

Oriental Bird Club: Final Report

Project title: Working with religious communities to reduce shorebird hunting pressure in Ninh Binh Province, Vietnam

Project ID: P1467

The project was funded through the Migratory Shorebirds Fund of the Oriental Bird Club.

Provision of 03 binoculars Cley Spy through the Oriental Bird Club.

Host country and site location: Ninh Binh provinces, Vietnam

Authors: Nga Nguyen, Phu Ngo, Trang Nguyen.

Contact address: 25, Lane 211/1, Khuong Trung, Thanh Xuan, Hanoi

Contact email: trang.nguyen@wildact-vn.org

Website: www.wildact-vn.org

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Section 1: Summary

Over the last 12 months, with financial support through the Migratory Shorebirds Fund of the Oriental Bird Club, we were able to reach 31,279 local people, including religious leaders and practitioners, school children and teachers of Kim Son and Yen Mo districts in Ninh Binh province. A total of 881 educational materials, including leaflets, keychains, and cardgames were distributed as part of the awareness-raising campaign. This project is one of the first-ever awareness-raising project focusing on migratory birds in Ninh Binh province.

Section 2: Background (50 - 100 words)

Illegal hunting has been identified as one of the main threats to the survival of migratory birds. Our survey in 2021 revealed that bird hunting is widespread across the Red River Delta Biosphere in the northern parts of Vietnam, with mist-net being the most popular hunting equipment used; and hunters mainly being practicing Catholics. In addition, although in recent years there have been numerous awareness-raising campaigns on the consumption of wildlife products, most of these campaigns targeted consumers of large mammals, such as rhinos, elephants or tigers. Very little, if not none, has been conducted on birds. The project objectives were to: i) Empower religious leaders to participate directly in birds' conservation in Ninh Binh Province; ii) : Increase local community's understanding of the importance of birds and birds' conservation.

Section 3: Summary of Objectives, Activities and Outputs

Objective 1: Religious leaders are empowered to participate directly in birds' conservation in Ninh Binh Province.		
<i>Activities</i>	<i>Expected</i>	<i>Project's outputs & outcomes</i>
<u>1.1 Interweaving bird conservation messages in religious services:</u> WildAct had 01 meeting with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phát Diệm, and 03 separated meetings with the district diocese in Kim Son and Yen Mo. At the	At least 08 faith leaders committed to the project activities; At least 10 religious services include bird conservation messages	1 faith leader committed to the project activities; 2 religious services were conducted:

<p>meeting, the priests showed their support to the project however it was difficult to follow up and they have been given many reasons to not participate at the last minute (i.e too busy or out of town). As a result, we were only able to collaborate with Father Tran Phan from Kim Dong Catholic Diocese (Jun&Jul 23).</p>	<p>provided directly to approximately 500 local people and hunters;</p>	<p>500 leaflets produced by WA and distributed by faith leaders – Appendix 1; 500 signatures and hand prints committing to conserve migratory birds from students and parents.</p>
<p>Objective 2: Increase local community’s understanding of the importance of birds and birds’ conservation.</p>		
<p><i>Activities</i></p>	<p><i>Expected</i></p>	<p><i>Project’s outputs & outcomes</i></p>
<p><u>2.1. Erecting billboards to provide information on government bird protection laws and regulations:</u> We collaborated with Ninh Binh Forest Protection Department to design and erected 2 billboards with warning messages to the public on the penalties they would face if caught while hunting/trading protected wild birds (Oct 22)</p>	<p>2 billboards erected.</p>	<p>2 billboards erected in Kim Dong & Kim Trung communes_Appendix 2.</p>
<p><u>2.2. Broadcasting bird conservation messages by religious leaders through local radio:</u> Every day, twice a day from Oct22 – Jan 23 in Kim Son and Yen Mo districts, the local radio is broadcasting through local speakers positioned at every corner giving messages to raise public awareness on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Current laws and regulations related to bird conservation; ii) Risk of zoonosis transmission disease due to wild meat consumption; iii) Current birds’ conservation activities going on in the areas; iv) Update school children’s activity and messages on bird conservation; v) Catholic community messages on bird’s conservation – context based on the leaflet provided. 	<p>At least 20,000 local people of Ninh Binh Province exposed to the radio broadcast on birds and bird conservation;</p>	<p>6 radio scripts were created by WildAct and boardcasted by the local radio broadcasters over 4 months period (Oct-Nov-Dec-Jan)_Appendix 3;</p> <p>Approximately 30,000 local people reached (through local radio estimation).</p>

<p><u>2.3. Educational campaign at local schools in Kim Son and Yen Mo commune:</u> Our original plan was to reach as many schools as possible in both Yen Mo & Kim Son districts, however, the education department in Ninh Binh suggested we should focus on 01 school and implement a series of activities to ensure a long-lasting impact. Hence, we collaborated with Dong Hai secondary school in Kim Son district and conducted several activities to raise awareness about birds' conservation, the importance of shorebirds to our ecosystem and call for signed commitment letters from children and parents to not hunt and consume wild birds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Introduction to migratory birds and establishment of school's library for children, with books on natural conservation theme (Sep 22); ii) Ring a Golden Bell competition with bird's conservation theme (Oct 22); iii) Future careers – what to do if you want to protect migratory birds? (Jan 23) iv) Bird's conservation through Catholic points of view (based on the leaflet provided) (Jul 23) 	<p>At least 800 students and parents participate in our education campaign;</p>	<p>1,127 youth exposed to the campaign;</p> <p>778 students from Dong Hai secondary school in Kim Son district signed a petition to protect migratory birds.</p> <p>375 bird educational conservation materials (key chains, notebooks, boardgame, conservation themed books, student's hat distributed to school children_ Appendix IV</p>
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Section 4: Recommendation

Throughout the 12-month implementing the project, we've learned many lessons. Originally, we proposed to involve at least 08 religious leaders to commit to the project activities. However, it's proven to be difficult to gain Catholic leaders' trust in Vietnam. We have had 01 meeting with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Phát Diệm, and 03 meetings with the district diocese in Kim Son and Yen Mo districts. Although religious leaders agreed to the proposed activities, when it comes to implementation, they have been given many reasons to not participate at the last minute (i.e too busy or out of town). As a result, we were only able to collaborate with Father Tran Phan from Kim Dong Catholic Diocese. However, with the relationship established with Father Tran Phan, and the successful services provided, we believe that future activities will be easier.

In addition, we were hoping to show a 10% reduction in bird traps (including mist-net and other types of traps) in 2022 compared to the results of our survey in 2021. However, there have not been any major changes in the number of bird traps found in 2022 (1289 traps) compared to 1300 in 2021. The funding for bird's net survey was funded by Hong Kong Ocean Park Conservation Fund. This is expected, as turning awareness into behaviour changes takes time (Wallen & Daut.2018). We recommend the following activities to ensure the effectiveness of future projects:

- Continue collaborating with religious leaders. Although it was very challenging at first, once the trust was established, they were very supportive. In addition, the district diocese in Kim Son has established procedures for effective communication among their practitioners and this benefits the project greatly.
- Continue collaborating with local schools in the area, using Dong Hai secondary school as a role model. Input from school teachers must be taken into account when designing education and awareness-raising activities for school children. The evaluation process must be clear, and the evaluation methodology must be explained clearly to local teachers to effectively measure the activities' impact.
- Outdoor activity is necessary, especially bird's watching and/or bird identification should be taught to school children and teachers to foster their love for nature. Always update and create new, exciting activities and messages for local children. We realised that school children and teachers in Ninh Binh care about nature, and they remember messages, either on billboards, school murals, or those broadcasted on the radio. The students are also willing to repeat these messages to their parents and family members.
- Training for school teachers on conservation activities, and supporting school teachers to create curriculum for local students. In Vietnam, school children will enjoy an outdoor trip twice a year. It is possible to organise a bird watching trip with the schools – as part of their annual activity.
- Take advantage of local human resources, such as the Women Union and the Association for Elderly in the areas, as they have the time, and are willing to participate;
- Continue collaborating with Ninh Binh FPD to remove bird's trap and support the FPD's hotline. Training to increase ranger's capacity in bird's identification, welfare and bird's handling are extremely important to increase bird's survival.

Appendix:

1. Leaflet: The leaflet was created by WildAct, with input from Kim Son district diocese priest and Catholic practitioners. The leaflet cited quotations from the bible teaching us how to live in harmony with other living creatures created by God. It also states the commitments from the Kim Son district diocese to protect migratory birds, together with hotlines from Ninh Binh Forest Protection Department (FPD).



2. **Billboards:** The billboard was created by WildAct, with input from Ninh Binh FPD, the Women Union & the Association of the Elderly in Kim Son district. The billboard gave information on the penalties that violators might face if caught hunting or trading protected migration birds, of up to 400,000,000 VND and 15 years in jail. It also provided Ninh Binh FPD’s hotline number for the public to contact if they witnessed any of the mentioned violations. The billboards were erected at school and local market areas to maximise exposure to the public.



3. **Radio Broadcasting:** The script was created by WildAct, with input from the People Committee of Kim Son district, Ninh Binh FPD and broadcasters from the local radio. From October 2022 –

January 2023, twice a day (5AM & 5PM), for 15 minutes, the broadcaster read the provided scripts to the public. Messages to raise public awareness include:

- Current laws and regulations related to bird conservation;
- Risk of zoonosis transmission disease due to wild meat consumption;
- Current birds' conservation activities going on in the areas;
- Update school children's activity and messages on bird conservation;
- Catholic community messages on bird's conservation – context based on the leaflet provided.



4. Education materials:

Education materials, including published books in Vietnamese on wildlife conservation & environmental protection, notebooks, keychains, hats, and the card-game produced by WildAct's School & Community Team were distributed to participants of our awareness raising campaign. These items featured the spoon-billed sandpipers & fun facts about them. The card-game combines 40 cards: 10 species introduction cards, 18 problem cards and 12 solution cards.

Key chain & lucky envelopes



Students reading books about wild birds



Card-games

The image displays a card game layout for "Bộ Thẻ Trò Chơi Động Vật Hoang Dã" (Wild Animal Game Card Set). It features several cards and a central illustration of a bird.

- Top left: A card showing a person sitting on the ground with a backpack, labeled "18 thẻ nguyên nhân" (18 cause cards).
- Top middle: A card showing a sea turtle, labeled "10 thẻ động vật" (10 animal cards).
- Top right: A card showing a classroom scene with a teacher and students, labeled "12 thẻ hành động" (12 action cards).
- Center: A card showing a person with a backpack and a large animal, labeled "18 thẻ nguyên nhân" (18 cause cards).
- Bottom left: An illustration of a bird with the text "mình họa động vật dễ thương" (cute animal illustration).
- Bottom right: A large orange shape containing the text "BỘ THẺ TRÒ CHƠI ĐỘNG VẬT HOANG DÃ" (Wild Animal Game Card Set).