

10. Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name Phou Hin Poun **Translated** Limestone Mountains

Area

150,000 ha (in PM Decree 164)
202,911 ha (according to DFRM, 2013)
237,987 ha (according to IUCN, 2017)

Date of designation

29th October 1993 under PM Decree 164.

Location

Latitude: 17°26' - 18°10' N; Longitude: 104°24' - 105°11' E

Province

Khammouane

Districts

Hinboun	33 %
Khounkham	19 %
Mahaxsay	2 %
Nakai	20 %
Nhommalath	21 %
Thakek	5 %

Boundaries

The decree 164 boundary follow the Nam Hinboun in the north and northwest. The boundary then largely follows the edge of the main limestone massif, the Nam Don River in the southwest, then highway 12 to just before Nhommalath. It then follows the depression between the Nakai Plateau and the limestone to the Nam Hinboun. The current management boundary is different from the decree 164 boundary, and includes areas to the north of the Nam Hinboun. It requires further refinement to take into account additional areas with high conservation values, and to delete areas with low values.

Access

Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area is about 18 km northeast of the provincial capital, Thakek, in Khammouane province along Route 12. Indeed Route 12 forms part of the southern border of the protected area. At KM 54 along Route 12, an access road enters the eastern portion of the reserve, and passes through eight villages. A second major access road is at KM along Route 13 near Ban Nongboua, on the southwestern periphery of the reserve. This road provides road access to a further 14 villages. Route 8 provides access to the northernmost parts of the reserve, as well as a third access road which enters the protected area in the northwest from Nahin district town. This access road passes through five buffer zone villages and 10 enclave villages, with the road terminating at Kong Lor Cave. A number of other access roads run along the periphery of protected area as well as provide access to isolated villages.

Map Sheets

Scale 1: 50,000

5845-2	5945-3	5945-2
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5844-1	5944-4	5944-1	
	5944-3	5944-2	6044-3
		5943-1	6043-4

Scale II: 100,000

E-48-65	E-48-66	
E-48-77	E-48-78	
	E-48-90	E-48-91

BRIEF HISTORY

1993	NBCA declared in October
1995-2000	FOMACOP NBCA Sub-Programme undertaken
1999	Official change of name from “Khammouane Limestone” to “Phou Hin Poun”
1999	Management plan prepared for Phou Hin Poun NBCA
2011-2013	Phase 1: A 2.5 year joint project between FFI & IUCN, “Protecting globally significant gibbon populations in Ailaoshan Nature Reserve, Yunnan and Phou Hin Phoun National Protected Area in Lao PDR” funded by the ARCUS Foundation
2014-2017	Phase 2: A three-year project by IUCN, entitled “Advancing Protection for Southern White-Cheeked Gibbons in Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area, Lao PDR.” funded by the ARCUS Foundation

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

Staffing

24 staff (6 PAFO, 18 DAFO from Hinboun (6), Thakek (6), and Gnommalath (6) Districts), 1 contract advisor. Discussions are being held with Nakai District to provide additional staff.

Management Structure

NBCA head is based at PFO, while the Deputy head is a DAFO staff. NBCA staff at each DAFO are then organised into functional units according to management themes.

Buildings

NPA office (Thakek), and
Three field bases (Thakek, Gnommalath, Hinboun Districts).

Financial Support & Training

IUCN with the support of Arcus Foundation working in three districts, namely Hinboun, Khounkham and Nakai.

Current Management Priorities

- Village land-use planning
- Zoning of the Controlled Use Zone and Total Protection Zone
- Law enforcement patrolling and monitoring
- Assessing tourism values, including caves, viewpoints and limestone biodiversity values

Possible Research Topics

- Population densities of Southern White-Cheeked Gibbon (*Nomascus siki*) in the TPZ of Phou Hin Poun.
- Population densities of Lao Langur *Trachypithecus laotum* in the TPZ of Phou Hin Poun
- Mapping the geographical range and transition zone of Lao Langur *Trachypithecus laotum*, Indochinese Black langur (*Trachypithecus ebenus*) and the Hatinh langur (*Trachypithecus hatinhensis*) with phylogenetic studies on the different populations in Phou Hin Phoun.

Other Projects Active in the Area

- Ecotourism development (Tetraktys, Konglor & Natan)
- Collaborative management with villagers.
- IUCN Southern White-Cheeked Gibbon conservation project in Hinboun, Khounkham & Nakai
- Improved natural resource information.
- Village information collection
- National Protected Area boundary demarcation.
- Livelihood development linked to threat mitigation.
- Outreach and conservation awareness activities, including market surveys.

BIO-PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Physical Features

Predominately limestone karst ranges with steep slopes, cliffs and bluffs and caves in many areas, rising to 1500 metres near Phou Mon. Flat bottomed valleys or *kouans* ranging in size from a few hundred hectares to 40 square kilometres. Major rivers include the Nam Hinboun in the north and west, and the Nam Pathen, Nam Pakan and Nam Don in the west and south. Many of these rivers flow through underground caves, the largest of which is between Kong Lor and Natan on the Nam Hinboun and is navigable by boats.

Elevation

Climate

Main Forest Types

Semi-evergreen forest, vines and bamboo forest, mixed deciduous forest, deciduous dipterocarp forest. The vegetation of the large *kouans* is heavily modified and dominated by secondary species.

Forest Cover

This calculation was realized by the Forest Cover Monitoring Project (FCMP) MRZ/GTZ. It is based on interpretation of 1996/97 Landsat TM with the NPA boundaries as shown on topographical maps 1:100.000 provided by the FOMACOP project. Verification with the original documents has not taken place. Therefore the data might be only approximate.

Forest Code	Area / ha	% of Total Area
Evergreen/Mixed, Continuous Cover, High Cover Density (11, 17)	3,019	1.6
Evergreen / Mixed, Continuous Cover, Medium Cover Density (12, 18)	19,354	10.7
Evergreen / Mixed, Mosaic (13, 19)	886	0.4
Deciduous Continuous Cover (20)	3,123	1.6
Deciduous Mosaic (22)	116	0.6

Evergreen Wood and Shrubland (61, 63, 65)	55,983	31.1
Dry Wood and Shrubland (64)	440	0.2
Rocks	93,250	51.7
Mosaic of Cropping (81, 82)	350	0.1
Agricultural Land (91)	3,628	2.0
Grand Total	180,149	100.0

Other Habitat Features

Extensive areas of semi-vegetated and bare limestone; extensive caves; limited wetland areas, including several nongs; habitat linkages to the Nakai plateau and Nam Kading National Protected Area.

Key Wildlife Species

The following species lists were generated through four intensive biodiversity surveys, which are undertaken in 1997 and 1998. The results of these surveys are described in the following reports: “Notes on wildlife and habitats in Khammouane Limestone National Biodiversity Conservation Area, Khammouane Province, Lao PDR” produced by Timmins (1997); “A survey of habitats and mammals in and around Khammouane Limestone National Biodiversity Conservation Area, Lao PDR” by Steinmetz (1998); “Report on a survey of bats in Khammouan Limestone NBCA” by Francis and Vongkhamheng (1998); and “A survey of amphibians and reptiles in Khammouane Limestone National Biodiversity Conservation Area” By Stuart (1998). No notable research has been undertaken since that time, to warrant modifications to these lists. Therefore it should be acknowledged that some of the large mammalian species and other high value species (e.g. Southern Serow) may have undergone decline or even extinction within the reserve during the intermittent period, particularly those species targeted by the wildlife trade.

Confirmed mammal species of conservation interest in Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	National Priority	Global Threat Category	Lao Risk Status
Sunda Pangolin	<i>Manis javanica</i>		CR	
Loris species	<i>Nycticebus spp.</i>	-	-	-
Pig-tailed Macaque	<i>Macaca leonine</i>	-	VU	PARL
Assamese Macaque	<i>Macaca assamensis</i>	-	VU	PARL
Francois’s Langur	<i>Trachypithecus ebenus</i>	-	VU	PARL
Southern White-cheeked Gibbon	<i>Nomascus siki</i>	HNP	DD	PARL
Black Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa bicolor</i>	-	0	PARL
Hairy-footed Flying Squirrel	<i>Trogopterus pearsonii</i>	-	GNT	LKL
Red-cheeked Flying Squirrel	<i>Hylopetes spadiceus</i>	-	0	LKL
Phayre’s Flying Squirrel	<i>Hylopetes phayrei</i>	-	0	LKL
East Asian Porcupine	<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>		VU	0
Kha Nyau	<i>Laonastes aenigmamus</i>	HNP	LC	PARL
Asiatic Black Bear	<i>Ursus thibetnanus</i>	-	VU	-
Large-toothed Ferret Badger	<i>Melogale personata</i>	-	0	LKL
Binturong	<i>Arctictis binturong</i>		VU	
Medium-sized cat species	<i>Species not identified</i>	-	-	-
Big cat species	<i>Species not identified</i>	-	-	-
Asian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>	HNP	EN	ARL
Sambar	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>	-	0	PARL

Gaur	<i>Bos gaurus</i>	HNP	VU	ARL
Chinese Serow	<i>Capricornis milneedwardsii</i>	-	VU	PARL

Confirmed bird species of conservation interest in Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	National Priority	Global Threat Category	Lao Risk Status
Red-collared Woodpecker	<i>Picus rabieri</i>	-	VU	0
Wreathed Hornbill	<i>Aceros undulatus</i>	-	0	ARL
Great Hornbill	<i>Buceros bicornis</i>		NT	
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	-	0	LKL
Sooty Babbler	<i>Stachyris herberti</i>	-	VU	0

A total of 81 species of reptile, 47 species of amphibians and 145 fish species have been recorded within the protected area.

Classification key

National Priority Categories ANP: Acute National Priority; HNP: High National Priority; INP: Intermediate National Priority
Global Threat Categories 0: not listed as of concern; DD: data deficient; GNT: globally near-threatened; GT-CR: globally threatened - critical; GT-EN: globally threatened - endangered; GT-VU: globally threatened - vulnerable; n/a: not applicable.
Lao Risk Status 0: not at risk in Lao PDR; ARL: at risk in Lao PDR; CARL: conditionally at risk in Lao PDR; LKL: little known in Lao PDR; n/a: not applicable; PARL: potentially at risk in Lao PDR.

(Duckworth *et al.*, 1999)

MAIN THREATS

The main threats comprise:

- Logging of remaining mature forest areas adjacent to the protected area.
- Limestone quarrying.
- Copper and gold mining in Hinboun
- Tin mining in Hinboun
- Forest clearance, and expansion and agricultural lands
- Impacts from hydro-electricity development on Nam Hinboun River and on elephant migration routes.
- New road proposals in Nakai District.
- Increased village populations and resource use.
- Hunting.
- Wildlife trade.
- Fires.
- Uncertain boundaries.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Stakeholder Villages and Population

Three types of villages are identified as priority village partners with respect to their location and natural resource use patterns:

- I Villages situated inside Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area
- II Villages situated outside Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area with use of agricultural land and other resources inside the protected area
- III Villages situated outside Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area with the village boundary touching the protected area boundary and with resource use other than land use inside the National Protected Area.

The population data were collected by the State Planning Committee of the National Statistical Centre for the National Population Census 2015.

District	No. of Villages	No. of Villages by type			Population
		I	II	III	
Hinboun	32				
Kounkham	21				
Mahaxay	10				
Nakai	8	5	3	0	7,581
Nhommalath	15				
Thakek	9				
TOTAL	95				

Population statistics and ethnicity for the 32 guardian villages in Hinboun district, Khammouane province in Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area.

No.	Name of Village	Village cluster	Ethnic group	No of HHs	No of persons	Location
1	Homephan			51	261	Outside
2	Nakhi			170	908	Overlap
3	Thami			178	946	Overlap
4	Napho			225	1577	Outside
5	Buamlou			69	447	Inside
6	Nathan					Overlap
7	Nahang			83	448	Overlap
8	Nano			54	301	Overlap
9	Phonman			92	559	Outside
10	Bong			150	719	Inside
11	Phipeng			45	231	Inside
12	Naan			56	298	Inside
13	Huana			123	621	Inside
14	Kuankacha			66	440	Inside
15	Phontio			103	509	Inside
16	Noi			124	650	Inside
17	Khao			70	344	Inside
18	Nakhambo			75	422	Inside
19	Thayo			67	516	Inside
20	Phalem			37	186	Inside
21	Nongseun			41	203	Inside
22	Boneng			262	1,484	Inside
23	Thongkha			77	446	Inside
24	Vangphung			41	224	Inside

25	Nasa			34	195	Inside
26	Natenoy					Overlap
27	Nongdong			67	339	Overlap
28	Pakveng			70	321	Overlap
29	Pakthuk			53	241	Overlap
30	Songkhon			70	323	Overlap
31	Sang			63	250	Overlap
32	Vangmon			94	357	Outside
Total						

(Provincial Forest Resource Management Office, Khammouane Province; National Statistical Centre for the National Population Census, 2015).

Population statistics and ethnicity for the 21 guardian villages in Kounkham district, Khammouane province in Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area.

No.	Name of Village	Village cluster	Ethnic group	No of HHs	No of persons	Location
1	Phachua					Overlap
2	Thanathai					Overlap
3	Huaypeuak					Outside
4	Phahangneua					Overlap
5	Nakhok					Overlap
6	Thonglom					Overlap
7	Vangdao					Overlap
8	Don					Overlap
9	Nonghang					Inside
10	Naphuak					Overlap
11	Phonthong					Inside
12	Nameuang					Overlap
13	Nakay					Inside
14	Nakham					Inside
15	Keng					Inside
16	Namnon					Inside
17	Phonyeng					Inside
18	Yang					Inside
19	Koub					Inside
20	Anw					Inside
21	Konglor					Inside
Total						

(Provincial Forest Resource Management Office, Khammouane Province; National Statistical Centre for the National Population Census, 2015).

Population statistics and ethnicity for the 10 guardian villages in Mahaxay district, Khammouane province in Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area.

No.	Name of Village	Village cluster	Ethnic group	No of HHs	No of persons	Location
1	Lao			143	630	Overlap
2	Nakham			136	613	Overlap
3	Nadou			41	194	Overlap
4	Nadi			69	387	Overlap
5	Ten			146	705	Overlap
6	Lak 9			40	199	Overlap
7	Nakoknai					Overlap

8	Phonkham			65	307	Outside
9	Khoksavang			35	168	Inside
10	Phachoum Khouy			51	218	Overlap
Total						

(Provincial Forest Resource Management Office, Khammouane Province; National Statistical Centre for the National Population Census, 2015).

Population statistics and ethnicity for the eight guardian villages in Nakai district, Khammouane province in Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area.

No.	Name of Village	Village cluster	Ethnic group	No of HHs	No of persons	Location
1	Thong			274	1,487	Overlap
2	Yang			294	1,391	Overlap
3	Meuangluang			298	1,676	Overlap
4	Kuan			128	762	Inside
5	Nabon			61	359	Inside
6	Phadang			76	387	Inside
7	Nahang			164	973	Inside
8	Natan			92	546	Inside
Total				1,387	7,581	

(Provincial Forest Resource Management Office, Khammouane Province; National Statistical Centre for the National Population Census, 2015).

Population statistics and ethnicity for the 15 guardian villages in Nhommalath district, Khammouane province in Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area.

No.	Name of Village	Village cluster	Ethnic group	No of HHs	No of persons	Location
1	Phitsikhai			104	476	Inside
2	Phonsay			79	402	Inside
3	Tat			216	1087	Inside
4	Luang			173	810	Inside
5	Pomkhoun			151	715	Inside
6	Phonat			125	610	Inside
7	Phonsi			127	649	Inside
8	Khouanphanh			250	1,095	Overlap
9	Phathong			108	547	Overlap
10	Nhommalath Tai			170	748	Overlap
11	Nong ping			113	562	Overlap
12	Nafaimai					Overlap
13	That			201	931	Overlap
14	Lao					Outside
15	Thathot			207	943	Overlap
Total						

(Provincial Forest Resource Management Office, Khammouane Province; National Statistical Centre for the National Population Census, 2015).

Population statistics and ethnicity for the nine guardian villages in Thakek district, Khammouane province in Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area.

No.	Name of Village	Village cluster	Ethnic group	No of HHs	No of persons	Location
1	Nalem			75	385	Overlap
2	Doi			88	438	Overlap

3	Nadou					Inside
4	Nase			74	393	Overlap
5	Nakhang Xang			99	551	Outside
6	Nonsavang			115	580	Overlap
7	Nayo					Overlap
8	Kuanphavang					Overlap
9	Phin			100	503	Overlap
Total						

(Provincial Forest Resource Management Office, Khammouane Province; National Statistical Centre for the National Population Census, 2015).

Ethnic Composition

Lao Loum (Kaleung, Tai Bo, Tai Sam and Meuy sub groups); Mangong (Kwa, Tro sub groups) – mainly in the east of the NBCA.

Principal Local Resource Uses

TOURISM VALUES

This site has very high potential for development of ecotourism.

Konglor Cave: This amazing 7.5 km-long limestone cave was formed by the Hinboun River which flows through the cave all-year-round. There is a boat ride through the main cave, which is up to 90 metres wide and 100 metres high.

Kampaeng Yak (The Giant Wall): Legend tells that the 15km long giant wall was erected in the 9th Century by the Sikhottabong Kingdom. Some say, however, that it is a natural sandstone formation which was incorporated into the civilization's defence system. The best place to visit the Giant Wall is 8 km north of Thakek on Route 13 where it reaches a height of 16 metres with an unbroken section 75 metres long.

Konglor Cave Walk 1 day Walk to Konglor Cave and take a dip in the thundering Tad Namsanam and Tad Mouang waterfalls

Boat through Konglor cave, stopping to visit spectacular stalactites and rock formations within the vast cavern. Trek through limestone karst landscape to Tad Namsanam waterfall and stay in remote villages.

Pristine Phou Hin Poun (Phalaem Trek) 2 days Trek through Phou Hin Poun NPA and experience rural village life. The limestone-studded landscape offers pristine monsoon lakes and spectacular caves.

Nong Paa Fa (Buddha Cave) is one of the most important religious sites in Khammouane Province, a cave containing over 200 ancient Buddha images that lay forgotten for hundreds of years. Take a forest walk, stopping for a refreshing swim at Nong Tao (Turtle Lake) and Tham Nong Paseum cave.

From Thakek, explore fascinating caves in the southwest of Phou Hin Poun NPA and gain an insight into rural Lao culture. Visit Tham Xang (elephant cave), Tham Xiangliab, Tham Phaya Inh and Tham Nam Aen, Nam Don River and the legendary "Giant Wall".

MANAGEMENT PLANS AND ZONING

A Phou Hin Poun National Biodiversity Conservation Area Management Plan was prepared in 2000. However the quality of the content is poor. Zoning of the protected area has not been undertaken, although it is anticipated that large parts of the protected area will become total protection zones because of difficult access.

PRINCIPAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROTECTED AREA SYSTEM

Biodiversity Values

Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area is biogeographically distinct from other National Protected Areas. It is one of two protected areas in Central Indochina Limestone, and protects a representative sample of the drier western limit of this feature. It is globally important for the Lao Langur *Trachypithecus laotum*, and contains nationally important populations of Assamese Macaques and White-cheeked gibbons. Phou Hin Poun also provides part of the range for one of the largest and most viable populations of Asian Elephant, and for gaur. Furthermore, Phou Hin Poun contains good populations of both species of bear, a nationally significant Serow population and at least 43 species of bat (largest bat diversity of any National Protected Area).

The bare-faced bulbul *Pycnonotus hualon* is a member of the bulbul family, was newly described from the Central Indochina Limestone in 2009. Phou Hin Poun is also a type locality for the Sooty Babbler *Stachyris herberti*. A new species – Limestone Leaf Warbler – is also present.

Phou Hin Poun National Protected Area also contains at least 14 species of turtle and is nationally significant for the conservation of reptiles.

Watershed Values

Provides catchment protection for parts of the Nam Hinboun, Nam Pakan, and Nam Don rivers, and the Thakek water supply. Upper catchments of these rivers have distinctive milky coloured limestone water.

Cultural Values

There are numerous temples and shrines in limestone caves and a number of sacred forests and areas. At Ban Na there are the remains of an extensive town called Alan which covers 20+ hectares, including remains of a number of buildings built of brick. Ban Nakhu has the remains of a stupa built of brick about 3-400 years ago.

There are also archaeological sites with pottery as well as Indochina War sites and trails.

Contact

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