

# BAI TU LONG

## National Park

### Bai Tu Long Bay Environmental Education Programme Launched

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*This information sheet is the third of a series that are produced quarterly for distribution both in the National Park and surrounding buffer-zone communes.*

*The aim of the newsletters is to enable the National Park Authority to provide regular information to the people of Bai Tu Long Bay.*



**A teacher training workshop was held on Van Don island**

*Mr. Pham Ngoc Huan  
Department of Education and  
Training Deputy Director*

**B**ai Tu Long National Park is an invaluable area with impressive forest and marine resources, creating a diverse ecological environment with very important significance for Van Don district in marine economic and tourism development. The protection and sustainable conservation of Bai Tu Long National Park is not only the responsibility of every social organization, but also of future generations.

With future generations in mind, since October 2002, Frontier - Việt Nam, Bai Tu Long National Park and the Van Don Education Bureau have worked together to draft an environmental education course for the schools within the Bai Tu Long Bay area. With enthusiastic co-ordination

of education officials and teachers, park staff and Frontier project staff, 8 lessons have been developed. Before the programme officially begins in September, 2003 the district Education Bureau decided to pilot the first four lessons in the in 5 buffer zone commune schools, in the middle of April this year. With the project as well as the Park's support, the district Education Bureau has organized training workshops for the headmasters and biology and geography teachers to carry out the pilot program. According to the preliminary assessment on teaching activities so far, the results showed a positive sign about the existing understanding and the increased knowledge of students about their surrounding nature and environment.

At present, we are making a great effort to complete the 8-lesson

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# Promising Prospects for Sea Turtles in Vietnam

*Hoang Minh Hong*  
Communication officer-WWF

**T**he sea turtle is an amazing animal. It has lived millions of years, surviving even the meteor crash that led to the extinction of the dinosaur.

For many years, Vietnam has attracted sea turtles, which come to lay their eggs on the country's long and beautiful beaches. Female sea turtles crawling slowly out of the water onto the sandy beach in the night, digging holes and laying round white eggs was once a familiar sight for fishers along the country's many coasts. Eventually, a hundred baby turtles would hatch, emerging from each nest and running to the sea. Decades later, these same turtles, now mature, would return to exactly the same place where they were born and there repeat the timeless pattern, laying more eggs, and by doing so fulfill nature's grand design.

But for the past few years, the situation has become very serious for the sea turtle in Vietnamese waters. People's behaviour has led to a drastic decline in their numbers. Pollution, destructive fishing, the collection of turtle eggs, and hunting for food and fashion accessories have decimated the turtle population. The scarcity of remaining sea turtles has become alarming. Five of the planet's seven species of sea turtles are found in Vietnam and all are either facing extinction or highly endangered. These include green, hawksbill, loggerhead, Olive Ridley and leatherback turtles.

WWF Indochina has identified the sea turtle as one of the six flagship species that needs to be protected in Indochina.



**Technical training on turtle identification**

***“Indeed, we did not know that sea turtles are so valuable. I must admit that I have eaten turtle meat before. If we had not attended this workshop, we would make even more mistakes”***

WWF began conserving turtles in 1994, and in 1995 a sea turtle conservation project was launched in Con Dao Island for the first time. In 2000, the Marine and Coastal Programme of WWF Indochina was established, and sea turtle conservation activities were extended to Nui Chua Natural Reserve in Ninh Thuan province. In 2002, this programme was expanded to include Phu Quoc Island in Kien Giang province.

With the aim of replicating this success in all coastal areas of Vietnam, WWF collaborated with IUCN (the World Conservation

Union) to organize workshops on management and conservation of the sea turtle in several provinces in the country. One of these workshops was held in early April in Van Don district in Quang Ninh province, where some of the most beautiful beaches in Vietnam, and Bai Tu Long National Park are located. It was attended by park staff, officials of the provincial and district fisheries department, and representatives of the local government, fishing companies and fishing communities. There they heard for the first time about the imminent danger facing the sea turtle. They also learned about what WWF is doing to save the turtle from extinction.

Surprisingly, they also discovered from the presentation that the exploitation of sea turtles is illegal in Vietnam. In order to play their part in the preservation of this highly endangered reptile, participants

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were also trained to identify different species, to tag and monitor sea turtles, and to protect and take care of their eggs. And maybe for the first time many participants realized how they were contributing to the destruction of the environment.

“The presentations and information were clearly presented and applicable to the local situation, so it directly affects the awareness of the participants. I hope they will later share this knowledge with others in their community. I would like to propose that WWF organize

more such activities in Quang Ninh province, so that we can feel just as proud of the wonderful animals living in our sea, like these turtles, as the world heritage Ha-long Bay,” said Nguyen Phi Hung, vice director of Quang Ninh provincial Fisheries Department.

## Local Teachers Join Study Tour to Cuc Phuong National Park

Following the teacher training workshop on February 11<sup>th</sup>, a study tour to Cuc Phuong National Park was organised from the February 12-14<sup>th</sup>. Participants included 26 staff and teachers of Van Don district department of education and training, and National Park and Frontier-Vietnam staff.

The aims of the study tour were to provide the teachers with an example of an existing environmental education (EE) programme, and to increase their understanding of environmental values through contact with the National Park and the educational resources that it provides.

Cuc Phuong National Park currently implements an ENV (Education for Nature Vietnam) EE programme that focuses on its buffer zone communes. Therefore, the study tour was seen as an ideal opportunity to provide an example of an existing, successful EE Programme. The participants were given a talk by Miss Quyen (director of ENV) on their Programme and were given a tour of the Cuc Phuong nature centre (an effective EE resource established by ENV). In addition, participants had the opportunity to observe EE lessons conducted at local schools, and to visit some of the major attractions of the National Park, including the Primate Rescue Centre.



*The teachers visited Cuc Phuong nature centre*

***“We wish to have more opportunities to gain experience and knowledge about the environment and environmental conservation”***

Participants were taken around the Interpretation Centre by an ENV staff member, which allowed a more structured visit. Information, questions and ideas were given for the group as a whole and thus participants received a good over-

view of Cuc Phuong National Park, and an insight into the education methods used by the Park in general and by the Centre in particular.

Although the duration of the study tour was short, participants were committed to using the available time to gather as much information as possible and experience a successful EE programme in practice. The wide range of information collected will be fed into the next phase of the Bai Tu Long Bay environmental education programme in June/July of this year.

# Dugong Survey in Bai Tu Long National Park



*Extract from the report of*

*Mr. Nick Cox - WWF Indochina*

**R**ecently Nick Cox, WWF Indochina Programme consultant and Nguyen Tri Chung, Environment and Sustainable Development Institute (formerly of FiPi) implemented a rapid survey of ecosystem in Bai Tu Long National Park. The purpose of the trip was to get an overall introduction to the marine and terrestrial ecosystems represented in the Park, and the neighbouring communities. However, the major target of this survey was to investigate reports that dugongs are still present in the area.

During the survey in and outside Bai Tu Long National Park, the survey group collected much helpful information about this

*One of the pictures used in the survey*

species. Locals confirmed the existence of dugongs when shown photographs and illustrations, and when we discussed the characteristic feeding trails left by dugongs in seagrass beds.

Like other areas in Vietnam, local fishermen report that prior to 1975, dugongs were much more common than they are now. According to the interview with local fishermen the main season for dugong sightings appears to be from September to January. Lack of sightings in other months may be due to changes in fishing activities and also adverse weather conditions. More detailed information was given regarding the incidence of dugong sightings relative to the lunar calendar and in relation to the changing tides over a lunar month cycle. For instance, in one area (to the west of Minh Chau

commune), dugongs are seen at low tide during the first week of the lunar month, but after the middle of the month they are seen after the peak of high tide

However, dugongs have appeared very rarely in the area recently. Dugongs may have been caught accidentally in fishing nets. Dugong meat has been seen in the market from time to time by local people and is considered more delicious than pork or beef (like elsewhere in Vietnam). One piece of information reported from three separate individuals is of at least one dugong caught in recent years that weighed in excess of 700kg. It is possible that such a large individual may have existed, however the universally accepted upper weight limit for an adult dugong is around 450-500kg.

# Aquaculture potential in Van Don District

*Nguyen Van Ninh-Engineer  
Fishery Department*

**According to the assessment of the Van Don Fishery Bureau, the value of marine productivity of the district in 1997 reached 26,1 billion dong and increased to 45,8 billion dong in 2001 and 58,4 billion dong in 2002.**

**L**ying within Bai Tu Long Bay, Van Don is considered as having great potential in marine and brackish aquaculture. With a marine area of more than 11.000ha, including mudflats and hundreds of islands, the area of Bai Tu Long Bay has ideal conditions for the development of aquaculture.

Since the 90s, the model of aquaculture has been making considerable developmental steps, contrib-



***Shrimp pond model in Minh Hai co-operative (Ha Long commune)***

uting greatly to the alleviation of hunger and poverty, provision of jobs, increase of income and stabilization of local people's lives. The activities of aquaculture within the district focus mainly on rafted-fishery, established since 1996 on a small scale by some households in Cai Rong port. But since 1997, this industry has been expanding to other communes such as Thang Loi, Ngoc Vung, Quan Lan,

Tra Ngo, Minh Chau, Dong Xa and the area of Hoi cave. At present, the whole district has more than 180 rafts with a total number of over 1500 fish cages. The main kinds of fishes include Garrupa, red snapper and "Gio" fish. From the year 2001-2002, the district has received investment by the State with a loan of 5.450 million dong to develop this industry. In addition to this industry, the raising of oysters for pearls is also considered to be developing quickly with 8 pearl exploiting companies of which 2 are 100% funded by Japanese investment providing jobs for more than 800 local people.

However, the situation of aquaculture development in Van Don district in recent years is still spontaneous and non-synchronous with many difficulties in finding solutions for breeding species, food, market, environmental and marine resources. With the attention from

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***Food preparation for Garrupa fish in Nam Hai co-operative***

# Minh Chau Commune Van Don District



## 'Stunning' Minh Chau beach

*Mr. Phan Doan Thuc*  
*Communist Party Secretary*

**M**inh Châu commune is situated on Quan Lan island, which is part of the Van Hai archipelago in Quang Ninh Province. Quan Lan covers more than 20 square kilometres and occupies the wide coastal area of Bai Tu Long Bay. There are 195 households with 925 people. The major economic potential is the development and exploitation of marine resources, which is confirmed by the majority of people working in the fishing industry. Besides marine development, agriculture and forestry production are also given priority. Thanks to location and economic potential, the authorities and people in Minh Chau have been keen on identifying goals to achieve socio-economic

development and social security. Firstly, the key of economic development, which is identified by commune authorities, aims at exploiting sea products sustainably. In addition, local authorities have been managing the remaining labour to develop agriculture, animal hus-

bandry and afforestation. Due to effective management by local authorities, community life has much improved. From a 90% poverty rate there has been a major improvement with the majority of households now having an average or above average living stan-



*Ba Mun island viewed from Minh Chau pier*

dard. The average income is 250,000VND per month, and 65% of houses in the commune have TV. Together with economic development, social and cultural development has much improved. A number of welfare projects have been implemented such as: schools, a health clinic, kindergardens, and communication and transportation infrastructure. This progress has decreased the number of people leaving the island for the mainland or other areas in search of a better life. At present, there is one school in the commune with about 300 pupils, and one clinic for the basic health care of local people. Local people have started to embrace modern culture, and sport and cultural activities have been organised in the commune regularly.

Moreover, authorities at all levels in Minh Chau have also raised the importance of national defence issues. To defend the sovereignty of the maritime border, the movements of the populace have to be continued and enhanced, such as: the move-



**Agriculture in Minh Chau Commune**

ments of national security defence, strategy of national defence and social security. Due to making the best effort on these movements, there have not been any serious social evils in the commune recently, and no claim letters have been submitted to the

higher levels for a long time. From what Minh Chau commune has achieved so far, it is clear that Minh Chau's socio-economic situation has developed, and national defence has been enhanced. Those elements have made big differences to peoples' lives.



**The newly built pier at Minh Chau is a key improvement in transport infrastructure**

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various provincial agencies on the orientation of rapid, effective and sustainable aquaculture in the recent past, the management board of Van Don district has co-ordinated with the SUMA organization, which belongs to the Ministry of Fisheries, to work out comprehensive plan-

ning for aquaculture development in the whole district during the period 2003-2010. The district guiding opinion in the coming years is to make aquaculture development the key industry with special attention paid on marine aquaculture development. In addition, there should be close collaboration be-

tween the provincial Science, Technology and Environment Department and the provincial Fisheries Department in improving the capacity of local officials in forecasting and assessing environmental impacts, and the planning and implementation of sustainable aquaculture.

## Speaker Systems to be Installed Throughout Buffer Zone Communes

*Bai Tu Long Bay Biodiversity Awareness Project  
(Frontier-Vietnam)*

**A**t the end of last year, the National Park and Frontier-Vietnam were given the idea to use village speaker systems to disseminate Park awareness and EE information by commune leaders at a community meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October.

The aim is to provide regular information on Park activities and local environmental issues by developing a series of radio information programmes to be broadcast on a regular basis to all villages within the five buffer zone communes.

Following initial meetings with the director of the Van Don District department of radio and television media, Mr. Pham Anh, Frontier-Vietnam has decided to provide support for the installation of speaker systems in all buffer zone villages.

Work will begin in May with initial surveys of the 21 villages cur-



**Quan Lan commune**

rently without speaker systems.

***“The aim of the radio programme is to provide local people with regular information on Park activities and local environmental issues”***

The findings of the surveys will then be presented to people of the five buffer zone communes at a community meeting at the end of June, and investment and work plans then formulated.

Following the agreement of Van Don district and commune people's committees, local people, the National Park and Frontier-Vietnam, work on installation will begin. Installation in all buffer zone villages is expected to be completed by the end of August this year.



# Experience the wild nature of Bai Tu Long National Park

*Mr. Pham Tuan Hung*  
*Vice Director of BTLNP*

**T**he eco-region, with an area of nearly 15.790 ha lies within Bai Tu Long Bay (the northern Ha Long Bay) in Van Don district, Quang Ninh province. The natural scenery is still filled with the wildness of forests, mountains and the sea. This area is now attracting many foreign and domestic visitors.

The most interesting thing when visiting Bai Tu Long National Park is to go deep into the caves. Each cave is a wonderful work of heaven and earth. The most famous is Cai De cave, which is nearly 2 km long and situated on Tra Ngo Lon Island.

Visitors can go on a boat or a bamboo raft to reach the end of this cave where there are mudflats, and mangrove forest of nearly 200 ha. Soi Nhu cave in Ha Long commune stores the traces of ancient Vietnamese people from the old stone age of 20 thousands years ago. The tourism potential of this area also hides in other islands with specific terrain, including the soil islands of Ba Mun, Sau Dong and Sau Nam and the mixed soil and limestone islands of Tra Ngo and Soi Nhu.

Bai Tu Long National Park is home to 494 plant species belonging to 117 families of which many are rare plants such as “kim giao”, “lát hoa”, “thông tre”, “sao hòn gai”, “lim xanh”...). This area is also a “collection” of rare animals with 37 mammal species, 96 bird species, 15 amphibian species and 22 reptile species. 9 mammal species are listed in the Red Data Book including wild pig (*Sus Scrofa*), sika deer (*Cervus uni-*



***Sunset on Bai Tu Long Bay***

color), and yellow macaque (*Macaca mulata*). There are 391 animal species of which abalone, sea cucumber, “sá sing”, clam, dugong, dolphin, and turtle... are the ones commanding very high economic value.

***“The park is home to 494 plant species belonging to 117 families. The area also represents a unique “collection” of rare species”***

After an exciting and exhilarating time sightseeing in the caves and going through the forests on the islands, visitors can take a relaxing break by visiting the cool water beaches of Minh Chau, Son Hao or Quan Lan. The amazing sites of Ba Mun - Quan Lan, Hon Trui - Minh Chau, Cai De cave, Soi Nhu Island and the Bai Dai tourist area will, in

turn, introduce visitors to the plentiful and diverse tourism adventure that is Bai Tu Long National Park. The programme for sea and island tourism development of Quang Ninh province in the period 1998 - 2010 sets out the objective of attracting 2,5 million visitors per year, of which 50% are expected to be international visitors. Ha Long Bay is chosen as the center for this programme, with an investment plan for the high quality water passenger-transportation system exemplified by the group of express ships that serve the offshore tourist attractions of Quan Lan, Bai Tu Long National Park, Ngoc Vung, Co To, and Cat Ba. Especially, the province will focus on strengthening eco-tourism in Van Don district with areas attracting visitors and investors to Minh Chau beach, Quan Lan commune, Son Hao, and Mai Quyen eco-region. Indeed, Bai Tu Long National Park has a lot to offer people who enjoy the delights of nature and the adventure and excitement that it brings.

# Sustainable Exploitation of Sea Worm Resources in Minh Chau



*Mr. Ngo Van Dinh*  
*Scientific Department Manager*  
*Bai Tu Long National Park*

**S**o far, sustainable use of natural resources is still considered the measure that can both ensure economic efficiency for business and production, and protect the environment. During the utility process, the activities of scientific and technical research play a very important role in defining suitable professional measures in order to obtain the objective of sustainable use of natural resources.

In order to implement the activities of Bai Tu Long National Park, the Park's Science - Technology Bureau is applying a model based

## *A model of aquaculture in Ha Long commune*

on the Minh Hai Sustainable Marine Product Exploitation Co-operative Project, with the purpose of protecting the Park's biodiversity based on environmental awareness and the application of sustainable measures of resource exploitation, contributing to hunger and poverty reduction within local communities.

The project site is in the buffer zone commune of Minh Chau, Van Don district, Quang Ninh province. The project aim is to preserve the rare and valuable genes of seabed animal. Sea worms have a limited distribution range in habitats, such as mudflats. This species belongs to the ground insects with high economic value, providing local communities with high income. Re-

cently, due to increasing market-demand, the exploitation and use of this species have been exceeding the allowed limitation, which increases the risk of resource exhaustion. To obtain the project objectives, there is the need to carry out activities to raise awareness on the Park's environment and biodiversity conservation for local people, together with the work of management strengthening for the co-operatives formed from community economic organizations. Through the activities, local people will be provided with sufficient knowledge as well as equipment to

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ensure the sustainable exploitation and use of natural resources.

Through those activities, the expected results include: an increase in exploitation productivity, and maintain a stable condition of sea worm size, increase environmental

awareness and sustainable use of natural resources by local communities within the project area, and strengthen the management role of the co-operative towards both the co-operative members and communities.

It can be said that, although this is the first plan of this kind and the pro-

ject is still in the process of seeking funding, the ones who have ideas about the project believe and hope that this project will not only bring about high economic benefits to local people but also help to protect the marine resources within the area.

# Nature Centre for Minh Chau

In a prime location next to Minh Chau's beautiful beach, The National Park and Frontier-Vietnam plan to build an environmental education/nature centre. The building will act as a base for conservation awareness raising activities among the Park's buffer zone communes and visitors to the park.

Within the centre, visitors will find a series of information displays describing Bai Tu Long's diverse flora and fauna as well as giving a background to the environmental and cultural history that has shaped the area. Diagrams, paintings and photographs, along with models and other exhibits will be used to inform and interest visitors. They will also learn of the substantial threats the Park currently faces from illegal hunting, fishing, logging and pollution. These problems will be explained along with ways in which we can all meet these conservation challenges to protect Bai Tu Long's future.

Outside the centre, a botanical garden will feature a variety of Bai Tu Long's flora and will hopefully attract some of the colourful butterflies found in Minh Chau. Nature



**The centre will be located in Minh Chau commune**

trails will lead off from the centre, giving visitors an opportunity to explore the coastline and perhaps sight the diverse species of birds that flock around the island.

***“The centre will act as a base for conservation awareness raising for the Park's buffer zone communes, and visitors to the Park.”***

The Park and Frontier are planning to host a community meeting as soon as the centre building is complete. This opportunity will be used to further explain the centre's role and discuss local community participation in running the building and its activities. It is hoped the centre will become a venue for regular community meetings to discuss Park related matters.

Construction has been made possible by a generous grant provided by the British Embassy, Hanoi and is scheduled for completion by Mid-August.

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manual with the supplement of visual aids for teachers. Our aim is to start to implement the environment education programme in schools in the whole district in

the school year of 2003-2004.

As educators, we think that education about the environment of Bai Tu Long Bay for school pupils is an important task, as they will be the future owners of the district who will con-

tribute to the protection of Bai Tu Long's environment and the sustainable existence of Bai Tu Long National Park - an invaluable gift that nature awards to Van Don district.

## Thơ: VỀ VƯỜI BÁI TỬ LONG

Phạm Thu Hà

Class 6D, Hạ Long commune secondary school

Chào Bái Tử Long, Vườn quốc gia của biển  
Ôi cái tên mới trù mấn làm sao  
Ở nơi đây bao du khách ước ao  
Được đến đó chỉ một lần để nhớ

Núi đất đỏ Trà ngọc ơi trần trở  
Đến bao giờ mới giữ được màu xanh?  
Đảo Sậu Nam, với dòng nước bao quanh  
Ôm ấp Sậu Đông như hình với bóng



Đảo Ba Mùn hiện ngang lồng lộng  
Duyên dáng chào mời khách du lịch thăm quan  
Tài nguyên nơi đây phong phú tuyệt vời  
Có thể nói: “ Nơi rừng vàng biển bạc”

Nhưng có lúc cánh rừng kia than khóc  
Bởi con người không giữ trọn màu xanh  
Và biển mong, mong mãi sự yên lành  
Để biển sớm thành “kho bạc quý”

*This publication was made possible with the financial support of the Darwin Initiative, and technical support of Frontier-Vietnam  
Frontier-Vietnam projects are a collaboration between the Society for Environmental Exploration (SEE), London and the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources, Hanoi and a collaboration of SEE and the Institute of Oceanography, Hanoi.*

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