

# Kien Luong Proposed Nature Reserve

## Alternative site name(s)

Ba Hon area

## Province(s)

Kien Giang

## Status

Proposed

## Management board established

No

## Latitude

10°09' - 10°17'N

## Longitude

104°34' - 104°42'E

## Bio-unit

05a - Mekong Delta



## Conservation status

Kien Luong is a 7,624 ha area situated in Kien Luong district. The site was proposed as a nature reserve by BirdLife and IEBR, following their project to identify key sites for wetland conservation in the Mekong Delta (Buckton *et al.* 1999). Kien Luong has been included on a proposed list of protected areas currently being prepared by FPD and FIPI (FPD and FIPI in prep.).

## Topography and hydrology

Kien Luong proposed nature reserve is situated in the south of the Ha Tien plain, a flat coastal plain, which is one of the last remaining extensive areas of seasonally inundated grassland in the Mekong Delta. The proposed nature reserve, which is bisected by a network of canals, has some brackish water characteristics. The soil at Kien Luong is predominantly acid-sulphate, which is susceptible to acidification if allowed to dry out, for instance as a result of increased drainage following canal formation. Measurements of pH at Kien Luong proposed nature reserve indicate that the area has already been affected by acidification, with readings as low as pH 3.4 (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

## Biodiversity value

Kien Luong proposed nature reserve supports mainly seasonally inundated grassland, although there is also a small area of *Melaleuca* plantation in the south-west of the site. At the fringes of the site, the natural habitat has been converted into agricultural land, principally wet rice. The grassland is dominated by *Eleocharis dulcis* and *E. ochrostachys*. Patches of other species, such as *E. retroflexa*, *Xyris indica*, *Scleria poaeformis*, *Melastoma affine*, *Scirpus grossus*, *Fimbristylis* sp., *Pseudoraphis brunoniana*, *Cyperus* spp. and *Lepironia articulata* are also found (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

Kien Luong is one of the most important sites for the conservation of large waterbirds in the Mekong Delta. The proposed nature reserve contains a significant area of suitable habitat for Eastern Sarus Crane *Grus antigone sharpii*, a flock of at least 135 of which was recorded at the site in 1999. The total global population of this subspecies is thought to be only 500 to 1,500 individuals, the majority of which spend the dry season at Tram Chim National Park, the only known regular dry season site for this subspecies in Vietnam. Kien Luong proposed nature reserve may, therefore, support a globally important population of this subspecies (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

Another indication of the conservation importance of this area came from two sightings of the globally endangered White-shouldered Ibis *Pseudibis davisoni*, in April and August 1999 (Buckton *et al.* 1999). The presence of a pair may indicate that a small breeding population exists in the vicinity. These sightings constitute two of only a handful of recent records anywhere of this species, which has drastically declined over its entire range. The only recent sightings in Vietnam have come from Cat Tien National Park in Dong Nai province (Eames and Tordoff in prep.).

Other large waterbirds recorded at the proposed nature reserve include Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* and Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* (Buckton *et al.* 1999). The latter species has declined throughout much of Asia (Lekagul and Round 1991, Thewlis *et al.* 1998).

## Conservation issues

The seasonally inundated grassland at Kien Luong proposed nature reserve is currently under severe threat of conversion to agriculture and forestry. Large areas of the site are already earmarked for resettlement and agricultural conversion. However, the acid-sulphate soils at the site mean that the area can only be converted into marginal agricultural land that is only capable of producing meagre crops of less than one tonne of rice per hectare per year (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

Kien Luong proposed nature reserve is also threatened by canal development. There exist plans to build a major flood control canal through site, leading to fragmentation of natural habitat, changes in flooding regimes and subsequent deterioration of soil fertility through acidification. The construction of this canal is also likely to have serious impacts on the globally threatened large waterbirds found at the site by increasing levels of disturbance (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

## Other documented values

Because of the presence of the charismatic Eastern Sarus Cranes, Kien Luong proposed nature reserve has the potential to be developed as a site for birdwatching and environmental education.

## Related projects

No information.

## Literature sources

Buckton, S. T., Nguyen Cu, Ha Quy Quynh and Nguyen Duc Tu (1999) [The conservation of key wetland sites in the Mekong Delta](#). Hanoi: BirdLife International Vietnam Programme.

Buckton, S. T., Nguyen Cu, Ha Quy Quynh and Nguyen Duc Tu (2000) [[The conservation of key wetland sites in the Mekong Delta](#)]. Hanoi: BirdLife International Vietnam Programme. In Vietnamese.

Eames, J. C. and Tordoff, A. W. (in prep.) Recent records and a conservation status review of some threatened and near-threatened bird species in Vietnam.

Lekagul, B. and Round, P. D. (1991) A guide to the birds of Thailand. Bangkok: Saha Karn Bhaet Co. Ltd.

Thewlis, R. M., Timmins, R. J., Evans, T. D. and Duckworth, J. W. (1998) The conservation status of birds in Laos: a review of key species. Bird Conservation International 8: 1-159.