



Asian Turtle News

News from the Frontlines of Conservation

The Asian Turtle Conservation Network (ATCN)

September 7, 2005

Strengthening Protection for Turtles in Hoa Binh

Vietnam (September 7)— Cuc Phuong National Park and the Asian Turtle Conservation Program hosted a training workshop for Hoa Binh provincial wildlife protection authorities aimed at increasing the knowledge and understanding of frontline enforcement officers about the need to protect Vietnam's endangered tortoises and freshwater turtles. Twenty rangers from provincial and district offices attended the day-long session that included an overview of the ecology of turtles, and introduction to the Asian Turtle Crisis in Vietnam, and a training module focused on building the rangers' turtle identification skills.

Instructed by Turtle Conservation Center coordinator Bui Dang Phong and Douglas Hendrie, Vietnam Turtle Conservation Program director, the training also focused on encouraging provincial wildlife protection authorities to utilize new confiscation guidelines for dealing with turtles that are seized by police and wildlife protection authorities. The guidelines are intended to reduce the practice of returning animals back into the trade or releasing them into the wild without consideration for the health, natural distribution, and habitat requirements of the species.

The turtle identification skill-building component of the course involved an introduction and review of all 23 species native to Vietnam, live hands-on instruction utilizing confiscated turtles at the TCC, and an opportunity for the rangers to practice their skills. Following the training, the rangers were required to take the "turtle test", demonstrating their identification skills using photographs of Vietnam's 23 tortoises and freshwater turtles. The results indicated that 14 of the 20 rangers were able to identify 16 or more species as a result of the training, while eight of the rangers could identify 21 to all 23 of Vietnam's native species.

Hoa Binh was the 27th province for which turtle-specific training has been carried out for wildlife protection authorities since 1999. The Vietnam Turtle Conservation Program has also carried out training for staff of ten national parks and protected areas, as well as CITES authorities, border guards, customs officers, and police.

Additional training is planned for customs and police at Noi Bai International Airport, as well as in the Vietnam-China border province of Lang Son.

The training workshop was supported by the Wildlife Conservation Society, Cuc Phuong National Park, and Education for Nature – Vietnam.

For additional information, please contact:

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ENV To Monitor Turtle Trade More Closely

Ms. Tran Bich Ngoc (sitting in front) and Mr. Nguyen Duc Tho, staff of Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV), also attended the training in order to improve their knowledge and understanding of turtles, and enhance their identification skills, each scoring 100% on the "turtle test". Ms. Ngoc sharpening her identification skills in preparation for a new assignment with the ENV Wildlife Crimes Investigation Unit, and will be regularly involved in monitoring trade cases and following up on turtle-related investigations.



