

The establishment of Lenya National Park A new partnership for conservation

**A project concept from the Biodiversity and Nature
Conservation Association and BirdLife International**



The establishment of Lenya National Park

The Government of the Union of Myanmar has wisely set a policy target to expand the national protected areas system to 10% of the land-area of the country. Doing so will bring it in line with international norms and its ASEAN neighbors. In order to fulfill this policy objective the protected areas system should be fully representative of the diversity of habitats and species occurring in Myanmar. Currently there is no terrestrial protected area established to conserve sundaic lowland forests and their fauna and flora (including the Endangered and endemic Gurney's Pitta) in Myanmar. By incorporating Ngawun Reserve Forest and Ngawun Extension within an expanded Lenya National Park, the Government of the Union of Myanmar will take a major step towards fulfilling this policy goal and in doing so the Government will further fulfill its international obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). In addition, the returns on investment in the expansion and development of an expanded Lenya National Park include:

- Government policy targets met with no-cost investment by the Government of Myanmar;
- Provision of guaranteed environmental services, in the form of water supply to provide for agricultural development in adjacent areas, thereby supporting and sustaining regional development;
- Providing a sound model of multiple-use land use planning that maximizes economic benefit and helps promote a modern, developed nation;
- Increased international tourism potential, providing foreign currency; and,
- The Government of the Union of Myanmar would earn international recognition for its commitment to biodiversity conservation.

Project Goal:

To establish an expanded Lenya National Park in order to achieve a fully representative example of sundaic lowland forest within the protected areas system of Myanmar.

Objectives:

1. To ensure the gazettelement of an expanded Lenya National Park encompassing a biologically significant and viable area of lowland forest habitat.
2. To develop park infrastructure and equipment necessary for the establishment of the park.
3. To increase capacity of relevant staff from the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry to manage the national park.

4. To identify and secure support for the continued conservation management of Lenya National Park, and the formulation of a conservation agenda for the wider landscape.

Outcomes:

- A comprehensive feasibility study completed
- National park boundary identified
- Settlement proposal completed
- Proposal for an expanded Lenya National Park gazetted by Government
- National park boundary demarcated
- Headquarters, guard stations and other infrastructure built and operational.
- Communications system operational
- Field and office equipment in place
- Trained national park staff in place
- Management plan formulated and implemented
- Monitoring priorities identified
- Enforcement system operational
- Advocacy strategy operational
- Sustainable financing mechanism developed
- Agenda for conservation of wider landscape developed and funded

Timeframe: To establish a functioning, viable protected area an indefinite commitment is required by the project partners. Although BirdLife has secured initial investment funds, our commitment is indefinite. Depending on the institutional modality used this could be 10-100 years.

Budget: US \$ 300,000 initially for the feasibility phase (two years), plus a commitment to raise all necessary funds for a long-term engagement. Over the course of the project this could be expected to be several million dollars.

Partnership

This project will be a partnership between the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, Union of Myanmar, Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA) and BirdLife International. BirdLife has been working in tropical forest conservation for decades, and in over 50 countries. BirdLife has unrivaled experience and expertise in the management of tropical forest sites. The grass roots, bottom-up nature of BirdLife positions us well to deliver results and demonstrations on the ground, ensure benefit sharing from tropical forest conservation. Underlying this would be the need for BirdLife to have a memorandum of understanding with the Myanmar Government.

Options for site management

Traditionally BirdLife has worked in partnership with forest departments worldwide to conserve forest sites by designing joint projects and programmes, seeking international investment and providing technical support. The BirdLife Forests of Hope programme offers the opportunity for governments to consider long-term leases using holding companies or trusts as mechanisms to manage the site. For the Harapan project in Indonesia for example, a specially created

legal entity holds the title for a 100,000 ha forest site on a 99-year lease. See Forests of Hope section below.

BirdLife International

BirdLife International is a global Partnership of conservation organizations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. We're the World's largest partnership of conservation organizations.

- BirdLife Partners operate in over one hundred countries and territories Worldwide.
- BirdLife Partners collaborate on regional work programmes in every Continent.
- BirdLife is non-political and non-religious

Our Vision

Birds are beautiful, inspirational and international. Birds are excellent flagships and vital environmental indicators. By focusing on birds, and the sites and habitats on which they depend, the BirdLife Partnership is working to improve the quality of life for birds, for other wildlife (biodiversity), and for people.

BirdLife's aims are to:

- Prevent the extinction of any bird species
- Maintain and where possible improve the conservation status of all bird species
- Conserve and where appropriate improve and enlarge sites and habitats important for birds
- Help to conserve biodiversity and to improve the quality of people's lives
- Integrate bird conservation into sustaining people's livelihoods.

BirdLife Global Partnership

The BirdLife Global Partnership has:

- More than 4,000 staff working for conservation
- Over 2,500,000 members worldwide
- 10,000,000 worldwide supporters
- Over 2 million children involved annually
- Over 1,000,000 hectares owned or managed

Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA)

BANCA is one of the major organizations active in Myanmar in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. BANCA is a registered non-profit, non-governmental organization and a BirdLife Affiliate. BANCA's vision is "Living in harmony with nature with biodiversity is maintained and restored, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefit essential for all people" BANCA's mission is the conservation of nature, primarily biological diversity through actions based on surveys and research, advocacy, partnership, network building, environmental education and public awareness, people's participation, encouragement of stakeholder concept and improvement of rural livelihoods.

Forests of Hope

The international community has so far failed to save the world's tropical forests. As things now stand, few tropical forests will survive to the end of the 21st century. Tropical deforestation is one of the most acute ecological tragedies of our modern age, yet it continues at a frightening rate, driven by global demand for timber, paper and land for crops and biofuels. As forests are destroyed, their values as stores of biological diversity, providers of livelihoods and ecosystem services to local and global communities, and stabilizers of the global climate, are lost.

Tropical deforestation has serious impacts on the world's climate. Globally, deforestation and forest degradation account for 15–20% of all human induced carbon emissions, and a large proportion of this takes place in the tropics. This is therefore one of the major causes of global warming. These emissions are greater than those of all cars, trucks, planes, ships and trains worldwide. Climate change leads to biodiversity loss over and above that caused directly by habitat destruction. One global study estimates that 15-37% of species could be committed to extinction by 2050 as a consequence of climate change.

To prevent irreversible damage to ecosystems, with devastating consequences for people and biodiversity, it is essential to restrict global warming to less than 2 °C above pre-industrial levels. If current rates of deforestation are not slowed, this is impossible. However, it is not too late to turn the tide. Threatened biodiversity is not lost and can be saved, and degraded forests can be restored. Conserved or restored forests can continue to provide the services that local communities and society worldwide need.

BirdLife's tropical forest management experience

The BirdLife Partnership has been working in tropical forest conservation for decades, and in over 50 countries. The grass roots, bottom-up nature of BirdLife positions us well to deliver results and demonstrations on the ground, ensure benefit sharing from tropical forest conservation, and feed lessons upwards into national and global policy.

The BirdLife Forests of Hope Programme

BirdLife International has created the Forests of Hope programme to bring together and build on its successful forest conservation and management programmes throughout the tropics. BirdLife is working in tropical countries around the world, to identify and pilot innovative management, financing and governance systems for forest and biodiversity conservation and restoration, generating local and national economic benefits for sustainable development, and combating climate change. The aim is the prevention of deforestation and the restoration of natural forest at up to 20 sites covering at least 5 million hectares of tropical forest by 2015. The Forests of Hope programme links forest conservation on the ground to its policy and advocacy work at national and international levels, making impacts in three crucial areas.

Conserving biodiversity

Tropical forests are the most ecologically rich of all forest types. They are home

to 70% of the world's plants and animals — more than 13 million species—and contain 70% of the world's vascular plants, 30% of all bird species, and 90% of invertebrates. Forests of Hope are helping to develop and implement forest governance and management systems that will conserve this biodiversity in perpetuity.

Combating climate change

Conservation of natural forest is an essential means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Restoration of natural forest can assist in helping restore stocks with the highest carbon content. Forest conservation and restoration plans developed by Forests of Hope, and the threatened nature of the forests selected, ensure the prevention of emissions of large volumes of greenhouse gases. Forests of Hope contribute to the development of effective mechanisms under discussion to maintain and restore these carbon stocks. These include REDD—Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation—where forested developing countries would undertake to reduce their emissions from deforestation below a historic reference level, and would be financially compensated for doing so.

Ecosystem services and sustainable livelihoods for local people

Deforestation is a disaster for the many thousands of people who live in and around tropical forests and whose livelihoods depend on the forests. For example, about 4.6 billion people depend for all or some of their water on supplies from forest systems; a large proportion of these live in the tropics. Forests of Hope is helping to safeguard livelihoods and ecosystem services, while respecting, supporting and promoting the rights of local and indigenous peoples, under the principles of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other applicable instruments. In particular, it promotes the improvement of forest governance systems that can secure the rights of local people, as they relate to conservation and the ecologically sustainable use of natural resources.

Selected Forest Profiles - [click for map](#)

[Belum-Temengor Forest Complex, Malaysia](#)

[Western Siem Pang Forest, Cambodia](#)

[The Maya Forest: Calakmul Region, Mexico](#)

[Harapan Rainforest, Indonesia](#) [click here](#) and [here](#)

[Gola Forest Complex, Sierra Leone and Liberia](#)

[Tsitongambarika Forest, Madagascar](#)

[Mt Irid Angelo, Philippines](#)

[Sierra de Bahoruco, Dominican Republic](#)

[Gran Chaco Forests, Paraguay: \[English\]\(#\); \[Spanish\]\(#\)](#)

The forests of Tanintharyi Division are a global conservation priority

The sundaic forests of Tanintharyi Division contain the largest remaining areas of evergreen wet forest in mainland South-east Asia. This forest type has now been totally replaced by oil palm and rubber in Thailand and peninsula Malaysia.

Within the region only Myanmar has the opportunity to establish a representative protected area that reflects the full diversity of sundaic fauna and flora. This opportunity has long been lost in Thailand and without immediate action will pass in Myanmar.

The sundaic forests of Tanintharyi Division are a global conservation priority because they support the largest remaining population of the endemic and globally Endangered Gurney's Pitta. They also support populations of Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus*, Tiger *Panthera tigris* and Asian Tapir *Tapirus indicus*.



Gurney's Pitta is the emblem of Myanmar's Sundaic Forests

Although several protected areas have been proposed for Tanintharyi Division, none are currently functional and all are at risk from logging and conversion to tree crops. These include the proposed Tanintharyi national Park and Tanintharyi Nature Reserve. The establishment of an expanded Lenya National Park would ensure the creation of a fully representative protected areas system in southern Myanmar. Together they provide an opportunity for sustainable land-use planning in the landscape and could be proposed as a World Heritage Site (see map).

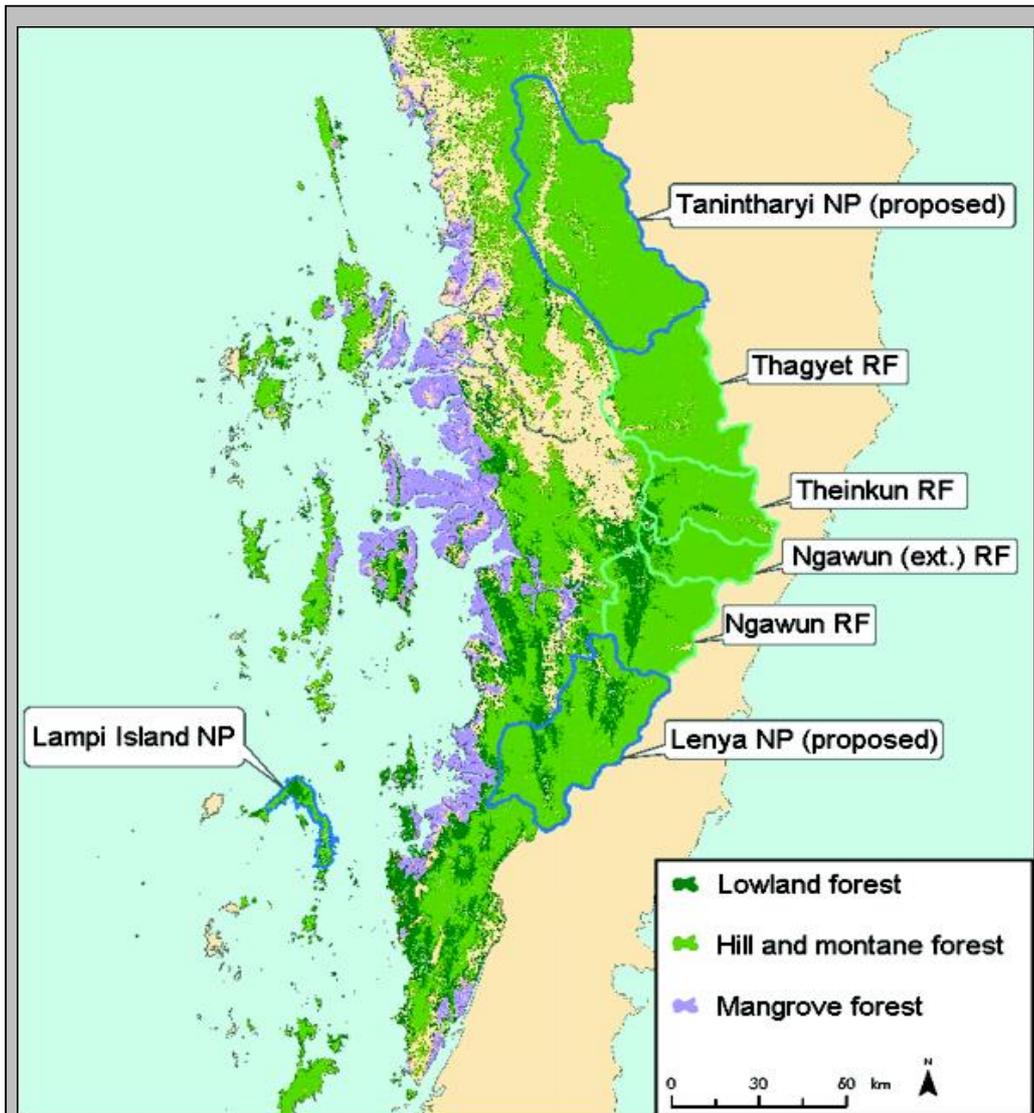
Timeline of key events

- 1875 Gurney's Pitta discovered in Myanmar¹
- 1986 Gurney's Pitta rediscovered in Thailand¹
- 1987 20-50 km² of forest below 100 m remained in peninsular Thailand^{1,3}
- 1987 Khao Nor Chu Chi Non-hunting Area established in Thailand¹
- 1990 Khao Nor Chuchi Lowland Forest Project established Thailand¹
- 1993 Khao Pra Bang Kram Wildlife Sanctuary established Thailand¹
- 2001 Gurney's Pitta judged to be on verge of global extinction¹
- 2002 Lenya National Park first proposed⁶
- 2003 Gurney's Pitta rediscovered in Myanmar⁵
- 2004 Lenya National Park extension first proposed⁶
- 2005 Gurney's Pitta population estimated to be 5,000-9,000 pairs in Myanmar⁵
- 2005 The British Birdwatching Fair provides GBP 200,000 to sponsor the conservation of sundaic Forest in Myanmar and Thailand.
- 2005 The sundaic forests of Tanintharyi are identified as a global conservation priority Thailand²
- 2009 Gurney's Pitta population estimated to be 20,000 territories in Myanmar⁴
- 2011 Gurney's Pitta population in Thailand estimated to be less than ten pairs

References

1. BirdLife International (2001) *Threatened birds of Asia: the BirdLife International Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.
2. BirdLife International in Indochina (2005) Myanmar: *Investment Opportunities in Biodiversity Conservation*. Yangon. BirdLife International in Indochina. 1.
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4. Donald, P. F., Aratrakorn, S., Htn, T., W., Eames, J. C., Hla, H., Thunhikorn, S., Sribua-road, K., Tinun, P., Aung S. M., Zaw, S. M. and Buchanan, G. M. (2009) Population, distribution, habitat use and breeding of Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* in Myanmar and Thailand. *Forktail* 19: 1-14
5. Eames, J. C. Htin Hla, Leimgruber, P, Kelly, D. S., Sein Myo Aung, Saw Moses and U Saw Nyunt Tin (2005) The rediscovery of Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* in Myanmar and an estimate of its population size based on remaining Forest cover. *Bird Conservation International* 15: 3-26.
6. Istituto Oikos and BANCA (2011) *Protected Areas: Context, current status and challenges*. Milano, Italy. Ancora Libri.

Map showing protected areas in Tanintharyi Division



It is imperative that Ngawun Reserve Forest (including its extension) is included within an expanded Lenya National Park, to ensure the creation of a protected area fully representative of the Sundaic forests of Tanintharyi Division. Map: Smithsonian Institution