



Media Release

Wednesday January 31, 2007

Celebrating World Wetlands Day

Wetlands and mangroves along Vietnam's coastline play an important role in supporting fisheries, birdlife and protecting the coast from typhoons.

This Friday February 2 is **World Wetlands Day** – and communities living around Xuan Thuy National Park, Nam Dinh province, are celebrating the day by showing what must be done to protect the local wetlands area.

With the support of the Centre for Marineline Conservation and Community Development (MCD), World Wetlands Day will include a tree-planting ceremony, a biodiversity exhibition and cultural performances by local people at the Xuan Thuy National Park headquarters.

More than 300 local children will also participate in an environmental clean-up and take part in a colouring-in competition, making paper fish to decorate their homes and schools.

Celebrated since 1997, World Wetlands Day has a special theme every year. This year's theme is 'Wetlands and Fisheries' and its slogan asks the question: Will there be fish for tomorrow?

MCD Program Manager Than Thi Hien says coastal wetlands play an important role in supporting fish and fisheries at all levels – from large-scale, commercial ocean fisheries to wild harvest fisheries and aquaculture.

"Not only do coastal wetlands act as their own wild fisheries areas, but they also play a critical role as spawning and nursery areas for many marine species," Ms Than said.

"Protecting the health of coastal ecosystems – such as mangroves – is critical to the maintenance of fisheries. And for a coastal country like Vietnam, this is very important.

"We are so excited that all five communes from around the park are coming together this year to celebrate World Wetlands Day.

"It is a special day that raises awareness about the importance of protecting wetlands to support the environment and fisheries, the benefits of the park to local livelihoods and promoting sustainable fisheries management."



Xuan Thuy National Park, a Ramsar site of international importance, has about 3.000ha of mangrove area that supports many species of high value fish – including fish, crustaceans and molluscs.

It is also home to the Cá Mòi Cờ (*Clupanodon thrissa*), a fish listed in the Red Book as vulnerable and at risk of extinction.

The park was declared Vietnam's first international Ramsar site in January 1989.

The Ramsar wetlands convention is an intergovernmental treaty with more than 150 member countries and parties.

"By becoming part of the convention, Vietnam has expressed to the international community its commitment to reversing the problems of wetland loss and degradation," Ms Than said.

"This means we must promote Xuan Thuy National Park's conservation, and wise, sustainable use – for the benefit of the local people, the country and the international community."

The event is organised by the Centre for Marine Life Conservation and Community Development (MCD), the Nam Dinh People's Committee, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of Nam Dinh province, the Giao Xuan People's Committee, and the Xuan Thuy National Park Management Board.

It is part of an MCD project funded by the Australian Government's Department of the Environment and Heritage.

Official launch

Where: Xuan Thuy National Park Management Board, Nam Dinh province, Giao Xuan commune.

When: 8.30am, Friday February 2, 2007

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