

# Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban Proposed Nature Reserve

## Alternative site name(s)

Van Ban

## Province(s)

Lao Cai

## Status

Proposed

## Management board established

No

## Latitude

22°05'N

## Longitude

104°05'E

## Bio-unit

10b - Northern Indochina



## Conservation status

Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban proposed nature reserve is located in Van Ban district, Lao Cai province. The site is included on a proposed list of Special-use Forests currently being prepared by FPD and FIPI (FPD and FIPI in prep.). This list contains a proposal to establish a 30,000 ha nature reserve. However, baseline biodiversity and socio-economic surveys have not yet been carried out in the area and an investment plan has yet to be prepared. In fact, the most suitable location for the proposed nature reserve within Van Ban district has yet to be determined.

## 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. Van Ban district is mountainous, with many peaks over 2,000 m. The highest point (2,875 m) is in the north of the district, on the border with Sa Pa district. 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 value

Remote sensing data indicate that Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban proposed nature reserve supports the largest area of natural forest in the Hoang Lien mountains of Vietnam (Wege *et al.* 1999). Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban proposed nature reserve can be expected to support a similar range of habitat types to the adjacent Hoang Lien Son-Sa Pa Nature Reserve (Tordoff *et al.* 1999). Thus, the proposed nature reserve can be expected to support a wide gradient of habitat types from lowland evergreen forest to upper montane evergreen forest, including elfin forest formations at higher elevations. The globally threatened conifer *Fokienia hodginsii* occurs at the proposed nature reserve (N. Lormee pers. comm.).

During a field survey conducted in November 2000 by the Fauna and Flora International (FFI) Indochina Programme, Black Gibbon *Hylobates concolor* was observed in the forest in Van Ban district (B. Long pers. comm.). Hoang Lien Son-Van Ban proposed nature reserve is, therefore, one of the last places in Vietnam to support this species; and, given the area of available habitat, may support one of the largest populations in the country.

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## Conservation issues

According to data supplied by the district forest protection department (FPD), Van Ban district contains 73,680 ha of forest, of which 54,958 ha are managed by the district FPD as watershed protection forest. Although the population density in Van Ban district is very low, the district FPD, with a staff of only 15, is unable to effectively enforce forest protection legislation. Consequently, local people engage in activities such as extraction of timber, particular *Fokienia hodginsii*, and hunting of mammals and birds, including Black Gibbon (N. Lormee pers. comm.).

Most of the inhabitants of Van Ban district belong to the Dao and Thai ethnic groups and practice wet rice cultivation in valley bottoms (N. Lormee pers. comm.); shifting cultivation is not practiced as widely as in some other parts of northern Vietnam.

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 (N. Lormee pers. comm.). If this process continues, it threatens to isolate forest areas in the north of the district from those in the south.

Nam Xe commune, which contains 12,000 ha of forest and has a human population of only 600, may be suitable to form the centre of any nature reserve established in the area (N. Lormee pers. comm.). This area is contiguous with Hoang Lien Son-Sa Pa Nature Reserve to the north.

## Other documented values

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

## Related projects

In November 2000, the FFI Indochina Programme conducted surveys for Black Gibbon in Van Ban district, with a view to implementing a community-based conservation project. This project is expected to include such elements as environmental awareness, monitoring of forest cover and gibbon populations, signing of local-level decrees to protect gibbons, management of medicinal plant exploitation, and protected area establishment (B. Long pers. comm.).

## Literature sources

Tordoff, A., Swan, S., Grindley, M. and Siurua, H. (1999) Hoang Lien Nature Reserve: biodiversity survey and conservation evaluation 1997/8. London: Society for Environmental Exploration.