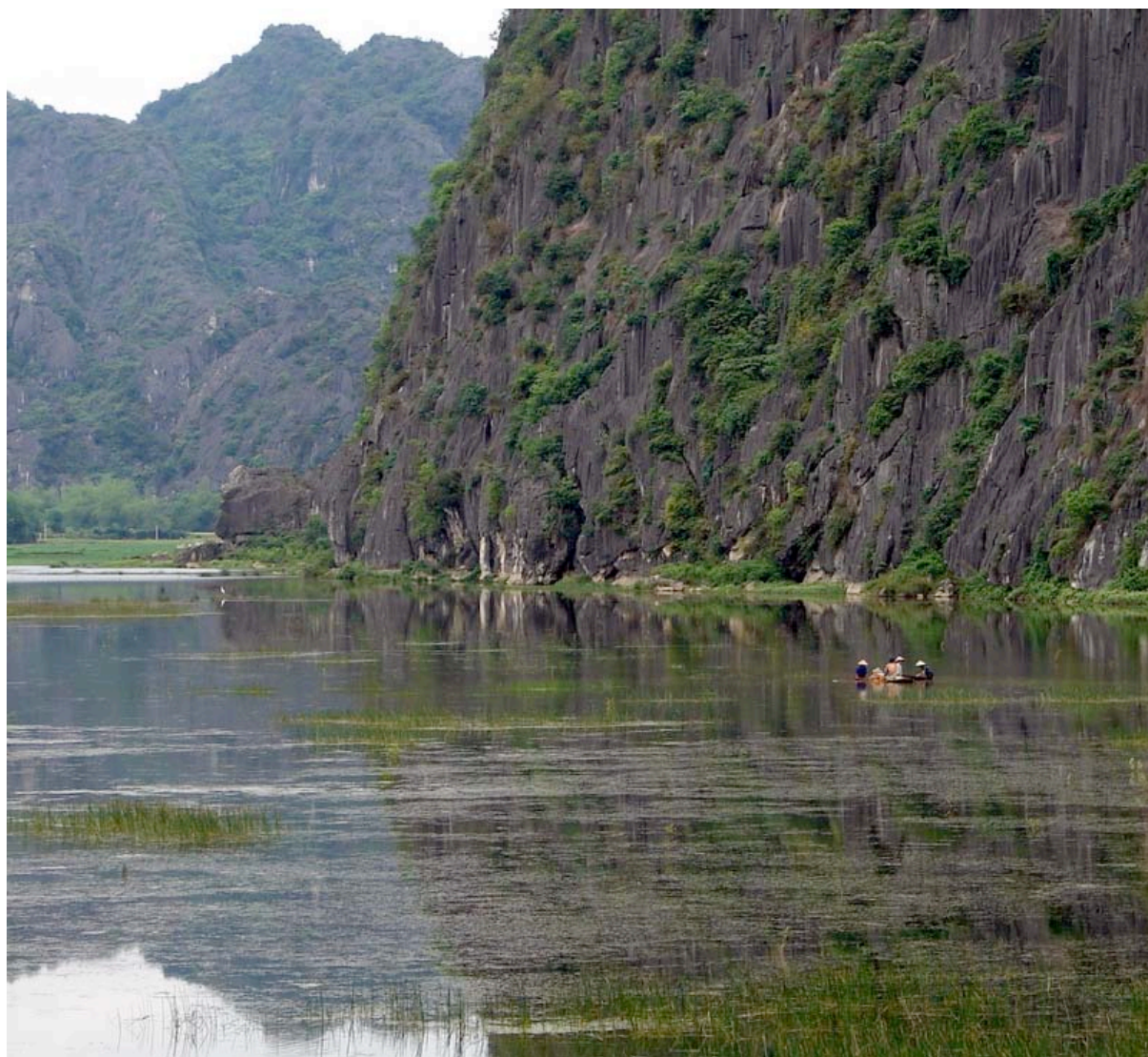




Van Long Nature Reserve

Vietnam



Van Long – local fishers cast nets in the limestone fringed community wetland

By Dao Nguyen

May 2008

Executive summary

Van Long Nature Reserve is situated in Gia Vien district along the Northeastern border of Ninh Binh Province. Van Long straddles seven communes (local Government administrative units) and is in the heartland of the populated centre of north-eastern Vietnam, 85km south of the capitol, Hanoi. All the 45,000 or so people who live in these seven communes in the buffer zone of Van Long are of the Kinh ethnic Vietnamese majority. Van Long itself covers some 3,000 hectares and comprises two major geographic features. Firstly, Van Long is a large wetland and freshwater system. Secondly, the canals, lakes and streams wend through an island-like landscape of karst limestone mountains that harbour the only viable population of the Delacour Langur - one of the world's most critically endangered species of primate (with less than 200 individuals remaining, globally). Without the protection afforded Van Long by the local community, and now by the Government and local authorities, it is highly probable that the Delacour langur would be the first primate extinction of the 21st Century.

The name Van Long dates back centuries, and the community has evidenced a robust capacity to harness the natural resources of Van Long through decades of intense conflict and change, without diminishing their resource base. The cultural significance of the wetland-karst landscape is a vital part of local folklore and sense of place.

With the outside discovery of the population of Delacour's Langur in 1993, external attention to Van Long began to increase. Initial conservation project support, led by Frankfurt Zoological Society, culminated in Government interest and investment through the establishment in 2001 of a multi-stakeholder Van Long Management Board. This falls under the legal provisions of the national Nature Reserve system, within the overall mandate of the Provincial authorities.

The status and recent history of Van Long were discussed during meetings held in April 2008 with the Management Board and local stakeholders, and information was compiled from interviews with local women working as guides and boat handlers for the robust tourism trade that Van Long now supports.

The meetings highlighted the continued support for the Van Long reserve from the local communities who depend upon it. The meetings appeared to show that the official recognition of the area, and establishment of the Management Board, was a welcomed level of support and investment from the point of view of the community representatives. However, the success of the tourism trade and the subsequent growth of the Van Long visitation facilities – as well as related nearby economic development – are of local concern. Provincial control of management decision-making has been maintained through the Tourism department, which is superior and unaligned with the consensus model of the Management Board. As such, the lions-share of tourism revenues and investment portfolios are not in the hands of the communities or directed to conservation. Most profits from tourism to Van Long are channelled directly to provincial coffers. Only a fraction of these funds make their way back to Van Long through provincial support for basic management costs.

Van Long may be a victim of its own success. Government recognition and involvement has disenfranchised the community values and effort that had initially yielded a precious biodiversity haven and an ideal tourist attraction. Whilst Van Long has been one of the most successful examples in Vietnam of a marriage between community-based tourism development and species and habitat conservation, the authorities need to reinvest time and resources into the community – the essence of its origins and success. A strategic shift in decision-making is required that will secure long-term benefits from the area for the surrounding communities based on an equitable return for the cost of local participation in management of the wetland and karst ecosystem and its unique biodiversity.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

As part of the broader programme of grassroots discussion on Community Conserved Areas (CCAs), a meeting was coordinated and held on the 17th April 2008, hosted by the Van Long Management Board. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the Van Long conservation area from its community origins through to its current status as a legally-gazetted Nature Reserve, and to open discussion on how the community view the change, transition and development of the past decade, and how they feel about the present and the future of the conservation area. The meeting was semi-structured around the CCA methodology, but was mostly directed by the lively, freeform input of the participants and their views. The main meeting lasted three hours, then rolled over into a luncheon. There were 20 participants representing different communities and stakeholders, including representatives from the seven communes in and around Van Long. In Vietnam, commune delegates are elected by the people of the commune itself, although candidates must be approved by the Provincial authorities (membership of the Communist Party is no longer mandatory). Also present were officials from the tourism department, the forest protection unit and the Van Long Management Board, and staff from FZS.

A separate meeting was held to discuss the Van Long CCA experience, with a women's group, comprised entirely of



Van Long means Dragons flying in clouds

local ladies involved in servicing the tourists and visitors. All these ladies are from the Van Long area, drawn from several of the local communities. They were assembled and interviewed ad-hoc, during a lull in the tourist visits in the early afternoon. The meeting was held in the shade of the jetty boat shelter.

Additional information was sought from the Van Long Management Board vice-director; and finally with the FZS Primate Conservation team. Interviews with other local people who operate boats in Van Long were also carried out.

Basic description

Historically, Van Long was an important outpost and waterway artery for the ancient Vietnamese capital of Hoa Lu, founded by the Le Dynasty in the 10th Century. The mist-shrouded limestone peaks are littered with shrines and small pagodas that likely date back to this era. Van Long is the name given to the area in the Le period, name meaning “*Dragon Flying in Clouds*”. The seven ancient villages of Van Long now form the administrative demarcation of seven communes within the boundaries of Gia Vien District, in Ninh Binh Province. The people of these Van Long communes have traditionally relied on paddy rice and fish-farming as their key livelihood strategies, but the wetland and limestone forest has always offered additional sources of nutrition, medicine and marketable products. Since the decline of the prosperous Hoa Lu heyday, until recently, Van Long has been isolated, away from the main highways, townships and industry. However, the communities have been buffered from hardship by their backdoor access to abundant water and forest resources. During the turmoil of most of the 20th century in Vietnam, the communities of Van Long give credit for much of their survival to the natural bounty of the wetland and through foraging in the forest. Indeed, right up to the *Doi Moi* reform policy enacted from 1986, food security was a daily struggle. Therefore, both recent and historical ties run deep between the people and culture of Van Long, and the land and waters that surround them.

Local use and management of the wetland and the limestone forest has been ongoing for centuries. However, in the last decade, the dynamic shifts in national fortunes and economy have impacted in Van Long, as Vietnam’s development accelerates. Changes have occurred that have put Van Long in the limelight, and tested the mettle of the community to remain in control of the area.



A local fisherman waiting for the catch of the day

Recent History of the Van Long Community Conservation Area (CCA)

Van Long is the largest wetland reserve in the Vietnamese Northern Delta. Surrounding Van Long is mainly intensive cultivation agriculture land with 45,000 people living in the seven communes and 1,700 people living inside what is now the core zone of the Nature Reserve. Most people live from farming.

The people of Van Long have maintained their management of the wetland area for generations, it is a fully utilised resource centred in a human-dominated, intensely cultivated landscape. In the early 1990’s, in recognition of the watershed services provided by the limestone forest to the Van Long wetland, the Provincial Authorities rolled out the national ‘327 Program’ to the communities - a simple payment system

based on watershed forest protection contracts with the community. In 1998, this evolved into the '661 Program' (also referred to as the '5-million Hectares Program'), where forest restoration was coupled with a more sophisticated forestland allocation and payment mechanism. Certain areas of Van Long were allocated to individual households to protect in return for an annual payment per hectare.

Evidence of the success of community-based conservation of the area was highlighted in 1993, when biologists confirmed startling biodiversity uniqueness at Van Long, with the discovery of a viable population of the endemic primate Delacour's langur *Trachypithecus delacouri* listed as Critically Endangered on IUCN Redlist of Threatened Species. Globally, it is only found in Van Long and neighbouring areas surrounding Cuc Phuong National Park. IUCN-listed as Critically Endangered, the total population estimate for the species is around 200 individuals – one of the rarest primate species on earth.

With growing external interest and more frequent trips and survey expeditions by national and international organisations, the community leaders joined forces with the Frankfurt Zoological Society and the Endangered Primate Rescue Centre to begin to put in place more formal management practices and collaborative projects to ensure the continued survival of the langurs and look towards developing a village-based ecotourism venture to help bring benefits and cover management costs for the community. From 1993 to 2001, the stream of visitors grew steadily and several micro-projects provided training, equipment, technical advice and infrastructure for the community. During the same period, the demand for forest and freshwater products, particularly fish, timber and wildlife increased exponentially in Vietnam. The external pressures on Van Long began mounting; demand for produce and an increase in outsiders accessing the area. Additionally, the huge demand for building materials, notably cement, had spurred a boom in limestone quarrying. Within a decade, the nearby limestone hills of Ninh Binh province were being blasted into an unrecognisable landscape.

Given the increased threat; the flagship biodiversity and cultural value; and the potential for ecotourism development, the Provincial Authorities reacted positively to community demands for more assistance in protection of the Van Long area. In 2000-2001, collaborative surveys and scoping for a formal protected area were carried out.



A local woman is setting a fishing net from her boat

Survey results describe Van Long's natural values - it has about 11 ecosystems, including the two major ones of wetland and limestone karst hills, but also many underground caves and water systems. Results from preliminary biodiversity surveys show that Van Long has 670 species of vascular plants including 12 species listed in the Red Data Book of Threatened Species in Vietnam, 54 species of fish, 32 species of reptiles, 72 species of birds, 39 species of mammals (including 13 species listed in the Vietnam Red Data Book).

One endemic wetland species is the 'Ca cuong' water bug *Lethocerus medius* which lives in the still water of Van Long. The species, once a very popular species for its scent glands, has been wiped out of most wetland areas of Vietnam due to pollution and pesticides. Its essence was used in fish sauce to make many traditional dishes. It is no longer commonly found in markets elsewhere in Vietnam.

The surprising values of the limestone forest and wetland resulted in the formal gazettelement in December 2001 of 3,000 hectares of the 'Van Long Wetland Nature Reserve'. It lies on the boundaries of the seven communes (Gia Hung, Lien Son, Gia Hoa, Gia Van, Gia Lap, Gian Tan and Gia Thanh). These communes each comprise between five and eight villages. Like most of lowland Vietnam, the land is closely populated,

cultivated and managed. The boundaries of the Van Long area were openly agreed and are clearly demarcated, and include the wetland lake area and the specific karst massif beyond. A core zone of 902.4 hectares has been identified within the area. No-one lives within the wetland area itself, or on the karst massif hills.

Decision making

By 2002 the community-instigated Van Long Conservation Area had now become *de jure* managed by the Provincial Forest Protection Department, who established a Management Board and office in Gia Van commune. However, the *de facto* situation on the ground, with an organised, mobilised and motivated community, was still functioning effectively as before. In this regard, the traditional institutions governing use, planting, harvest, access, monitoring, maintenance and restoration activities are still upheld.

'We just want to do tourism now. It is much better than growing rice. We sold our paddy and invested in a boat and tour license. We are very happy and proud of the reserve.' Ms Quynh, tour guide.

Facilitated by FZS, the Van Long Management Board engaged members of the related communes in a management committee and drew up an initial 5-year management plan, negotiated with the communities. Each commune also has appointed a Forestry Officer who oversees forestry related programmes such as 661 Program on forest protection payments. Furthermore, the Management Board supports a community ranger program, where local individuals are paid a stipend to patrol and assist in management activities. In general, the Management Board has formalised the protection effort and added a legal framework to the community conservation area that was previously missing, for example, outsiders can now be legally apprehended.

The Van Long Management Board itself is under direct management of the Provincial Forest Protection Department. The Board is responsible for overall management of biodiversity conservation and protection of natural resources, law enforcement and conservation projects.

Van Long Management Board is currently supported by FZS with a long term conservation programme. FZS supports technical and financial assistance, training of staff and research on the Delacour's langur. FZS currently provides core funding to support the community rangers' stipends and equipment.

Tourism developed quickly after the formal establishment of the Reserve. Information about the access and ease to see the globally endangered Delacour's langur made Van Long a popular destination to eco-tourists, and increasingly to the domestic market in general. Tour operators from Hanoi (only 1.5 hours drive) have begun to feature Van Long as one of their Hanoi-based itinerary destinations. Within just five years, two private hotels and one resort have been established in Gia Van. There are more hotels proposed. The commune cannot fully control the development of hotels and fringe tourism enterprise, which often involves non-local companies and investors. Land prices are rising and many villagers are hoping to sell their agricultural plots to developers and work full-time in the tourism service.



Boats coming back from cave tours. The boat ride in Van Long is a very pleasant experience. The eco-friendly boat is made of bamboo and rowed by hand. It can go in very shallow water. The water of Van Long wetland can be very shallow, so this type of boat is perfect for this environment. Tourists can also enjoy the experience of just flow on very quiet water surrounded by limestone forests, watching birds and if they are lucky they can see the Delacour Langur.

Up until 2002, the fledgling tourism operation was fully managed by the Gia Van Commune authorities, with full participation from the local people from the surrounding communities. In 2002, the Province assigned the Ninh Binh Tourism Department to oversee and regulate the Tourism Activities at Van Long. All direct tourism revenue is collected and controlled by the Tourism Department. A set proportion of the ticket price is allocated to the boat operators, but the remainder is channelled to the Provincial Finance Department, to be re-allocated within the overall Provincial budget.

The Management Board of Van Long Wetland Nature Reserve is able to influence and monitor the impact of tourism activities. For example, tourism trails and routes avoid the sensitive restoration areas, core zone habitat and most langur habitat. Only in the late afternoon, and by specific request, will boats be taken to view the langurs as they return along the waterside cliffs to their sleeping caves on the upper crags. In this way visitor impacts are minimized and the community have some control over the tourism operations, if not the revenue.

Whilst there are other examples of community-based tourism development, and several attempts at community co-management of protected areas in Vietnam, there are few that compare in either success in biodiversity conservation or in success in growth and viability of the tourism product.

Value, effectiveness, sustainability

Status of Van Long

Van Long is thriving both in terms of conservation and ecotourism development. With the close cooperation between the local communities and the new official management authorities, Van Long has wiped out the threats from forest fires, hunting, fire-wood exploitation. Local people are directly involved in the tourism operations and many families are earning much higher incomes from farming. Even some of the external tourism ventures still hire local people and use local services. Training for tourism has greatly benefited the local people. The success of biodiversity conservation has been a phenomenal, especially in the context of a national decline in most areas and species. The population of the Delacour's langur has reached more than 100 individuals in 2008, from the 20 individuals surveyed in 1993. This is also perhaps the only viable population in the whole world (Tilo Nadler, per comm.). Van Long is developing a new conservation management plan for further restoration and possible expansion of the Reserve into the forested hills further to the North, in Hoa Binh province.

'It is amazing to see the langurs coming so close to us nowadays. I often take people there to see them coming down to drink the water. We see them all the time and now I know exactly where to take people to see them.' Mr. Tung, owner of the Van Long Eco-restaurant.

Van Long Nature Reserve is highly valued by the Provincial level as well as the Central level. The Parliament of Vietnam adopted Van Long as a site for assessment for wetland conservation law and policies. Van Long as also used for the International Wetland Day celebration ceremony by the Ministry of Environment.

The local communities are proud of the importance of Van Long. Management Board surveys have shown that between 2002 and 2005, the local community have an increased appreciation and value for Van Long, and they care much more for the protection activities carried out by the Reserve and community staff.

As such, the management objectives are achieved, and tourism is flourishing, but it is not yet viewed as sustainable. There are increasing conflicts in terms of land tenure, access to tourism business, and income-sharing. There are still families who rely on the firewood from the reserve. There are still needs for community development and improving livelihoods. There have been a few support incentives from outside, but still very-small scale, localised and project based.

The Nature Reserve itself plays an important role for wet rice cultivation and other agriculture. Ecotourism is developing well and provides incomes, but it needs to be sustainable. At present tourism is benefiting a small

number of local communities surrounding the reserve. One village in Gia Van Commune is the main actor in tourism operations and earn more direct incomes than any other village, which is causing some conflict. Although there are eight tourism routes in Van Long, providing tourists with many options, they all depart from the Gia Van jetty.

However, the major conflict involves the structure for tourism benefit sharing in Van Long. The management of tourism is run by the Provincial Tourism Department who regulate the ticketing to Van Long. In turn, Gia Van Commune's Tourism Office is managing the registration of local people who operate the eco-friendly traditional boats to carry tourists across the still wetland and paddy fields to the caves and sights in the Van Long area. Registered boat operators therefore earn direct incomes from daily tourism operations. Others are registered as stall-sellers in a street-market area near the jetty. Other indirect incomes for the community come from working the new resort and hotels and restaurants, and in diverse services such as boat repairs, oar-making, and sale of local products to tourists and tour operators. However, 85% of the income from ticket sales go directly to the Province's Treasury and do not go directly back to fund biodiversity conservation or community development. The question of benefit sharing has been submitted to the provincial level but it is not solved. As such, conservation activities are still mainly funded independently from FZS, as the budget allocation to the nature reserve barely cover basic functions, maintenance and core costs.



Delacour langurs on the limestone karst massif in Van Long

In 1998 there were approximately 500 visitors to the reserve, mostly international tourists interested in viewing wildlife. In 2007 there were between 45,000 visitors, with an estimated 54,000 tourists for 2008.

Approximately 70% of tourists are from overseas; half of them from Asian neighbours such as China, Korea and Japan. This brings about 250,000-300,000 USD/year income just from ticketing. However, between 200,000 to 250,000 USD of this revenue goes directly to the Provincial pot. None is earmarked for the Reserve Management or for the Commune or for other community interests. Theoretically, with less than 25% of this sum, the Management Board could sustainably finance the core conservation program including a range of community incentives and positions. With additional resources, maybe up to 50% of this total per annum, a number of community development initiatives could be instigated and addressed in a more programmatic, long-term, sustainably financed approach.

Effectiveness in conserving biodiversity

Although small, the core area of biodiversity conservation in Van Long is proving very effective in conserving biodiversity. This is demonstrated through the increasing number of water bird colonies in the area and the increase in number of groups and population of the Delacour's langur. The population is reproducing well. There were seven babies born in 2007. It used to be very difficult to sight the langurs but now a specific langur-viewing tour is guaranteed to see them and can get much closer. They are now often viewed by day-time scenic tourists also. The langurs are much more relaxed with human presence. They used to be terrified to see humans but now they seem to be less alert. This is a good example of the effectiveness of protection and the decrease in hunting activities. The Delacour's langur distribution or their habitat is expanding further out. The population used to restrict to the core inaccessible area, since the protection and management of Van Long had an impact of hunting elimination, the population has increased and expanded to larger territories.

Local commitment and participation, and external support

With strong commitment from the local communities, Van Long is slowly securing its stabilities in terms of protection against fires, hunting, or other immediate impacts threats. Local communities' participation in protecting Van Long is very crucial to its prosperity. This also enables Van Long to develop its tourism profiles.

There are ten guard stations run by local forest guards. Salaries and operations of these stations are currently funded totally by FZS. It is therefore crucial to have funding from the Government and outside to support conservation activities. There is a need for research activities, communications and education activities, community development, but there is no budget for any activities rather ran bare functions of patrols and law enforcement.

There is a huge need to support local communities in improving livelihoods. The support from the Government is important to create an equal benefit sharing mechanism. Community development projects are needed to support local people improving their incomes. These should be funded in part by revenue from tourism.

Threats and needs

Threats

Forest fires are a threat to the limestone forests due to its impossibility to intervene. It used to be occasionally caused by people exploiting charcoal. They burnt the wood up in the mountains to get charcoal and then caused the widespread of forest fires. However, it has been controlled well so far.

Unsustainable land use in the core zone of the reserve is increasingly a threat due to more use of pesticides, over-grazing and the steadily increasing population in Van Long, both from an expanding number of local households and from an influx of outsiders looking to gain from the tourism operations.



View of a quarried limestone massif neighbouring Van Long

Rapidly growing tourism can be a threat with high level of waste discharge and the lights from the hotels near the reserve, which can attract the wetland insects such as the rare Ca cuong water bug and kill them. It is important to continue to manage tourism in a sustainable way to minimize the impacts towards biodiversity, but as it grows it is increasingly difficult to influence, for example, the development of new hotels and restaurants.

A major threat to Van Long Nature Reserve is the Cement Factory which is located next to the reserve. This factory is destroying the limestone mountains range from the neighbouring area which used to be one contiguous range with Van Long Reserve. Due to the huge development needs in Vietnam, cement factories have been developed to satisfy the building need of the nation. There are several cement factories in Ninh Binh Province. The destruction rates of these factories are devastating. Most of the nearby limestone mountains have been completely demolished. Limestone mountain ranges used to be a particular scenic view from the National Highway One, surrounded by beautiful wet rice fields – they are now almost gone. Van Long is greatly impacted by this factory. The everyday blasting of dynamite from the neighbouring mountains have scared off the Delacour's langur from the Eastern range, they are seen to have moved to the other side of the mountain. The dust discharged and the noise from the factory is also impacting greatly on the local communities and the nature reserve. There are days when the smoke from the factory completely covered the

whole of Van Long area and visibility was almost zero. It was difficult to breathe. Its impact to human health is high. Nothing could be done about this factory, as it was the decision from the Province to develop this in the area. There is not yet an assessment on human impacts from the pollution from the factory.

Invasive species can also be a threat, but there is not yet any assessment on the matter. Pollution from pesticides is also not yet assessed either. The wetland of the reserve is currently used as a waste water discharge for the wet rice fields, but the impact from water pollution is not yet studied.

Needs

- Government's support in terms of policies and financial investment for community development projects in the reserve (e.g. sustainable agriculture and aquaculture projects, effective bio-gas projects). There were several projects supported by Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants but very restricted to several demonstration households. It is needed to be more wide spread to the whole communities. Projects also need to be long-term to be able to achieve success.
- Sustainable income from tourism, to offset the risks of an inconstant amount of tourists every year, or any upset in the national or regional tourism industry
- Broader opportunities and jobs for local people to improve livelihoods
- Equal benefit-sharing from the proceeds of tourism and also equal access to the tourist market. At present, many people provide effort and bear costs in supporting the Reserve, but only those who work with tourism receive financial benefit



The Cement factory with its tall chimney is situated next to Van Long Nature Reserve and local villages

'We really do not know the real and long term impacts of the cement factory, but it is obvious with the smoke and the dust coming out is not good for our health or for the langurs. Nobody is there to measure the impacts and the seriousness of the pollution from the factory to our health. The langurs already moved away from that side due to the blasting of dynamite.' Mr Quang, Gia Van Tourism Office

Needs specifically relating to technical aspects of the Reserve Management:

- General Technical and financial support and capacity building for biodiversity conservation and ecotourism management
- Funding for the management of the reserve to be able to specialise in biodiversity conservation management. The management board is currently a multi-task agency and not funded by the Government.
- There is a need for more training for local staff in biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture and forestry, sustainable land use.
- Government funding for the community forestry office to have more permanent staff working to support the Van Long Reserve.

Outside support

The main outside support is from Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) through the staff at the Endangered Primate Rescue Centre in Cuc Phuong National Park. FZS is currently funding basic conservation and protection activities in Van Long. FZS is funding the salaries for all local guards from the 7 communities in the surroundings of Van Long Reserve. The long term support from FZS has been the single most

contributory factor in the major progress in biodiversity conservation in Van Long. Van Long also receives funding from the Vietnam Conservation Fund (VCF) for two years, but over the short term funding this has not enabled the reserve to achieve its long term objectives. FZS is currently committed to support Van Long in the long-term as part of its primate conservation programme in Vietnam, yet FZS is also stretched for resources and relies on fundraising and program marketing abroad to secure finance for its portfolio of activities in the country. The organisation has achieved major conservation success for primate conservation in Vietnam. FZS is highly appreciated by the local communes and Van Long Management Board. However, it is not a situation that is sustainable or desired by the community – it should not be the sole responsibility of FZS to provide core finance for conservation, especially when revenues from Tourism are more than enough in total to finance management and development needs.

Commitment and needs

The local communities are committed to protect Van Long for their pride as well as the benefits that they receive. Van Long is now well known in the Province and in Vietnam. The local communities that benefit directly from the nature reserve through tourism are participating in conserving it through informing the community rangers and Reserve Management of any wrong doing that occurs in the reserve.

Several needs were expressed, including support for monitoring and more work on the biodiversity, particularly some of the plants and wetland species, and how to maintain and enhance certain edible, medicinal and commercial species. However, the main need was for the tourism revenues to be better shared and more resources made available to adequately recompense and encourage more local participation in protection activities.

Formal recognition

Van Long is legitimately recognised by the Provincial level under the Vietnamese national law for its biodiversity values. Ninh Binh Provincial People's Committee issued the Decision to establish Van Long as the wetland nature reserve in 2001. The provincial government gave formal recognition to Van Long but financial support is minimal. The Van Long Management Board does comprise community leadership and local representation, and the de facto management practice has been enshrined in management plans, aligned to changes and compromises that are clearly in the interests of preserving both the langurs and the integrity of the karst forest and the wetland area. The collaborative arrangement that recognises and formalizes a community-based management structure is almost unique in Vietnam. Given that the Van Long area is not in the remoter reaches of Vietnam's rural hinterland, and the communities are not of traditional peoples – it is in the heartland of the kinh majority Vietnamese, in a highly human dominated landscape, on the very outskirts of the capitol Hanoi. The clear issue is the lack of revenue from tourism from Van Long – it is unfairly directed to the provincial coffers and is not invested back to conservation work or local community development. The theme of the meeting was very much centred on how to wrestle control of the revenues back to the communities of the Van Long area.

Networking

There is a real need to connect to other similar CCAs to learn and exchange experiences. Van Long wants to be in the Vietnam Protected Area Association to share more lessons, but this will not likely resolve or reinforce the community-based roots of the Van Long area, nor help to divest control of tourism revenues back to the community. How the International CCA alliance can support Van Long is unclear, but access to models of other CCA's and CCA approaches may help motivate and catalyse leadership and initiative to seek means to both secure control of the tourism funding, but also in how to reinforce the role of community institutions in the allocation and distribution of these revenues to match community development needs with the management requirements of the Van Long reserve.

Synthesis and recommendations

- Van Long is functioning at the current scale of protection and management with constant support from outside. Tourism is bringing cash benefit to local people who directly involve in the operations. This has

encouraged the communities to care more for its resources. However, there is much at stake if management of both biodiversity conservation and tourism is not made sustainable.

- There are major threats from the cement factory which is situated right next to the Van Long Reserve, that will have long term negative impacts on the reserve and its people. These threats and issues have yet to be resolved. It is recommended that the Reserve and seven communes seek Provincial assistance in assessment and dialogue with the company. Solutions must be found, ideally a reduction in impacts and pollution, and an offset payment or other compensation or contribution to management of the Reserve should be negotiated.
- Many local people have sold their agriculture land to hotel owners to take on tourism operations as the main income source. This will put them at risk if the tourism crashes. The need to sustain Van Long is now the wish of those local communities depending on it for incomes.
- Conflicts in benefit sharing: no investment back from official revenue from tourism to conservation and the community. This issue must be resolved at the Provincial level. It is recommended that the Tourism Department of Ninh Binh Province allocate at least 50% of the tourism revenue from Van Long to support conservation activities and community development in Van Long as a direct return and payment for its ecosystem services. This will strengthen and sustain Van Long and its institutions.
- Long term funding and support from outside is crucial to Van Long. Short term projects are not working and impacts are often minimal. Long term and constant support (even very minimal) have proved its effectiveness over the long term.
- Local community participation in conservation and support has also proven to be key to conservation success. However, outside support is still needed greatly to enable the local communities to operate by themselves.
- The small size of Van Long is an advantage for management. With commitment and support from the local communes living around Van Long, it is a conservation success in Vietnam. However, the issue of power sharing and benefit sharing is overcasting the management of Van Long. It is important for Van Long's stakeholders to work out the best way for benefit sharing as well as management of conservation and tourism for its long term sustainability.
- Van Long, the goose that lays golden eggs, but it is not fed or well looked after. The Provincial government should look to reinvest in conservation, restoration and sustainable development for the area. Economic development projects in the area such as the cement production should take Van Long into consideration.
- Van Long has retained its natural and cultural significance for centuries, but strikingly so given the social and economic upheaval and change over the past few decades. As development accelerates in and around Van Long, it is increasingly becoming an island in a human-dominated, industrialised landscape. So far, the reaction and resilience of Van Long to rapid change has been beyond expectations (such as the five-fold increase in the langur population since 1993) but the crucial issues of conflict management and benefit-sharing are vital to resolve.

Annex 1:

Basic data

Site Name (in local language and in English)	Khu bao ton thien nhien dat ngap nuoc Van Long (Van Long Wetland Nature Reserve)
Country (include State and Province)	Ninh Binh Province, Vietnam
Area encompassed by the CCA (specify unit of measurement).	3,000 ha
GIS Coordinates (if available)	
Whether it includes sea areas (Yes or no)	No
Whether it includes freshwater (Yes or no)	Yes, it includes freshwater areas
Marine (Y or N)	No
Concerned community (name and approx. number of persons)	Van Long touches upon the administrative boundaries of Seven communes: Gia Hung, Lien Son, Gia Hoa, Gia Van, Gia Lap, Gian Tan and Gia Thanh; with about 46,700 people, all of whom can legally use and benefit from the Reserve. However, within these many villages, a select group of individuals, families, groups and other 'communities' really maintain usufruct rights and are directly concerned with the Reserve on a daily basis.
Is the community considering itself an indigenous people? (Please note Yes or No; if yes note which people)	All are Kinh people (Kinh is the majority in Vietnam) that have been living in the area for generations.
Is the community considering itself a minority? (Please note Yes or No, if yes on the basis of what, e.g. religion, ethnicity)	They are not a minority, although there is a Catholic community in the Van Long area.
Is the community permanently settled? (Please note Yes or No; if the community is mobile, does it have a customary transhumance territory?)	Yes, the communities are permanently settled, practicing wet rice cultivation.
Is the community local per capita income inferior, basically the same or superior to national value? (please note how confident you are about the information)	The local per capita income is inferior to the national value. The information is very confident. However, for a rural farming community, it is actually quite typical. Tourism incomes do provide an economic buffer.
Is the CCA recognised as a protected area by governmental agencies? (Yes or no; if yes, how?)	Yes, it was formally established by the Provincial level on 18 th December 2001 according to the

If no, is it otherwise recognized?) If yes, legal document? Establishment date?	Decision 2538 by the Ninh Binh Provincial People's Committee
Conflicts with land tenure, natural resource use?	Some border disputes with the neighbouring province. The Government has brought up the issue to the Parliament but it is not yet solved.
What is the main management objective (e.g. livelihood, cultural, spiritual...)	The management objectives are natural resources conservation for ecotourism, education and livelihood as well as culture and historical conservation.
By definition, a CCA fulfils a management objective. To which IUCN management category ¹ do you consider it would best fit (this does not imply that the management objective is consciously pursued by the concerned community, but that it is actually achieved)	IUCN Category IV b2: habitat/species management

Additional qualitative information

Main ecosystem type	Wetland, limestone forests, wet rice fields, traditional village ecosystem
Description of biodiversity & resources (ecosystems, species, functions) conserved by the CCA	Wetlands and limestone ecosystems are the main ecosystems conserved. Delacour's langur is a flagship species of the reserve. The wetland is also a functional system for the wet rice cultivation for years, it is a place for flood water relief and also water reservoir in drought for wet rice cultivation.
Description of local ethnic groups and languages spoken	Vietnamese language
Broad historical context of the CCA	Van Long has both wetland and limestone forests. The local people living in and around the areas use both wetlands and forests for natural resources. Van Long plays an important in wet rice cultivation in the area as its wetlands serve as a system for regulating water in and out of rice fields. Its wetlands also provide local people important protein sources such as freshwater fish and plants. In 1993, the discovery of the Delacour's langur, a globally endangered primate species made Van Long famous for its

¹ Please see http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wpc2003/pdfs/outputs/pascat/pascatrev_info3.pdf

	<p>biodiversity value. Van Long was then an important species sanctuary for this threatened species. The need to officially conserve the area became the interest of the local communities and the local authorities. Tourism started with interest groups who wanted to see the Delacour's langur, since then it becomes a popular tourist destination for tour operators from Hanoi and other provinces.</p>
Governance structure for the CCA (who takes management decisions, how?)	<p>There is currently two major decision making structures in Van Long. Conservation and protection of the reserve is managed by Van Long Wetland Nature Reserve's management board. This sector is representative of all the local communities surrounding Van Long to uphold official law and locally applicable institutions and regulations, through the Commune administrative system.</p> <p>The other sector is tourism management. This is under the management of the Provincial Tourism Department.</p>
Length of time the governance model has been in place	Formally, for eight years
Land and resource ownership in the CCA	As per Vietnam, all land belongs to the State. Households are allocated plots (household, agricultural) on 99-year leases which can be traded. Van Long is a mosaic of public commons, State land (the reserve and wetland), and private freehold land.
Type of land use in the CCA	Wet rice cultivation, forestry, grazing, residential and long term cultivation
Existence of written or oral management plans and specific rules for the use of natural resources in the CCA	Five year management plan
Map and zoning of the CCA (please attach if available and relevant,)	Maps attached
Relevant pictures with captions (please attach if available)	Attached
Major threats to biodiversity and/or the CCA governance system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rapid development of the cement factory right next to the reserve is a major threat to its environment and its

	<p>endangered species.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism operations/ benefit sharing from tourism: Van Long is increasingly a popular destination for tourists. The management of tourism needs to be managed well to present any negative impacts. Benefit sharing is currently a major concern between the stakeholders and an equal system of benefit sharing is needed to sustain Van Long.
Local CCA-relevant features, stories, names, rules and practices	Van Long is relatively new in conservation management. The local communities have been always using it for resources for generations, especially wetland resources. Since conservation of Van Long, ecotourism has become the major income source for the local people.

Contact individuals and organizations: please add contacts directly related to the community governing the CCA

Do Van Cac, director, Van Long Wetland Nature Reserve Management Board, Van Long, Gia Vien District. Ninh Binh Province

Nguyen Thi Thu Hien, Project Assistant for Van Long, FZS based at Endangered Primate Rescue Centre, Cuc Phuong National Park, Ninh Binh Province.

References² : please list any available references describing the conservation, cultural and socio-economic values of the CCA

Report on biodiversity conservation and management in Van Long Wetland Nature Reserve from 2001-2007. February 2008 (in Vietnamese).

² Please use the same format of the references in: <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ceesp/Publications/TILCEPA/guidelinesindigenouspeople.pdf>

HOA BINH
PROVINCE

Nho Quan District

MAP OF VAN LONG WETLAND NATURE RESERVE, GIAN VIEN DISTRICT, NINH BINH PROVINCE

SCALE 1:25,000

Ha Nam Province

Lien Son Commune

Legend

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------|--|--|
| | Provincial boundary | | Temples |
| | District boundary | | Guard stations |
| | Commune boundary | | Reserve's demarcation points |
| | Provincial road | | Reserve's information board |
| | Dirty road | | Reserve boundary |
| | Contours | | Reserve's core zone boundary |
| | Canals | | Boundary for restoration zone |
| | Electric lines | | Boundary for management units |
| | Dikes | | Guard station boundaries |
| | Foot path | | Grass and bush land |
| | Residential area | | Cultivation land for crops and fruit trees |
| | Rivers, lakes | | Forest plantation area |
| | Wetland | | Limestone mountains with trees |
| | Langur distribution | | Forest plantation area |
| | Fire observation units | | |

Gia Van
Commune

Gia Thanh
Commune

Gia Lap Commune

GIA LẬP

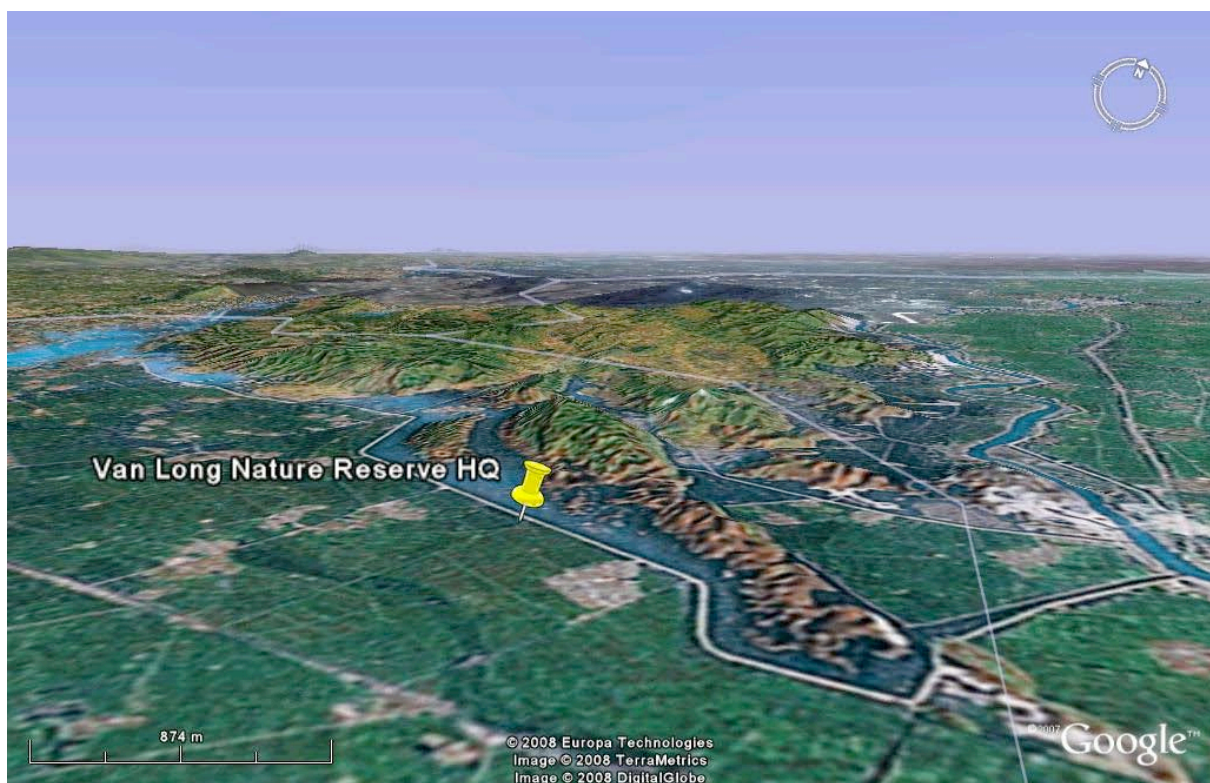
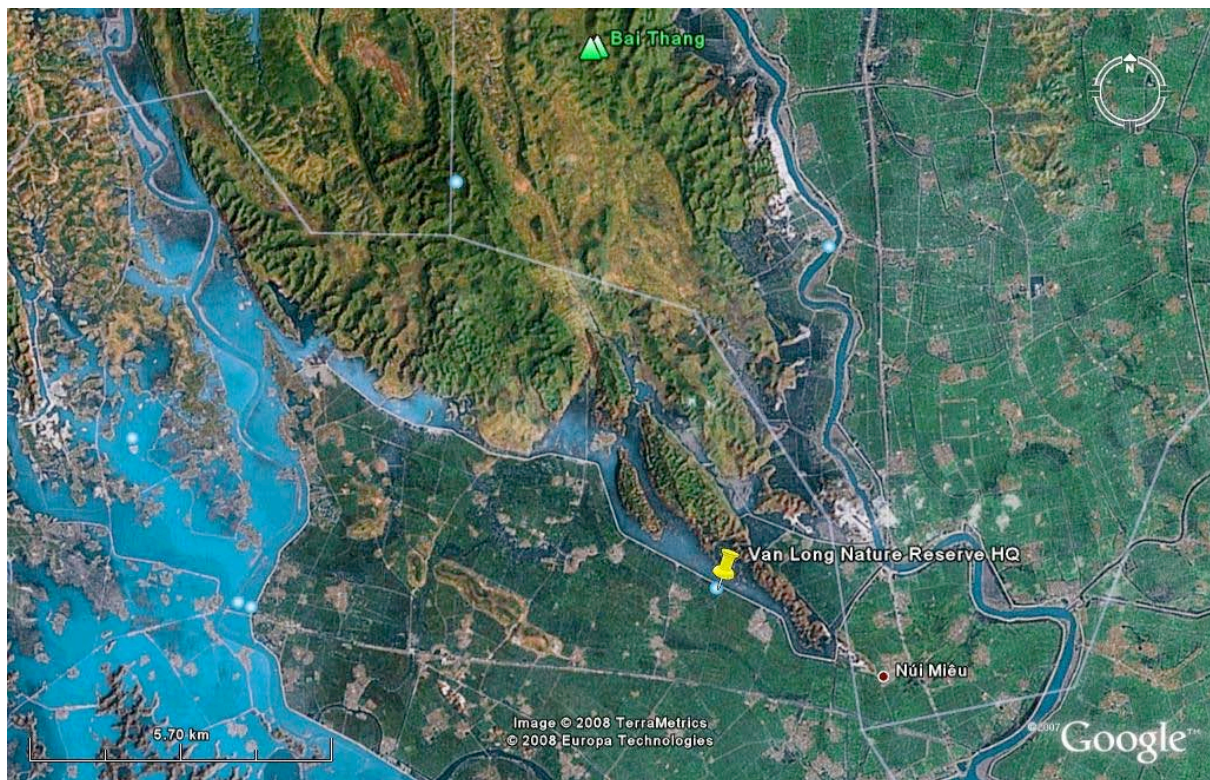


Figure 1 Van Long aerial photo from Google Earth, Van Long is surrounded by a water system, so its wetland is very diverse. The dramatic rise of the limestone karst is also a haven for wildlife. Van Long's biodiversity is not properly assessed or studied yet. The conservation efforts so far is on the Delacour's langur with consistent support from FZS through its Primate Centre based in Cuc Phuong National Park. They have contributed greatly to Van Long's success. Long term external commitment in supporting Van Long is still important for its future, but equivalent domestic investment from the Provincial authorities is crucial.

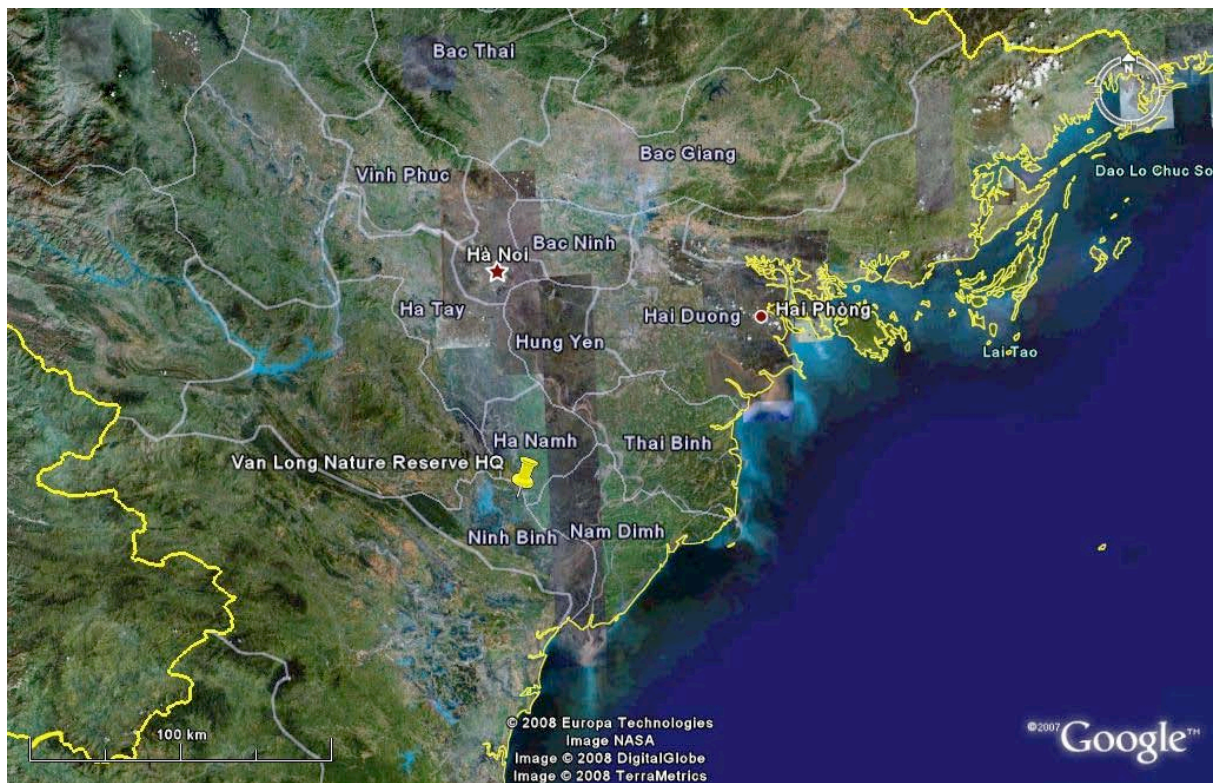


Figure 2 Van Long is in the North of Vietnam

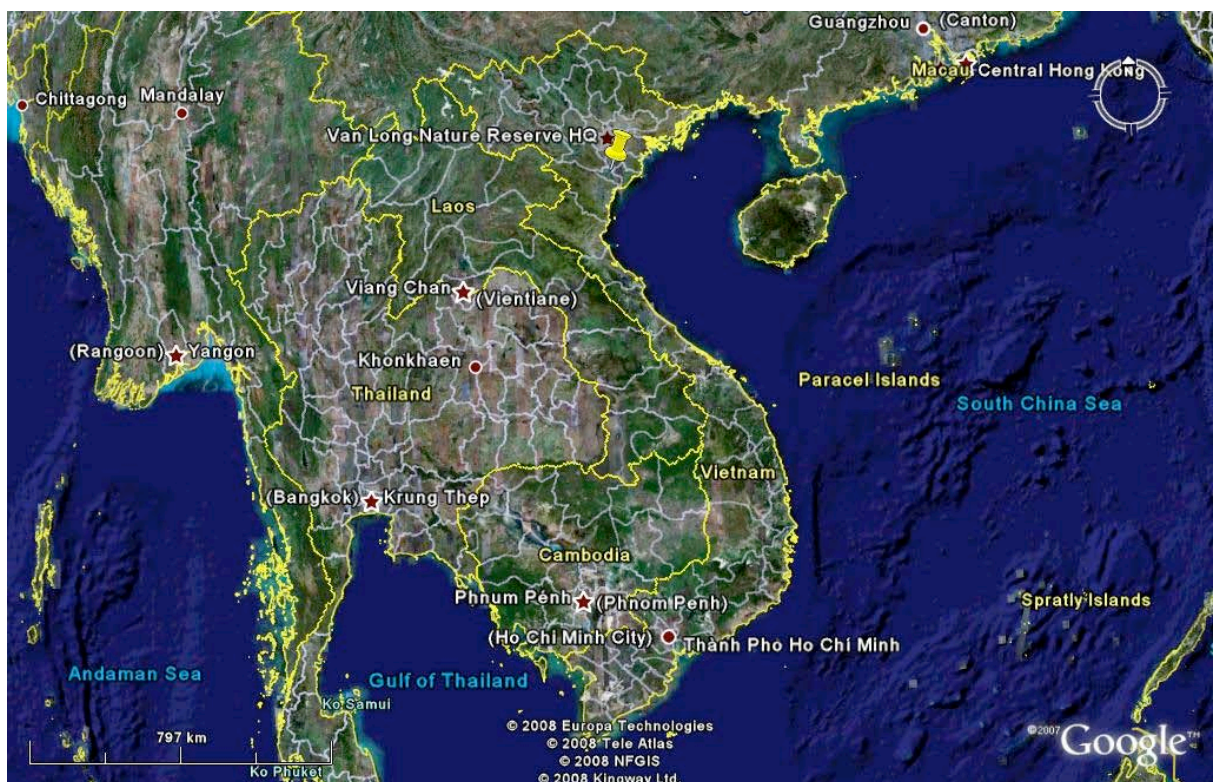


Figure 3 Map of Vietnam