



BAI TU LONG

National Park

NATIONAL PARK OPENED

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The Management Staff of Bai Tu Long National Park

This newsletter is the first of a series that will be produced quarterly for distribution both in the National Park and surrounding buffer-zone communes. The aim of this newsletter is to enable the National Park Authority to provide regular information to the people of Bai Tu Long Bay.

On the 25th of April 2002, the proclamation ceremony for the establishment of Bai Tu Long National Park (also seen as the occasion on which the National Park came into being) was organised by the Quang Ninh provincial Forest Protection Department at Van Don district headquarters, in the presence of province, district and commune departments, Frontier

representatives and park staff. The task of protecting and restoring the natural advantages and raising species diversity in the natural ecological system in general and the special ecological system of Bai Tu Long National Park is the primary task of the park. The central and local organisations were all very inspired due to the Prime Minister having approved the

establishment of the National Park. It was agreed that the establishment of the National Park is an effective means of ensuring the protection and development of the local hereditary diversity, maintaining the unique ecological environment of the area in order to achieve economical, scientific and tourism benefits for the province in general, and for Van Don district in particular.

The Construction and Conservation of Bai Tu Long National Park

Mr. Pham Tuan Hung

Bai Tu Long National Park Vice-Director

The groundwork development of Bai Tu Long National Park has been transformed and constructed from Ba Mun nature reserve, Van Don district, Quang Ninh province. The natural forest on Ba Mun has been classified as “a forbidden national forest” according to resolution No: 41/TTg of 24/01/1977 of the Prime Minister. The level of canopy cover on Ba Mun island reaches 95%. The forest is evergreen broadleaf forest, and is home to many different wild animal species, such as the Barking deer (Hoang), Sambar (Nai) and Wild pig (Lon rung). Due to illegal forest exploitation over many years, the animals and plants have been encroached upon, exerting a negative influence on environmental habitats. From 1992 up to the present day, due to the guidance and care of the provincial and Van Don district people’s committees, the Van Don Forest Protection Department has been able to arrange and conduct regular boat protection patrols, at the same time coordinating with Minh Chau Commune authorities allowing direct contact with the local inhabitants to protect forest resources and preserve and enable good development.

Through surveys conducted it is clear that within the National Park’s domain, marine species

composition is rich and of high diversity with many rare and precious species including bao ngu, hai sam, sa sung, ngoc trai and especially the Dugong species (also called the sea cow). The inhabitants of Bai Tu Long bay inform us that every year in October the Dugong species of-

“The National Park consists of Ba Mun, Tra Ngo Lon, Tra Ngo Nho, Sau Dong, Sau Nam islands, and 20 other smaller islands.”

ten appears in the National Park area to find food because this area has a large amount of sea grass, a species of aquatic plant that the Dugong has a preference for.

In 1999, the Quang Ninh Scientific Technology and Environment Department and Hai Phong Institute of Oceanography carried out an ocean resource research study aimed at constructing a conservation project and a project to establish a National Park on the basis of Ba Mun nature reserve and extending out to the surrounding islands. In response to the richness and diversity of the natural forest and marine resources, on 01/06/2001



Mr. Pham Tuan Hung, speaking at the official opening ceremony

the Prime Minister declared the regulation No: 85/2001/QĐ Establishment of Bai Tu Long National Park. Bai Tu Long National Park has a total area of 15,783 hectares, of which 6,125 hectares is made up of islands and island bench, with marine and tidal areas making up 9,658 hectares. The National Park consists of Ba Mun, Tra Ngo Lon, Tra Ngo Nho, Sau dong, Sau Nam islands, and 20 other smaller islands.

A large part of Bai Tu Long National Park consists of soil mou

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One of many spectacular views of Bai Tu Long Bay

(continued from page 2) ton islands, and a number of limestone mountain islands. In addition, Tra Ngo Lon island has more unusual geological tectonic points, such as soil and limestone mountain scenery adjoining each other. Apart from this, the National Park has a high diversity of landscape types: 8 on the islands themselves and 7 types of offshore landscapes beneath the ocean, which make the animal and plant systems fairly diverse.

Apart from scientific biodiversity value, the National Park has high tourism potential. For example, Luon Cai de cave on Tra Ngo Lon island has a 2km long tide which comes in and out of the cave and is similar to an underground river continuing

through to the limestone salt-marsh valley. Soi nhu cave on Soi nhu island has remnants of archaic people living there more than 2 thousand years ago. Quang Chau beach is an ideal bathing spot which is clean and peaceful.

The establishment of Bai Tu Long National Park is a priceless legacy for the State and Quang Ninh province. Together with the natural world heritage site of Ha Long bay, Bai Tu Long National Park is a truly fascinating area for the development of modern and future sustainable eco-tourism.

The Bai Tu Long National Park management team, together with the collaboration of all levels from central and local government to local people, must



The Park's patrol boat, anchored off Ba Mun island

exert ourselves to the utmost to preserve and protect the natural environment. It is certain that Bai Tu Long National Park will rehabilitate and develop, and will embellish its natural worth in time to preserve and develop a treasure of natural resources of the North-East of the fatherland in particular, and of the entire nation in general.

National Park and Frontier-Vietnam Launch Awareness-Raising Project

If you have been on Van Don Island in the past couple of months, you may have noticed a couple of Westerners driving around on a red Minsk and going in and out of a house near Cai Rong Port. In case you have been wondering who we are, I can tell you that we're the staff of the Biodiversity Awareness Project working with the Bai Tu Long National Park Authority.

Over the next two years, the project will be assisting the National Park Authority with their plans to raise awareness about the new National Park. We hope to achieve this through a series of activities which we have been planning with the Authority. The project will also aid Park

Authority efforts to raise awareness about the National Park and its conservation through an environmental education programme. Through a variety of means such as this newsletter, the programme will strive to work with the Bai Tu Long Bay community to raise awareness about the National Park.

To provide a base for project activities as well as venue for future Park programmes, the project hopes to build a Nature Centre in one of Bai Tu Long's buffer zone communes. The centre will be used for community meetings and local school activities as well as holding a series of displays explaining various aspects of the National Park.



Project staff, outside Frontier's Van Don Office

We are very much looking forward to working with the Bai Tu Long Bay community and are very grateful for the kindness and generosity that people from the district have already shown us. I am sure that by working together we can help make Bai Tu Long Bay an excellent National Park for everybody.

National Park and Frontier Hold Planning Meeting

In order to facilitate planning of the Frontier-Vietnam awareness-raising project, a planning meeting was held to introduce the project to National Park staff and to other relevant stakeholders, and to discuss both training and awareness-raising issues. The planning meeting took the form of a workshop where training requirements were identified and prioritised, and methods and opportunities for awareness raising discussed by participants. The conclusions of the planning meeting will form the basis of planning for the project's work and activities

over the next two years. The meeting was held at the offices of Quang Ninh provincial Forest Protection Department (FPD) on the 18th of April 2002, and was scheduled for a full day. The morning session of the meeting was devoted to presentations by the National Park and Frontier-Vietnam in order to introduce the context, rationale and remit of the project. The remainder of the meeting was devoted entirely to a facilitated discussion of how to achieve the project's objectives. 28 participants from a wide range of backgrounds attended the planning meeting. The participants mentioned



Participants were given a presentation by Mr. Hung, Vice-Director

above brought different perspectives and expertise to the meeting which allowed for diverse ideas and viewpoints to be shared. The contributions of all participants were much appreciated, as it is these contributions that have provided an excellent starting point for the project and the National Park.

Bai Tu Long National Park Research Project Begins

Frontier-Vietnam began implementing a one year large-scale forest research project in Bai Tu Long Bay National Park on January 8th 2002. Research is undertaken by a team consisting of Vietnamese scientists, National Park staff, Frontier-Vietnam research staff and twelve student research volunteers from the U.K.

The base camp for the initial phase was in Minh Chau commune, on the northern tip of Quang Lan island (forming the southernmost area of the national park) and the bulk of the

survey work was carried out on Ba Mun and Sau Nam islands in the north of the park, which are both non-limestone islands.

The following phase of survey work shall concentrate on Tra Ngo island in the west of the park, which is primarily limestone substrata and which may be host to somewhat different ecological communities particular to that habitat. The principal aims of the project are :

- 1) To conduct a detailed biological evaluation of the forested areas of the National Park and its buffer zones.
- 2) To assess the integrity of the



Volunteers preserving specimens for future study

forest habitat in situ, to investigate the nature and extent of the disturbance problems currently affecting the Park's ecosystems.

- 3) To explore the past, current and potential relationships between economic development, population growth and environmental conservation in the National Park and its buffer zones.
- 4) To provide the knowledge

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Conserving Bai Tu Long National Park

The responsibility of the Party and the people of Van Don district

Mr. Nguyen Hai Ly

Member of the District Standing Committee

Vice-Chairman of Van Don District People's Committee

Bai Tu Long National Park is close to Ha long Bay world heritage site and has the potential to develop ecological tourism, and become a place for travellers to rest during their tours of northern Vietnam. Comprising of a unique terrain, beautiful scenery and rich and rare plant and animal resources of the sea and forest, Bai Tu Long National Park is indeed a priceless gift that nature has granted us, which needs the entire Party and people of Van Don district to exert all our strength in working to preserve and develop.

The decision of the 20th Van Don district party general assembly (2000-2005) defined the position of tourism and island services, which will be the economic spearhead of Van Don district. On 20/4/2002, the official construction of Van Don bridge began. This will open up a new breach in the socio-economic development of the

district area that will satisfy the needs and aspirations of the people and nation on the island district for years to come.

The conservation and development of Bai Tu Long National Park is not only the responsibility of the Forest Protection Department and Park Management

***“Bai Tu Long
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Board, but also the responsibility of all levels and district branches. We have defined that in the short-term, we must have an economic development plan for the buffer zones, so that they are able to take part in forest protection. The district together with the Provincial Forest Protection Department need to have an efficient protection and management propaganda plan for Bai Tu Long National Park forest and marine ecology.



Mr. Nguyen Hai Ly, speaking at the opening ceremony of Bai Tu Long National Park

The most positive forest protection is the protection of trees, and the protection of wildlife from being hunted. The most positive marine protection is to eradicate arbitrary fishing, which damages the marine environment and ecology.

Thus, with the stature and scale of Bai Tu Long National Park, along with the specific traits of its islands, it is hoped that Bai Tu Long National Park will be the desired destination for both foreign and domestic tourists. Indeed, Bai Tu Long Bay offers beautiful island landscapes with a warm sun, cooling breezes and hospitable hosts.

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gained from the research programme to the management authorities, and to assist in devising effective management strategies.

5) To work closely with the Frontier-Vietnam Darwin-funded Environmental Aware-

ness Project and the National Park authorities in promoting environmental awareness.

To achieve these aims, Frontier-Vietnam will undertake survey work in the three broad categories of botanical, zoological and socio-economic research, so as to collect information regarding both

the National Park itself and the buffer zone areas to the south. This project has been possible due to the kind assistance and permission from the People's Committees, Police and Forest Protection Departments of Quang Ninh Province.

Ang Valley

A Unique Habitat Of Bai Tu Long National Park



The Ang Valley viewed from its northern edge

Ang valley lies in the limestone mountain area of Tra Ngo Lon island. The valley consists of two parts: the largest part is rectangular shaped and is 1300m long running East-West, 250-300m wide running North-South, while the small part is approximately 1000m² wide and is adjoined to the large part at the north-eastern peak.

During our time conducting the bio-diversity surveys with Frontier on Tra Ngo island from our satellite camp in the North, we came into Ang valley after passing through many other smaller ones and over difficult awkward limestone cliffs.

Looking from the northern edge of the valley, Ang valley appears as a large wide swamp. The central valley part is a large mangrove forest making up nearly 30 hectares, the main population being Su (*Rhizophora mucronata*), with many species that are up to 8m tall, with diameters of

20-25cm (DBH). Encompassing this is the Vet population (*Bruguiera eripetala*) which is not higher than 2m. High quality mangrove forests such as the one

“The central valley is a large mangrove forest of nearly 30 hectares”

found in Ang valley cannot be found anywhere else on Tra Ngo island, and is also very rare along Quang Ninh’s coastline. The second speciality of Ang valley is the level of stable conditions for the tidal environment which does not come into direct contact with the ocean. This stability not only ensures the good development of the mangrove forest, but also ensures growth

for all aquatic species which have economic value such as shrimp, sa sung, ngan and sam. Cai De cave plays an extremely important role in this environmental regulating mechanism as a natural canal, and there could possibly be a very small current from a fresh water stream that pours into the valley from the Tra Tran direction. Thus in the future Cai De cave will not only be a tourist destination, but will also be a conservation target to protect the environmental regulating mechanism and ensure the sustainable development of Ang valley.

The third special characteristic of Ang valley is the difference in characteristics of the ecological vegetation on the northern limestone bank compared with the *(continued on page 7)*

Dr. Tran Dinh Nghia, Hanoi Science University

Mr. Pham Xuan Dieu, Conservation Department, Bai Tu Long National Park

BRITISH RESEARCH VOLUNTEER DESCRIBES HIS USUAL DAY

I am working as part of a small group of twelve volunteers under the supervision of three British researchers, two Vietnamese scientists and National Park staff. The team has been conducting research into various aspects of the environment on Tra Ngo and Ba Mun islands in Bai Tu Long Bay. An important part of this research is the vegetation plot surveys, where the location and type of trees are recorded in a 50m sq. plot. This allows forest quality to be as-



Ben Vincent, Research Volunteer

(continued from page 6) southern bank of the valley. The two banks are nearly parallel with each other and are not more than 300m from each other, but the mountains on the south bank consist of symbolic humid evergreen forest, while on the northern bank is drought vegetation on top and chapped limestone slopes due to day-time and night-time temperature upheavals with specific species

essed, as a detailed picture of the area can be used to gain an insight into the area as a habitat for wildlife.

**“Overall, this project
has exceeded my
expectations”**

A normal day on camp generally involves an early rise, either to go birding at 5 am, or for breakfast at 6 am. After washing the dishes, a day sack of food, water and equipment for the day's work is prepared, including a medical kit for the inevitable scrapes during the day. After a trek uphill to the vegetation plot, work begins. Dr. Tue, one of the Scientists from IEBR, identifies the tree types and numbers them, and then the whole team completes the survey. This normally takes a whole day if not longer.

such as Huyet Giac (*Pleole cochinchinensis*), Me nui da (*Phyllanthus sp.*), Thien tue (*Cycas sp.*) and Luoi lon (*Hoya macrophylla*) which grow to a height of 4-5m in relation to the valley bottom. The reason for this difference is possibly due to the local winds that are determined by the terrain conditions in the area, but will become clear through thorough research by Frontier in the expeditions to come.

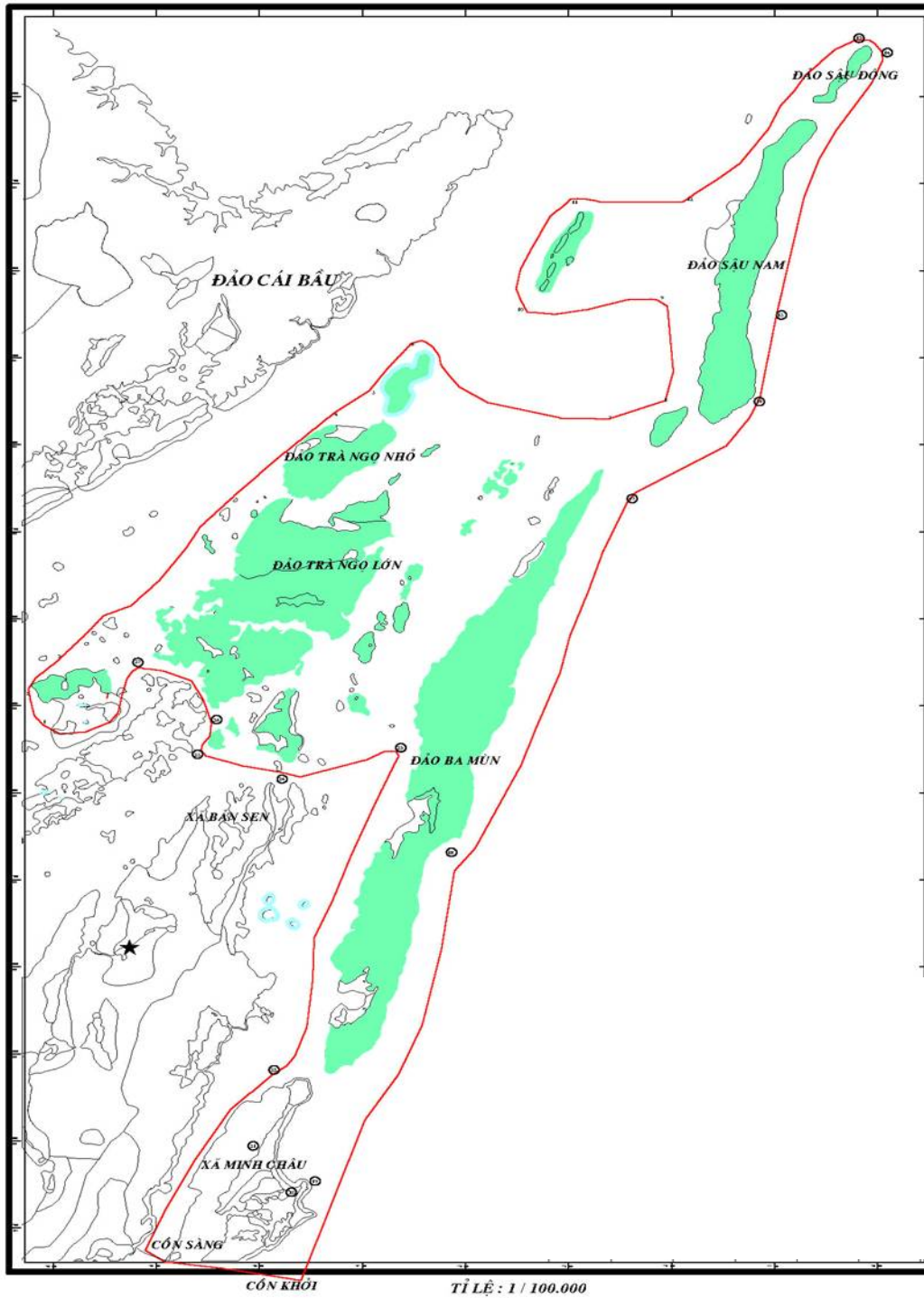
At the end of the day dinner is very welcome, and after a break and the evening debrief, where the days work is discussed, a group goes frogging and to check traps for bats. Finally, on return to camp, the team can sit and chat, play chess and cards and listen to music before going to the hammocks to sleep. Life on camp is quite tiring but very rewarding. The research team is excellent with great people that make being in Vietnam a truly memorable experience. Indeed, the Vietnamese staff are very friendly and helpful – I know we would have missed some meals in the rain if it were not for their fire lighting skills!

Overall, this project has exceeded my expectations being in such a beautiful and interesting environment, and with a group that is so dedicated to working for the environment in a realistic way. It has certainly been worth all the effort to get here.



A view from base camp, Tra Ngo island

Bai Tu Long National Park



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