

**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 the Na Hang dam reservoir and streams and rivers within the catchment hold ideal habitat conditions for WENH. In 2012, a number of WENH nests were identified by the People Resources and Conservation Foundation (PRCF) and protected, however, greater conservation effort is required to continue protecting these nests from particularly habitat clearance 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 sites and surrounding critical forest habitat of White-Eared Night Heron at four sites within Na Hang Nature Reserve, Na Hang and Lam Binh Districts, Tuyen Quang 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 the Na Hang Nature Reserve Management Board and local Commune 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

During the construction of the dam, large sections of forest in the lower lying areas were cleared in areas that would be inundated by the rising waters of the reservoir. This changed the composition of the riparian vegetation in many areas, however, many of the important tree species suitable for WENH nesting such as Ca Lo, SỔ, Ô rô, Nghien etc. remain in local forest. At some locations in the upper catchment streams and rivers riparian vegetation is

mostly intact and has been subject to little degradation. The three known nesting sites at Pac Vang, Ban Lam and Chom are all located within the Na Hang Nature Reserve and are under the management of Forest Protection Department staff. Local Commune authorities play a role in supporting management actions particularly in relation to involving local people.

After the completion of the Na Hang dam and during filling of the reservoir, 10 villages were relocated. Although the impacts upon the local environment have not been assessed, popular consensus amongst local government, the Forest Protection Department and local people indicate the impacts have now stabilized or even reduced after the initial upheaval of communities. However, illegal logging of a large number of high economic value tree species is still a major local management and law enforcement issue and a threat to WENH. Further, the Na Hang reservoir now has large resources of shrimp and fish species, which has recently encouraged a shift in local livelihoods resulting in the creation of a new threat to WENH due to competition of resources and hunting.

According to local key informants, WENH was regularly observed in the area during the 1990s, however, were less commonly observed after the construction of the dam and flooding of the reservoir. It could be suggested that the massive ecological upheaval and destruction of a large area of premium habitat contributed to this decline. However, recent reports suggest that the numbers are on the increase again.

Since the declaration of the Na Hang Nature Reserve in 2002, the forest has had improved levels of protection, and all houses located within this area of the Tat Ke Sector have been relocated. The pressures upon the forest and animals by local people appear to have decreased. This includes a noticeable improvement in the number of WENH observed locally within this area.

Table 1: Timeline of significant events and activities impacting WENH within the vicinity from 1989 - 2012

Time	Events and Activities
1989	Forest within the Na Hang area was degraded by local people for slash and burn agriculture and limited timber extraction.
May 9 th 1994	The Tuyen Quang People's Committee issued decision no. 274/QĐ-UB establishing the Na Hang Nature Reserve.
1996	Three WENH nesting pairs observed at Pac Vang and three adults were spotted by fishermen at Ban Lam
2000	Village communities that were going to be inundated by the rising reservoir waters commenced preparation to relocate
2002	Government Of Vietnam (Prime Minister) approved construction of the Na Hang Dam and hydroelectric plant
2002 - 2007	Construction of the Na Hang dam and hydroelectric power plant
2003 - 2004	Na Hang Forest Protection Department harvested flora species of high conservation value prior to inundation by the rising reservoir water
2004	Five WENH adults were observed by fishermen in the Chom and Den areas
2006	One hundred households from Tân Thành and Na Khuyến villages (Yen Hoa Commune) relocated due to rising water levels.

2007	One WENH adult bird had been caught in a fishing net at Pac Vang.
2009	One WENH pair nested at the border between Pac Vang and Chom with two fledged offspring
2011	PRCF commenced awareness raising activities and promote WENH Nest Protection activities during the 2012 nesting season in villages in and around Na Hang Nature Reserve
2012	PRCF WENH Nest Protection Program commenced from February to June
February	One WENH pair discovered nesting (Nest 1) at Ban Lam (destroyed early March by storm)
March	Two WENH pairs nested (Nests 2 and 3) at Ban Lam with six eggs
	One nest found in Pac Vang area with two eggs
March – May	Na Hang Nature Reserve seriously damaged at Khau Tinh, Đà Vj, and Sơn Phú Communes by illegal logging.
20 - 28 th April	Strong storm destroyed the two nests at Ban Lam area with all nests/six chicks lost. Nests were not rebuilt
End April	One nest found with three chicks at Chom
May	One WENH nest (Nest 4) located at Ban Lam with three chicks (destroyed in storm during May)
June 2012	Nests at Pac Vang (one) and Chom (one) were successfully protected with five birds fledged.

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 Na Hang Nature Reserve and relevant local commune authorities. As part of this conservation program PRCF staff disseminated awareness raising information on WENH, its conservation status and our intentions to protect nests at locations in and around Na Hang Nature Reserve (Tat Ke and Ban Bung Sectors) and the Na Hang reservoir. As a result of the PRCF Nest Protection Program six WENH nests were protected during the 2012 nesting season within the Nature Reserve by enthusiastic community nest protectors. Only five chicks from two nests were successfully fledged. Unfortunately all four nests at Ban Lam with containing nine eggs and three chicks were destroyed by a series of storms.

In 2012 two further reports of WENH birds or nests were followed up by PRCF staff:

1) Sighting of a WENH at Chom (Lang Kha Commune) – different report to the nest already located there; and 2) Reports of a WENH nest at Thanh Tuong Commune. Unfortunately no bird or nest was located at Chom and the nest at Thang Tuong was found to be a Forest Heron. These reports, however, are an indication of the success of the awareness raising activities and willingness of local communities to engage in nest protection activities through financial incentives.

The WENH Nest Protection Program attracted the support and attention of both the Na Hang Nature Reserve and local commune authorities. It is hoped that further localized conservation initiatives will result in the future.

V. Threats to the Nesting Site and Critical WENH Habitat

Fishing and unfortunately illegal logging are the main activities that provide a large percentage of local livelihoods for communities living near Na Hang reservoir. These in addition to hunting and agricultural encroachment at Den, pose the greatest threats to WENH and WENH habitat. Specifically at the site of the protected nest at Chom there is high potential for disturbance to the nest from the noise of boats and high frequency of

travel. This location is part of a major travel route and for fishing. 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

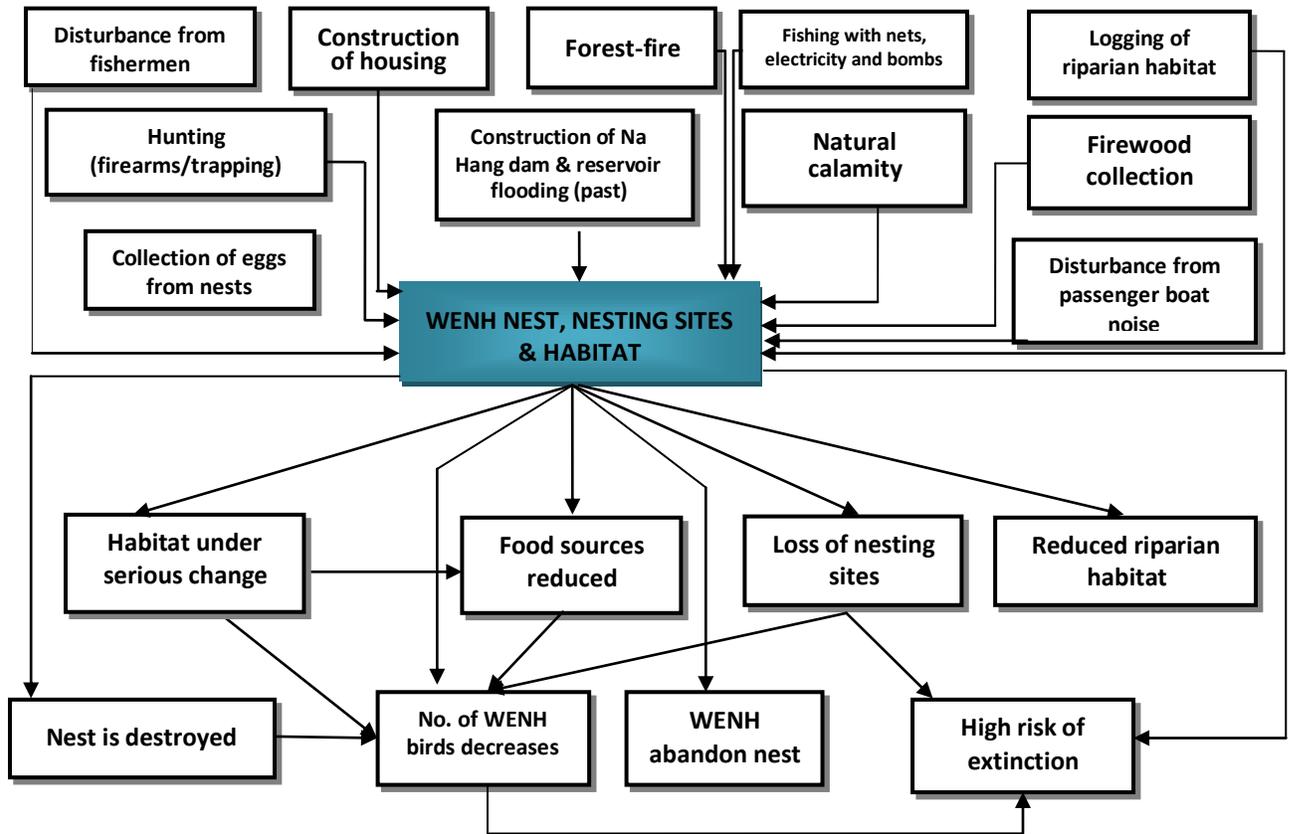
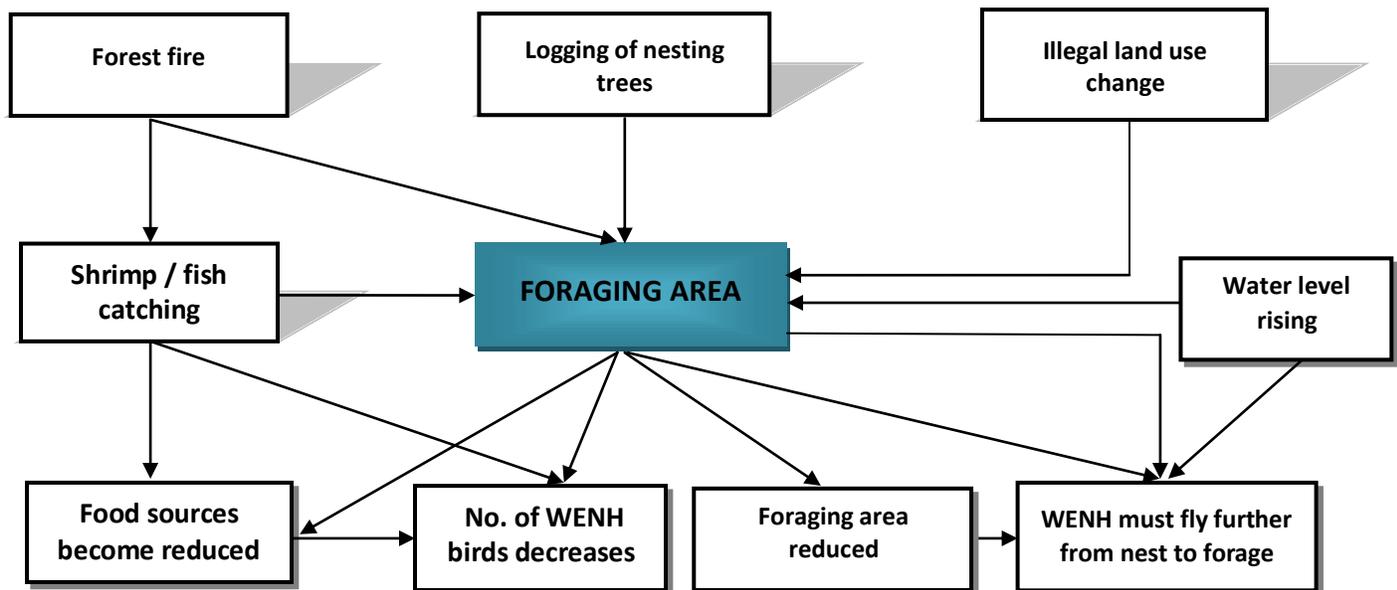


Figure 2: Impacts of Threats to Foraging Areas



VI. Conservation Activities/Actions Addressing Threats

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 signage 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 annually from February to June.
- 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 particularly between February and June annually.

VII. Definition of the Local WENH Conservation Area

1. Location of Na Hang hydroelectric reservoir Conservation Zone signage

Signage will be installed at the three known nest protection sites to define the Conservation Zone and outline prohibited activities therein. These signs will be located at Pắc Vãng, Bản Lãm and Chóm. The dimensions of the Conservation Zone will include 100m up and down stream of the 2012 nesting tree (total 200m length) and 50m on each side of the nesting tree at a perpendicular angle to the river (total 100m width).

Coordinates where signs will be located include:

- i) Pắc Vãng: 22°31'4" – 105°26'5"
- ii) Bản Lãm: 22°27'53" – 105°28'9,5"
- iii) Chóm: 540143°E & 2475587°N

2. Prohibited Activities within the local WENH Conservation Zone

The following activities will be permitted to occur within each WENH Conservation Zone:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Logging of any trees | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Starting fires |
| <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"/> Fishing with nets, electricity and bombs |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shrimp and fish catching | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mooring boats (stopping) |

VIII. Actions to Support WENH Conservation by the Na Hang Nature Reserve and local Commune Authorities

The Na Hang Nature Reserve and commune authorities at Thanh Tuong, Son Phu have agreed to support conservation of WENH nesting sites and critical habitat through the following actions:

- ✓ Support PRCF define the location of the local WENH Conservation Zones 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;
- ✓ Handle the wrongdoing in the located area for conservation;
- ✓ Collaborate with partners (Na Hang Nature Reserve and Commune Authorities) to monitor the conservation zone.
- ✓ At Thanh Tuong Commune where there is potential to discover WENH nests, continue to raise community awareness to identify WENH and protect the species.

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 in Na Hang reservoir and agree to declare the local WENH Conservation Zone and endorse both the WENH Nest and Habitat Protection Plan and the actions contained therein.

This WENH Nest and Habitat Protection Plan at Na Hang Nature Reserve will be signed by 6 parties all of equal value with each party keeping an official copy recording the agreement.

Na Hang, 17th August 2012

Nest Protectors

Na Hang Nature Reserve

Mr Nong Van Huan Mr Duong Van Thu Mr Pham Van Dien Mr Phan Van Huan

Mr Ngyen The Doi
Director

Thanh Tuong CPC

Son Phu CPC

Chairman

Chairman

Mr Michael Dine
**People Resources and
Conservation Foundation**