

Thanh Phu Nature Reserve

Alternative site name(s)

None

Province(s)

Ben Tre

Status

Decreed

Management board established

Yes

Latitude

9°48' - 9°59'N

Longitude

106°34' - 106°41'E

Bio-unit

05a - Mekong Delta



Conservation status

Thanh Phu is a site of both biodiversity and historical value. For these reasons, Ben Tre Provincial People's Committee initially intended to establish Thanh Phu as both a nature reserve and a cultural and historical site. This request was submitted to MARD on 20 December 1996 by Directive No. 1931/CV-UBT. However, the following year, MARD approved an investment plan to establish a nature reserve only, following Decision No. 1928/NNKH-QD, dated 9 August 1997 (Pham Trong Thinh 1998).

In 1998, Ho Chi Minh City Sub-FIPI prepared a revised investment plan for Thanh Phu Nature Reserve, for the period 1999 to 2003. The total area of the nature reserve stated in this investment plan is 8,825 ha. However, as this area includes a buffer zone of 4,315 ha, the area of the nature reserve should be considered to be only 4,510 ha, comprising a strict protection area of 1,788 ha, a very critical coastal protection area of 949 ha and a scientific research area of 1,773 ha (Pham Trong Thinh 1998). The revised investment plan was approved by government Decision No. 1026/QD-TTg, dated 13 November 1998. Following this decision, Ben Tre Provincial People's Committee established a nature reserve management board on 20 October 1999 (Ben Tre Provincial DARD 2000).

Thanh Phu Nature Reserve is under the management of Ben Tre Provincial DARD (Ben Tre Provincial DARD 2000). Thanh Phu Nature Reserve is included on the 2010 list with an area of 4,510 ha (FPD 1998).

Topography and hydrology

Thanh Phu Nature Reserve comprises a narrow strip of coastline between two of the mouths of the Mekong River: the Co Chien and Ham Luong estuaries. As is the case with other sites on the eastern coastline of the Mekong Delta, Thanh Phu Nature Reserve is strongly affected by erosion as well as accretion. The coastal landscape at Thanh Phu is made up of the following elements: sandy belts, tidal mudflats, saline tidal swamps and toxic acid-sulphate swamps.

Biodiversity value

The coastal mangroves at Thanh Phu are dominated by *Rhizophora apiculata*, *Avicennia marina*, *A. officinalis*, *Excoecaria agallocha* and *Sonneratia* spp. The most extensive mangrove type is *Rhizophora apiculata* mangrove. These mangroves are an important habitat for a number of aquatic organisms, including some with high economic value.

The intertidal mudflats are an important habitat for shorebirds. However, all the shorebird species listed by Pham Trong Thinh (1998) as occurring at Thanh Phu Nature Reserve are common and widespread species, such as Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* and Sanderling *Calidris alba*. Furthermore, Thanh Phu did not meet any of the three rapid assessment criteria employed by BirdLife and the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources (IEBR) to identify key wetland sites for biodiversity conservation in the Mekong Delta: presence of appreciable numbers of globally threatened or near-threatened species; presence of large concentrations of species indicative of wetland values; and presence of habitats of high biodiversity value (Buckton *et al.* 1999).

Conservation issues

A total of 1,470 people live inside Thanh Phu Nature Reserve, and a further 6,935 people live in the buffer zone (Ben Tre Provincial DARD 2000). The principal economic activities of these people are agriculture, fishing and forestry. The income of the average resident of the nature reserve and buffer zone is only VND 40,000 to 90,000 per month, the lowest in the Mekong Delta region (Pham Trong Thinh 1998). Therefore, communities in the Thanh Phu area rely heavily on exploitation of the natural resources of the nature reserve. Furthermore, pollution and the general development of the area exacerbate the effects of natural resource exploitation.

Other documented values

Thanh Phu Nature Reserve is situated in the coastal zone of the Mekong Delta, between two major estuaries. These estuaries are important breeding sites for many economically valuable aquatic species, such as Tiger Prawns *Penacus* spp., various fish species from the Notopteridae, Toxotidae, Nandidae and Anguilidae families, and numerous species of squid including *Logilo formosana*, *Septeurys lessoniana* and *Sepria tigris*. The estuaries also support a variety of other invertebrates, including crabs, clams and mussels.

During the Second Indochina War, Thanh Phu was a military base of the Vietnam National Liberation

Front. In particular, the coastal site was used as a wharf, to which supplies and weapons for the Ben Tre battlefield and Military Region Number 8 were shipped from North Vietnam. For this reason, Thanh Phu was decreed as a place of historical importance by the Ministry of Culture and Information, following Decision No. 3777/QD/BT, dated 23 December 1995.

Related projects

Prior to 1999, the national 327 Programme was the main source of investment funding for all plantation and protection activities at the site. Since 1999, the national 661 Programme has been the main source of investment funding for such activities.

Literature sources

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