

# News from the Frontline

A brief summary of the activities of Education for Nature - Vietnam

Issue 1 - February 2012

[www.envvietnam.org](http://www.envvietnam.org)

## The battle rages on to end bear bile tourism in Ha Long Bay

The battle rages on to shut down bear bile tourism businesses operating in the heart of Vietnam's premier international tourist attraction, Ha Long Bay. A number of Ha Long Bay bear bile farmers have been running "bear bile tourism" operations, targeting mainly Korean tourists. In direct violation of the law, the tourists are brought to the farms by the busload where they witness a bile extraction, before being offered to buy fresh bear bile.

In late 2007, local authorities discovered approximately 80 illegal bears at six farms in Ha Long Bay. This investigation was prompted by ENV following the disappearance of 29 illegal cubs from a farm in Hanoi. Further scrutiny of these farms indicated that they were entertaining tourists; early during the investigation, an ENV undercover team infiltrated a group of Korean tourists and witnessed an extraction. Subsequent and regular surveillance of these farms, combined with the cooperation of key members of the National Assembly, and media, as well as Quang Ninh police, resulted in the closure of three of the farms. The three other farms, two owned by the same individual, continued to operate.

Prompted by ENV's sustained campaign, in March 2011 the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism issued a correspondence to all provincial governments banning bear bile tourism nationwide. Following this instruction, tourism at the three surviving bear farms was reduced, but continued. Owners began making efforts to hide their illegal businesses, prohibiting buses from parking onsite, and checking the identification of tourists entering the farm.

## ENV Appeal for support



Greetings friends, supporters, and partners in wildlife protection!

**The problem:** Vietnam has been identified as major consumer of rhino horn, mostly smuggled in from South Africa.

**ENV need:** As part of an emerging campaign to help protect the world's rhinos, ENV is seeking support for the production of a new public service announcement (PSA) to be aired on national and provincial television that will focus on dispelling the myths associated with the use of rhinoceros horn as a form of traditional medicine to reduce fevers, eliminate toxins, and even cure cancer.

**Total cost:** \$4,000 USD

**Additional benefit to our partner:** Credit at the end of the PSA with name and/or logo.

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**The battle rages...** (Continued from page 1)

Nearly one year after the correspondence from the Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Tourism banning bear bile tourism, ENV produced evidence suggesting that the bear farm owners were still continuing to entertain Korean tourists at their farms. ENV issued an official correspondence to the Provincial People’s Committee stating that the bear farm operations still continued, providing registration numbers of buses, tour companies, times and dates of visits, and other information obtained from surveillance and local informants.

On December 30, 2011 the Provincial People’s Committee responded to ENV’s complaint, ordering law enforcement agencies to cooperate in inspecting farms and to ensure full implementation of the March 2011 ban on bear bile tourism operations at Ha Long farms.

“The Quang Ninh People’s Committee (PC) appears ready more than ever to put an end to this issue,” says Mr. Tran Viet Hung, Vice Director of ENV. “I am sure, like us, that they are tired of these farmers ignoring the law after so much investment in time, people, and efforts to put an end to this dirty business.”

Hung is optimistic that the authorities will not allow the problem to persist, “The law is clear. It only needs to be enforced.”

ENV will continue to work closely on enforcement of the ban with provincial police and the PC, while maintaining regular surveillance to ensure compliance.



During a school program carried out in Hanoi’s Phuc Tho district where many bear farms are concentrated, children were encouraged to voice their opposition to bear farming in their community

Photo: ENV



One of ENV’s exhibit boards used during wildlife trade awareness events urges the public to report crimes to authorities or through the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline

Photo: ENV

**Fresh off the Press**

**Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Identification resource**

ENV has produced a printed version of its identification guide to tortoises and freshwater turtles of Vietnam for distribution as part of a new “law enforcement support package” under development. The identification resource was originally produced in 2010 and distributed to authorities throughout the country electronically, along with a DVD film on the “Turtle Crisis in Vietnam”.

Link: [Identification guide for law enforcement on Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles of Vietnam](#)



ENV Highlights

## Mobile team targets priority southern provinces

ENV's mobile awareness team carried out a range of activities focused on the southern provinces of Lam Dong, Binh Duong and Dong Nai as part of an ongoing national program administered by ENV to reduce consumption and demand for wildlife. The awareness team travelled nearly the length of the country in ENV's brightly decorated wildlife awareness van and linked up with the ENV Ho Chi Minh and Da Nang teams, as well as members of the local Wildlife Protection Network. They hosted awareness events in universities and public markets, recruited and trained volunteers, conducted compliance monitoring and consumer trade surveys in key urban centers, and investigated two high priority wildlife crime cases.

ENV also held meetings with key law enforcement agencies and investigated several priority sites in Lam Dong as part of the mission. At the request of local authorities who joined some of ENV's events, discussions were initiated that could lead to a new pilot awareness initiative in partnership with Lam Dong authorities.

The ENV mobile team is based in Hanoi and travels monthly to different parts of Vietnam, carrying out activities in support of ENV's goal to bring an end to illegal hunting and trade of wildlife.

## New mobile exhibit urges public, "Don't consume wildlife, get involved!"

A new wildlife trade exhibit is reaching thousands of potential wildlife consumers each month encouraging the public not to consume wildlife and to report wildlife crimes. ENV teams in all three regions (north, central and south) of the country host the event in public parks, major shopping malls, markets, and at universities. Each event includes a series of



Staff of 29.3 (textile) Company learning about wildlife protection during an exhibit held at their factory in December

Photo: ENV



Medical students performing the "Especially for Bears" skit during a wildlife trade seminar at their college in Hanoi

Photo: ENV

information boards on wildlife trade and related activities, such as a quiz and public opinion board that encourage the public to share their ideas and participate in the event. A short film depicts the horrors of the illegal trade. A total of 32 wildlife trade exhibits have been hosted by ENV between April, when the new exhibit was launched, and December 2011.



ENV facts

ENV uses quizzes at wildlife trade exhibits to get the public involved, and also to encourage them to read the information boards fully (to find the answers).

## Guide training to enhance visitor experience at Cuc Phuong Turtle Center

In January, ENV conducted training sessions for six guides from the tourism department at Cuc Phuong National Park as part of an effort to enhance the interpretive value of visits by Vietnamese tourists to the park's Turtle Conservation Center (TCC). In 2010, the national park opened the new Visitor interpretation center to increase awareness of visitors to the park about the crisis facing Vietnam's tortoises and freshwater turtles. The center, designed by ENV, features a range of interpretive displays and exhibits including an underwater look at endangered species in three large viewing tanks, an egg incubation exhibit, and a forest trail with replica hunting camp and live turtles wandering about.

The guide training sessions in January, the second round of training since November, were intended to improve the quality and volume of tours given to Vietnamese visitors in 2012.

## New Wildlife Crime Database helps ENV track crime

In 2011, ENV finally took delivery of its new Wildlife Crime Database, a system designed by professionals to manage more than 3,900 cases reported to ENV since the Wildlife Crime Unit was established in January 2005. The new database permits case officers to securely access and manage their cases, updating information, documenting the results of phone calls, and actively tracking the results of each case. The database also permits ENV to readily produce reports on specific aspects of trade that previously took hours, if not days, to generate. "There are still a few bugs within the system and a fair amount of updates required on some of the older cases," says ENV's Wildlife Crime Unit supervisor, Nguyen Van Quan. "However, the new system has already proven its value and has helped us produce reports on enforcement agency response performance, crime classifications by species, and alert us on important developments such as the recent surge of pangolin confiscations leading up to the new year."

## Amplifying the message: On the air in central Vietnam

ENV's team in central Vietnam has taken to the airwaves with a new series of Voice of Vietnam radio shows airing in the central provinces. The monthly shows, designed specifically for audiences in the central provinces, include news updates on efforts to combat wildlife crime by local authorities and discussions on key issues such as avoiding consuming wildlife during Tet, or not keeping wildlife (such as macaques) as pets. In December, ENV aired its 6th show since the program began in August in the provinces of Da Nang, Thua Thien Hue, and Quang Tri.

The central team of ENV has also been successful at getting ENV's public service announcements aired in shopping malls, airports, and on trains running from Saigon to Hanoi. Recent airings have included several public service announcements developed by ENV aimed at reducing consumption and use of bear bile, and promoting safer alternatives. Thanks to a new partnership with Goldsun Focus Media, the PSA's were aired 15,300 times



Pop singer Quang Dung (left) encourages his fans not to consume wildlife products, through a radio advertisement produced by ENV

*Photo: ENV*



### ENV facts

ENV is using a new feedback system to collect opinions, attitudes and ideas from the public. Information is collected from volunteers on Facebook, forums, and from public events. ENV poses a question at each wildlife trade event that is intended to encourage the public to give their ideas.



### ENV Highlights (Continued from page 4)

at 16 locations in central Vietnam, while Sen Communication Co., Ltd has aired the PSA's about 620 times each month on trains running from Saigon to Hanoi.

## **WANTED: Volunteers needed to help stop wildlife crime!**

ENV's Wildlife Protection Network consists of approximately 3,100 volunteers nationally, representing 32 provinces. The network also incorporates nine local clubs representing priority hotspot urban centers throughout the country. Volunteers assist ENV by monitoring business establishments where wildlife crimes have been previously reported to ensure compliance with the law.

As part of the December mission to the south, ENV's mobile team recruited volunteers in both Lam Dong and Binh Duong provinces, two areas where the network coverage has been traditionally weak. Approximately 35 volunteers were recruited and trained at each location. Similar recruitment drives have recently focused on districts in Ho Chi Minh where ENV has a growing number of cases that require monitoring.



The Vinh City Chapter of ENV's Wildlife Protection Network, comprised of nine active clubs and more than 3,200 members

*Photo: ENV*

## Public feedback

*“Does wildlife farming benefit conservation of wildlife?”*

Of 26 comments on the issue at an event in Binh Duong, 14 were in favor or farming as beneficial to conservation and ten were opposed.

### *Pro-farming comment*

“When we farm wildlife, we are conserving them and supplying them to consumers at the same time. Hunters no longer need to hunt because farms will supply demand” (37-year-old university lecturer)

### *Opposed to farming*

“Absolutely not. We should not farm wildlife. How can we be certain that animals will be conserved on farms? The demand for wildlife will still be present because people prefer (to consume) wild animals rather than farmed animals” (45-year-old male, university faculty member).

### *On bear bile*

“For me, I was burning (watching the film of bear bile extraction) because of the inhumane actions and cruel treatment of bears by people for personal profit. I promise that I will not use bear bile and neither will my family!” (Resident, Yen Thanh district, Nghe An province).

### ENV facts

The Wildlife Crime Unit has documented more than 3,900 cases since January 2005. In 2011, 768 cases were logged including 291 reported through the hotline and 241 from compliance monitoring. An additional 73 cases were reported by authorities to ENV and 154 cases were sourced through the media.

ENV in Action



Hotline banners have been placed on more than a dozen websites including those of several key government agencies

Photo: ENV



A gibbon, kept at a restaurant in Kon Tum, which was confiscated and transferred to a rescue center after being reported to ENV through the hotline. Other successful confiscations in December included a bear, lorises, leopard cats, snakes, marine turtles and macaques.

Photo: ENV



ENV's work now will hopefully ensure that bears and other wildlife are still around when this little girl grows up

Photo: ENV



"Bear bile extraction is cruel and illegal" - A new sticker distributed by ENV as part of their bear farm hotspot campaign

Photo: ENV



During December and January, nine wildlife trade and bear exhibits were carried out in five cities from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh

Photo: ENV



A construction worker takes a break to sign a pledge not to consume bear bile. ENV has collected more than 100,000 pledges since 2009

Photo: ENV





EDUCATION FOR NATURE-VIETNAM

Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam's first non-governmental organization focused on the conservation of nature and protection of the environment. Our mission is to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about environmental issues of local, national and global significance, ranging from the protection of endangered wildlife and natural ecosystems to climate change. We employ creative and innovative strategies to influence attitudes and mobilize Vietnamese citizens to live in balance with the natural world and to take action to protect Vietnam's precious environment.

ENV specializes in four major program areas that collectively form ENV's integrated and strategic approach toward achievement of our mission. These include:

- Reducing demand and consumption for wildlife products
- Strengthening and supporting law enforcement in dealing with wildlife crimes
- Mobilizing public support and participation in efforts to stop the illegal wildlife trade
- Strengthening legislation and advocating effective government policy in addressing the illegal trade

**ENV wishes to thank the following donors for supporting our efforts to protect nature and wildlife in Vietnam:**

- World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)
- The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- Humane Society International (HSI)
- Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)
- The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation
- Freeland Foundation
- The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund
- Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
- Auckland Zoo
- Houston Zoo
- Columbus Zoo
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

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**Report wildlife crimes: 1800 1522**  
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