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# Carbon Balanced

Khe Nuoc Trong: The climate ally  
you're helping to save in Vietnam



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A special World Environment Day update for The Cheeky Panda



# A breakthrough for climate, conservation and communities

What your support has meant for Khe Nuoc Trong in a momentous year

For World Environment Day this year the UN is calling for a new “generation restoration” to save the ecosystems all life depends on – and that’s the very sort of transformation The Cheeky Panda has made possible, for years now, at Khe Nuoc Trong. By choosing World Land Trust (WLT) to offset your carbon emissions, you’ve thrown your weight behind a fully REDD+-compliant project in Vietnam – and helped us save, in the process, a climate powerhouse home to over 40 threatened species.

This special update for The Cheeky Panda follows a major breakthrough for our partner Viet Nature. Years of work led to the government recently upgrading Khe Nuoc Trong’s status from Watershed Protection Forest to Nature Reserve. This wasn’t only a lifeline (see boxout below) for Khe Nuoc Trong’s astounding life (see page 4), including singing gibbons and one of the world’s rarest mammals. It also brought a boost to local people, whose lives (see page 5) are being improved by the conservation work you’re making possible.

With you on their side, Viet Nature has continued to work tirelessly across Khe Nuoc Trong’s 54,000+ acres (22,132 ha). As you’ll read on these pages, over the past few months alone the WLT partner’s rangers have recorded hundreds of kilometres worth of patrols, processed thousands of wildlife pictures and removed hundreds of illegal snares. They have protected a living landscape and the landscape has returned the protection: Viet Nature tells us that when floods and landslides struck Vietnam this year, Khe Nuoc Trong’s strong tree root systems kept the area relatively safe.



Nature champions on wheels: in a virtuous conservation cycle, Viet Nature’s rangers are being protected by the forest they safeguard, with Khe Nuoc Trong’s strong root systems shielding the area from historic floods earlier this year. Credit: Viet Nature Conservation Centre

## Harnessing Khe Nuoc Trong’s climate potential

The bulk of the work has, of course, also revolved around gauging and harnessing Khe Nuoc Trong’s staggering climate potential. Viet Nature staff have now spent years working with researchers to collect carbon inventory data across 24 sample plots – periodic field measurements to shed light on what the climate benefits are from saving and restoring these forests after decades of logging.

These assessments, supported by peer-reviewed analysis by Leeds University PhD researcher Susanne Stas, go a long way towards confirming the estimates around the value of this Carbon Balanced project: the evaluation shows the protection of Khe Nuoc Trong’s 54,000+ acres will deliver 50,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e in annual climate benefits.

Think about it: these are climate impacts on par with taking 23,706 cars average UK cars off the roads for a full year, and The Cheeky Panda has helped make it possible!

## Why the new Nature Reserve status matters

To Carbon Balance as The Cheeky Panda is doing means to save the wild places that matter – and it’s hard to overstate the significance of Khe Nuoc Trong as a landscape. This is one of the best and last few examples of Annamite lowland evergreen forest in Vietnam, the home (see page 3) of hundreds of species as well as trees (and stored CO<sub>2</sub> tonnes) in their tens of millions.

Thanks to the government’s intervention, this trove of life will be much safer. Where the prior watershed protection status only safeguarded the trees from logging, Khe Nuoc Trong’s new Nature Reserve status means conservation mandates can be set for wildlife. It means Viet Nature can now access a higher level of funds for conservation.

Following the new reserve status, provincial leaders have repeatedly visited the area over the past six months; ushering in a new era of increased political support that will only strengthen Khe Nuoc Trong’s protection for posterity.



# Khe Nuoc Trong: An ally for people and planet

The impact you're making through our Carbon Balanced REDD+ project

## The Khe Nuoc Trong project contributes to nine UN Sustainable Development Goals





# Singing gibbons, endangered deer, the Asian unicorn

Meet the Khe Nuoc Trong species you are making a difference for

The life of Khe Nuoc Trong is incredible, as Viet Nature's rangers are reminded every time they hit the trails for a field trip.

By choosing us to offset your carbon emissions, you have supported a Carbon Balanced project in one of the world's most biologically diverse countries – helping Viet Nature save a hoard of endangered life. Our partner's latest updates show annual counts for wildlife sightings that run into the thousands, with primates, ungulates, birds, rodents, small carnivores, reptiles and amphibians all well represented in the camera trap feeds routinely monitored by Viet Nature staff

Khe Nuoc Trong is home to an estimated 700-plus terrestrial species, and it is when delving into the most charismatic residents that the reserve's importance truly shines through. Over the past few months, Viet Nature has been pleased to report multiple camera trap appearances of Southern White-cheeked Gibbon and Large-antlered Muntjac, a confirmation that these Critically Endangered species are now starting to bounce back in the area. Recently, rangers also spotted four troops – a 35-strong group all in all – of Red-shanked Douc.

Viet Nature have not just been documenting the life of Khe Nuoc Trong, though. They have also joined forces with scientists to research it – leading to the discovery of the new Copper-coloured Kizirian's Frog species, or *Limnonectes kiziriani*, in the forests – and worked tirelessly to protect it. In Q1 2021 alone, our partner's staff travelled 775 km over 18 patrolling trips and removed in excess of 950 snares.



Known as "Vooc Ngu Sac" by locals (Vietnamese for "Five-coloured Macaque"), the Red-shanked Douc have now a safer home in the newly declared KNT Reserve.

## Sunda Pangolin



Pangolins are believed to be the world's most trafficked animal and in the case of this Southeast Asian species, these threats have pushed it to Critically Endangered status. And yet the support by The Cheeky Panda and others of our Carbon Balanced programme is helping hand them a lifeline, with camera trap sightings of these excellent climbers moving across the Khe Nuoc Trong forests.

## Large-antlered Muntjac



At a height of 65-80cm, this deer – the largest of all muntjac species – was discovered by scientists only in 1994 but thanks to supporters like The Cheeky Panda, our partner Viet Nature now has a chance to ensure this Critically Endangered species will live on for generations of researchers to study. For now, recent camera trap sightings are a sign that the work you have been funding is making a difference.

## Saola



If Khe Nuoc Trong's gibbons and muntjacs are making a comeback, there is a chance that others might – including one of the world's rarest mammals. A species so elusive it is dubbed the 'Asian Unicorn', this antelope has been pushed by poaching to the cusp of extinction but Khe Nuoc Trong is expected to host populations. As Viet Nature continue to monitor for sightings, The Cheeky Panda will be the first to know if the Saola is spotted once more.

## A bird haven

It's not just mammals – Khe Nuoc Trong's Annamite Lowland Forests are set to play a key role for threatened bird species. The Vietnam (or Edwards') Pheasant, a Critically Endangered bird not seen in the wild for decades, may be reintroduced in the nature reserve in the future.

# No conservation without communities

Carbon Balanced improves local lives at Khe Nuoc Trong



Decades of work alongside our partners have taught WLT this: no project to save nature will ever succeed if it doesn't involve – if it doesn't improve the lives of – local communities.

Khe Nuoc Trong sits in an area of the Quang Binh province blighted by relatively high levels of poverty, home to marginalised ethnic minorities who have historically struggled to make a living off their small holdings. And yet our Carbon Balanced project is already making a difference, with your help: funded by you, the conservation action delivered by Viet Nature is laying the foundations of a local economy that doesn't cost the forest.

As shown by a recent update from our partner, this positive change is taking the form of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certifications. In mid-March, Viet Nature reported that a first-of-its-kind certificate had been awarded to smallholders in the Khe Nuoc Trong project area, opening a door for these communities to sustainably manage small, pre-existing plantation plots – a new source of livelihood so that smallholders don't ever have to turn to the primary forest still standing to subsist.

This is, as explained by Viet Nature President and Co-founder Pham Tuan Anh, just the first step. Deals have already been signed for private companies to pay a premium price to farmers as they buy all the FSC-certified produce, and negotiations for similar arrangements are underway that could see the total FSC-certified area grow to cover 10,000-15,000 ha this year – all of it outside the confines of the protected primary forest.

“When the deals conclude, they will be a game-changer for the forest landscape and local economy by reducing livelihood pressure on natural forest,” Tuan Anh points out. “In time, they will allow sustainable plantation timber to gradually become the substitute for timber from natural forest for domestic use and export.”

Conservation at Khe Nuoc Trong is benefitting local people in other ways; after all, this is a Carbon Balanced project that contributes (see page 3) towards the UN SDGs for No Poverty (SDG1), Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG6), Reduced Inequalities (SDG10) and more. Viet Nature, Tuan Anh says, is also helping the area's farmers form sustainable forestry cooperatives – with plans to then offer follow-on support to build capacity and access government incentives.

## Science to harness a climate powerhouse

Conservation can only tip the scales against climate change and biodiversity loss when guided by science and to that end, Khe Nuoc Trong has been enlisting the brightest minds for the task.

After Suzanne Stas concluded her work, new PhD student Paolo Sartorelli will be casting, with his research, a light on how forest restoration can and must be harnessed for the sake of life on our planet.

Helped along by supervisor and University of Leeds Professor Dominick Spracken alongside co-supervisor WLT Senior Carbon Programme Manager Charlie Langan, the PhD researcher will collaborate under the European Research Council DECAF scheme as they study the extent of forest degradation and recovery and the impacts of either on the local economy.

## Thank you!

Climate, conservation, communities – all have been offered a lifeline in Vietnam and beyond because of The Cheeky Panda. By choosing Carbon Balanced for your net-zero transition, you've been instrumental in Khe Nuoc Trong's own journey from threatened forest to protected climate powerhouse and wildlife haven.

On World Environment Day and all days, thank you! It is your commitment that makes this work possible.