

# Introducing the crested argus (*Rheinardia ocellata*)...



**Conservation status – Globally Threatened: Vulnerable**  
**Endemism: Endemic to Vietnam, Lao PDR and East Peninsular Malaysia**

With its amazing plumage, the crested argus is unmistakable. Found only in Vietnam, Lao PDR, and a small population in Peninsular Malaysia, this large pheasant is distinguished by its huge tail feathers, which are up to 15cm wide and almost two metres long in adult males. When spread, the tail feathers display a beautiful and complicated pattern of chestnut and almost white, eye-shaped spots on a grey background.



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## Fast facts

Length: up to 239 cm including tail, although females may be less than half this.

## Social or solitary?

The distinctive loud calls indicate that the crested argus is usually solitary and territorial. Despite its size the crested argus is not easy to observe, as it is usually shy and retiring. However, even if out of sight, it can be identified by its two distinct calls: one a prolonged two-toned whistle, the other a soft clucking.

Photo credit, from left to right, top to bottom: WWF/Barney Long; WWF/Barney Long; Andrey Kuznetsov; Andrei Kuznetsov; Howard Buffet; WWF/Toon Fey; WWF/James Hardcastle; WWF/James Hardcastle; Tilo Nadler





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## The crested argus's home

The species is found in wet evergreen forest from sea level to 1,700m. Recent surveys in Lao PDR show that distribution is local; it occurs in four areas along the Laotian Annamites (Nakai-Nam Theun NBCA, proposed Nam Theun Extension NBCA, Hin Namno NBCA and Phou Ahyon). Numbers were found to be higher in forests with a wet climate. In Vietnam the crested argus is found throughout the Annamites at most altitudes in wet evergreen forest.

## Threats

The crested argus is threatened by habitat degradation, fragmentation and loss although it can survive in small pockets of forest. Hunting pressure compounds these other threats, but it is unclear what the effects is having on the population. Snaring may be an extreme threat to some populations.

## What we are doing

The crested argus is found in many nature reserves in Vietnam and Lao PDR including: Song Thanh, Phong Dien, Xe Sap, and A'Vuong species/habitat conservation area. Both the Vietnam and Lao Government have established a PA network that is working towards protecting the Crested Argus habitat. WWF is working in these areas in Vietnam through the MOSAIC project. In Phong Dien Nature Reserve learning and skills-share approaches to forest management with local people and the ranger force is linked to a wider landscape corridor. This Green Corridor project is to maintain the forest cover between Phong Dien Nature Reserve, Bach Ma National Park, and the mountain border with Lao PDR.

In Lao PDR we are working towards improved transboundary conservation and large scale habitat conservation. The Nam Theun catchment, where records of crested argus are high is of particular focus.

### Elaborate courtship

During the mating season, males perform an elaborate courtship ritual. Head feathers are ruffled and the crest is spread whilst the male dances in an area of the forest floor cleared of leaves. If successful, he will attract a female.



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Find out more about the crested argus and the Greater Annamites Ecoregion at  
<http://www.wwfindochina.org> and  
[www.panda.org/asiapacific/annamites](http://www.panda.org/asiapacific/annamites)