

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund provides US\$10 million for biodiversity conservation in Indo-Burma Region

Title After four years, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund's (CEPF) investment in the Indo- Burma biodiversity hotspot, implemented by BirdLife International, has resulted in more than US\$ 9.8 million in grants to 54 civil society organisations to conserve biodiversity in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. More than 300 applications for grants have been submitted to CEPF and BirdLife International from organisations working in the region, leading to the award of 44 large grants (over US\$20,000) and 70 small grants (up to US\$20,000) throughout the region. **Investment continues** Following the recent update of the ecosystem profile's stakeholder-driven conservation strategy for the hotspot, the CEPF Donor Council decided recently to reinvest in the Indo-Burma Hotspot. The \$8.85 million reinvestment will begin as CEPF's initial five-year winds down, with a planned end date of June 2013. The decision to reinvest in the hotspot, which includes all non-marine parts of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, plus parts of southern China, will allow for seamless connection between funding phases, sustaining the momentum of civil society-led conservation efforts in one of the most critically threatened hotspots, and leveraging funding of the foundations that supported the profiling process. The profile was updated with funding from the MacArthur, Margaret A. Cargill and McKnight Foundations and CEPF, in collaboration with BirdLife International in Indochina, the Conservation International-China Program, Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden, the Samdhana Institute and the Yunnan Green Environment and Development Foundation. "CEPF funds have been a vital resource to enable real biodiversity conservation to be undertaken in the region by civil society organisations. As international donors have lost interest in biodiversity funding in recent years, there is no doubt that far less would have been achieved without CEPF's contribution", said Jonathan C. Eames OBE, the BirdLife/CEPF Project Manager. "The threats biodiversity faces in the region have only grown during this time and CEPF impacts, although real, remain modest. A far greater commitment by the international community will be needed if we are to be successful in conserving biodiversity."

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http://www.birdlife.org/community/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/b_white-shoulered_ibis2-300x199.jpg



The Indo-Burma hotspot has a high level of biodiversity (Jonathan C Eames)

The portfolio grows As the portfolio of CEPF-funded projects has grown so has the proportion of grants made to local civil society organisations. Under the first two calls for proposals, numbers of local civil society organisations submitting applications reached only 40%, but under the fourth call reached 75%. 'The growth in the role played by local civil society is most welcomed', said Eames. 'We see local civil society most active in areas where international organisations are not, such as supporting livelihood-based conservation interventions, advocacy and education. Correspondingly, international organisations can be expected, for the foreseeable future, to play continued vital roles in applied conservation science and planning, capacities that local civil society organisations often lack and struggle to build.' CEPF began its first five-year investment phase in the region in July 2008, with BirdLife International acting as its Regional Implementation Team. Guided by an ecosystem profile developed through a consultative process begun in 2003 and updated in 2011, the CEPF investment strategy focuses on the Mekong River and major tributaries, and the Sino-Vietnamese Limestone conservation corridors. In the new phase of investment, the Tonle Sap Lake and Inundation zone and Hainan Mountains corridors, as well as Myanmar, will be added to these geographic priorities. **Strengthening Capacity** During the first five-year phase, key impacts of CEPF investment were observed with regard to the conservation of key species, sites and corridors, as well as with delivering tangible livelihood benefits to local communities and strengthening capacity of local civil society organisations working on biodiversity conservation. To date, CEPF-supported projects in the hotspot have identified and/or secured core populations of 47 globally threatened species, with local conservation teams being put in place for 11 of them, and nest protection schemes for nine. Protection and management have been strengthened for more than 1.5 million hectares across 24 key biodiversity areas in the hotspot, and new protected areas, covering more than 30,000 hectares, have been established. Outside of protected areas, conservation goals have been integrated into more than 160,000 hectares of production landscapes, and civil society networks have raised concerns about the social, environmental and economic implications of hydropower dam development on the Mekong River and its major tributaries, and helped affected communities voice their concerns. As well as benefiting from strengthened voice, more than 100 local communities across the hotspot have received direct benefits from sustainable use of natural resources. The CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, 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. Further information is available at www.cepf.net, www.birdlifeindochina.org/cepf or www.facebook.com/birdlife.cepfrit. An up-to-date list of funded projects is available at www.cepf.net/grants/project_database/indo-burma and an interactive map of project locations can be viewed at www.birdlifeindochina.org/cepf/Project-database