

LAOS

LAND AREA 236,800 km² HUMAN POPULATION 5,690,000 (24 per km²)

NUMBER OF IBAs 27 TOTAL AREA OF IBAs 23,850 km² STATUS OF IBAs 15 protected; 4 partially protected; 8 unprotected



The forests and wetlands at Xe Khampho/Xe Pian (IBA 19) support several threatened species, including White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata* and Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata*. (PHOTO: SIMBA CHAN)

KEY HABITATS AND BIRDS

- The temperate and sub-tropical evergreen forests in the uplands of northern and central Laos support populations of many Sino-Himalayan species (*Biome AS07: Sino-Himalayan temperate forest*, *Biome AS08: Sino-Himalayan subtropical forest*, *SA 084 Kon Tum Plateau*), including threatened species, such as Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis* and Beautiful Nuthatch *Sitta formosa*.
- The lowlands of central and southern Laos retain relatively extensive semi-evergreen forests, as well as smaller areas of wet evergreen forest (*Biome AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest*, *EBA 143: Annamese lowlands* and *SA 083: Southern Laos*), with important populations of threatened forest birds such as White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata*.
- Laos also supports significant areas of deciduous dipterocarp forest (*Biome AS11: Indo-Malayan tropical dry zone*) with populations of threatened species, including White-shouldered Ibis *Pseudibis davisoni*, Giant Ibis *Thaumatibis gigantea* and Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus*. The Lao populations of these species are, however, of lower global significance than those in Cambodia.
- The Mekong River and its major tributaries (*Biome AS12: Indo-Gangetic plains*) support important riverine bird communities, with significant concentrations of several waterbird species, such as River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii* and Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*, as well as a population of the recently described Mekong Wagtail *Motacilla samveasnae*.

CONSERVATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM

The Lao protected areas system has been under development since 1988. In 1993, the government decreed the establishment of 18

national protected areas, and, in subsequent years, the national protected areas system was expanded through the addition of two new protected areas, the extension of one existing protected area, and the establishment of a corridor between two others. Currently, the national protected areas system comprises 20 national protected areas, covering 3.3 million ha or 14% of the nation's land area. Protected areas and conservation forests have also been gazetted at the provincial and district levels, such as Nam Chat/Nam Pan Provincial Protected Area in Bolikhamxai province. Taken together, provincial and district protected areas cover an additional 8.2% of the nation's land area. Most Lao protected areas have significant human populations living and using resources within their boundaries.

The government agency responsible for protected areas management at the central level is the Division of Forest Resource Conservation, within the Department of Forestry of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. However, protected areas management is strongly decentralised in Laos, and responsibility at the local level lies with the District and Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Offices. Another government agency with a major role in biodiversity conservation is the Science, Technology and Environment Agency of the Office of the Prime Minister, which is responsible for environmental management and implementation of international conventions on the environment.

OVERVIEW OF THE INVENTORY

- Of the 27 IBAs in Laos, 19 support globally threatened species, 16 have restricted-range species, 19 have biome-restricted species and nine qualify as IBAs because they hold large congregations of waterbirds.
- The IBAs in Laos cover 10% of the total land area of the country. Nine IBAs are larger than 1,000 km², reflecting the extensive

landscapes of natural and semi-natural habitats that remain in parts of the country.

- With the exception of upper montane evergreen forest, most of the major habitat types found in Laos are well represented within the IBA network. Regarding wetland habitats, the Mekong River and its major tributaries are relatively under-represented within the Lao IBA network, as are non-flowing wetlands outside of deciduous dipterocarp forest.
- Outstanding IBAs for globally threatened species in Laos include Dong Khanthung (IBA 5); Xe Khampho/Xe Pian (IBA 19); Xe Kong Plains (IBA 20); Dong Kalo (IBA 21); Nakai Plateau (IBA 24); and Nakai-Nam Theun (IBA 25).

CONSERVATION ISSUES

- The most widespread threat to biodiversity within the Lao IBA network is hunting, which was identified as a threat at all 27 IBAs. The next most widespread threat at Lao IBAs is conversion of natural habitats to agriculture, which was identified as a threat at 23 IBAs (85%). Other threats to biodiversity at IBAs include fire, natural resource extraction, infrastructure development, forest grazing and fisheries.
- Of the 27 IBAs in Laos, 15 (56%) are wholly included within protected areas and four (15%) are partially protected. Three IBAs wholly or partly included within proposed protected areas should be considered high priorities for expansion of the national

protected areas system: Dong Khanthung (IBA 5); Phou Ahyon (IBA 16); and Xe Khampho/Xe Pian (IBA 19).

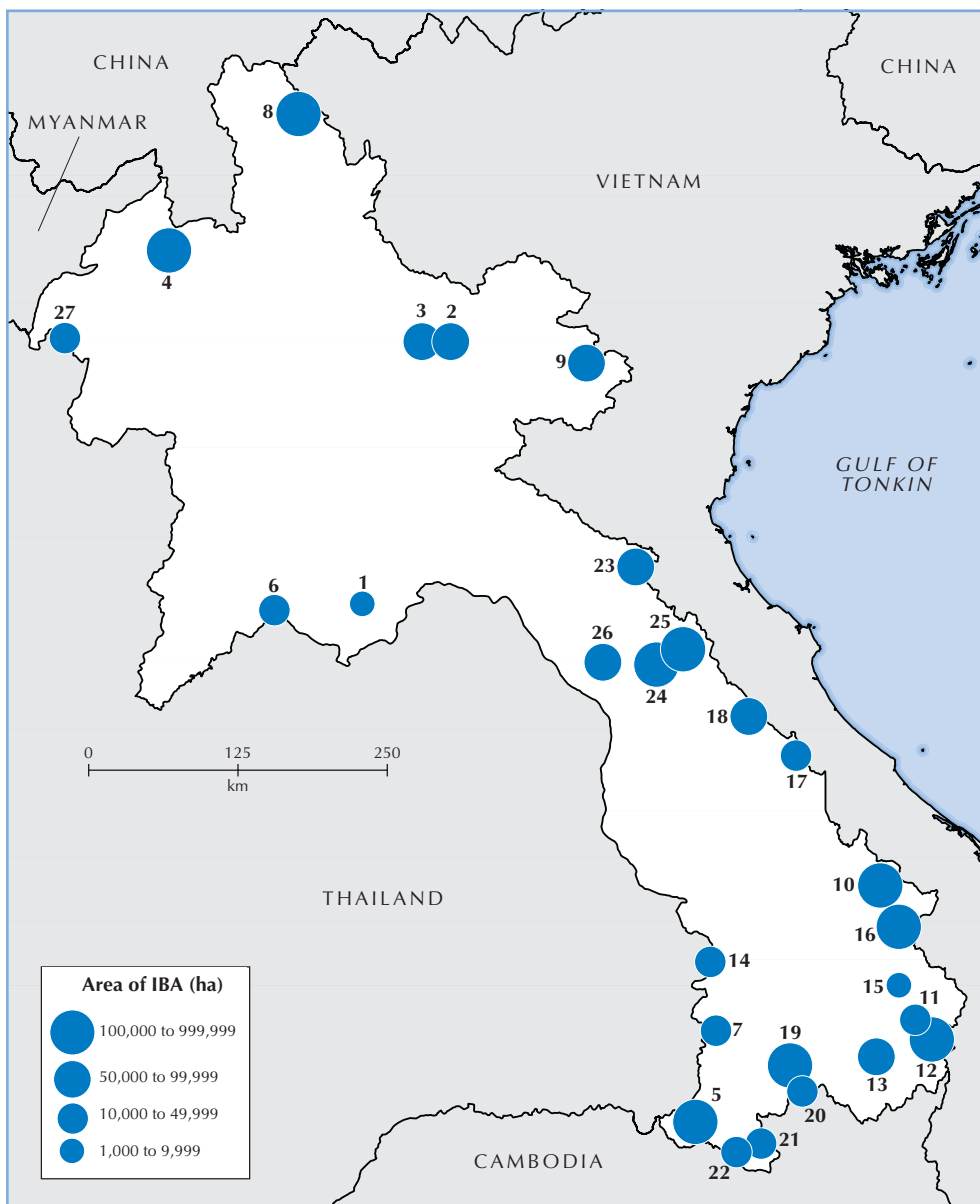
- Several sites in Laos potentially qualify as IBAs but lack sufficient ornithological data to confirm this. In particular, surveys should be conducted of Nam Chouan proposed national protected area, Nam Ghong Provincial Protected Area, the upper Xe Kong river, and Phou Bia and other high peaks, in order to evaluate their biodiversity value and assess the feasibility of conferring some form of protected area status.

SOURCES OF IBA DATA

The information presented here is taken from Ounekham and Inthapatha (2003). The external reviewers of that directory were Ian Baird, Pete Davidson, William Duckworth, Tom Evans, Roland Eve, John Parr, Michael Poulsen, William Robichaud, Tony Stones and Robert Timmins. Technical support was provided by Andrew Tordoff, Michael Hedemark and Arlyne Johnson.

REFERENCES

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Map 1. Location and size of Important Bird Areas in Laos.

Table 1. Important Bird Areas in Laos.

| | | | |
|---|--|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Ban Nakhay | Protected | A1 |
| Admin region Vientiane Coordinates 18°17'N 102°48'E Altitude 100–600 m Area 2,480 ha Habitats Forest; Grassland Threatened species <i>Pavo muticus</i> | | | |
| 2 | Nam Neun | Protected | A3 |
| Admin region Houaphan Coordinates 20°18'N 103°31'E Altitude 700–1,600 m Area 85,450 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Forest; Grassland Biomes AS08: Sino-Himalayan subtropical forest; AS12: Indo-Gangetic plains | | | |
| 3 | Phou Louey | Protected | A1 A3 |
| Admin region Houaphan; Luangphabang Coordinates 20°18'N 103°17'E Altitude 700–1,800 m Area 60,070 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Forest; Grassland Threatened species <i>Aceros nipalensis</i> , <i>Sitta formosa</i> Biomes AS07: Sino-Himalayan temperate forest; AS08: Sino-Himalayan subtropical forest; AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest; AS12: Indo-Gangetic plains | | | |
| 4 | Nam Ha Northern Highlands | Protected | A3 |
| Admin region Luang Namtha Coordinates 21°00'N 101°14'E Altitude 250–2,094 m Area 184,520 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Forest; Grassland Biomes AS07: Sino-Himalayan temperate forest; AS08: Sino-Himalayan subtropical forest | | | |
| 5 | Dong Khanthung | Unprotected | A1 A3 A4i |
| Admin region Champasak Coordinates 14°18'N 105°30'E Altitude 90–500 m Area 191,560 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Forest; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i> , <i>Thaumatibis gigantea</i> , <i>Cairina scutulata</i> , <i>Gyps bengalensis</i> , <i>Pavo muticus</i> , <i>Heliopais personata</i> , <i>Acrocephalus tangorum</i> Biomes AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest; AS11: Indo-Malayan tropical dry zone Congregatory waterbirds <i>Thaumatibis gigantea</i> , <i>Cairina scutulata</i> | | | |
| 6 | Mekong Channel upstream of Vientiane | Unprotected | A3 A4i |
| Admin region Vientiane; Xaignabouli Coordinates 18°14'N 102°05'E Altitude 200–250 m Area 18,230 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Shrubland; Wetlands Biomes AS12: Indo-Gangetic plains Congregatory waterbirds <i>Vanellus duvaucelii</i> , <i>Glareola lactea</i> | | | |
| 7 | Mekong Channel from Phou Xiang Thong to Siphandon | Partially protected | A2 A4i |
| Admin region Champasak; Salavan Coordinates 15°00'N 105°40'E Altitude 40–50 m Area 34,200 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Shrubland; Wetlands Endemic Bird Areas “Lower Mekong river basin” ¹ Congregatory waterbirds <i>Glareola lactea</i> | | | |
| 8 | Upper Nam Ou | Protected | A1 |
| Admin region Phongsali Coordinates 22°03'N 102°17'E Altitude 500–1,900 m Area 126,880 ha Habitats Forest; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Aceros nipalensis</i> | | | |
| 9 | Nam Xam | Protected | A1 A3 |
| Admin region Houaphan Coordinates 20°08'N 104°37'E Altitude 300–1,800 m Area 69,000 ha Habitats Forest Threatened species <i>Sitta formosa</i> Biomes AS08: Sino-Himalayan subtropical forest; AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest | | | |
| 10 | Xe Sap | Protected | A2 |
| Admin region Salavan; Xekong Coordinates 16°07'N 107°00'E Altitude 400–2,100 m Area 137,120 ha Habitats Forest; Grassland Endemic Bird Areas s084: Kon Tum plateau | | | |
| 11 | Upper Xe Khaman | Partially protected | A1 A2 A3 |
| Admin region Attapu Coordinates 15°05'N 107°17'E Altitude 200–500 m Area 34,780 ha Habitats Forest; Shrubland; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Heliopais personata</i> Endemic Bird Areas s083: Southern Laos Biomes AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest | | | |
| 12 | Dong Ampham | Protected | A2 A3 |
| Admin region Attapu Coordinates 14°56'N 107°25'E Altitude 200–2050 m Area 180220 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Forest; Shrubland Endemic Bird Areas s084: Kon Tum plateau Biomes AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest | | | |
| 13 | Attapu Plain | Unprotected | A1 A3 |
| Admin region Attapu Coordinates 14°48'N 106°58'E Altitude 200–400 m Area 71,400 ha Habitats Forest; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Gyps bengalensis</i> Biomes AS11: Indo-Malayan tropical dry zone | | | |
| 14 | Houay Kok-Houay Phalaphang | Protected | A1 A2 A3 |
| Admin region Champasak; Salavan Coordinates 15°31'N 105°38'E Altitude 40–500 m Area 36,650 ha Habitats Forest; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Pavo muticus</i> Endemic Bird Areas s083: Southern Laos Biomes AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest; AS11: Indo-Malayan tropical dry zone | | | |
| 15 | Dakchung Plateau | Unprotected | A1 A2 |
| Admin region Xekong Coordinates 15°21'N 107°09'E Altitude 800–1,400 m Area 5,140 ha Habitats Forest; Grassland; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Actinodura sodangorum</i> Endemic Bird Areas s084: Kon Tum plateau | | | |
| 16 | Phou Ahyon | Unprotected | A1 A2 |
| Admin region Xekong Coordinates 15°48'N 107°09'E Altitude 400–2,193 m Area 148,900 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Forest; Grassland; Shrubland Threatened species <i>Rheinardia ocellata</i> Endemic Bird Areas s084: Kon Tum plateau | | | |
| 17 | Upper Xe Bangfai | Unprotected | A1 A2 A3 |
| Admin region Khammouan Coordinates 17°07'N 106°19'E Altitude 300–1,600 m Area 31,300 ha Habitats Forest; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Rheinardia ocellata</i> Endemic Bird Areas 143: Annamese lowlands Biomes AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest | | | |
| 18 | Hin Namno | Protected | A1 A2 A3 |
| Admin region Khammouan Coordinates 17°25'N 105°56'E Altitude Unknown Area 68,125 ha Habitats Forest; Rocky areas Threatened species <i>Rheinardia ocellata</i> Endemic Bird Areas 143: Annamese lowlands Biomes AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest | | | |

FOOTNOTE: ¹ = The “Lower Mekong river basin” Secondary Area was defined by Seng Kim Hout *et al.* (2003), following the criteria used by Stattersfield *et al.* (1998), to encompass the range of Mekong Wagtail *Motacilla samveasnae*, which was described by Duckworth *et al.* (2001).

| Table 1 ... continued. Important Bird Areas in Laos. | |
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| 19 | Xe Khampho/Xe Pian Partially protected ■ A1 ■ A2 ■ A3 ■ A4i |
| Admin region Attapu Coordinates 14°44'N 106°16'E Altitude 150–800 m Area 197,280 ha Habitats Forest; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Cairina scutulata</i> , <i>Gyps bengalensis</i> , <i>Gyps tenuirostris</i> , <i>Heliopais personata</i> Endemic Bird Areas s083: Southern Laos Biomes AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest Congregatory waterbirds <i>Cairina scutulata</i> | |
| 20 | Xe Kong Plains Protected ■ A1 ■ A2 ■ A3 ■ A4i |
| Admin region Attapu; Champasak Coordinates 14°32'N 106°22'E Altitude 100–200 m Area 37,150 ha Habitats Forest; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i> , <i>Pseudibis davisoni</i> , <i>Thaumatibis gigantea</i> , <i>Gyps bengalensis</i> , <i>Gyps tenuirostris</i> , <i>Pavo muticus</i> , <i>Grus antigone</i> , <i>Heliopais personata</i> Endemic Bird Areas "Lower Mekong river basin" ¹ Biomes AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest; AS11: Indo-Malayan tropical dry zone Congregatory waterbirds <i>Thaumatibis gigantea</i> | |
| 21 | Dong Kalo Protected ■ A1 ■ A2 ■ A3 ■ A4i |
| Admin region Champasak Coordinates 14°08'N 106°02'E Altitude 50–300 m Area 41,460 ha Habitats Forest; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i> , <i>Thaumatibis gigantea</i> Endemic Bird Areas s083: Southern Laos Biomes AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest; AS11: Indo-Malayan tropical dry zone Congregatory waterbirds <i>Thaumatibis gigantea</i> | |
| 22 | Siphandon Unprotected ■ A1 ■ A2 ■ A4i |
| Admin region Champasak Coordinates 14°04'N 105°50'E Altitude 30–50 m Area 37,320 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Forest; Grassland; Shrubland; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Gyps bengalensis</i> , <i>Gyps tenuirostris</i> Endemic Bird Areas "Lower Mekong river basin" ¹ Congregatory waterbirds <i>Glareola lactea</i> | |
| 23 | Nam Chat/Nam Pan Protected ■ A1 ■ A2 ■ A3 |
| Admin region Bolikhamxai Coordinates 18°34'N 105°01'E Altitude 500–1,800 m Area 81,220 ha Habitats Forest Threatened species <i>Rheinardia ocellata</i> Endemic Bird Areas 143: Annamese lowlands Biomes AS08: Sino-Himalayan subtropical forest; AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest; AS12: Indo-Gangetic plains | |
| 24 | Nakai Plateau Partially protected ■ A1 ■ A3 ■ A4i |
| Admin region Khammouan Coordinates 17°49'N 105°11'E Altitude 400–800 m Area 136,550 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Forest; Wetlands Threatened species <i>Cairina scutulata</i> , <i>Gallinago nemoricola</i> Biomes AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest Congregatory waterbirds <i>Cairina scutulata</i> , <i>Vanellus duvaucelii</i> | |
| 25 | Nakai-Nam Theun Protected ■ A1 ■ A2 ■ A3 |
| Admin region Khammouan Coordinates 17°56'N 105°24'E Altitude 500–2,286 m Area 278,000 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Forest Threatened species <i>Rheinardia ocellata</i> , <i>Aceros nipalensis</i> , <i>Sitta formosa</i> Endemic Bird Areas 143: Annamese lowlands Biomes AS08: Sino-Himalayan subtropical forest; AS09: Indochinese tropical moist forest | |
| 26 | Central Khammouan Limestone Protected ■ A2 |
| Admin region Khammouan Coordinates 17°50'N 104°45'E Altitude 200–900 m Area 79,000 ha Habitats Forest; Rocky areas Endemic Bird Areas 143: Annamese lowlands | |
| 27 | Upper Lao Mekong Unprotected ■ A3 ■ A4i |
| Admin region Bokeo; Oudomxai; Xaignabouli Coordinates 20°20'N 100°23'E Altitude 300–400 m Area 10,980 ha Habitats Artificial landscapes (terrestrial); Shrubland; Wetlands Biomes AS12: Indo-Gangetic plains Congregatory waterbirds <i>Vanellus duvaucelii</i> , <i>Glareola lactea</i> | |
| FOOTNOTE: ¹ = The "Lower Mekong river basin" Secondary Area was defined by Seng Kim Hout <i>et al.</i> (2003), following the criteria used by Stattersfield <i>et al.</i> (1998), to encompass the range of Mekong Wagtail <i>Motacilla samveasnae</i> , which was described by Duckworth <i>et al.</i> (2001). | |