

FEATURE

The Pangolin Trade

There have been 19 trade seizures involving pangolins documented by the ENV Wildlife Crimes Monitoring Unit since the beginning of 2006. These figures account for more than 630 animals confiscated in trade, with an average trade weight of 4 kg per animal, and a street value of approximately 1.5 billion VND, or roughly USD \$88,000. These trade seizures almost certainly account for only a small fraction of the overall volume of trade through Vietnam in pangolins.

Is Vietnam the Backdoor for the Illegal Pangolin Trade in Southeast Asia?

Some experts are drawing attention to what may be a relatively new trend in the regional pangolin trade, traders using overland trade routes for the smuggling of pangolins through Vietnam and onward to China. Indeed some wildlife traders that have been apprehended over the past year in Vietnam have reported that their cargo of pangolins originated in Laos, Myanmar, and even Malaysia. Information from sources in Malaysia note the presence of at least one trader there specializing in the smuggling of pangolins through Thailand and into Vietnam.



A recent seizure of pangolins in Ninh Binh province may have originated in Malaysia.

Photo: Leanne Clark

Although the evidence is not conclusive, Vietnam is being used by traders as a “back door” for smuggling of pangolins from source states into China.

Strong Action is Needed

ENV urges provincial authorities to act firmly and decisively in dealing with cases involving the trade of pangolins, and ENV strongly discourages the resale of pangolins back into the trade. If Vietnam is to be successful in efforts to stop the illegal trade, we must exercise enforcement actions that make it prohibitively costly for traders to operate. Heavy fines and removal of the illegal contraband entirely from the trade (with no benefit to the traders or other enterprises engaged in commercial trade) will help deter traders from shipping their illegal cargos through Vietnam.

Although there is no clear solution for dealing with confiscated pangolins, ENV recommends that confiscated animals be turned over to the Soc Son Rescue Center (north) or the Cu Chi Rescue Center (south) pending a longer-term solution.

Authorities can also contact the Asian Pangolin Conservation Program at Cuc Phuong National Park for advice on dealing with confiscated animals. The pangolin program at Cuc Phuong maintains a small group of captive pangolins confiscated from trade seizures, and is researching diet and captive management issues relevant to devising a longer-term conservation strategy for the species.

Contact numbers are provided below:

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About pangolins

Pangolins are consumed as food at wildlife specialty restaurant in Vietnam and China. The scales are also valued for their medicinal use. According to wildlife protection authorities (December 2006), pangolins are worth for about 500,000 VND per kilogram live and 100,000 VND per kilogram if dead.

There are two species of pangolins native to Vietnam. The Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) inhabits northern parts of the country and the Sunda pangolin (*Manis javanica*) is found in the south. The Sunda pangolin can be easily distinguished from the Chinese pangolin by its notably longer tail.

Pangolins are protected under group 2B of Decree 32 banning exploitation for commercial purposes. Both species are also listed on Appendix II of CITES prohibiting trade across international borders without a CITES permit.



A pangolin in wine at a Ha Tay restaurant. Photo: Kathy Ruttenberg

Crime Log – December 2006

Trade Seizures

- Police from Ho Chi Minh city confiscated a number of animals and animal parts from a resident's house in District 12. The wildlife contraband included the body of a dead Asian golden cat (*Catopuma temminckii*) and two leopard cats (*Prionailurus viverrinus*), five bear paws, 3.5 kg of python bile, 22 stomachs reportedly from porcupines, and other wildlife parts (WCU Case Ref. 365).
- Ninh Binh FPD confiscated 63 pangolins weighing 235.4 kg. Five of the confiscated pangolins were transferred to the Asian Pangolin Conservation Program at Cuc Phuong National Park. The remainder were auctioned off (WCU Case Ref. 369)
- Police in Thanh Hoa confiscated a shipment of 34 macaques hidden in a car possibly heading for Hanoi from the central region of Vietnam. (WCU Case Ref. 379)
- Wildlife protection officers of Da Nang city confiscated six macaques and 12 porcupines from a public bus that originated in Quang Nam. The driver of the bus was fined 13 million VND (WCU Case Ref. 383)
- A man apprehended in May 2006 in the province of Quang Ninh with a cargo of turtles and snakes was fined 21 million



Bile is extracted from an unconscious bear at a bear farm outside of Hanoi.

VND. The vehicle that was carrying the animals was also confiscated. (WCU Case Ref. 225)

- Three traders in Quang Ninh were sentenced to nine, twelve, and fifteen months probation respectively for their role in a March 2006 case involving the smuggling of 147 kg of crab-eating macaques (WCU Case Ref. 186).
- Four traders involved in a December 2005 case involving the smuggling of 333.3 kg of turtles, snakes and monitor lizards seized in Dak Lak province were sentenced to between 10-12 months imprisonment. Two other traders involved in the case received 8-10 months probation (WCU Case Ref. 142).
- One of the three tigers confiscated in August from a farm in Dong Nai province was transferred to Soc Son Rescue Center outside of Hanoi. The remains of two other dead tigers were turned over to FPD pending final settlement (WCU Case Ref. 292).

Public participations

- Rangers from the Ho Chi Minh FPD confiscated a masked palm civet (*Paguma larvata*) from a restaurant after being tipped off by a concerned citizen through the Wildlife Crimes Hotline. The restaurant was fined 200,000 VND (WCU Case Ref. 367).
- A restaurant in Hanoi voluntarily removed a signboard advertising wildlife specialty dishes following a visit by the ENV Wildlife Crimes Monitoring Unit (WCU Case Ref. 361).
- Wildlife protection officers raided some local resident's houses advertising bear bile and macaque bond glue in Nghe An province following reports from a journalist. The inspecting rangers found that the bear bile displayed for sale was fake. The FPD confiscated the fake bear bile and instructed the shop owners to remove all the signboard advertising wildlife. (WCU Ref. Case 368).
- Two gray-shanked douc langurs that had been kept in captivity by local residents in Binh Dinh province were turned over to FPD and transferred to the Endangered Primate Rescue Center of Cuc Phuong National Park (WCU Case Ref. 366, 378)
- Wildlife protection officers in Sa Pa confiscated a signboard advertising tiger bond glue and bear bond glue from a gift shop after receiving information from a foreign visitor through the Wildlife Crimes Hotline. The shop owner was requested to pay a fine of 200,000 VND (WCU Case Ref. 358).

Gibbon in Can Tho in Need of Rescue



A young gibbon on display at an "Eco" resort in Can Tho awaits rescue.

A gibbon in Can Tho province remains on display at the Phu Sa Eco Resort near Can Tho city while provincial authorities sort out responsibility for dealing with the violation. Can Tho province does not have a Forest Protection Department, and in such cases, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is responsible for enforcing wildlife protection laws. However, DARD claims that they are awaiting authority to deal with the case from the provincial People's Committee. Meanwhile, the gibbon remains illegally in the hands of the resort. All of Vietnam's gibbons are protected under Decree 32, group 1B and may not be possessed, traded, purchased, or sold without a permit from the government.

Crime Statistics

The ENV Wildlife Crimes Monitoring Unit has logged a total of 382 cases since January 1, 2005.

Period	Trade seizures	Selling	Advertising	Possession display	Other	Total *
December 2006	5	13	1	3	2	24
Total 2006	70	77	10	53	25	235
Total 2005 + 2006	111	113	16	83	56	382

* These statistics represent only a small fraction of the active trade in wildlife in Vietnam, and only account for those cases that are reported to ENV.

About the ENV Wildlife Crimes Monitoring Unit

Established in January of 2005, the Wildlife Crimes Monitoring Unit runs the national Wildlife Crimes Hotline, a toll-free number that was established to provide a mechanism for the public to report wildlife crimes. Reports are quickly passed on to the appropriate functional agency by ENV, after which the monitoring unit tracks each case through to its conclusion with special attention focused on the disposition of the animals or animal parts, and punishment administered to the subjects in each case. Sources are contacted and advised in detail as to the outcome of the case that he/she reported. Cases are then documented and filed, as well and recorded on ENV's Wildlife Crimes Database.

The main aims of the program are to:

- Encourage public participation and support in efforts to combat the illegal trade of wildlife
- Support enforcement efforts by government agencies
- Document crimes and identify factors that contribute to the wildlife trade

The ENV Wildlife Crimes Monitoring Unit is jointly funded by the Humane Society International and Conservation International

In the corner

Don't Buy Me

Do not buy wildlife to save it. Your money will end up in the hand of traders and hunters, and others who profit from the wildlife trade. Although your action may have saved the life of one animal, your money will almost guarantee the loss of more wildlife, as hunters will seek additional animals to sell in the market.

The only way to save an animal from the market is to have it confiscated, whereby the seller fails to profit (incurs a loss) from the transaction, making the business of selling wildlife "unprofitable".



Report wildlife crimes to your local Forest Protection Department or the ENV National Wildlife Crimes Hotline, we will do our best to have the animal confiscated.

Stop the wildlife trade, get involved and make it happen!

Your Voice and Ideas or Questions are Welcome!

If you have a question about some aspect of the wildlife trade, email us and we will do our best to find you an answer. Your question might also be selected for the community voice section of our monthly wildlife crimes radio show on the Voice of Vietnam. Email: Hotline@fpt.vn

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Stop Wildlife Crime!



If you see wildlife for sale in restaurants or other business establishments, contact your local Forest Protection Department or the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline.

Hotline: 1800-1522 Email: hotline@fpt.vn

YOU can make a difference