

**SOCIALIST AND REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
INDEPENDENCE – FREEDOM - HAPPINESS**

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**WHITE-EARED NIGHT HERON NEST
AND HABITAT PROTECTION PLAN**

I. Introduction

The White-Eared Night Heron (*Gorsachius magnificus*) is a poorly known and under conserved species of nocturnal bird limited in distribution to southern China and Northern Vietnam. Internationally and in Vietnam White-Eared Night Heron (WENH) is classified as Endangered, meaning that the species is facing a high risk of becoming extinct because it is few in numbers, and threatened by deforestation and hunting.

Forest areas adjacent to streams and rivers in and around the South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area (SXLSHCA) hold ideal habitat conditions for WENH. In recent years a number of nests have been identified by the People Resources and Conservation Foundation (PRCF) and protected outside the protected area, however, greater conservation effort is required to continue protecting these nests from particularly habitat clearance and slash and burn agriculture in riparian zones and hunting (including collection of eggs from nests).

II. Aim of the local Nest and Habitat Protection Plan

Establish a local conservation plan that aims to protect the nesting site and surrounding critical forest habitat of White-Eared Night Heron at Ban O village, Xuan Lac Commune, Cho Don District, Bac Kan Province.

Critical WENH habitat is defined as essential areas of land required to support WENH during the nesting season including: riparian nesting trees, surrounding riparian forest and shallow streams or irrigated paddy rice fields for foraging.

III. Objectives of the local Nest and Habitat Protection Plan

1. Define historical context of WENH at the site and/or immediate surrounding area
2. Identify local threats to WENH nests and habitat
3. Determine conservation actions to protect each nest site
4. Seek support from local authorities to protect each nesting site

IV. Historical Background to the nesting site/area

1. History of WENH birds and nesting within the local area and at the site

At present the riparian forest at Ban O Village is outside the SXLSHCA and is composed of secondary regrowth forest. This area of forest is managed by local people and the Xuan Lac Commune People's Committee (CPC).

Locally the riparian forest includes a diverse range of species of a wide variety of sizes dependent upon maturity. Species such as Ca Lo, Sỗ, Ô rô, , Nghien and the other trees have ever green during winter and spring season etc. are frequently observed and are often chosen by WENH for nesting.

To date the riparian forest has not been heavily impacted by human logging, however, as the demand to expand agricultural production areas increases, land occupiers are gradually cutting forest down forest all the way to the stream edge and hence decrease the availability of suitable nesting trees and WENH.

According to local key informants WENH was regularly observed in the area prior to 2000 when at least seven nesting pairs were known to nest and forage. Since 2000 the number of nesting pairs has decreased significantly to three observed pairs in 2005 and from 2008 due to presumed destruction of suitable nesting habitat and hunting, only one nesting site has continuously been used until present (2012) at Ban O Village.

Table 1: Timeline of significant events and activities impacting WENH at Ban O Village from 1960 - 2012

Time	Events and Activities
1960 - 1976	Selective logging of primary forest - most forest remains in good condition
1978 - 1986	H'mong minority people migrated to the area
1977 - 1987	Small scale clearance of forest to expand area of upland agriculture by Xuan Lac Commune Agricultural Cooperative
1987/88	Xuan Lac Commune Agricultural Cooperative disbanded
1988 - 1992	Slash and burn of mostly good quality secondary forest for upland rice cultivation including clearance of forest down to stream edge in many areas
1992 - 2000	Forest land allocated to local households
2000	At least seven pairs of WENH observed along the Ta Han Stream at Ban O village
2000 - 2012	Gradual decrease in the number of large riparian trees along the Ta Han Stream as land is cleared for agriculture
2005	Three pairs of WENH observed along the Ta Han Stream at Ban O village
2008	One WENH pair nested along the Ta Han Stream at Ban O village with two birds fledging – one adult hunted
2009	One WENH pair nested along the Ta Han Stream at Ban O village with three birds fledging
2010	One WENH pair nested along the Ta Han Stream at Ban O village with three birds fledging
	Approval granted by Cho Don District to cut native forest and plant production forest species – approximately 20 ha of forest deforested and replanted.
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRCF commenced Nest Protection Program (Year 1) with local Community Nest Protector from March to June • One WENH pair nested along the Ta Han Stream at Ban O village with three

	birds fledging
	Occupier of land next to nesting site proposed to cut forest down to expand agricultural area – land owner declined offer
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 2 of PRCF Nest Protection Program with local Community Nest Protector from Feb to June • One WENH pair nested along the Ta Han Stream at Ban O village with three birds fledging
March 2012	Maize planted within 100m from the WENH nest
8 May 2012	Group of H'mong hunters (carrying firearms) searching along the stream for WENH intercepted by Community Nest Protector

2. Summary of White-Eared Night Heron conservation actions in the area/site

In 2011 PRCF commenced a WENH Nest Protection Program funded by the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) in collaboration with the Xuan Lac CPC and the SXLSHCA Management Board. As part of this conservation program PRCF staff disseminated awareness raising information on WENH, its conservation status and our intentions to protect nests within the target villages of Ban Eng, Ban O and Ban Ho. In addition, As a result one nest was protected at Ban O Village in both the 2011 and 2012 nesting season (with a total of 6 fledglings protected – three each year) by an enthusiastic community nest protector. In 2012 the nest protection program was successful in preventing hunters identified as being from the H'Mong minority group from shooting the birds with a firearm.

In 2012 there were reports of WENH sighted at Ban Eng Village which were investigated by PRCF staff. Unfortunately the investigated nests were of Forest Heron. However, these reports are an indication of the success of the awareness raising activities and willingness of local communities to become involved in nest protection activities through financial incentives.

The WENH Nest Protection Program has attracted the support of both the Xuan Lac CPC and SXLSHCA Management Board and it is hoped that further localized conservation initiatives will result in the future.

V. Threats to the Nesting Site and Critical WENH Habitat

Agricultural and forestry activities provide the main sources of livelihoods for local people and also contribute to some of the greatest threats to WENH and WENH habitat at Ban O Village. Specifically at the site of the protected nest there is some disturbance (mainly sound and traffic volume) from the main commune road and a smaller access road leading to agricultural farming land below. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the main threats, their causes and impacts to WENH, nesting sites and critical WENH habitat.

Figure 1: Threats To Nesting sites and Critical WENH Habitat

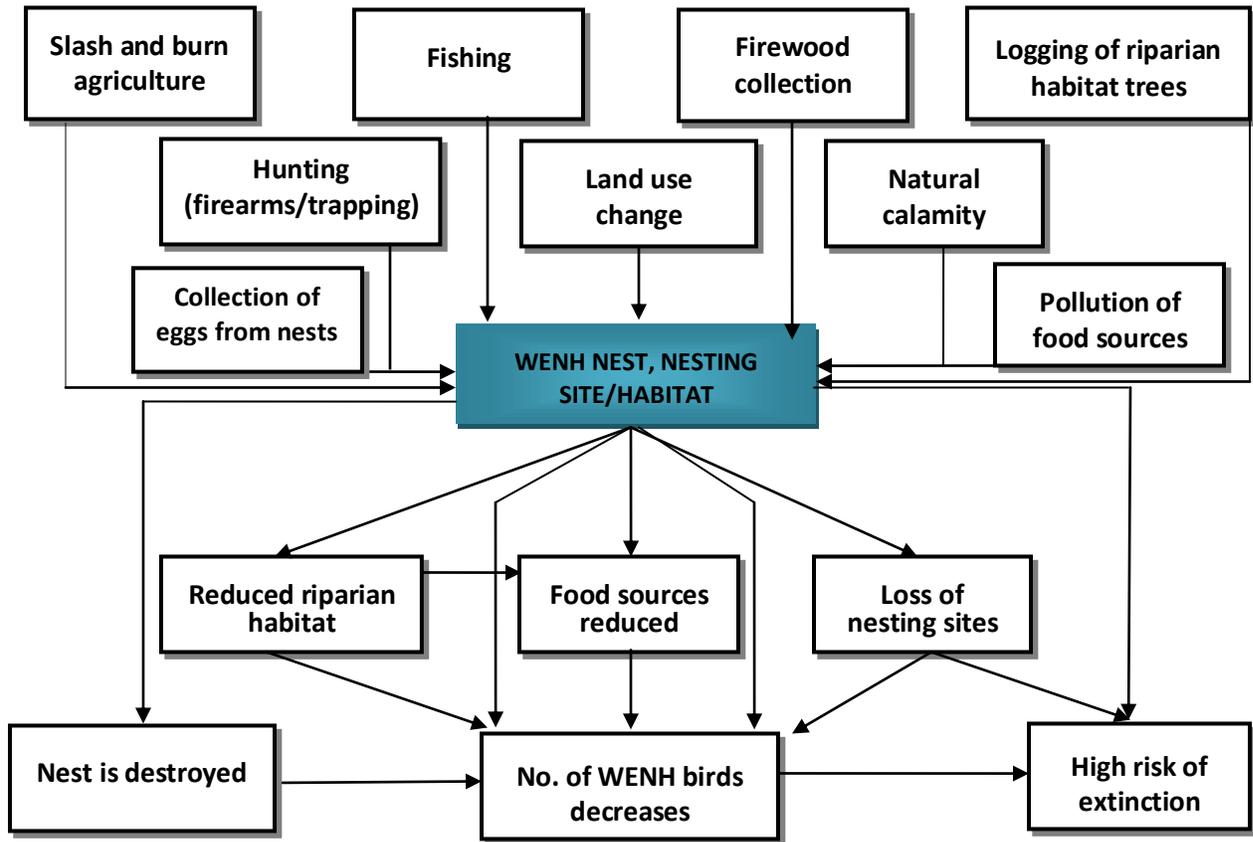
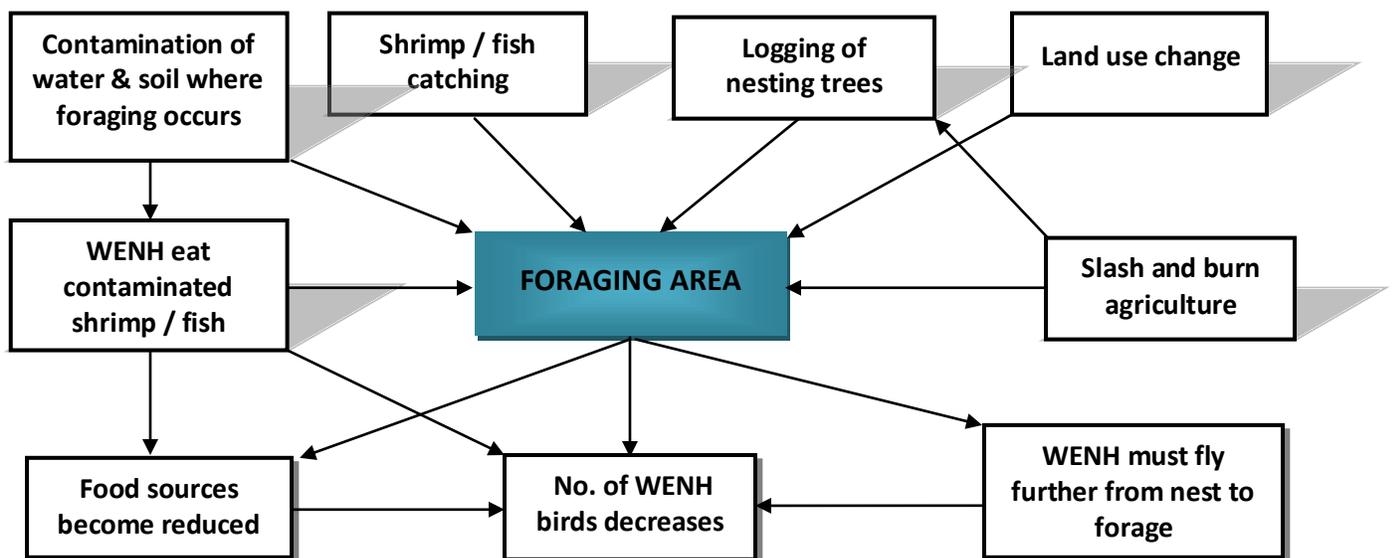


Figure 2: Impacts of Threats to Foraging Areas



VI. Conservation Activities/Actions Addressing Threats

Figures 1 and 2 identified many threats to WENH, nesting sites and critical habitat. Recommended conservation activities /actions to address these threats locally include:

- 1) Establish a local WENH Conservation Zone to protect the nesting site and surrounding critical habitat;
- 2) Demarcate the local WENH Conservation Zone with a sign that identifies both the dimensions of the Zone and prohibited activities within;
- 3) Issue official decisions to establish the local WENH Conservation Zone and explain its purpose;
- 4) Conduct awareness raising activities amongst the local community on the significance of WENH and the conservation of the species;
- 5) Continue community-based nest protection activities
- 6) Announce and implement incentives for the local community to protect WENH and establish local WENH Conservation Zones;
- 7) Enforce the regulation protecting the local WENH Conservation Zone.

VII. Definition of the Local WENH Conservation Area

1. Location of the first Ban O Village local Conservation Zone signage

Signage will be installed at the Ban O Village nest protection site to define the Conservation Zone and outline prohibited activities therein. The dimensions of the Conservation Zone will include 100m up and downstream from the 2012 nesting tree (total 200m length) and 50m on each side of the nesting tree at a perpendicular angle to the Ta Han Stream (total 100m width). The sign will be located at coordinates: $N22^{\circ}21'20''$; $E105^{\circ}33'13.4''$.

2. Prohibited Activities within the local WENH Conservation Zone

The following activities will be permitted to occur within the WENH Conservation Zone at Ban O Village:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Logging of any trees | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Slash and burning of forest |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hunting WENH and other wildlife | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collection of eggs from WENH nests |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climbing or disturbing WENH nests | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Construction of any structures |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Firewood collection | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grazing livestock |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shrimp and fish catching | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural cultivation and spraying of chemicals |

VIII. Actions to Support WENH Conservation at Ban O Village by the Xuan Lac CPC and SXLSHCA Management Board

Both the Xuan Lac CPC and SXLSHCA Management Board have agreed to support conservation of the WENH nesting site and critical habitat through the following actions:

- ✓ Support PRCF to define the location of the local WENH Conservation Zone and signage.

- ✓ Set up mechanisms to protect and enforce protection of the WENH Conservation Zone in collaboration with the legal landholder.
- ✓ Prepare and disseminate a legal decision declaring the WENH Conservation Zone.
- ✓ Disseminate information on activities prohibited within the WENH Conservation Zone.

IX. Agreement and Endorsement of the WENH Nest and Habitat Protection Plan

After jointly reviewing the merits and content of this WENH Nest and Habitat Protection Plan, the below signatories understand the necessity to conserve the Endangered WENH within the Xuan Lac Commune and agree to declare the local WENH Conservation Zone at Ban O Village and endorse both the WENH Nest and Habitat Protection Plan and the actions contained therein.

This WENH Nest and Habitat Protection Plan at Ban O Village will be signed by four parties all of equal value with each party keeping an official copy recording the agreement.

Xuan Lac Commune, 3th August 2012

Mr Ly Thua Xuong
Landholder

Mr Nong Van Mac
Chairman Xuan Lac CPC

Mr Luc Van Chan
**South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat
Conservation Area Management Board**

Mr Michael Dine
**People Resources and Conservation
Foundation (PRCF)**