed establishing a nature reserve in Ho Thau, Binh Lu and Ban Bo communes, Phong Tho district, Lai Chau province. The total area of the nature reserve given in the investment plan is 19,739 ha, comprising a strict protection area of 13,921 ha, a forest rehabilitation area of 4,554 ha and an administration and services area of 1,264 ha (Anon. 2000). To date, this investment plan has not been approved at the provincial or ministerial level. However, Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau is included on a proposed list of protected areas currently being prepared by FPD and FIPI as a 19,739 ha nature reserve (FPD and FIPI in prep.).

Topography and hydrology

Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau proposed nature reserve is situated on the south-western flank of the Hoang Lien mountains. The Hoang Lien mountains extend south from the Ailao Shan mountains in China, the south-easternmost extension of the Himalayan chain. The highest point in the proposed nature reserve is Mount Fansipan, which, at 3,143 m, is the highest mountain in Vietnam. Mount Fansipan is situated on the border between Lai Chau and Lao Cai provinces, and the north-eastern face of the mountain lies within Hoang Lien Son-Sa Pa Nature Reserve. To the south-west of Mount Fansipan, elevations drop sharply to under 800 m at the foot of the mountain. Further north-west along the ridge of the Hoang Lien mountains, there are a number of other peaks above 2,800 m.

The south of the proposed nature reserve is in the catchment of the Nam Mu river, while the north is in the catchment of the Nam Na river. Both of these rivers are part of the Black River watershed.

Biodiversity value

There is little specific information available about the biodiversity value of Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau proposed nature reserve. However, given that the proposed nature reserve is contiguous with and

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supports the same range of habitats as Hoang Lien Son-Sa Pa Nature Reserve, it can be assumed that the biodiversity values of the two sites are similar (see Hoang Lien Son-Sa Pa site card). Given the lower human population density and more inaccessible nature of the forest at Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau, it is possible that levels of human impact may be lower than at Hoang Lien Son-Sa Pa, and that certain mammal and bird species may occur at higher densities (A. Tordoff pers. comm.). However, detailed field surveys are required to accurately assess the biodiversity value of Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau.

Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau supports two main forest types: submontane dry evergreen forest and montane deciduous forest. Both these forest types are dominated by species in the Fagaceae, Magnoliaceae and Lauraceae families, including *Lithocarpus* spp., *Castanopsis* spp., *Michelia* spp. and *Manglietia* spp. Ridges at high elevations support a sub-alpine forest formation, characterised by trees with stunted growth forms, and the presence of *Rhododendron* spp. and several conifer species. At the highest elevations, there are stands of dwarf bamboo, cf. *Arundinaria*. The precise altitudinal ranges of each vegetation type are not currently known (A. Tordoff pers. comm.).

According to the investment plan, Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau proposed nature reserve supports 10,871 ha of natural forest, equivalent to 55% of the proposed nature reserve. Most of the remaining area of the proposed nature reserve supports scrub, grassland and agricultural land (Anon. 2000).

Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau proposed nature reserve is situated within the Fansipan and Northern Laos Secondary Endemic Bird Area (EBA) (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998), and probably supports populations of one or more of the four restricted-range bird species that occur in the secondary EBA. In addition, it is probable that the proposed nature reserve supports a large proportion of the vascular plant species that are endemic to the Hoang Lien mountains.

Conservation issues

According to the investment plan, a total of 2,651 people in 14 villages live inside the nature reserve, while a further 4,040 people in 16 villages live in the buffer zone. Most of these people belong to the Kinh,

Hmong, Thai, Giay and Dao ethnic groups. At 2.4% per year, the population growth rate in the proposed nature reserve and buffer zone is significantly higher than that of the country as a whole (Anon. 2000).

The threats to biodiversity at Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau proposed nature reserve include hunting, and over-exploitation of timber and non-timber forest products. However, the biggest threat is probably fire. Fires are frequent during the dry season, and are usually associated with the clearance of vegetation from hill agricultural land. Large areas of the proposed nature reserve have been cleared of forest as a result of fire, even at elevations above 2,000 m (A. Tordoff pers. comm.).

Other documented values

Hoang Lien Son-Lai Chau proposed nature reserve has an important role in protecting the water resources of local communities and the watershed of the Black River.

Related projects

No information.

Literature sources

Anon. (2000) [Investment plan for Hoang Lien Son Nature Reserve, Lai Chau province]. Hanoi: North-western Sub-FIPI. In Vietnamese.