

## Summary description

Con Dao National Park is centred on an archipelago of 14 islands, the largest of which is Con Son. The topography of Con Son Island is mountainous, and dominated by a granite ridge, which runs from south-west to north-east, sheltering the bays on both sides of the island from strong winds. The highest points on the island are the summits of Mount Thanh Gia and Mount Chua, at 577 m and 515 m respectively. The smaller islands reach a maximum elevation of 200 m (BirdLife International and MARD 2004).

There are no permanent watercourses on any of the islands of the Con Dao archipelago, only seasonal streams. In the rainy season, water is plentiful but, in the dry season, there is a serious lack of water. Three reservoirs collect water during the rainy season to supply the local population during the dry season.

The Con Dao archipelago is located on the boundary between two sea currents: a warm one from the south, and a cold one from the north.

Con Son Island and many of the other islands of the archipelago are extensively forested. According to the revised investment plan, the national park supports 5,990.7 ha of forest, equivalent to 81% of the total terrestrial area. To date, 1,077 vascular plant species have been recorded at the national park, including 91 species of medicinal plant. One outstanding feature of Con Dao's flora is the 44 plant species that were discovered for the first time on the islands. A number of these species are named after the site, including *Dipterocarpus condorensis*, *Ilex condorensis*, *Pavetta condorensis* and *Psychotria condorensis* (Anon. 2009).

To date, 24 species of mammal, 69 species of bird and 42 species of reptiles and amphibians have been recorded at the national park. Although the number of species is relatively low, the density of individual species is often high, and there are a number of endemic taxa, including an endemic subspecies of Black Giant Squirrel, *Ratufa bicolor condorensis*. The bird fauna of Con Dao National Park is not well studied. However, a number of bird species recorded at Con Dao are not known from any other site in Vietnam, including Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica*, Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor* and Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* (Nguyen Chi Thanh (Eds.) 2004).

The marine ecosystems at the national park include mangroves, coral reefs and sea-grass beds. Mangroves cover a total of 15 ha, and are distributed around Ba Island and along the west coast of Bay Canh Island, and along the north and south coasts of Con Son Island. The coral reefs at Con Dao are among the most pristine in Vietnam, and are distributed in shallow waters around the islands, covering a total area of around 1,000 ha. The coral reefs support high levels of biodiversity (Devantier 2002), including over 355 coral species. Surveys conducted by Nha Trang Institute of Oceanography have shown the presence of 1,323 species of marine fauna and flora, including 44 species listed in the *Red Data Book of Vietnam* (ADB 1999). At 153 species, the recorded mollusc diversity of Con Dao is the highest of any of Vietnam's offshore islands (ADB 1999). The national park supports around 200 ha of sea-grass beds, which support a small population of the globally threatened marine mammal, Dugong *Dugong dugon*, numbering around 12 individuals (Anon. 2009).

Con Dao National Park contains a number of nesting beaches for the Green Turtle *Chelonia mydas* and Hawksbill Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata*, two globally threatened marine turtles (Nguyen Thi Dao 1999). More than 250 (to 350) females visit 14 nesting sites annually, forming over 1,000 nests. Nearly 80% of the nesting takes place between June and September (Nguyen Truong Giang 1998). Furthermore, a number of cetaceans have been recorded in the marine component of Con Dao National Park (Anon. 2009).