

Phuong Hoang-Than Xa Proposed Cultural and Historical Site

Alternative site name(s)

(Hang) Phuong Hoang, Than Xa

Province(s)

Thai Nguyen

Status

Proposed

Management board established

Yes

Latitude

21°43' - 21°52'N

Longitude

105°53' - 106°10'E

Bio-unit

06a - Tropical South China



Conservation status

Very little information is available about this site and its status is not clear. According to Thai Nguyen Provincial FPD (2000), the site comprises two sectors: Phuong Hoang in the east and Than Xa about 10 km to the west. The Phuong Hoang sector is situated in Phu Thung commune, while the Than Xa sector is situated in Than Xa commune, both of which are in Vo Nhai district, Thai Nguyen province. The total area of the two sectors is given as 11,220 ha, although this includes a buffer zone of 2,375 ha (Thai Nguyen Provincial FPD 2000). Consequently, the total area of the Special-use Forest is 8,845 ha. The total area of the Phuong Hoang sector, including the buffer zone, is 3,867 ha, while the total area of the Than Xa sector, including the buffer zone, is 7,353 ha (Anon. 1996).

In 1991, Phuong Hoang was included on Decision No. 3211/QDVH-BVH of the Ministry of Culture and Information, under the name Hang Phuong Hoang (Phuong Hoang cave) and with an area of 6,000 ha. On the basis of this decision, Hang Phuong Hoang was included on the 2010 list as a 6,000 ha cultural and historical site (FPD 1998). No mention is made of the Than Xa sector in either the decision of the Ministry of Culture and Information or the 2010 list.

According to Thai Nguyen Provincial FPD (2000), the site includes both sectors and its management category is nature reserve not cultural and historical site. The management category of the site is, therefore, unclear. A management board was established on 7 December 1999 by Thai Nguyen Provincial People's Committee. Phuong Hoang-Than Xa is currently under the management of Thai Nguyen Provincial FPD (Thai Nguyen Provincial FPD 2000).

Topography and hydrology

Phuong Hoang-Than Xa is situated in an extensive limestone karst area distributed in Thai Nguyen and Lang Son provinces. The Than Xa sector is centred on Mount Coc Chem, the summit of which is 731 m in elevation. The highest point in the sector is, however, a 755 m peak, 3 km to the south of Mount Coc Chem. The lowest elevation at the site is about 50 m in the stream valley that forms the sector's western boundary. The Phuong Hoang sector is bisected by the valley of the Mo Ga stream, through which National Highway 1B runs. The highest point in this sector, Mount Nam Long at 890 m, lies to the north of this valley, while elevations to the south of the valley reach only about 500 m.

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Biodiversity value

Very little information is available about the biodiversity value of the site. The natural vegetation is limestone forest. The Than Xa sector supports 4,247 ha of forest, equivalent to 58% of the total area of the sector. The Phuong Hoang sector, however, supports only 1,053 ha of forest, equivalent to 27% of the total area of the sector (Anon. 1996).

Historically, Black Gibbon *Hylobates concolor* may have occurred in the Than Xa sector. However, during a survey in March 1998, Geissmann and Vu Ngoc Thanh (1998) did not see or hear any gibbons, and obtained only one first-hand report of a recent gibbon sighting, which dated from 1997. The authors considered the continued occurrence of gibbons in the area unlikely, and added that, if gibbons did still occur, they were unlikely to survive the next decade.

Conservation issues

Thai Nguyen Provincial FPD (2000) consider the main threats to biodiversity at Phuong Hoang-Tha Xa to be clearance of forest for agriculture, hunting and collection of forest products. They also mention unmanaged tourism as a threat to the cultural values of the site.

During a survey of the Than Xa sector in March 1998, Geissmann and Vu Ngoc Thanh (1998) repeatedly encountered hunters and loggers in the forest. The authors noted that hunting pressure appeared to be particularly high in the area. The forest at Than Xa is home to about 10,000 immigrant gold miners, who have greatly intensified the hunting pressure in recent years. Geissmann and Vu Ngoc Thanh (1998) also reported that use of chemicals by gold miners was polluting the watercourses in the area. This can be expected to be having severe negative impacts on aquatic ecosystems, and may well be affecting the health of downstream water users.

Other documented values

Phuong Hoang is a popular destination for domestic tourists, as the site has beautiful scenery with numerous caves. Thai Nguyen Provincial People's

Committee intend to further develop tourism at this site.

Related projects

No information.

Literature sources

Anon. (1996) [Investment plan for Phuong Hoang-Tha Xa Nature Reserve, Thai Nguyen province]. Xuan Mai: Xuan Mai Forestry College. In Vietnamese.

Geissmann, T. and Vu Ngoc Thanh (1998) Preliminary results of a primate survey in north-eastern Vietnam, with special reference to gibbons. Unpublished report to Institute for Zoology, Hannover Zoological College.

Geissmann, T. and Vu Ngoc Thanh (in press) Preliminary results of a primate survey in north-eastern Vietnam, March 1998, with special reference to gibbons. Asian Primates.

Thai Nguyen Provincial FPD (2000) [FPD questionnaire]. Thai Nguyen: Thai Nguyen Provincial Forest Protection Department. In Vietnamese.