



NATIONAL PARK

* BIDOUP
NUI BA *

A LAND OF WONDER

ENGLISH CONTENT SUPERVISOR

ANJA BARTH
Chief Technical Advisor, GIZ

TRANSLATOR

LUU VAN HIEN

ENGLISH EDITORS

DANIEL BURNS
DINH NGOC HAN
NGUYEN THI HA

VIETNAMESE CONTENT SUPERVISOR

Dr. LE VAN HUONG
Director, Bidoup - Nui Ba National Park

AUTHORS

Dr. LE VAN HUONG
MZUNG NGUYEN

VIETNAMESE EDITORS

TRUONG QUANG CUONG
TRAN LE TRA
NGUYEN THỊ HA
NGUYEN THI HONG XIEM

PHOTO CREDITS

BINH DANG
| 19 - up | 24 - 25 | 30 | 35 | 37 | 39 | 40 - down |
KRAJAN PLIN | 51 | 52 | 53 |
TRUONG QUANG CUONG | 20 - 23 | 26 |
LE THI THUY DUONG | 38 |
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FOREWORD

Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park, situated in the centre of Langbiang plateau in the north of Lam Dong province, was established under the Prime Minister's Decision No. 1240/QĐ-TTg on 19th November 2004. The Park, recognised by UNESCO in 2015, covers an area of 70,038 hectares in the core area of Langbiang World Biosphere Reserve. In 2018, the Secretariat of the Association of Southeast Asian National Parks recognised Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park as an ASEAN Heritage Park.

The international community recognises Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park for being representative of the diverse ecosystems found in biogeographic areas of global significance. The Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park area has been rated as one of the four biodiversity centres

of Viet Nam, one of 221 important bird areas of the world, and a priority area for the conservation programme of the main mountain ranges of the South Annamite (SA3 area). The K'ho indigenous community – the real and long-standing owners of this land – have a unique culture embedded in the Central Highlands Cultural Space of Gongs, which is also recognised by UNESCO.

The approach to conservation at Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is built on the basis of human ecology, considering humans as just one species (*Homo sapiens*) in the world of things. The authors have compiled this book from stories to describe the biodiverse and cultural landscape of this spectacular natural setting. It's our expectation

that upon your arrival at Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park, you will immerse yourself in nature silently and with feeling to continue writing your own stories in this amazing natural world. We would like to sincerely thank the German Development Cooperation Organisation's GIZ Bio project for supporting the compilation, design, and printing of this book.

"Save nature, save culture, save future" is the guiding thread for all activities at Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park. Let's join hands to protect Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park! Your contributions are meaningful for today's, tomorrow's and future generations. /.



Dr. LE VAN HUONG
Director of Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park

GREEN DREAMLAND

*In the forest, staying up late with a fire
listening to the stream echoing a mountainous rhythm
Dear moon, your sparkles render me sleepless
bewildered leaves soaked with dawning dew
The moon shattered in rushing forest winds
Heaven's Gate opens to adventures
Suddenly you appeared and together we started a fire
eyes in deep wild mountain hues
I can't tell if you are a hamlet girl or a fairy,
all I know is you bring the forest tranquillity
thousands of stars shimmering with fire
Bidoup flickered awake in the green dreamland.*

VUONG TUNG CUONG

(This poem by Vuong Tung Cuong is one of a series of poems commemorating the tenth anniversary of the establishment of Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park. You can view the poems at <http://bidoupnui.ba.gov.vn>)

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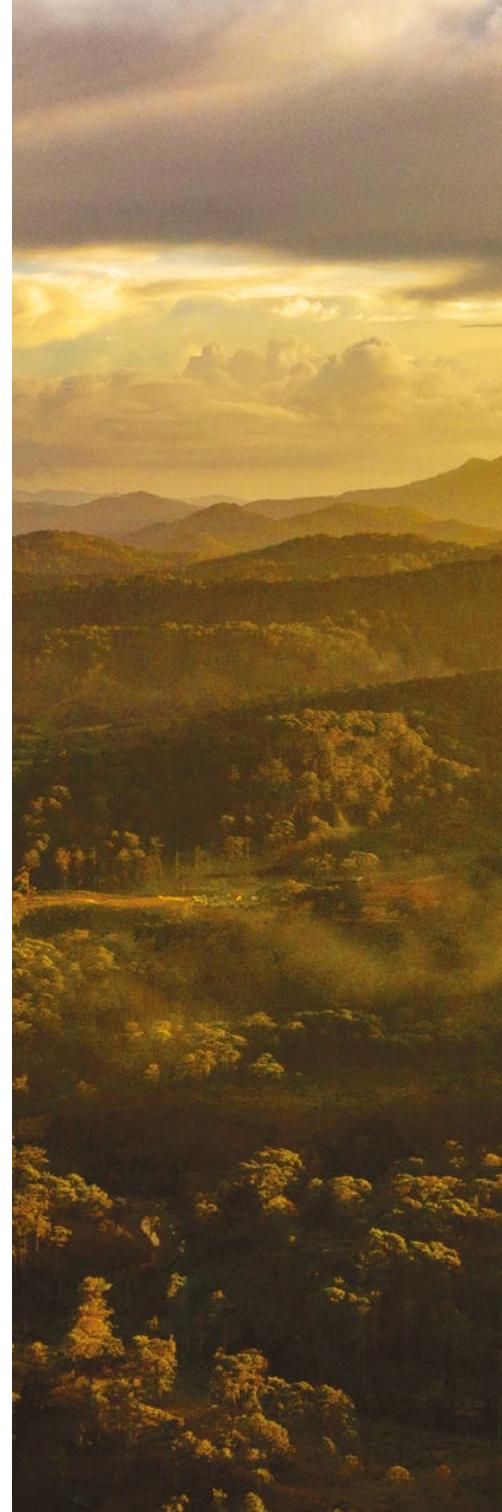


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I STORY OF THE DAWN ERA

SON OF THE SUN GOD (SRAI KON BING)

In a village there lived a girl named K'Bing. One day, K'Bing brought rice to the yard to dry. After spreading the rice on the ground, K'Bing sat down to keep watch against the chickens. After a while, she felt too sleepy, so she went around the yard to find twigs and branches to fence the rice and keep the chickens away. Then, she sat in front of the house, dozing off. Meanwhile, Mattenge (Sun) passed by, saw the beautiful girl and decided to stay. The two of them then lived together. Sometime later, K'bing became pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy. She named him K'Srai.

K'Srai was a special child who knew how to play drums and gongs since he was just 7 days old. The boy's mother worked on the sloping field and never knew. Fifteen farming seasons had passed when one day he followed his mother to the sloping field, the boy asked her where his father was. His mother pointed to the sun and said it was his father. K'Srai was very happy and eager to meet and play with his sun father (Mattenge). He kept waiting and waiting, from morning, then noon, to afternoon, day after day, but the sun father did not come down to play. K'Srai then asked his uncle to make him a good crossbow; if Mattenge wouldn't come down to play, K'Srai would go find him and shoot him down.

A few days later K'Srai set out bringing the crossbow with him, but he struggled with which Mattenge to shoot: morning Mattenge, midday Mattenge or afternoon Mattenge. Finally, Mattenge, K'Srai's father, said:

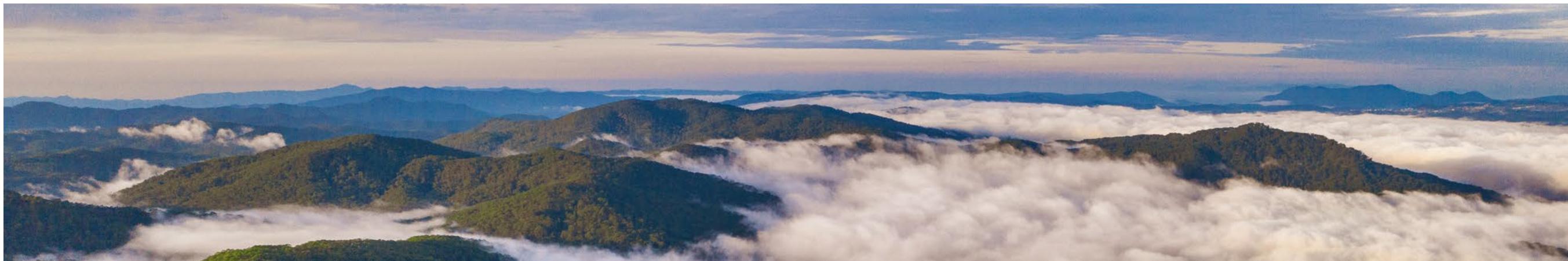
- Daddy is up here and can't come down, everything on earth is left to you. You have to listen to your mother and your uncle, and help daddy to take care of everything inside and outside the village...

At his father's request, K'Srai, the son of the sun god, instructed the villagers to burn Lo o, a species of bamboo, to make salt and then to go in the direction of the rising sun, where there was a vast body of water (the sea) to exchange rice for salt. He instructed the K'ho people to use iron ore to make knives, xa-gac (long-handled chopping knives), and axes, and told their people in the mountains and

forests what tubers were edible, what delicious leaves there were to eat, and what fish could be caught from the streams. When people knew how to find salt, used xa-gac, and knew which vegetables to pick and which fish to catch, the son of the sun god waded through the forest and showed the streams the way back to the sea. Since then, the people have not seen K'Srai return and for a long time now, every year the villagers arrange a ceremony for the bon (village) to worship the child of the sun god (K'Srai) and to pray for prosperity for their community.

(Srai Kon Bing is actually a song-narrative work of the Cil people's Yalyau genre that is quite long. The above story is just a summary of the work of artist Long Ding Ha Nhat in 2002 in Bon K'long, re-telling the legend of how hamlets and villages came to worship the son of the sun god.)





Langbiang love story – a Da Lat version of Romeo and Juliet and the history of Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park’s formation

In myths and legends of ethnic people’s in Da Lat, the three mountain ranges of Langbiang (Nui Ba), Giant (Nhut) and Bidoup are closely related to one another and have been an inspiration for poets.

From Da Lat, visitors can see two peaks of Langbiang mountains like the full breasts of a beautiful young girl looking at the immense blue sky on sunny and cold winter days. Langbiang marked a faithful love that is enshrined in legends about the mountain as recorded by researcher, Nguyen Hong Nhat:

“Once upon a time, in the village of La Ngu Thuong (now Da Lat) there was a man named Lang, chief of the Lat tribe. He fell in love with a girl named Bian, the daughter of the chief of the Cil tribe. As they belonged to different tribes, they were not allowed

to marry. In the end, Bian and Lang resorted to death to fulfil their love and to oppose the strict customary law, and they transformed into two adjacent mountains. K’zenh – Bian’s father – regretted the loss of his daughter and accepted responsibility for unifying the Lat, Cil, and S’re tribes into a common K’ho ethnicity. Since then, young men and women from different tribes have been able to get to know one another, fall in love, and marry. Later, the mountain where K’Lang and H’Biang died was named Lang Biang to commemorate their love.

Some Lat people believe that Yang (the God of heaven) sympathised with Lang and Bian, and so sent a god to earth to look after the two mountains. This god was the Lambieng God, who raised Langbiang as a pillar of heaven – this is

the main settlement area for the K’ho people today. When the Lembieng God built the pillar of heaven, he asked his two friends, Giant (Nhut) and Bidoup, to help him, but the latter was stingy and voracious, so the Lembieng God pushed him and he fell down to the edge of the sea: In K’ho dialect “Bidoup” means falling on one’s back.

Langbiang, Giant and Bidoup, the three mountain ranges, are associated with the legends and history of the K’ho ethnic community in this area. On the days the green plateau basks in golden sunlight, visitors can see the earth, the sky, gods and fairies blended together: our feet are on the ground but our minds wander in fairyland. In that moment, we understand why the K’ho legends always start with phrases like: “In those days, heaven and earth

lived as one and stayed close to each other” or “In those days, in those old days, the sea and the mountains were side by side.” While telling their children and grandchildren these legends, the old K’ho people believe that they are real; that is the life of the indigenous people here. And it seems that the eyes of the narrator sparkle with belief, a nostalgia for the dawn era, an immense nostalgia. (According to Truong Phuc An, Nguyen Diep; a Hundred Years of Da Lat, Lam Dong General Culture Company, 1993).

In 1931, on the beautiful land associated with these legends, the “Park de Refuge” Langbiang Sanctuary was founded by the French (Jenning, 2015), laying the foundations for a future sanctuary.

IN 1986



The Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam established the national forbidden forest

IN 1992



The Bidoup-Nui Ba special-use forest management board was established

IN 2002



The Bidoup-Nui Ba Nature Reserve was established

IN 2004



It was upgraded to Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park. Thus, Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is named after the two highest mountains of the Langbiang plateau, Bidoup Mountain (2,287 m) and Nui Ba, also known as Langbiang Mountain (2,167m).

The Water God: Yang Da

From time immemorial human settlements have often been established in river basins to facilitate the trade and exchange of commodities, and the development of agriculture. It is not a coincidence that the names of habitats and hamlets of indigenous people in the Bidoup-Nui Ba area in particular, and of indigenous people in Lam Dong in general, start with the word “da” (water): Da Lac, Da Sar, Da Chais, Da Nhing. Each indigenous settlement was associated with a water source commonly possessed by the community. The role of water and water sources have

been sanctified by Lac, Cil and T’ring folks; for example, through the Yang da (God of Water). The space of the traditional hamlets of Lac, Cil, and T’ring peoples have an important connection with water sources: “gung da” (the way to the water). This was where people made use of the two basic functions of water: for production and husbandry (watering fields, raising cattle and poultry) and for domestic uses (preparing food, bathing, and washing). This was also where the rituals for worshipping the Water God took place. In the spiritual beliefs of indigenous people, water had another

sacred function; to purify and cleanse the sins that people had accidentally or intentionally committed. Among the Cil people, the sins related to male and female relationships, such as illicit relations and incest, had to be cleansed by Yang da. This primitive awareness of the role of water and other natural factors motivated indigenous communities to protect the purity of their water sources.

The annual rainfall in Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park ranges from 2,800 mm to 3,000 mm per year. The lowest rainfall in January may be as little as 6 mm. In the rainy season daily rainfall ranges from 50-80 mm, accounting for about 80% of the yearly total, with September recording the highest rainfall (300 mm). Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is the origin of river systems: the Krongno river, a major tributary of the legendary Srepok river, flows into the territory of neighbouring Cambodia, merging with the Tonle Sap before flowing back, providing alluvium to the Mekong Delta to boost its fertility.

Da Nhim and Da Dang rivers are two important tributaries of the Dong Nai River system, the longest inland river system in Viet Nam. These two river systems both originate from Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park, supplying water

to a large residential area downstream. The main streams originate from Bidoup Mountain (2,287m), Hon Giao Mountain (2,062m), and Langbiang Mountain (2,167m).

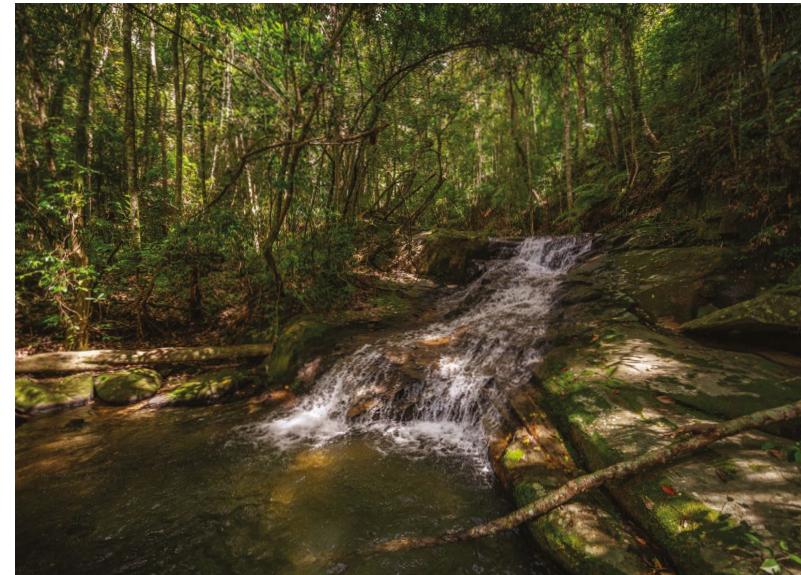
There are many streams that also originate in the mountains at an elevation of 1,500m or more, supplying water to the main streams of the river. With over 91% forest coverage in the National Park, the forest vegetation stores water and regulates flows ensuring that rivers and streams inside and adjacent to the Park have water all year

round and regular flows in both rainy and dry seasons.

There is an Indian proverb that says “Forest is the source of water, water is the source of life” affirming that water is an extremely valuable natural resource with a particularly important role and significance for human life. Water is as important as food; without it humans and other living things cannot survive. In addition to satisfying the needs of people, water has become a legend in the spiritual and cultural activities of the local communities. The forest has

become sacred and precious, and is the source of “the water” in the culture of the K’ho people of the legendary Langbiang plateau. Thus, the formation of two legendary rivers, the Dong Nai and Srepok rivers, is related to the story of the son of the sun god leading water to the ocean.

As the birthplace of two important rivers, in 2006 Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park together with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) proposed the first pilot project on Payments for Forest Environmental Services (PFES) in Viet Nam. PFES has created a sustainable financial source for forest conservation across the country.



II

LAND OF THE GODS

Gods in indigenous culture

In the traditional spiritual life of the Lac, Cil, and T'ring peoples, the gods play a distinctive role. For them, the village space is open to three main dimensions:



**SACRED
FOREST**



**SLOPING
FIELDS**



**WATER
SOURCE**

These are the places that influence their entire material and spiritual lives. The concept of animism (everything is sacred internally) refers to the following objects:



Yang (gods)

The system of gods of the Lac, Cil, and T'ring peoples are mainly nature deities (gods of nature) such as Water gods (Yang da), Forest gods (Yang bre), Rice gods (Yang kue), and Earth gods (Yang u). Among these gods, the Yang N'Du (Gong God) is mentioned most in the prayers of the Lac, Cil and T'ring peoples. For several rituals, the people have to build Hiu Yang Ndu (Temple for the Ndu god) in their village.

Ca, Mu (ghosts and demons)

These are the forces dedicated to spreading evil, death, and calamity. From the perspective of the Lac, Cil, and T'ring peoples, both Ca and Mu have unpredictable powers and abilities to transform themselves. People are very fearful of being harassed by Ca and Mu.

The Cil people practice shifting cultivation, nomadism, and clear forests for farming according to certain rules. For example, the Cil people do not clear and burn forests at watersheds. In the past, they exploited forest products only

for food, construction materials, and for the needs of the community, not for monetary profit. In cultivating sloping and mountainous fields, the Cil people always left an area of forest on top of the mountain, which is where they believe the gods reside. Local knowledge shows that these forest areas prevent cascading rain and flooding from the mountain top and are also a haven for wild plants to regenerate when the fields lay fallow. However, if families from another hamlet needed a few logs to build a house or to make a coffin, they had to

ask the village chief for permission. They then brought an offering of chickens and wine to the forest to ask for the god's permission. According to the village chiefs, in the past, every time the villagers cut down a tree, they had to perform a small ritual to worship the forest god (Yang bre). Offerings included chickens, pigs or goats and a jar of wine. In addition, the hamlet residents were not allowed to cut trees or hunt animals in the watershed forest. As explained

by village chiefs, any arbitrary felling of trees or hunting of wild animals in this forest would be subject to god's revenge by disease, sickness or death.

Belief in the forest god (Yang bre) among the Lac, Cil and T'ring peoples reveals a scientific method for preventing deforestation once the mysterious veil is removed. The exploitation of forest products includes hunting. However, the

local community is well aware of the destruction it can cause and strictly follow measures to reduce its impact:

“*Rivers and streams are common assets
Anyone can scoop up fish in the streams
Catch baby frogs but spare mother frog
Chop down bamboo, but leave bamboo
shoots Smoke beehives but leave the queen
bees Fishing with poison will deplete
streams' resources.*”

”



The Lac people's knowledge of the natural environment shows that since ancient times the indigenous inhabitants of Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park have been aware of and responsible for protecting the area's natural resources. The way impacts on forests and nature were managed therefore contain a profound humanity, showing both understanding and respect for nature. Today, however, such knowledge is

gradually being forgotten or viewed as opposing modern scientific knowledge.

Each traditional community of the Lac, Cil, and T'ring peoples had its own regulations for forest protection according to which people, either inside or outside of the community, were subject to penalties for violations of the sacred forest. For minor breaches, the penalty was one chicken and one jar of

wine. For major violations, goats and buffaloes were required to appease the forest god.

The forest protection regulations of Lac, Cil, and T'ring communities were a part of pondik-ponding, according to which rights were associated with responsibilities and penalties. Responsibility was the main emphasis, while the function of punishment was to

enforce that sense of responsibility.

In ancient times, very rarely did individual villagers violate the regulations. The power of the regulations lay in serving the right purposes and meeting people's expectations. They were voluntarily accepted and obeyed by everyone in the community; over time, the regulations became customs.

Currently, the view that the forest is no longer under the management of the village renders the ancient regulations invalid.

Recognising the central role of local communities in forest management and protection, and biodiversity conservation, Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park signed a forest protection contract with

1,540 indigenous ethnic minority households. Annual payments to the community for forest protection (over VND 30 billion) come from the payment programme for Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park's forest environmental services.

1540 HOUSEHOLDS **30** BILLION VND

A living museum of numerous paleontological plants

When hiking in the primeval forests of the Hon Giao Mountain area, you may see ancient trees with diameters of up to 1 m. Their bark looks smooth as if it has undergone a skin treatment. You have seen the Soi Ba Canh (*Trigonobalanus verticillata*), a paleontological species from prehistoric times. This temporal messenger is a species of the genus *Trigonobalanus* - the genus with the

least evolution in all genera of the Fagaceae family. The Soi ba canh (*Trigonobalanus verticillata*)'s external features are very different from trees of the same family; they have three spiral leaves, while all other chestnut species have alternate leaves. The fruit has 2 parts: seed and pod. The pod of all normal chestnuts is shaped like a rice bowl, but the three-sided oak pod has an undefined shape. Its heavy lobes

are a poorly evolved trait.

Soi ba canh (*Trigonobalanus verticillata*) are only found in Indonesia, Malaysia and most recently in Viet Nam. Scientists are deciphering the regional link between the three countries on the distribution of this species. Along with the Krempf's pine (*Pinus krempfii*), the miraculous survival of the Soi ba canh



(*Trigonobalanus verticillata*) remains a mystery.

When studying tree rings for climate change research, Professor Brendan M. Buckley from the prestigious Columbia University, USA, chose Po mu (*Fokienia hodginsii*) to study the two biggest droughts that destroyed the Angkor culture. Among them, the oldest individual tree he recorded has defied time for over 1,300 years.

Po mu (*Fokienia hodginsii*), a woody tree, grows to a height of up to 30 m and has a diameter at chest height that can reach 3 m. It has a rounded canopy and a dark brown bark bearing longitudinal cracks and irregular flaking patches. Po mu (*Fokienia hodginsii*) leaves have flattened scales arranged in two symmetrical pairs and the underside of the leaf often has specific white stomatal bands.

Po mu (*Fokienia hodginsii*) is distributed in countries such as China and Lao. In Viet Nam, Po mu (*Fokienia hodginsii*) has been found in Lao Cai, Yen Bai, Son La, Ha Giang, Ha Tinh, Quang Nam, Dak Lak, Khanh Hoa,

and Lam Dong provinces from an elevation of 900 m above sea level in forests of evergreen broadleaf trees or mixed broadleaf and coniferous trees on limestone and granite mountains.

The Krempf's pine (*Pinus krempfii*) in the pine family (Pinaceae) is a species symbolic of the Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park area. It can be found on the way up to Heaven's Gate or the Hon Giao Mountain area at elevations of 1,460 m - 2,000 m. Krempf's pine (*Pinus krempfii*) is an ancient species characterised by two blade-like needles and is a unique species endemic to Viet Nam with only a narrow distribution in Bidoup - Nui Ba National Park and surrounding areas.

A few kilometres away from its natural distribution area, the fan-shaped foliage of the old Krempf's pine (*Pinus krempfii*) can clearly be seen occupying the emerging layer of the forest. The closer you get, the more prominent the canopy becomes; this is also the most recognisable feature of this precious pine species. Krempf's pine (*Pinus krempfii*) is often seen scattered around the forest.

Po mu (*Fokienia hodginsii*) over 1,300 years





They grow to about 30 m in height with their trunks reaching 1.5-1.6 m and sometimes up to 2 m in diameter. The tree's canopy is usually quite wide and thick, dark-coloured and fan-shaped. The lower part of the trunk has almost no branches, is evenly rounded and projects straight into its characteristic fan-shaped foliage. Krempf's pine (*Pinus krempfii*) grows very slowly at a rate of about 2 mm in diameter per year. This means that if a tree has a 2 m diameter, it has been part of the forest for over 1,000 years. This species is endemic to Viet Nam, distributed only on the Langbiang plateau and its surrounding area.

Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is packed with extremely precious biodiversity. There are 2,089 Vascular flora species out of a total of about 13,000 species in 829 genera and 186 families present in Viet Nam. Seventy-four of these species are listed in the Red Book of Viet Nam

74
SPECIES
ARE LISTED
IN THE RED
BOOK

35
SPECIES IN
THE RED LIST
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
UNION

2007 and 35 species in the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) version 2021 (which categorises species as "Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered, Extinct in the Wild, and Extinct"). Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is the Kingdom of Orchids. There are 317 species of orchids in 85 genera out of a total of about 1,250 orchid species in Viet Nam. Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is also home to conifers with 13 species in 10 genera and five families out of a total of 33 species in Viet Nam. Among these are narrow endemic species such as

Krempf's pine (*Pinus krempfii*)

The Fork-leaved cycas (*Cycas michotzii* Dyer)





III

THE STORY OF ALL SPECIES



The Bee & Butterfly love story

An “indispensable” romance between *Stanhopea grandiihora* the Orchid and *Eulaema meriana* the Bee was revealed by biologist Robert L. Dressler in 1967. The *Stanhopea grandiihora* the Orchid, with her graceful beauty, has captivated so many bees and butterflies of the mountain and forest kingdom. Numerous bees and butterflies have exhausted all avenues trying to get her, but none have succeeded. In fact, *Stanhopea grandiihora* the Orchid only had eyes for *Eulaema meriana* the Bee. Her shy lips are desired by any Bee or Butterfly that’s fortunate to see her. Many bees and butterflies have tried their luck, but her lips are only for *Eulaema meriana* the Bee as his body size is created by God to fit her lips.



Flowering plants and insects, such as bees and butterflies have a close relationship with one another through the process of pollination. Statistics show that bees and butterflies enhance the fertility and genetic diversity of about 80% of plant species. More than half of plant species are not self-pollinating and are completely dependent on pollinators (*Assessment of pollinators and pollination processes related to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in all ecosystems, their role in agricultural and food production, Biodiversity Convention, 2018*).

Butterflies and bees use nectar and pollen from flowers for food. The interrelationship between plants and pollinators therefore maintains not only plant diversity, but also the existence of 350,000 species of animals, mainly insects, birds and mammals of various species (Ollerton, 2017). Species use specific flowers as breeding sites or as sources of food.

Bidoup’s high mountains are rated among the most typical areas of Viet Nam and the world for their high biodiversity and endemic species. Bidoup massif, together with the Langbiang mountains, is on the list of the world’s core areas for plant biodiversity (Davis, Heywood & Hamilton, 1995). The mountainous areas of Lam Dong province, called Da Lat plateau, are included on the list of territories with high numbers of endemic species. Eames and Robson (1993) conducted one of the first studies to detail biodiversity in the Bidoup mountains.

The largest family is HesperIIDae – Skippers under the order Lepidoptera (with 250 species), 400 species in eight families of the superfamily Papilionoidea have been recorded in 5 areas in the Da Lat plateau and its surroundings. The Papilionoidea family belongs to the order Lepidoptera,



accounting for nearly half of the total species in the taxon that have been described in Viet Nam (829 species). In fact, half of the species of the superfamily Papilionoidea in Viet Nam have been found in this area. And so, this land will produce many love stories between the flowers and the diverse, abundant pollinators that are awaiting researchers to come and write about them.



Storyteller Vietnamese Greenfinch



When walking under the canopy of the immense three-leaved pine forest of the National Park, you will have a chance to meet your tour guide – the Vietnamese Greenfinch (*Chloris mongiulloti*).

“In 1926, the scientist Theodore Delacour described and introduced me as an endemic bird of the Da Lat plateau. I have a yellow and black coat and a lovely pink beak. I’m delighted to welcome visitors to the National Park.”

“Birdwatchers from all corners of the world travel here just to take pictures

of me. Finding me is not easy at all; it depends on luck. You know why I’m so special? Because on all of the earth I chose to nest in Langbiang. You won’t see me in other lands. They also call me an “endemic” species. Of course, I am beautiful, very much so, therefore if you want to admire me, try to get up early. I am the most outstanding in the forest as soon as the sunrays hit the forest floor. When the American ornithologist Delacour first saw me, he was mesmerised at once. I thank him for introducing me to our friends all over the world.”

“
Birdwatchers from all corners of the world travel here just to take pictures of me.
”

Faithful lover/ Red Crossbill



Those who think that a beak should be straight may be surprised to see this special bird. The Red Crossbill’s (*Loxia curvirostra meridionalis*) bill has evolved from a straight shape to a cross-beak shape. The peculiarity of the beak makes it easier for them to pry open pinecones and get to the seeds within. This is the result of a long evolution for this particular bird.

When spring comes, crossbills begin to mate and together they build a happy nest with their lifelong mate. Although Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra meridionalis*) nests are cup shaped and simply built, they can withstand heavy rains and high winds. They must complete the nest before the rainy season to ensure their chicks have the best chance of survival. Their chicks fledge when the rainy season comes, enabling them to find food more easily.

Scientists have ranked Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park as one of 221 endemic

bird areas of the world with three important bird areas: Bidoup is ranked as 36th (VN036), Langbiang 37th (VN 037) and Cong Troi (Heaven’s Gate) 56th (VN 056). In total, Viet Nam has more than 900 bird species of which 306 in 15 orders and 54 families have been recorded in Bidoup-Nui Ba, 14 of which are endemic species and subspecies, accounting for more than half of the endemic species and subspecies in Viet Nam. This is an extremely impressive

number considering the area of the Park and the total natural area of Viet Nam. Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is often chosen by ornithologists and birdwatchers from around the world as an essential destination for their international travels.

900 BIRD SPECIES
VIET NAM HAS
MORE THAN





Truong Son Messengers: (The Annamite striped rabbit/ Large-antlered muntjac/ Sun Bear)

During recent research collaboration activities, the Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park, the Southern Institute of Ecology (SIE), and the Leibniz Wildlife Research Institute (Leibniz-IZW) announced the discovery of the following rare and precious mammal species that have been likened to the messengers of the Truong Son range:

**The Annamite
striped rabbit** 

Nesolagus timminsi

Large-antlered muntjac 

Muntiacus vuquangensis

Sun Bear 

Helarctos malayanus

The large-antlered muntjac



(*Muntiacus vuquangensis*)

The large-antlered muntjac (*Muntiacus vuquangensis*), an ungulate classified as Critically Endangered (CR) on the IUCN Red List, can only be found in the Truong Son mountains. In the family Cervidae, large-antlered muntjac (*Muntiacus vuquangensis*) are medium in size, with a body weight of about 40-50 kg. There is neither a mane on their faces nor a tuft of fur on their foreheads. Their fur is shiny yellow with black stripes running down the base of the antlers on the inside of the forehead from the

small antlers to the entire frontal gland. Their frontal gland, about 2 cm long, protrudes with its edge folded upwards. Along the frontal gland there is a little fine black fur; a line of long fur around the gland falls backwards. The lacrimal gland has a strip of fine dark fur. The skin on the back is darker than on the belly and there is a dark stripe running from the neck to the back. The tail fur is dark while its underside is white. The males have quite large antlers. Large-antlered muntjac (*Muntiacus*

vuquangensis) usually settle in primary forests, secondary forests, savannah (grassland), and shrubs, feeding mainly on grass and leaves. Being nocturnal and solitary animals, they only pair during the breeding season. Scientists believe that giant muntjacs are extinct in most of the forests where they formerly roamed in Viet Nam. However, images of large-antlered muntjac (*Muntiacus vuquangensis*) recorded in Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park in 2017 have further confirmed the conclusion that Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park may be the last place in Viet Nam where a viable population exists for the purpose of conservation. Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park will play an extremely important role in the survival of the giant muntjac in the years ahead.



The Sun bear



(*Helarctos malayanus*)

although commonly kept in captivity, are rarely recorded in natural forests. The most recently known image of Sun Bears in the wild was taken nearly 20 years ago in Cat Tien National Park. In 2020, camera traps captured an image of a Sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*) in the wild in Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park. Sun bears (*Helarctos malayanus*) are large animals weighing 50-100kg. They have a slightly rounded body, wide forehead and round ears that do not turn upwards as high as those of the Asian black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*). Their front and back feet have five digits each with sharp and strong claws, and with their bowed front legs they walk on the soles of their feet. The hind footprint has a long heel similar to that of a human foot. The coat is jet-black, short and relatively smooth and it has a bright yellow patch at the

snout. They have short neck fur that doesn't quite form a mane, with swirls at the shoulder blades. The fur on their foreheads and back of the ears grows in swirls. They have a U-shaped, pale yellow patch on the chest but in some cases the patch is intermittent and not clearly U-shaped at all. The tail is very short and does not protrude from its coat.

The Sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*) feeds mainly on plants, fruits and nuts, such as chestnuts, figs, palm fruits, bananas, corn, and bamboo shoots. They also eat fish, honey, bird eggs and meat if available.

They live in evergreen forests that form on granite or limestone, sometimes in dipterocarp forests. Despite their

size, Sun bears (*Helarctos malayanus*) are very agile. They are good climbers and swimmers, and love bathing. They do not have permanent dens but often sleep, rest or nest in tree hollows, or in the branches of trees. Sun bears are mostly celibate, mating only during the breeding or rearing season. The females are pregnant for more than three months and give birth to one litter of two to four cubs each year. Bear cubs live with their mother for one and a half to two years.

The image of a Sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*) captured recently at Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park has further consolidated evidence of the diversity of mammals here. Stronger protective actions are needed to protect this rare and precious species.



50-100 KG
SUN BEARS ARE LARGE
ANIMALS WEIGHING



The Annamite striped rabbit

(Nesolagus timminsi)

Was first described in 1999. A team from the University of East Anglia, a British university, coordinated with experts from WWF's Indochina programme to conduct a three-month survey and recorded the presence of this species in the Green Annamite Mountain (Truong Son) Range. Since then, there have been no further sightings of this species in the wild. During a general survey of fauna at Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park, the



research team recorded images of the Annamite striped rabbit. This species has a *(Nesolagus timminsi)* hare-like shape but the most striking difference is in the red stripes running along their backs and the lines of black fur on the head. This species usually lives in rather primeval, closed evergreen forests across Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Quang Binh provinces. A recent survey of this species south of the Truong Son range further

confirms that the Bidoup-Nui Ba will become a priority area for the conservation of major mountain ranges in the South Truong Son area. More in-depth research activities on the behaviour and ecology of this species are essential for setting out appropriate conservation policies and actions.



Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is home to 131 species of fauna in 12 orders and 29 families. More than 70 species are listed in the Viet Nam Red Book, the IUCN World Red Book and CITES list of rare and endangered species. A special feature of Bidoup-Nui Ba's fauna is that large ungulates are relatively fully represented: Bisons (*Bos gaurus*), Buffaloes (*Bubalus arnee*), Serows (*Naemorhedus sumatraensis*), and Large-antlered muntjac (*Muntiacus vuquangensis*). Primates are also quite abundant with all of the Park's nine species on the red list and in need of protection.

To enable the extensive in-depth research and effective wildlife conservation of endemic species in Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park, the Park's Management Board, in cooperation with Leibniz, has set up 202 wildlife

surveillance cameras on 103 sites. The cameras have captured 30,000 images of terrestrial mammals and birds. The results confirm that Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is one of the leading areas for mammal diversity in Viet Nam.

Rare and precious animals in the Park, such as Large-antlered muntjac (*Muntiacus vuquangensis*), Owston's civets, Sun bears (*Helarctos malayanus*), and Albino Porcupines, have been published in Mammalia – the world's prestigious mammal journal.

Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park also cooperates with Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University in the USA on developing proposals for the establishment of an International Research Centre for Tropical Forests. Scientific and technological training and research are also being promoted by the Park. To date, the Park has led and participated in the publication of more than 30 scientific articles in academic journals in a range of countries.

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The results confirm that Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is one of the leading areas for mammal diversity in Viet Nam.

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131 species of fauna in
12 orders and **29** families

Large ungulates are relatively fully represented:

Bisons
(*Bos gaurus*)

Serows
(*Naemorhedus sumatraensis*)

Buffaloes
(*Bubalus arnee*)

Large-antlered muntjac
(*Muntiacus vuquangensis*)

Vampires

At nightfall, the landscape of the Park is filled with the croaking of amphibians. Especially mysterious is the Gia Rich Mountain valley because of the cry of a species of “Vampire”. In the middle of the murky forest, covered with year-round fog, the sound of the “Vampire” species is definitely not for the faint-hearted.

The Vampire flying frog (*Rhacophorus vampyrus*) is given its mysterious name because the mouths of individuals in the tadpole stage have two “fangs” that resemble the famous blood-sucking vampire of western literary legend.

Although they are not the only frog species in the world with teeth, the Vampire flying frog (*Rhacophorus vampyrus*) in Viet Nam is still the frog with unique “fangs” topping the list of the world’s weirdest frogs.

Adult vampire flying frogs (*Rhacophorus vampyrus*) are 4.2-5 cm in length. Their noses are short, protruding slightly below the corner of the lower jaw. Viewed from the abdomen, a bright coloured dot at the tip of the nose can be seen. The mouth is wide, and the section in front of the eyes is sloping and slightly concave. The back ranges

from a light brown to brick red and the throat, thorax and abdomen are white. Their sides and thighs are black with the webbing between their fingers and toes a grey-black colour.

Like many other tree frogs, Vampire flying frogs (*Rhacophorus vampyrus*), as an arboreal species, dwells, moves, and catches prey mainly in trees. Although it has a name that when mentioned scares many people, this frog species, unlike the legendary Vampire, does not suck the blood of humans or animals. An amphibian endemic to Viet Nam, the Vampire flying frog (*Rhacophorus vampyrus*) is a species of amphibians that international scientists take a keen interest in.

Only recorded in Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park, this species is found in evergreen forests. They lay eggs in foam nests in small cavities in trees.



The Amphibian fauna of Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park includes:

78 species in **2** orders:

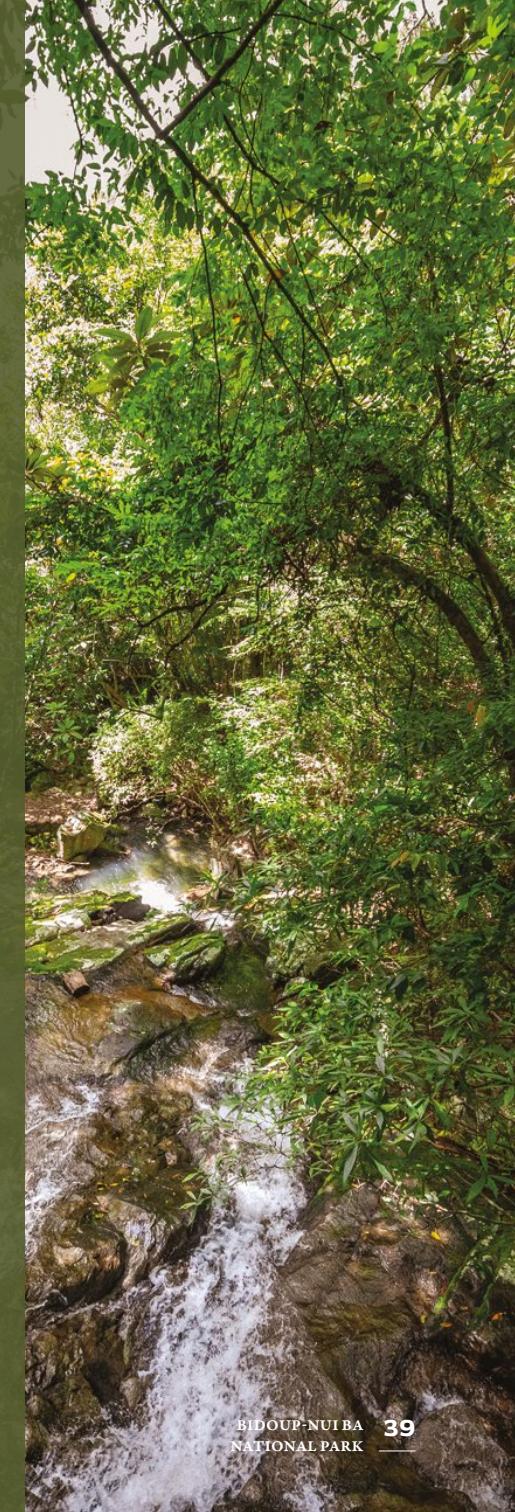
Tailless (Anura)

The remaining 77 species belong to the tailless order, including 6 families. Of these, the tree frog family Rhacophoridae accounts for the largest number with 19 species. Narrow-mouth frogs of the family Microhylidae is next with 16 species, then true frogs of the family Ranidae with 15 species, and the goose frog of the family Megophryidae with 13 species. The frog family Dicroglossidae has 11 species divided into 2 subfamilies: Dicroglossinae with 8 species and Occidozyginae with 3 species. The True Toad family Bufonidae has 3 species, the smallest number of species in the Tailless order.

Limbless (Gymnophiona)

The Limbless order has only one family Ichthyophiidae, the only species of which is Banna caecilian *Ichthyophis bannanicus*.

More in-depth surveys are necessary for a full assessment of Amphibian fauna in this area.



IV LOST IN WONDERLAND

Clouds in the skies of Bidoup

Clouds are visible aggregates of tiny water droplets (or ice crystals if it's cold enough) suspended in the atmosphere above the Earth's surface.

According to the World Meteorological Organisation, there are more than 100 types of clouds. However, many variations can be grouped into 10 basic categories depending on their general shape and height:



Low-level clouds
below

1,981 m



Mid-level clouds
form between

1,981 - 6,096 m



High-level clouds
from

6,096 m

Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park is known as a tropical, cool mountainous area surrounded by arc-shaped massifs that gradually tilt in north-south and east-west directions.

IN THE EAST ARE

**THE MOUNTAIN RANGES OF HON GIAO (1,950M)
GIA RICH (1,900M)
BIDOUP (2,267M)**

THE SOUTHERN PART STARTS

**GIA RICH MOUNTAIN (1,900M)
LANGBIANG MOUNTAIN (2,167M)**

TO THE WEST IS

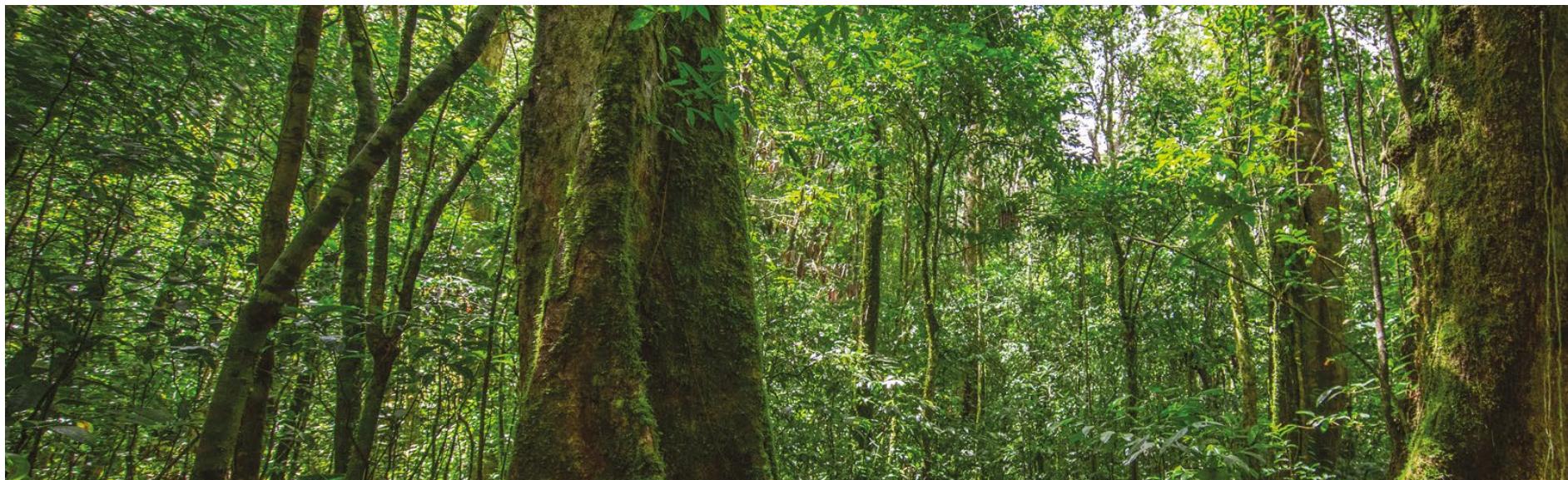
**THE CHU YEN DU MOUNTAIN RANGE (2,100M)
WHICH SLOPES TOWARDS THE KRONG NO RIVER**

A topography typical of high mountains and plains with vast primeval forests has created valleys immersed in clouds like a wonderland. At any time of the year, when the sun rises over Bidoup Mountain, Hon Giao, visitors can choose a suitable spot to admire a “Sea of Clouds”, a masterpiece of nature, and let their soul wander.



To admire the Park’s landscape in the early morning fog, visitors can choose a route to conquer Langbiang and Bidoup, and hunt clouds on other high mountains. If camping overnight, at early dawn travellers can bask in the scene described by the poet Huong Le :

*“Cloud-embraced mountains hug the trees
The space thickly covered in mist
The sun is emerging... the sun is shining
Faded dew disintegrates on green leaves.”*



Mossy Forest

“Winds and clouds follow their own course”

The poet Han Mac Tu used the winds and clouds to express separation in the poem “Here’s Vi Da hamlet”. But for scientists, the winds and clouds have created a wonderful spectacle. At an altitude of 1,500 to 2,500 m, in the cloud belt, water vapour cannot fall and is carried away by the wind.

Due to the push and direction of the southeast wind (also known as the trade wind) and the northeast wind, each cloud blends into the Bidoup primeval forest. With air humidity at over 90% and water vapour constantly at saturation point, a very special forest type has been formed in Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park, which ecologists have named the mossy forest. You will be

400

species of mosses have been found in the Park

325 species of 86 genera

Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park has recorded

surprised to know that more than 400 species of mosses have been found in the Park.

Mosses grow from the base of tree trunks and spread to every branch and leaf, where dew deposits glitter in sunlight like millions of sparkling diamonds. The dense moss growing on the forest’s ancient trees seem to take us into a world of fairy tales. Scientists have extracted valuable medicinal materials from mosses and the health of these species is an indicator of environmental purity for all species, including ourselves.



Another wonderful fact about mosses is that they create an excellent environment for orchids. Scientists have termed Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park as the kingdom of orchids where many species are prioritised for protection in the Viet Nam Red Book as well as the IUCN Red List.

Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park has recorded 325 species of 86 genera in the Orchid family (Orchidaceae Juss.). The park is home to more than one quarter of Viet Nam’s orchid species. Hardly any region in the country can compare with Bidoup-Nui Ba in terms of its abundance and diversity of wild orchid species. Several species are only found here, such as:

Hoang Thao Langbiang

(Dendrobium langbianense)

Dang huong hong nhan

(Aerides rubescens)

Moi cung Da Lat

(Stereochilus dalatensis)

Vanda bidoup

(Vanda bidupensis)



19.645,16 ha 

Account for 30.36% of the Park's total area

The main characteristics of this forest type are the single-story, sparsely-distributed Khasi pine

Tea (Theaceae) **Chestnut** (Fagaceae)

Ma sua den (*Helicia nilagirica*) **Ong anh vang** (*Lyonia ovalifolia*)

Oak (*Quercus lanata*) **The tree fern** (*Cyathea spp.*)

The Land of pine trees

*“Winter (Lidong) comes and winds whisper among a thousand pines
You said, “Together we share a flowery dream.”*

Two poetic lines from the song by musician The Hien partly touch on Da Lat - a land of pine trees that have embedded themselves in literary works since pen was first put to paper:

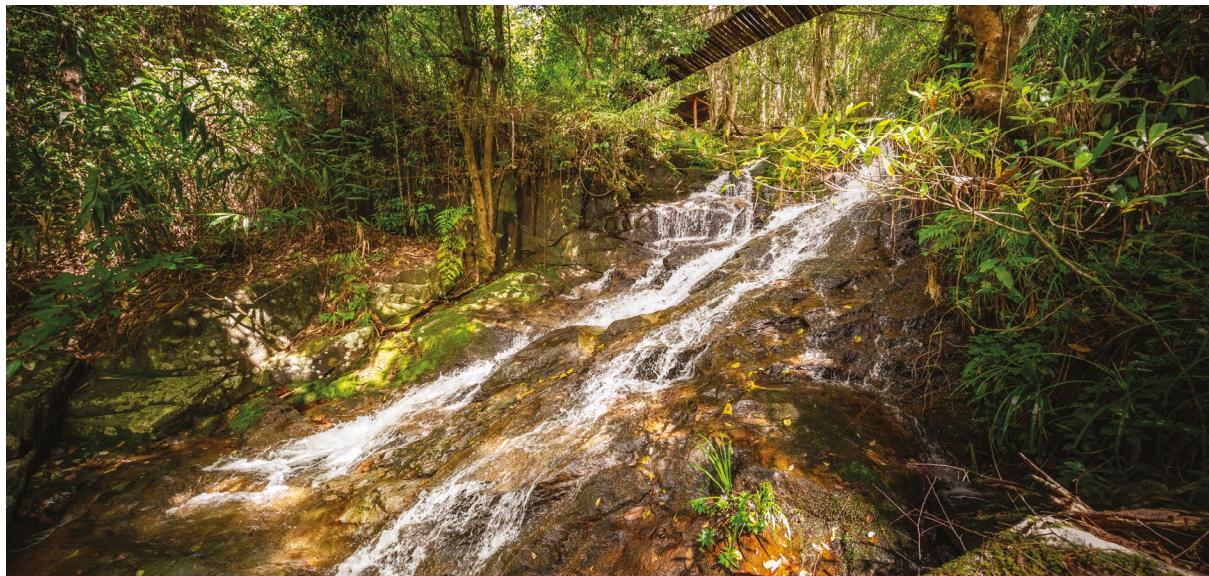
*“I won’t be a human in my next life
Instead, I will be a pine tree ringing in space.”*

Pine trees were also mentioned by the poet, Nguyen Cong Tru, as a symbol of the mettle that never succumbs to storms. Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park has a large area of Khasi pine (*Pinus kesiya*) forest widely distributed in 70 areas (Le, 2020). This confirms the popularity and uniqueness of Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park - the land of Pine trees.

Khasi pines (*Pinus kesiya*) form the largest and most unique forests in the country. They cover 19,645 hectares and account for 30.36% of the Park's total area. The main characteristics of this forest type are the single-story, sparsely-distributed Khasi pine (*Pinus kesiya*) mixed with species of tea (*Theaceae*) and chestnut (*Fagaceae* family) trees that grow under the main canopy at an average height of less than 4 m and an

average diameter under 15 cm. Some species, such as Ma sua den (*Helicia nilagirica*), Ong anh vang (*Lyonia ovalifolia*), and oak (*Quercus lanata*) provide resistance to fire. The tree fern (*Cyathea spp.*), an understory plant that can be found in many places, is considered a living paleo botanic fossil.

The whispering Khasi pine (*Pinus kesiya*) forest creates a fresh, airy space for visitors to Da Lat and Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park. Three-leaved pines live a sophisticated, mature and elegant lifestyle. For travellers to this land, basking in the vitality of the pine forest and breathing the fresh air is an unforgettable experience, a balm for the soul.



Thien Thai (Heaven) Waterfall

Water flows from the deep forest, weaving through the interlacing roots of ancient trees, murmuring on mossy rocks and over ground covered with vegetation. As the water passes beyond rocky rapids it creates the silky Heaven waterfall, a highlight amidst the immense primeval forest. The falls have low floors that form small clear and cool hollows. Large rocks divert the water to form creeks that offer spaces for relaxation, meditation, and for soaking one's feet after an arduous hike in the forest. At the top of the waterfall a rope bridge provides a vantage point to view the waterfall from two directions. The scenery, just as charming and heavenly as

the name infers, washes away all of life's worries.

The journey to Thien Thai runs through three-leaved pine hills and clusters of evergreen forest rich in woody species and vines. There are some large trees with buttresses, red pines – tree species with high medicinal value, and medicinal plants such as fabaceae, Poligalaceae, and Lagerstroemia. Along the route, guides introduce visitors to the famous highland coffee plantations and invite them to enjoy cold water fish from streams originating from the Da Nhim River.

Paths of discovery

Bidoup is an ideal place to visit with family and friends. But it is also perfect to wander in solitude, alone with our thoughts. Visitors have the opportunity to enjoy various activities in the Park. Hiking through the forests, camping among the pines, and exploring the culture of the K'Ho people offer moments of peace in the hectic modern world.

The Da Blah route, one of several journeys through the Park, explores K'Ho Cil culture. Visitors can stop at the Tourism and Environmental Education Centre to learn about forest conservation, wildlife, and the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans and nature.





V

THE INDIGENOUS K'HO PEOPLE

There are six local groups of K'ho people as listed by the General Statistics Office in 1979:

- Sre
- Nop
- Co don
- Cil (Chil)
- Lac (Lat, Lach)
- T'ring (Trinh)

of which three groups – Cil, Lac and T'ring – live mainly on the Lang Biang plateau in Bi Doup-Nui Ba National Park. In fact, K'ho ethnic groups (including Ma people) in Lam Dong all identify themselves as kon cau (or kon co, or kon cro). This local community (corresponding to a bon or buol) is differentiated from other local communities by the name “bon”.



The Lac (Lach, Lat) group

Previously, Lac people lived in the area now known as Da Lat city. Lac people live in each lineage community (bòn or bon) in the traditional social structure of hui yo, hui rot. Bons are often named after the dominant family, such as: Bon Yo, Bon Duong, and Bon Da Gout, a distinct ecological feature, or after a local legend such as Mang Ling (later written as Mang Line from “mang ling-mang ta” which means thick fog) and Tiang de (rat’s tail, denoting a string of hills shaped like a rat’s tail).



Regarding the name of the ethnic group, most Lac people interpret “Lac” in the local dialect as meaning “sparse forest”, referring to the area of bare hills spanning from Lang Biang Mountain Range to the southwest, including Da Lat city today. Researchers agree with the hypothesis that the name “Da Lat” has been mispronounced from “Da Lac” in the K’ho language, which means “stream of the Lac people”.

Over time, due to various reasons, such as epidemics and war, Lac people’s living area has narrowed, concentrated mainly at the foot of Lang Biang Mountain, specifically Lat commune and Lac Duong town (Lac Duong district), and Mang Line residential group (Ward 7, Da Lat city). Some Lac families have settled in other areas of Lam Dong province, although only in small numbers.



The Cil (Chil) group

“No matter how steep the slopes, how barren the land and how dense the forests, it’s still a habitat of the Cil”

Cil people (written in some documents as Chil) are the second most populous of the six local groups of K’ho, after the Sre. For a long time, the Cil dwelled in the montane forest area of Lang Biang plateau in the northeast of Lam Dong province, in the area of Lac Duong district. They live in traditional bons, such as Yen Gle, Dung Ja, and K’ong Klan. French researchers described the Cil as the people with the most difficult and unstable lives among the ethnic groups of the South-Central Highlands.

There is still no agreed interpretation of the clan name Cil. According to the Cil community and neighbouring peoples, the word Cil in the K’ho language refers to people living in high montane forests who depend on slope farming for their livelihoods. This is consistent with the characteristics of the traditional social and economic activities of this group as observed by Dambo:



The T'ring group (Trinh)

This is the group least mentioned of all the K'ho groups in Lam Dong. However, this group's awareness of their ethnic identity – self-identifying as T'ring people – is an irrefutable reality for indigenous people living in Dung Brieng (or Dang Brieng or Dang r'hong in Da Chais commune, Lac Duong district). The T'ring currently live scattered in the following areas:

Darahoa hamlets

K'Ren hamlets
(Hiep An commune,
Duc Trong district)

Da Ron hamlet
(Da Ron commune,
Don Duong district)

Giang Ly communes

Cau Ba communes
(Khanh Le district,
Khanh Hoa province)

Son Thai communes
(Khanh Le district,
Khanh Hoa province)

The number of T'ring people living in Lam Dong and Khanh Hoa is still unknown. T'ring people's traditional culture has faded considerably; a probable reason is that they have moved away from their traditional lands and have lived together with the Churu and Raglai people, who dominate in numbers.

For the T'ring currently living in Lam Dong, their tangible cultural traits, such as their traditional houses, costumes, and cuisine, as well as their intangible cultural artefacts, such as folk music, folk literature and crafts, have been adapted through their integration with other indigenous populations.

“

The Cultural Space of Gongs – Humanity's Intangible Cultural Heritage

”



Similar to indigenous ethnic groups in Lam Dong, inhabitants of Bidoup-Nui Ba are famous for their gong culture, a culture expressed by a popular brass instrument in the Truong Son-Central Highlands. What differentiates the gongs of the Lac, Cil and T'ring peoples from those of other indigenous peoples in the Central Highlands is the organisation of the gongs, which means the orderly arrangement of each gong in a set. The gong set that Lac, Cil and T'ring people prefer is a set of six gongs called cing bor. A gong musical melody is the harmony of six gongs in a set performed by six people (gong beaters).

Gong performances are an art form that requires the delicate aural skills of the team's six members. It's called gong culture because, in addition to the human factor, musical instruments (the gong set), and a methodical system, gongs also embrace other important elements. That is, the time of a performance (the date and on what occasion) and the performance space (where). These two factors are very important because in the opinion of the Lac, Cil and T'ring peoples, gongs are associated with the gods and sacredness every time they bring the gongs out to perform.

“

Simple but scientific, rustic but charming. That's the nature of gong culture and the folk music of the Lac, Cil and T'ring peoples on Langbiang plateau.

”



VI

AN ENTREATY FOR NATURE

“Conserving nature and preserving culture is nurturing the future”

This is the guiding thread for all our activities at Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park. It's our endeavour every day, every hour to conserve nature, biodiversity, and the forest ecosystems; to restore and preserve the natural values and traditional culture of the K'ho people on this land in order to preserve for generations forever after, this wonderland, this land of pine trees that cannot be restored if lost.

Please visit Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park and absorb yourself in the values of the nature, culture and people. Join with us to preserve and develop this treasure gifted by nature, and to ensure that the Da Nhim and Srepok streams flow forever with cool and fresh water, feeding millions of people as written by the late musician Duong Toan Thang:

“Weaving Dong Nai stream, overflowing Srepok stream...

Let the Park echo their murmurs towards nine mountains whilst they flow to ten rivers.”

To conclude the stories that have been told above, we would like to convey as our message the thoughts of mystic Eckhart Tolle so that all of us can join hands for the protection of Bidoup-Nui Ba National Park - the Wonderland.

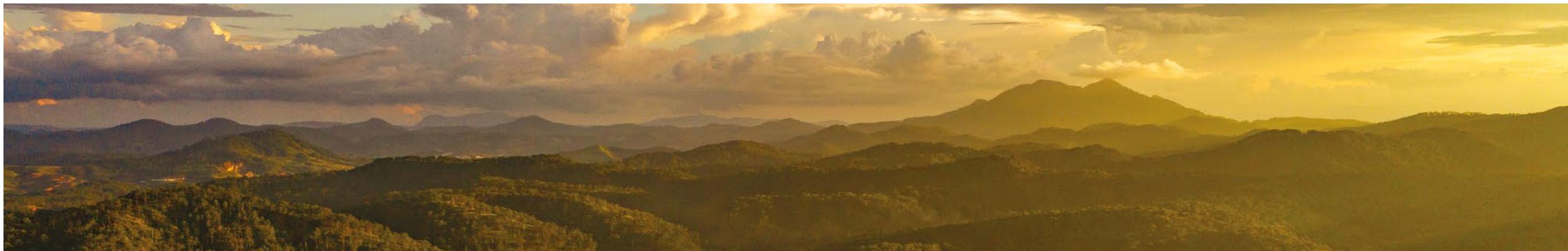
“You will attach more value to flowers and blades of grass when you recognise the sacredness, the beauty, and the deep and majestic stillness in them.”

“ You really need nature, and nature needs you.”

“Nature can bring you stillness. That’s its gift to you. When you perceive this, it’s the gift you offer to nature”./.



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Head Office: Subzone 97, Da Nhim Commune, Lac Duong District, Lam Dong Province;
Representative Office: 5E Tran Hung Dao Street, Ward 10, Dalat City
Telephone: (0263) 3502005 - Email: vqgbdnb@lamdong.gov.vn
Website: bidoupuiba.gov.vn