

Russian-Vietnamese ornithological research in Vietnam

The joint Russian-Vietnamese programme for the study of faunal ecology in Vietnam's tropical forests began in 1978 and for more than 20 years biologists from the Institute of Evolution and Ecology of Animals and the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources have been working together in the tropical ecosystems of Vietnam's forests. One of the major foci of the partnership has been the study of birds, of which there are over 800 species in Vietnam, including many endemics.

Ornithological research was first undertaken on the Central Plateau (Tay Nguyen Plateau), as the forest in this area was considered only minimally disturbed as a result of the Second Indochina War. The major part of the study has been carried out in Buon Luoi Research Station, Gia Lai province, south-central Vietnam (app. 14°20' N and 108°30'E). This station was named after the nearby village, although it is also known as Kon Ha Nung Tropical Forest Ecosystem.

The studies, carried out for over ten years, are proving to be significant. Stepanyan, a Russian ornithologist, and his Vietnamese colleagues have recorded hundreds of bird species. Within the first two years, 221 birds were recorded¹ and a further 47 were recorded over the next 15 years, raising the total number recorded by 1995, to 268.² Among the birds recorded are several threatened and restricted-range species: Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus*, Crested Argus *Rheinardia ocellata*, Germain's Peacock Pheasant *Polyplectron germaini*, Siamese Fireback *Lophura diardi*, Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata*, Blyth's Kingfisher *Alcedo hercules*, Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*, Barbellied Pitta *Pitta elliotii*, Black-hooded Laughingthrush *Garrulax milleti* and Grey-faced Tit Babbler *Macronous kelleyi*. The richness of avifauna and the very diverse ecosystem of the area, led the researchers to propose protective measures as early as 1983.³ The data and records collected have been published in a number of works.⁴⁻⁸

The partnership has also operated in the southern province of Dong Nai. In 1989, Mada Forest Research Station was established by the Vietnam-Russian Tropical Centre. This station has not only been used for faunistic studies in the past



Members of the Russian-Vietnamese ornithological research team. From left to right: Dr. Nguyen Cu, Unknown, Petzischev Boris Ivanovich

but also remains a major centre for studying avian ecology and biology as well as other ornithological activities in Vietnam.⁹⁻¹⁴

The Russian-Vietnamese partnership is still going strong today and in the last few years expeditions have been undertaken to Sa Pa, north-west Vietnam, Vu Quang Nature Reserve, north-central Vietnam and Cat Tien National Park in the south and valuable data on the distribution, biology and ecology of birds has been collected.^{14,15}

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