

Media release

BirdLife and CEPF call for Letters of Inquiry for civil society biodiversity conservation

A major new \$9.5 million, five year investment in Indochina was launched today, aiming to conserve biodiversity by engaging and building the capacity of non-governmental organisations. A first call for Letters of Inquiry was issued, for Vietnam and Cambodia, with a deadline of 30th November 2008. The full call for Letters of Inquiry can be found at www.birdlifeindochina.org or www.cepf.net

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) was formally launched today for the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot, one of the most threatened of Earth's 34 biodiversity hotspots. A call for Letters of Inquiry was issued during a visit of CEPF staff to the BirdLife International *in Indochina* office in Hanoi. The important new initiative is a collaboration between BirdLife International and CEPF.

“We have worked closely with CEPF over a number of years to realize this exciting new project and we are delighted to have now reached the point of implementation” said Jonathan Eames, Programme Manager of BirdLife International in Indochina, “The mobilization of CEPF for this region will at last provide an important source of funding for civil society to address the daunting array of challenges biodiversity faces.”

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation. CEPF will provide grants enabling non-governmental organizations, community groups, and other private sector entities to help conserve the hotspot. BirdLife International *in Indochina* will act as the Regional Implementation Team for CEPF.

“The remaining natural habitats in Indochina are the regions' real wealth” said John Watkin, CEPF Grant Director at Conservation International, “with only 5% of the original habitat remaining these tiny fragments are extremely threatened by human pressure and commercial exploitation. Immediate action is required to save these habitats and species that have huge cultural significance to the people of Indochina. If they are lost, we are all poorer.”

Conservation will focus on two large landscapes—the Northern Highlands Limestone, and Mekong River and Major Tributaries—and 28 key biodiversity areas within them. Sixty-seven animal species and all 248 globally threatened plant species will also be priorities for investment. The Northern Highlands Limestone Corridor bordering China and Vietnam is particularly important for the conservation of primates. It is also of global importance for plant conservation, supporting many unique species and the region's richest assemblages of conifer species. The Mekong River and Major Tributaries Corridor stretches across Cambodia, Lao P.D.R., and Thailand and represents the best examples of Indochina's remaining riverine ecosystems.

CEPF investments in this region will be guided by four strategic directions and related investment priorities, a full description of which can be found in the ecosystem profile on www.cepf.net. Further information and summaries in English, Vietnamese, Khmer, and (coming soon!) Lao, can be found at www.birdlifeindochina.org. Each project must be linked to one of the strategic directions to be approved for funding. Further information can be requested from cepf-rit@birdlife.netnam.vn

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