

NGO Collaboration in the Development of Hkakaborazi National Park in Northern Myanmar

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Background

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), New York

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is one of the leading non-government organisations (NGOs) in the World. In cooperation with other NGOs and government organisations it contributes towards the conservation of the Earth's wildlife and ecosystems through research, training, and education. It was founded in 1895 as the New York Zoological Society and has organised more than 250 field projects in 52 countries throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, and North America.

Although the formal presence of WCS in Myanmar is relatively recent, contact goes back to the early nineteenth century. William Bee travelled to northern Myanmar in 1906 in search of pheasants, afterwards publishing a book titled 'Jungle of Pheasants'. Oliver Milton and Richard D. Estes explored the Chaukan Pass area to investigate the feasibility of transboundary conservation and their 'Trails of Takin' have been recorded on film. These expeditions were sponsored by WCS and biophysical accounts of northern Myanmar were recorded.

The Wildlife Conservation Society Myanmar Programme

Dr Alan Rabinowitz has made a significant contribution to the WCS Myanmar Programme. He took the initiative for setting up the programme by signing the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Forest Department in 1994. A second MoU was signed in 1998 to extend the programme up to 2002. He also organised the first ever training course on wildlife conservation at Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park in January 1995. With a view to developing WCS activities in Myanmar, a country programme coordinator was appointed in March 1995. Since then, the implementation of wildlife conservation activities by WCS in Myanmar has been gathering increasing momentum, with the cooperation of the Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division (NWCD) of the Forest Department.

Framework of the Myanmar Programme

Following the conservation guidelines set out by WCS New York, the Myanmar Programme operates within the following framework.

- Programme development
- Basic training in wildlife conservation and protected area management for junior staff of NWCD
- Provision of small grants for research, with a particular emphasis on conservation of species, to staff of NWCD and researchers from Yangon University

“organising and undertaking biological expeditions to investigate new areas with conservation potential”

- Financial support to NWCD for park development
- Evaluation of NWCD's existing protected areas
- Organising and undertaking biological expeditions to investigate new areas with conservation potential. This helps the Forest Department increase the extent of its protected area system
- Coordination among related institutions such as the Department of Fisheries, universities, zoos, other NGOs and United Nations agencies
- Promotion of professional translation of wildlife and conservation-oriented books into Myanmar; publishing conservation and education posters and calendars in order to increase public awareness about conservation

Activities of the Myanmar Programme

Since its inception in 1995, the WCS Myanmar Programme, with its two professional and three administrative staff, has successfully implemented a variety of activities as laid down in the framework.

“the team will investigate the status of tigers in the whole country”

(a) Programme Development

The WCS office in Yangon is now equipped with essential facilities for both internal and external communication. In 1999 the office was extended to integrate an eight-member National Tiger Survey Team, which the Forest Department and WCS recruit for jointly. The team will investigate the status of tigers in the whole country for a consecutive period of 3 years. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Save the Tiger Fund of the USA provides the project funding. The outcome of the survey will help in the development of a National Tiger Action Plan for Myanmar.

The WCS Myanmar Programme is also looking into integrating a survey and research on captive breeding of the endemic star tortoise in Myanmar. A herpetology team from WCS New York has recently completed a feasibility study of this species in the central arid zone of Myanmar.

(b) Basic Training

As agreed in the MoU, the Research and Training Coordinator of WCS has, since 1995, provided basic training on wildlife conservation to the field staff of NWCD. So far, 9 basic training courses for nearly 200 staff of NWCD of 9 protected areas have already been conducted.

“WCS has provided small research grants”

(c) Small Research Grants

With the objectives of providing skills in research and increasing knowledge in basic data collection, WCS has provided small research grants to the staff of NWCD and postgraduates at the Zoology Department of Yangon University. So far, research grants covering species' conservation have been provided to 12 staff members of the NWCD, 6 researchers of the Yangon University and 3 researchers from elsewhere.

Initially research grants are provided in order to identify potentially skilled candidates; few come out as competent researchers. However, the

provision of small research grants will be continued to identify promising candidates from NWCD and other related sectors of conservation.

(d) Park Development

To help the staff of NWCD increase their professional capabilities, WCS is providing financial and field trip facilities for some of the protected areas where there is great potential for conservation. So far, four areas have been targeted based on the undisturbed nature of their vegetation, a viable wildlife population and remoteness of access. In these areas, additional salaries and uniforms for staff, transport facilities such as motor boats and motorcycles, protection signboards and guard posts have been provided.

In order of development priority the targeted areas are Hkakaborazi National Park, Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary, Natmataung National Park and Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary. Although park development activities were initiated in 1995, the provision of additional salaries and transport facilities to enhance these activities only became possible in 1998. In 1998 and 1999, WCS provided US \$21,000 worth of development facilities for these four areas and the target for provision for 2000 was US \$20,000 (with greater emphasis on Hkakaborazi National Park).

(e) Evaluation of Existing Protected Areas

Myanmar now has 9,491 sq.km of protected area in 31 established national parks and wildlife sanctuaries covering 2.26% of the total area of the country (Figure 8).

Although these sanctuaries were established some time ago (some as early as 1918), most of them have not been intensively managed due to lack of manpower and security. As a result of this neglect, little is known about their conservation value. The major objective of this activity is to evaluate the existing sanctuaries so that their conservation values can be assessed. This information will be used to help with the selection and prioritisation of areas for future intensive management.

So far, 16 out of 31 existing sanctuaries have been evaluated. This activity will continue until the remainder have been evaluated.

(f) Biological expeditions

The programme's most relevant accomplishment for this workshop is the emergence of Hkakaborazi National Park, which is the outcome of the biological expeditions jointly undertaken by the Forest Department and WCS in northern Myanmar. The Wildlife Conservation Society has organised six expeditions to the region and has identified new areas for conservation (see Table 12). Two trips were made to the southern part of the country to designate Lampi Island as a marine national park, one was made to the northwest along the Chindwin River, which supports Htamanthi, to create a wildlife sanctuary and three were made to the northern corner of Myanmar, resulting in the creation of Hkakaborazi as the country's largest national park.

(g) Coordination

In recent years, the Myanmar government has allowed NGOs to carry out their activities. Among wildlife conservation-oriented NGOs, WCS is the only one which has a solid base in the country. Therefore the WCS Myanmar Programme is helping other NGOs accomplish their conservation activities in Myanmar. This has resulted in better understanding and relations between WCS and other NGOs.

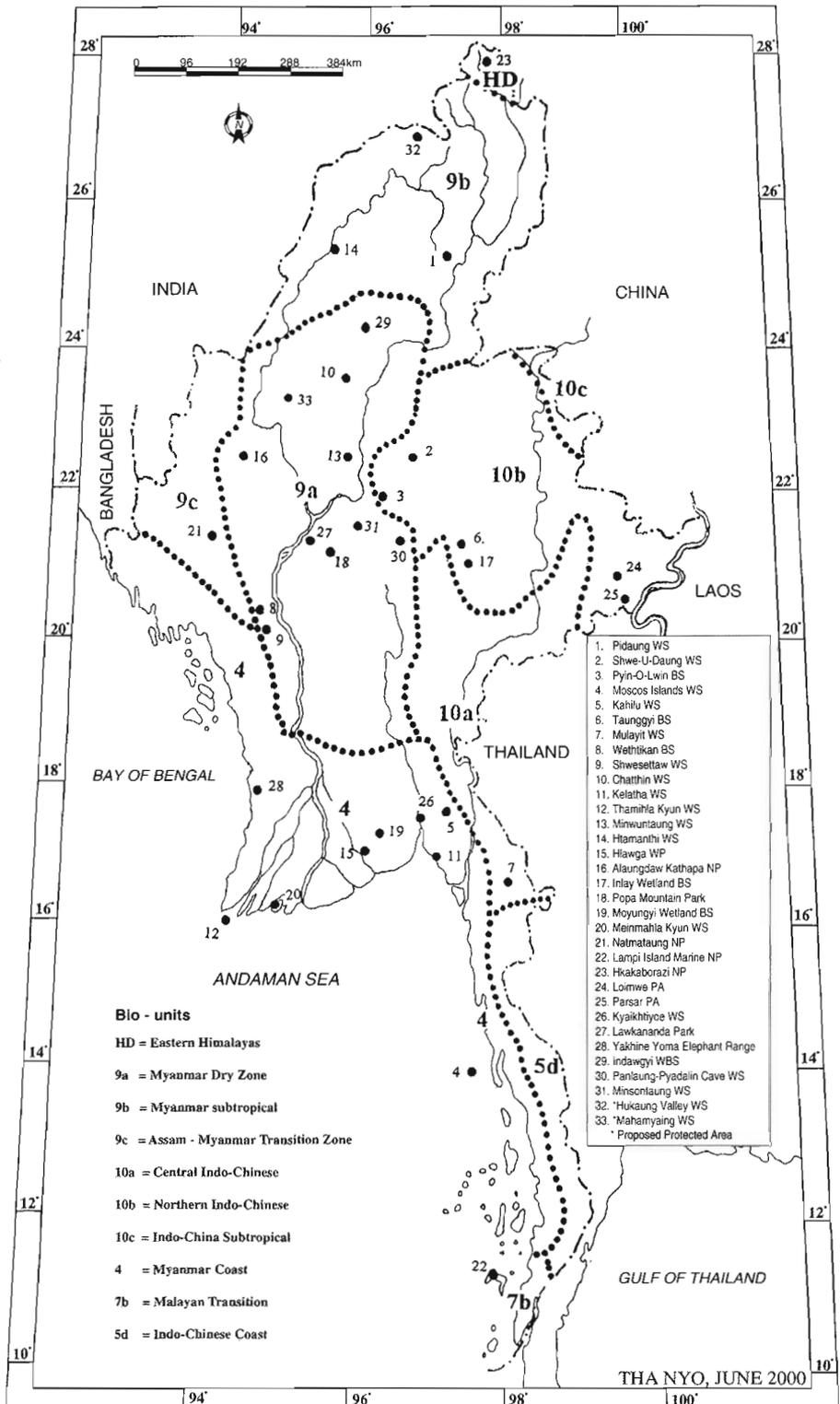


Figure 8: Protected Area Network of Myanmar

Table 12: Existing and Proposed Protected Areas as at 1 September 1999

S.N.	Name	Year	Area (sq.km)	General location	Bio Unit	Key species protected	Management
1	Piduang Wildlife Sanctuary	1918	698	Kachin State	9b. Terrestrial	Elephant, gaur, banteng, sambar, tiger, leopard, bear	NWCD
2	Shwe-U-Daung Wildlife Sanctuary	1918	207	Mandalay Division	10b. Terrestrial	Rhinoceros, elephant, gaur	NWCD
	Shwe-U-Daung Wildlife Sanctuary	1929	119	Shan State	10b. Terrestrial	Banteng, sambar, serow, tiger, bear	
3	Pyin-O-Lwin Bird Sanctuary	1918	127	Mandalay Division	10b. Terrestrial	Barking deer, pheasant	FD
4	Moscov Island Wildlife Sanctuary	1927	49	Taninthayi Division	4. Island Marine	Barking deer, sambar, swiftlet	FD
5	Kahilu Wildlife Sanctuary	1928	161	Karen State	4. Terrestrial	Rhinoceros, serow, mouse deer, hog deer	FD
6	Taunggyi Bird Sanctuary	1930	16	Shan State	10b. Terrestrial	Avifauna	FD
7	Mulayit Wildlife Sanctuary	1936	139	Karen State	10a. Terrestrial	Barking deer, tiger, leopard	FD
8	Wethtikan Bird Sanctuary	1939	5	Magwe Division	9a. Wetland	Wetland birds	FD
9	Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary	1940	553	Magwe Division	9a. Terrestrial	Eld's deer, sambar, barking deer, gaur	NWCD
10	Chatthin Wildlife Sanctuary	1941	269	Sagaing Division	9a. Terrestrial	Eld's deer, sambar, barking deer, gaur	NWCD
11	Kelatha Wildlife Sanctuary	1942	24	Mon State	4. Terrestrial	Serow, avifauna	FD
12	Thamihla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary	1970	1	Ayeyarwaddy Division	4. Marine	Marine turtle	FD
13	Minwuntaung Wildlife Sanctuary	1972	206	Sagaing Division	9a. Terrestrial	Barking deer, avifauna	FD
14	Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary	1974	2151	Sagaing Division	9b. Terrestrial	Rhinoceros, elephant, gaur, tiger	NWCD
15	Hlawga Wildlife Park	1982	6	Yangon Division	4. Terrestrial	Enclosed wildlife park, sambar, barking deer, hog deer, eld's deer, mythum, migratory birds	NWCD
16	Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park	1989	1606	Sagaing Division	9a. Terrestrial	Elephant, tiger, leopard, gaur, sambar, serow, bear	NWCD
17	Inlay Wetland Bird Sanctuary	1985	642	Shan State	10b. Wetland/Lake	Wetland and migratory birds	NWCD
18	Popa Mountain Park	1989	129	Mandalay Division	9a. Terrestrial	Barking deer, leopard, geomorphologic features	NWCD
19	Moyungyi Wetland Bird Sanctuary	1988	104	Bago Division	4. Wetland reservoir	Migratory birds	NWCD
20	Meinmahla Kyun Wildlife Sanctuary	1994	137	Ayeyarwaddy Division	4. Marine	Mangroves, crocodile, birds	NWCD

Table 12: Cont.....

S.N.	Name	Year	Area (sq.km)	General location	Bio Unit	Key species protected	Management
21	Namataung National Park	1994	723	Chin State	3c. Terrestrial	Gaur, seerow, goral land avifauna	NWCD
22	Lampi Island Marine National Park	1996	205	Taninthayi Division	7b. Marine	Coral reefs, mouse deer, Salon ethnic culture	FD
23	Hkakaborazi Protected Area	1996	3812	Kachin State	Hd. Terrestrial	Takin, Musk deer, red goral, black barking deer	FD
24	Loimwe Protected Area	1996	43	Shan State	10b. Terrestrial	Tiger, bear, pangolin, pheasant	FD
25	Parsar Protected Area	1996	78	Shan State	10a. Terrestrial	Jungle fowl, Chinese pangolin	FD
26	Kyaikhtiyoe Wildlife Sanctuary	1998	181	Mon State	4. Terrestrial	Tiger, goral, gaur, sambar, monkey	NWCD
27	Lawkananda Wildlife Sanctuary	1997	0.5	Mandalay Division	9a. Terrestrial	Avifauna, cultural diversity	NWCD
28	Rakhine Yoma Elephant Range	1997	1756	Rakhine State	4. Terrestrial	Elephant, gaur, leopard, jackal, bear	NWCD
29	Indawgyi Wetland Bird Sanctuary	1999	775	Kachin State	9a. Wetland/Lake	Elephant, tiger, sambhur deer, leopard, bear, serow, gaur	NWCD
30	Panlaung-Pyadalin Cave Wildlife Sanctuary	1999	334	Shan State	10b. Terrestrial	Elephant, tiger, leopard, gaur, banteng, golden cat, clouded leopard, serow, gibbon	NWCD
31	Minsontaung Wildlife Sanctuary	1999	23	Mandalay Division	9a. Terrestrial	Barking deer, rabbit, dhole, reptiles, land tortoises, wild cat, snakes	NWCD
32	*Hukaung Valley Wildlife Sanctuary	1999	6460	Kachin State	9b. Terrestrial	Elephant, tiger, leopard, wild boar, sambhur deer, barking deer, bear	FD
33	*Mahamyaing Wildlife Sanctuary	1999	3354	Sagaing Division	9a. Terrestrial	Sambhur deer, wild boar, barking deer, banteng, cat family, gibbon, wild dog, bear, rabbit	FD
Total			25094				

*Proposed protected area

Total land area of Myanmar = 676,756 sq.km

Percentage of existing protected areas to total land area of Myanmar = 2.26%

Percentage of Proposed protected areas to total land area of Myanmar = 1.45%

Hd = Eastern Himalayas; 3c = Assam-Myanmar Transition; 4 = Myanmar Coast; 5a = Indochinese Coast; 7b = Malayan Transition; 9a = Myanmar Dry Zone; 9b = Myanmar Subtropical; 10a = Central Indochina; 10b = Northern Indochina; 10c = Indochina Subtropical

Source: MacKinnon, J.; MacKinnon, K. (1986) *Review of the Protected Areas System of the Indo-Malayan Realm*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN

In 1996 WCS coordinated with the International Crane Foundation (ICF) to study the status of cranes in Myanmar. One ICF-sponsored researcher from Myanmar who was also assisted by WCS is now studying in India at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII). The Wildlife Conservation Society has also helped the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) in selection of candidates and provision of financial assistance for training in Nepal.

The Wildlife Conservation Society also coordinated with the Smithsonian Institute and the Wild Bird Society of Japan to provide financial assistance to study the status of Eld's deer and avifauna in Myanmar.

In the future, WCS will continue to coordinate with other NGOs to promote close cooperation in order to advance the cause of wildlife conservation in Myanmar.

(h) Conservation awareness

To promote public awareness about wildlife conservation, WCS publishes educative posters, pamphlets, calendars, and books. With some financial support from WCS and the cooperation of Ava Publishing, 'Large Mammals of Myanmar' has been published. It is by a local eminent writer Dr Sein Tu and is aimed at the general public.

The 'Wildlife Field Research and Conservation Training Manual' written by Dr Alan Rabinowitz has been translated so that staff of NWCD can read it in their own language. An educational calendar about Hkakaborazi was published in 1998, after the biological expedition was completed in the same year. Another educational calendar about the outstanding protected areas of Myanmar was published in 2000.

In future, WCS will put more emphasis on publishing articles and books, which will enhance conservation awareness not only among the general public but also among the decision-makers of the country.

The Development of Hkakaborazi as a National Park

The Wildlife Conservation Society has invested a lot of time, energy, and money into the development of Hkakaborazi as a national park. The preliminary study around Putao in 1996, the biological expedition to Hkakaborazi in 1997 and the expedition to Naung Mumg area in 1998 have all contributed to this development.

Hkakaborazi was merely an unnamed site when the Ministry of Forestry first designated it as a protected area on 30 January 1996. Only when its biological richness was unearthed by the expeditions was the importance of the area recognised and its status was upgraded to that of a national park by the government on 10 November 1998. In a further development, on 19 November 1998, the Ministry of Forestry sanctioned the appointment of 61 NWCD staff in Putao to help with the development of Hkakaborazi.

In order to carry out future development activities, WCS is committed to support NWCD. From the very first day the staff reported for duty at Putao, where the headquarters of the park is going to be, WCS has provided financial support for the staff in terms of additional salaries, transport facilities and field equipment. In 1999, US \$7,000 worth of these facilities were provided and, in 2000, US \$13,000 worth of facilities for construction of an education centre at Putao and a guard post at Parandir, the entrance of the park, were provided. In view of this, WCS is committed and will continue to support Hkakaborazi until the park is fully developed.

“a unique area in Myanmar”

Collaboration with non-government organisations

Hkakaborazi is a unique area in Myanmar because it has been a treasure trove for botanists, mammalogists, and explorers since the early nineteenth century and has much more to offer for many years to come. This protected area will not only serve as a national park of the country but will also play an important role as a transboundary conservation area with both neighbouring countries, China and India. It also includes within its boundary the crucial headwaters of the mighty Ayeyarwaddy that flows from the northern tip to the southern delta region of the country. From another perspective, this river is the lifeline waterway for the people of Myanmar.

From the very outset the Government of Myanmar has been committed and, as a supporting NGO, WCS is also decidedly involved in the development of Hkakaborazi. From its status of protected area in 1996, it is now being upgraded to a national park and, if conditions are favorable, it will further be developed as a World Heritage Site, the first of its kind in Myanmar.

“it also includes within its boundary the crucial headwaters of the mighty Ayeyarwaddy”

In trying to marshal support for the development of Hkakaborazi, close scientific and financial cooperation among the conservation groups, either from the government sectors or NGOs, is not merely desirable, it is imperative. Furthermore, any cooperation needs to be coordinated so that the development of the protected area strictly follows a management strategy.