

## Summary description

There are a number of important wetlands within the Beung Kiat Ngong Wetlands complex and this includes swamps, lakes and marshes scattered throughout the area (Claridge, 1996).

The Beung Kiat Ngong Wetlands are connected to several small streams, including the Houay Ta-kuan and Houay Ta-euang, the Xe Khampho and Xe Pian Rivers, and the Xekong River, and thus during the wet season these areas are all ecologically connected. Part of the wetland, however, is in the Tamo River Basin. The edge of the wetland is forested, and is surrounded by large stunning trees, including species typically found in the south and east of Laos. Seasonal and perennial flooded grasses and some emergent trees are found here. The forest is rich due to the good quality soil and abundance of water.

Beung Kiat Ngong wetlands is part of the tributaries of Xe Khampho River, which supports well over 150, and possibly up to 200-300 fish species (Baird and Shoemaker 2008; Baird et al; 1999; Mather et al., 1997). However, the main wetland area certainly includes less fish species than the main rivers outside of the Beung Kiat Ngong Wetlands. During the wet season, the wetland is a passing way for varieties of fish to move upstream. About 43 fish species have been reported while during the dry season, only about 20 fish species remain in the area. The fisheries, include Walking catfish (*Clarias* spp.), Snakeheads (*Channa striata*), Swamp eel (*Monopterus albus*). This area is also an especially important area for fishes to live during the low water dry season. This area is also used for fishing by local villagers during the dry season. Wild vegetables and other products from the wetlands provide the surrounding communities with food and income. The economic value of all products coming from Beung Kiat Ngong Wetlands is estimated to be USD 897,607 per year (Khamlibounthavi, 2008).

In 1996, a survey found 33 wetland-associated bird species (Claridge, 1996). In 2009, the surveys conducted in the 6 main villages surrounding the wetlands show the similar number of bird species included: Cattle egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*), Intermediate egret (*Mesophoyx intermedia*), Lesser tree ducks (*Dendrocygna javanica*), Painted snipes (*Rostratula benghalensis*) and Chinese pond heron (*Ardeola bacchus*). In fact, detailed bird surveys would undoubtedly reveal a much larger number of wetland-associated bird species. Being part of the Xe Pian National Protected Area, there are undoubtedly hundreds of bird species in the wetland area.

The wetland is suitable for small and medium nesting sites for water birds, and as sources of food for birds, wild and domestic animals, and humans. It is also a significant fish spawning ground during the wet season, and a fish sanctuary during the dry season. The aquatic habitats are thought to be home to freshwater tortoises such as the vulnerable Malayan snail-eating turtle (*Malayemys subtrijuga*), endangered Elongated tortoise (*Indotestudo elongate*), and the Yellow headed temple turtle (*Hieremys annandalii*). Other fauna include snakes like the Striped water snake (*Enhydris jagorii*), Gerard's water snake (*Gerarda prevostiana*), White-lipped pit viper (*Tremeresurus albolabris*), and the Cobra (*Naja sp*).

Many small animals and insects found in the area are sources of food for water birds. As part of Xe Pian National Protected Area, this wetland area is considered important for bird feeding and occasionally for nesting. However, detailed studies on biodiversity have not yet been undertaken. Therefore, it is not known for sure how many water birds and fish live in the area.

The wetland supports around 11,534 people from 6 core villages and other 7 involved villages who are heavily reliant on wetland and river resources. These farming villages are primarily reliant on subsistence rice paddy cultivation and also earn income from wild-capture fisheries

and non-timber forest products. Some income also come from tourism businesses, particularly in Kiat Ngong Village. The paddy fields found around the edge of the wetlands and are especially dominant in the second main part of the wetland – the seasonal wetlands on the east. About 4,322 cattle and water buffalo and 27 elephants are living in the wetland area.