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### Feature

## Who is Protecting Vietnam's Endangered Wildlife?

Correspondence 970, issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, may be a death sentence for Vietnam's endangered wildlife according to wildlife experts. The letter was issued in April 2008 to help guide provincial governments on the management of cases involving bears, tigers and other endangered wildlife being kept illegally. However, Correspondence 970, is being interpreted by provincial governments all over the country as signaling official approval to legalize the possession of protected wildlife, thereby undermining government and non-government efforts to protect endangered wildlife.

The letter's basic premise is that "possession" of critically endangered and protected species is not a criminal offense, and therefore, only warrants administrative fines, not criminal prosecution.

Unfortunately, this is an accurate interpretation of the law. Possession of protected wildlife is indeed not a criminal offense, while hunting, transporting, trading, selling, or buying protected wildlife are subject to criminal penalties. However, crimes were presumably committed prior to the charge of possession. For example, were the 20 or more Thanh Hoa tigers hunted, transported, traded, and/or sold prior to Mr. C and his gang possessing them? We can blame the law and its loopholes, but that merely deflects attention from the fact that we lack the will to protect our wildlife, always opting for an easy solution, which carries the least responsibility and lowest risk. This suggests that the main point of the law has been forgotten: protecting species that are threatened with extinction in the wild. Vietnam is one of the most amazing places on earth for wildlife, and yet, we are selling and trading it to extinction.

Today's interpretation of the law dramatically reduced its deterrent effect. As long as I am not caught hunting or transporting a tiger, for example, the worst that can happen to me if I am caught is a 30 million VND fine, the maximum possible administrative penalty. And the authorities will let me keep it too! We might as well hang signs around the necks of all of our most endangered wildlife: For sale, 30 million VND, buy fast, only available while supplies last! Moreover, for 30 million, I can keep not just one tiger but 20 tigers or even 80 illegal bears!



Live tigers in Thanh Hoa and Thai Nguyen provinces are the latest examples of what is being called the "Kiss of Death" for Vietnam's endangered wildlife. Weak interpretation of laws, loopholes, and in decision amongst responsible government agencies are resulting in meager fines and owners being allowed to keep protected animals they have purchased or received illegally.

Today's law, even with its possession loophole, permits authorities to confiscate illegal wildlife whenever and wherever it is discovered. By confiscating illegal wildlife, the owner suffers both financial penalties (fines) and the loss of the animal. This is a much stronger message to violators and would-be violators: possession of endangered and protected wildlife is not permitted.

By allowing authorities to register protected wildlife with owners after it has been discovered, we are essentially telling 83 million people that they only need to pay a small fine to keep protected species. The result, as shown in the Quang Ninh case involving 80 illegal unregistered bears, is that more bears, tigers, and other endangered wildlife will end up in private hands until there is nothing left in the wild. We can then all sit back and rest assured that we have solved the problem by eliminating the source of the trade; the species themselves!



A female Malayan porcupine and her young at a porcupine farm

Excuses abound for why current government policies and practices make sense. Some argue that wildlife farming benefits poor people and should be further developed as a poverty alleviation strategy. While certain species may be suitable for farming, such as common soft-shell turtles, the assertion that wildlife farming in general will improve local livelihoods is false. The truth is, without a constant input of new animals from the wild there are very few species that breed and develop fast enough in captivity to make farming economically viable. And monitoring of farms is poor to non-existent. Most wildlife farming in Vietnam depends on animals sourced from the wild and laundered through the farms. On the enforcement side, authorities cannot readily distinguish between legal and illegal wildlife, which further undermines efforts to protect some of our most endangered species.

And who owns these farmed tigers, bears, gibbons and langurs, and other protected species? Poor people? Minorities struggling to make a living? No. The vast majority are owned by rich people with influence and money. Local livelihoods is not an issue in the fight to save Vietnam's endangered wildlife.

Another common excuse is that there is no place to put the confiscated wildlife. While there are not enough rescue centers and zoos to hold all the bears, tigers, and other animals confiscated from the trade, there is still sufficient space to take many animals. The solution is for MARD, to dedicate adequate resources to provide additional space for confiscated wildlife. Allowing criminals to keep protected wildlife because of a lack of space is itself a crime against nature. Support from international organizations has resulted in the establishment of rescue centers for bears and primates, as well as holding facilities for other endangered species. If the government was to demonstrate to the world that it was making a sincere effort to protect wildlife in the wild, additional international support would become available.

Others argue that captive breeding and wildlife farming will save the day for Vietnam's wildlife by preserving genes that could be used to produce future generations, some of which could be released back into the wild. Although this is an appealing idea, the concept of preserving wildlife through commercial farming is fundamentally flawed for several reasons.

First, farmers seek production, not genetic conservation. They aim to maximize the number of offspring they can produce and sell, irrespective of genetic composition. The result is inbreeding, genetic dilution, and subsequent generations of offspring that are of no value to the conservation of the species. Genetic preservation requires founders to be carefully matched for breeding to ensure that genetic diversity is conserved. The conflict between maximizing production and conservation of genes is irreconcilable unless farmers are prepared to sacrifice profits to preserve quality genetic composition among breeding stock. There is no evidence that they are.

Second, the idea of releasing animals back to the wild at some future date is theoretically possible but in practice it is very difficult. Wild animals have natural behaviors, such as hunting and foraging skills that are unlikely to be adequately developed in captive-raised animals. Released captive-bred animals may lack the ability to adapt to local environmental conditions, disease, and predators. Animals, such as bears, raised in captivity have less fear of humans, which can lead to higher incidences of human-animal conflict when these animals are released. Introduced animals also serve as vectors for the dispersal of diseases. And the costs associated with successfully reintroducing a species to a habitat can be substantial. Who is going to pay for future reintroduction?

The less costly and more successful approach is available to us today if we care to seize this opportunity and protect our endangered wildlife in the wild. Let it



A clouded leopard on display in a wildlife trader's home. Possession of protected species in any form is illegal. What is the harm? If people were allowed to keep trophies, more animals would be hunted and killed to supply the demand for more trophies.



breed on its own in a protected environment. Let it preserve its own genes. Let species live and adapt to their native environments through natural processes. Let them be in nature.

We appeal to you as rangers, police, government officials, and leaders not to ignore the law, but to open your eyes and see what is happening to our wildlife, and do what is right in accordance with the law to ensure that we protect this valuable part of our culture, our history, and who we are.

The future will be determined by what we do today. What will we tell our grandchildren when they ask us why we did not act now while we still had time?



## Quang Ninh Bear Investigation Reveals Flagrant Disregard for the Law

An undercover investigation carried out by ENV In June provided a unique insight into the booming bear bile business that targets mainly Korean tourists in Ha Long City.

During the weeklong survey, ENV teamed up with police to visit nine bear farms operating in Ha Long city and in Yen Hung district. Of the nine farms, six were open for tourists. Surveillance teams were placed outside the entrances and monitored traffic going in to and out of four of the most active farms for periods ranging from 2-4 days, while undercover teams accompanied Korean tourists into some of the farms.

During the 4 day period, surveillance teams documented a total of 33 tour buses entering four of the farms, carrying an estimated 400 tourists, mainly Koreans. While some groups appeared to stop for fewer than 20 minutes at the farms, about three-

quarters of the visitors spent an hour or more inside, suggesting that they may have participated in a bear bile extraction during their visit. These facts were confirmed by the undercover teams.

Here is what one team reported: "Guests were toured around the facility looking at caged bears for a period of about ten minutes. The group, which consisted of about 20 Korean tourists, were led to a small room where they were given a presentation about bears and the value of bear bile by a Korean employee of the farm. About ten of the guests then sampled bear bile mixed in wine. Immediately following the bear bile tasting, a live and unconscious bear was wheeled into the room on a gurney. A Vietnamese man in a white lab coat used an ultrasound machine to locate the gall bladder before inserting a needle and extracting about 80cc of bile. The guests were then invited to buy fresh bear bile before loading back onto their bus and departing from the farm. The entire tour lasted about one hour."



*Ha Long Bay or Ha Long bears?* There is growing concern that Vietnam's prestigious World Heritage Site will be tainted by the growing illegal bear tourism industry operating in Ha Long town. Hundreds of bears that were hunted from the wild are being kept here and illegally used for bear bile exploitation.

The results of the investigation suggest that Quang Ninh bear farmers are capitalizing on a growing wildlife tourism industry that markets bear products to tourists, particularly Koreans, in violation of the law. Bears are listed under Group IB of Decree 32 of 2006. Possession or sale of bears or products made from bears is illegal. Bears that are registered in accordance with MARD's Decision 02 of 2005 may be kept by their owners, but extracting and selling bile from the bears is a criminal offense as it constitutes the sale of products from a Group IB protected species. Moreover, foreign tourists that purchase bear products and transport them across international borders do so in violation of Vietnam's international treaty obligations under CITES, which requires permits issued by the national government for transport of endangered species or products made from endangered species across borders.

# Project Think

Imagine the scenario in which bear farmers in Quang Ninh face a government determined to bring an end to cases involving the illegal possession of wildlife. Police raid the farms. They find 80 unregistered and illegal bears. Instead of slapping a 30 million VND fine on the owners, a fine of 30 million VND is applied for each violation, with a total fine of 2.4 billion VND. Police then confiscate all 80 bears and send them to the bear rescue center at Tam Dao.

1. Do you think that the government would be sending a strong message to violators throughout the country?
2. Do you think that Quang Ninh bear farmers will obtain more illegal bears next year, as they have done consistently since the registration deadline in February 2005?
3. Do you think Vietnam's wildlife will be more or less protected as a result of the actions of Quang Ninh authorities?

The answers may not matter except to those who care

about the future and how our actions today will determine our world tomorrow.



An Asiatic black bear being kept by a private household in Dien Bien City. Decision 02 of 2005 required bear farmers to register their bears. However, exploitation of bear bile, even from registered bears, is illegal.

## Words of Wisdom from the Front Lines

Below are a collection of thoughts from forest rangers working on the front line of the battle to protect Vietnam's endangered wildlife.

*"If illegal tiger keepers are only issued administrative fines, and tiger farms are permitted to exist, there will be many so called 'tiger farms' developing throughout Vietnam, in spite of the law."*

*Deputy chief of a provincial FPD, 2008.*

*"If animals belong to group 1B, the subjects must be prosecuted. Even for one animal."*

*Forest ranger, October 2007.*

*"According to Decision 02, bear farmers are not allowed to extract bear bile but in reality they do. If we want to protect bears, we can't allow this exploitation to continue."*

*Forest ranger, January 2008.*

*"Unregistered bears need to be confiscated and the owners punished in accordance with the law."*

*Forest ranger, May 2008.*

*"Hold government staff responsible for checking the wildlife farms and accountable for the disappearance of wildlife such as in the case of the 27 illegal bears that disappeared in Ha Tay in August 2007."*

*Forest ranger, October 2007.*

**Send us your thoughts and ideas about wildlife protection to [hotline@fpt.vn](mailto:hotline@fpt.vn)  
Your voice counts!**

# Hall of Shame

## **Gibbon Escapes Rescue in Ho Chi Minh (Case 1270, Ho Chi Minh City)**

This case involves a gibbon being kept in a private home in HCMC. The case was first reported to the Wildlife Crime Hotline in June by a foreign resident who observed the animal from a neighboring house. ENV passed the information on to the HCMC authorities but they stated that they did not have the right to inspect a private home. ENV then passed the information to another HCMC authority. Officers from this authority inspected the home and observed the gibbon but did not confiscate the animal despite the fact that gibbons are fully protected under Group 1B of Decree 32. The next day, officers from the two authorities returned to the home to confiscate the gibbon. However, the gibbon was no longer present and the owner claimed it had “escaped”.

In this case, the slow response of the authorities resulted in failure. It is essential that the authorities act in a timely manner after a crime is confirmed, and that owners, such as the man possessing the gibbon, are held accountable for breaking the law. This includes identifying the current whereabouts of the gibbon that conveniently “escaped” prior to rescue.

## **Resident Tries To Stop Bear Crime (Case 988, Phu Tho Province)**

A resident in Thanh Son district contacted the Wildlife Crime Hotline in January of 2008 and reported that another local resident was keeping a bear and extracting bear bile from the animal. ENV contacted the local authorities who visited the address and found the bear was registered in accordance with the law. They also saw no evidence that the bear was being used for bile extraction, and subsequently took no further action. Without evidence of the illegal activity, authorities were not in a position to act on the case.

But they could have used the opportunity to issue a warning and keep a closer eye on the subject to ensure that he remains in compliance with the law.

In May, the informant contacted the ENV hotline again to report that the subject was currently in possession of about 4kg of bear meat that he was offering for sale. ENV passed the information to the provincial authorities. These authorities responded and discovered between 2-3kg of bear meat in the possession of the subject. However, the meat was not confiscated because the quantity was considered too small to be of concern. The subject was reportedly issued a violation for selling bear meat and using his captive bear to extract bear bile.

Bears are listed as fully protected under Decree 32 Group 1B, and as such, bears and products made from bears may not be traded, sold, purchased, or possessed without a permit from the national government. In order to deter the subject from committing further crimes, the authorities should have confiscated the bear meat, however small a quantity.

## **Authorities Idle on Leopard Cat Crime in Son La (Case 1257, Son La Province)**

In May, ENV contacted the Son La authorities following a report to the Wildlife Crime Hotline of a live leopard cat being kept at a restaurant in Son La town. The agency staff inspected the restaurant and found the leopard cat as reported. However, no immediate action was taken. Leopard cats are protected under Decree 32 Group 1B. The appropriate response would have been to confiscate the animal immediately and to have issued an administrative fine to the restaurant owner for illegal possession of a protected species.



A skinny loris on a strangling rope outside a restaurant in central Vietnam. The loris died a few days after this photo was taken, just prior to a raid by Environmental Police, which recovered other endangered wildlife at the establishment.



In early June, at the urging of ENV, officers from the same agency returned to the restaurant to consider confiscating the leopard cat. However, the inspection team reported that the leopard cat was no longer present. ENV then had the site inspected by an independent monitoring team that happened to be in the area. On June 22, the monitoring team reported back to ENV that the leopard cat was still present at the restaurant. Given the conflicting reports, ENV contacted another Son La authority regarding the case and asked them to inspect the site. Officers from this authority subsequently inspected the restaurant and observed the leopard cat. But instead of confiscating the cat, they chose to issue a violation and allowed the

violation to keep the Group 1B protected species until a final decision was made at a higher level. These authorities cited the decision by MARD regarding allowing bear farm owners to keep their illegal bears as justification for their failure to confiscate the animal.

This case shows how the recent wave of bear and tiger registrations in response to Correspondence 970 have severely compromised our wildlife protection law, leaving all formerly protected species vulnerable to exploitation. In this case, the Son La authorities had the duty to confiscate the leopard cat, and should have done so in order to uphold both letter and spirit of the law.

If you are having difficulties dealing with a case involving Group 1B protected species because the subject of the case seems to be protected in some way, or if you wish to report corruption relating to forest crimes, please contact the new National FPD Forest Crime Task Force for assistance. Contact in Ha Noi: 04-734-6408

## Regional Crime News

### China: 7,000 Animals Destined for Guangdong Markets Seized

Chinese authorities seized more than 7,000 animals in the port city of Shantou that were being smuggled into China from an unidentified Southeast Asian country. The animals included almost 6,000 monitor lizards, more than 1,000 cobras, and about 500 turtles. The smugglers reportedly abandoned the shipment as a coastguard patrol approached their vessel.

(Source: *China Daily*, March 22, 2008)

### India: Rhinos Shot and Killed

A May article in the Times of India reported on the poaching of one-horned rhinos in India. According to figures cited in the article, at least six rhinos have been shot and killed so far this year. In January, one rhino was shot twice, had its horn sawed off and was left for dead in the forest where it bled for 34 hours before finally succumbing to its wounds. The article notes that in 2007, a total of 16 rhinos were killed by poachers.

Indian authorities said that rhino poachers use sharpshooters armed with powerful rifle and scopes to bring down a rhino, after which the horn is removed "in seconds", leaving little opportunity for anti-poaching teams to intervene.

Rhino horns are reportedly worth about \$40,000/kg on

*Vietnamese authorities can help reduce poaching of wild rhinos in India and Africa by giving maximum penalties to criminals found in possession of rhino horn here in Vietnam, and cooperating with law enforcement agencies in other countries on cases involving foreign nationals or in cases where the country of origin is known.*

the international market where the horn is valued as an aphrodisiac.

In Vietnam, ENV has recorded 16 cases involving smuggling or possession of rhino horn since 2005. A number of these cases involved rhino horn smuggled from Africa into Vietnam. Vietnam is also home to between three to eight wild rhinos at Cat Tien National Park.

(Source: *The Times of India*, May 4, 2008/ENV Crime statistics, June 2008)

### Two-week Training Course on Forensic Science in the US

ASEAN scientists participated in a two-week course on wildlife crime forensics at the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Law Enforcement Laboratory in Oregon, USA. The course was an initial step toward developing ASEAN countries' abilities to use forensic science in investigating wildlife crimes. Areas of focus included using forensic skills to gather evidence from a crime scene. Participants also learned about using DNA and genetic analysis to identify species from fur or meat and other confiscated products, as well as a variety of other practical skills that will enhance their abilities to utilize forensic science in building and prosecuting cases relating to wildlife crimes.

(Source: *The Malaysian Star*, May 4, 2008)

### Cambodia: Wildlife Destined for Vietnam Seized on Cambodia-Thai Border

In April, Cambodian Forest Rangers and Police confiscated more than 400 kg of pythons and turtles from a vehicle on the Thai-Cambodian border. The shipment, originating in Thailand, was reportedly being transported through Cambodia and was destined for Vietnam. Based on other past examples, it is probable that the shipment would ultimately have ended up being smuggled through Vietnam into China.

## Thailand: Coast Guard Nabs Tiger Smugglers on the Mekong River

In January, Thai Coast Guard officers seized the remains of six tigers, three leopards, and two clouded leopards from a truck as the animals were about to be loaded onto a boat and smuggled across the Mekong River into Laos. According to the article, the animals were destined for consumers in Vietnam and China. Authorities suspect that the cats originated from Malaysia or Thailand.

(Source: *The Nation*, January 30, 2008)

*This case is a typical illustration of how the wildlife trade is an international issue which requires cooperation of enforcement agencies throughout the region, not just to interdict trade, but to identify and apprehend the key people controlling and profiting from the wildlife trade.*

## United States: Tiger from Ho Chi Minh Seized by Customs

An American couple pleaded guilty in April to illegally importing a stuffed tiger to the United States after US Customs officers inspected a crate labeled "toy tiger" that had been mailed from Ho Chi Minh City. Customs authorities in Ho Chi Minh are currently seeking additional information from US authorities in order to determine how and when the tiger might have been smuggled out of Vietnam, and identify the person

responsible for the crime.

(Source: *Associated Press*, April 18, 2008, *ENV Wildlife Crime Unit*)

## India: Fewer Tigers Left in India

In February, the Wildlife Institute of India released a report estimating that there may be fewer than 1,400 wild tigers left in India. This is a 49% decrease since 2001-2002 when the government estimated the population of wild tigers at about 3,600.

In September 2007, two dead tigers seized at the home of a trader in Hanoi were tentatively identified as Bengal tigers according to a senior representative from the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources (IEBR). The Bengal tiger is a subspecies native to India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan, and southern Tibet.

(Source: *International Tiger Coalition*, March 2008)

*The world's wild tigers are quickly disappearing. As enforcement officers and government leaders, what should we do? Exercise zero tolerance on tiger crimes. Treat tiger crimes, including possession of illegal tigers, as serious crimes. Punish tiger traders and persons possessing tigers to the fullest extent of the law.*

*It is our responsibility as a nation to ACT, not just to preserve our own tigers, but to help our neighbors protect their tigers too.*

## Crime Statistics

The ENV Wildlife Crimes Monitoring Unit has logged a total of 1105 cases between January 1, 2005 to June 30, 2008.

Period	Trade Seizures	Selling	Advertising	Possession display	Other	Total *
January 2008	20	46	2	18	0	86
February 2008	6	9	1	6	4	26
March 2008	10	62	2	15	0	89
April 2008	13	13	3	6	0	35
May 2008	8	21	1	17	0	47
June 2008	14	25	2	15	0	56
<b>TOTAL 2008</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>339</b>
2005-2008	Trade Seizures	Selling	Advertising	Possession display	Other	Total *
<b>Total</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>1319</b>

\* 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

# Crime Log

Below is a brief summary of the major wildlife trade seizures in Vietnam between April and June of 2008.

## Lai Chau province

In April, Lai Chau provincial police, working in cooperation with the traffic police, confiscated 21.5 kg of cobras from two Vinh Phuc residents on a bus heading for their home province. The two subjects were fined 29,000,000 VND. (WCU Ref. Case 1206)

In June, mobile rangers from the Lai Chau Town FPD confiscated a loris from a group of local hunters during a patrol near Lai Chau town. The loris was subsequently transferred to the Cuc Phuong National Park Endangered Primate Rescue Center. (WCU Ref. Case 1304).

## Dien Bien province

In May, Dien Bien FPD confiscated 67.9 kg of turtles and cobras from a resident in Dien Bien district and fined the owner 18,000,000 VND. (WCU Ref. Case 1269)

In June, Dien Bien police confiscated 37.2 kg of monitor lizards, turtles, and cobras being transported on a motorbike. The motorbike driver was

subsequently fined 1,700,000 VND. (WCU Ref. Case 1268)

## Lao Cai province

In June, police arrested a Hanoi resident on smuggling charges after five rhino horns, which he had attempted to smuggle into Vietnam on a flight from Singapore in January, proved to be genuine. The rhino horns were initially confiscated on January 3 when the subject returned to Vietnam via Ho Chi Minh City. The rhino horns were reportedly identified as from white rhinos and the man claimed he had brought them to Vietnam from South Africa. (WCU Ref. Case 1283)

## Tuyen Quang province

In March Environmental police confiscated 174.2 kg of frozen wildlife from a residential house. The wildlife included a leopard cat, 48 civets, eight brush-tailed porcupines, and four live turtles. All of the frozen wildlife was incinerated and the turtles were released into the forest. The subject was sentenced to six months probation and issued an additional administrative fine of 19,000,000 VND. (WCU Ref. Case 1105)

In April, Environmental Police confiscated three frozen leopard cats and 22 kg of pythons, cobras and civets from a residential house in Yen Son District. The frozen leopard cats were subsequently incinerated and the other live animals were released. The resident is currently awaiting criminal prosecution. (WCU Ref. Case 1191)

In April, Tuyen Quang Rangers confiscated two king cobras from two subjects and 64 kg of civets, coucals, monitor lizards, keeled box turtles, snakes, jungle fowl and common cobras from a private home in Chiem Hoa District. The live animals were later released and the dead animals were incinerated. The resident was issued a fine of 12,300,000 VND and the person responsible for transporting the animals is awaiting prosecution. (WCU Ref. Case 1236)

## Son La province

In April, Son La Environmental Police discovered eight unregistered bears being kept in five different homes in three districts. Son La FPD is currently awaiting a decision that will result in the transfer of the bears to the AAF bear rescue center at Tam Dao National Park. (WCU Ref. Case 1199, 1222, 1224, 1224, 1225)

In June, police from Mai Son District arrested a local resident with two bear cubs that were reportedly being transported by motorbike to Ha Tay province. The motorbike driver faces criminal prosecution and the fate of the bears cubs is pending a decision by the province



Mountains of snake wine at a shop in central Vietnam, including species listed as protected under Group 1B and 2B of Decree 32

***“The best way to protect wildlife is in its habitat where it belongs, before it falls into the hands of hunters and traders”.***



on whether to transfer the animals to the Bear Rescue Center at Tam Dao National Park. (WCU Ref. Case 1277)

### Quang Ninh province

In May, border guards from Mong Cai town seized three bears being smuggled across the Ka Long River into China in a small boat. The smuggler was identified as a Chinese national and is currently facing criminal prosecution in Vietnam. The bears were subsequently transported to the Tam Dao Bear Rescue Center. (WCU Ref. Case 1245)



Amongoose awaits the cooking pot in a restaurant in Quang Ninh

### Thua Thien Hue province

In April, border guards in Thua Thien Hue province confiscated 25 Brush-tailed Porcupines being smuggled across the border from Laos into Vietnam by foot path. The smugglers included three Vietnamese nationals and two Laotians. The Laotian nationals were sent back across the border while each of the others received fines of 390,000 VND for the illegal transport of wildlife. The live porcupines were released back into the wild and the dead animals were incinerated. (WCU Ref. Case 1211)

### Ha Tinh province

In June, FPD confiscated 749 kg of monitor lizards and 70 kg of turtles from a truck in Ha Tinh. The shipment reportedly originated in Binh Dinh province. The driver was administered a fine of 90,000,000 VND. (WCU Ref. Case 1279)

### Ha Noi

In June, police inspected a house in Thanh Xuan District and confiscated 190 kg frozen tiger and 6.5 kg of wildlife bone glue. The tiger was reportedly bought in Ha Tinh at the Laos border crossing for 320,000,000 VND. It was transported to Ninh Binh before being moved again to Hanoi, where the tiger was to have

been processed to make tiger bone glue. (WCU Ref. Case 1281)

In June, National Environmental Police confiscated rhino horns in two separate cases in Hanoi. One case involved the seizure of a rhino horn weighing 1.27 kg from a home in Hanoi. Police also recovered an additional 64 grams of rhino horn pieces from the residence. The subject, identified as a resident of Nghe An province, faces criminal prosecution over the case.

In the second case, police arrested two people attempting to sell 1.26 kg of rhino horn. Also recovered were two gaur bladders reportedly from gaur, tiger teeth and 10 tiger claws. (WCU Ref. Case 1284, 1288)

### Ninh Binh province

In April, National Environmental Police, working in cooperation with local police and provincial rangers, raided two homes in Gia Vien District and confiscated two frozen tigers. (WCU Ref. Case 1188, 1190)

### Hai Phong city

In June, the Hai Phong People's Committee reversed an earlier decision to destroy a shipment of nearly 24 tons of frozen pangolins and pangolin scales that were seized by Customs at the port in late February and early March 2008. They now plan to sell the pangolins for production of medicinal products.

The pangolins were shipped in three separate containers originating in Indonesia and were to be received by a Quang Ninh company when they were intercepted. Authorities speculate that it had been the intention of the traders to transport the pangolins from Hai Phong to China by road. The Hai Phong company that was to receive the pangolins was issued a fine of 30,600,000 VND. Vietnamese authorities have also passed on critical information to counterparts in Indonesia to assist the Indonesian authorities in investigating the company responsible for shipping the pangolins. (WCU Ref. Case 1090, 1100)

*Selling rather than destroying the confiscated pangolins contributes money to the state budget, but in doing so, further encourages trade of wildlife by stimulating demand for illegal products. It also seriously complicates the ability of enforcement agencies to identify legal versus illegal pangolin products when they are discovered during enforcement operations. Agencies and organizations tasked with protecting Vietnam's wildlife view the decision to sell 24 tons of confiscated pangolins as a serious compromise in efforts to stem the illegal trade of pangolins and other wildlife.*

**“Buying and selling wild animals and their parts is a CRIME.”**

### Thanh Hoa province

In June, a mobile ranger team was attacked by the driver of a bus after they stopped and attempted to inspect the bus on Highway 1A in Thanh Hoa city. The driver then escaped as police arrived and rangers discovered 172 kg of wildlife on the bus including 150 kg of water monitors and 22 kg of common rat snakes. A man who was accompanying the shipment was arrested. The shipment reportedly originated in Gia Lai province and was destined for the north. The animals were subsequently destroyed and the police are attempting to track down the driver. (WCU Ref. Case 1274)

### Quang Binh province

In April, mobile rangers in Quang Binh confiscated 435 kg of monitor lizards, 110 kg of king cobras, and 170 kg of turtles from a truck heading north on Highway 1A. The driver is currently facing criminal prosecution. (WCU Ref. Case 1253)

### Quang Tri province

In March, the Huong Hoa district FPD confiscated 68 kg of wildlife including two Asiatic Black Bear cubs from a bus with Laotian registration. In addition to the bears, the shipment included pythons, soft-shell turtles, rat snakes, and monitor lizards. The bear cubs were subsequently transferred to the Tam Dao Bear Rescue Center and the other animals were released into the wild. (WCU Ref. Case 1231)

In May, Quang Tri Traffic police confiscated 1.012 kg of monitor lizards from a truck that originated in the south of Vietnam. The smuggler was fined 60,000,000 VND and the monitor lizards were released. (WCU Ref. Case 1239)

Also in May, Quang Tri police confiscated an additional 117 kg of monitor lizards on Highway 9 from a truck that was destined for Hanoi. Police said that



An endemic box turtle, *Cuora bourreti*, in Quang Ngai province. Authorities inspected the restaurant where this turtle was observed shortly after it was reported, and plan to transfer it to a rescue center.



This shop selling wildlife wine at Cu Chi Tunnels was raided and shut down by Ho Chi Minh FPD shortly after the case was reported to ENV

the shipment originated in Laos and fined the smuggler 9,000,000 VND. The monitors were released locally. (WCU Ref. Case 1254)

### Ho Chi Minh City

In May, Customs officers at Tan Son Nhat Airport confiscated two rhino horns weighing 9 kg from a Vietnamese passenger returning on a flight from Hong Kong. The case is currently pending prosecution. (WCU Ref. Case 1249)

In June, HCM Customs authorities investigated a case involving a stuffed tiger shipped from HCM to the United States in late 2007. The stuffed tiger was seized by US Customs agents at San Francisco International Airport in December and was to be received by a Vietnamese-American couple. (WCU Ref. Case 1207)



A wild pig confined to a cage awaits sale in Quang Nam province

***“If you are not part of the solution, you may be part of the problem.”***



# Public Participation in Stopping Wildlife Crime

The following cases involving public participation in efforts to stop the wildlife trade occurred or were resolved during the three months from April to June 2008

## April 2008

Two leopard cats and a stuffed leopard were confiscated from a restaurant by Hanoi Environmental Police after a resident reported the case to the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline. The restaurant was the site of previous crimes reported to the hotline, but earlier inspections by the FPD had failed to reveal any violations. The leopard cats were subsequently transferred to the Soc Son Rescue Center.

Meanwhile, another Hanoi resident voluntarily turned over a loris to ENV in April. The loris was later transferred to the Endangered Primate Rescue Center at Cuc Phuong National Park. (WCU Ref. Case 615B, 1185)

After one year of attempting to deal with the high profile case involving three gibbons being kept at a restaurant in Dong Nai province, FPD confiscated and transferred the gibbons to facilities in Cat Tien National Park. The owner of the restaurant was issued a fine of 22,000,000 VND. The case was first reported to the Wildlife Crime Hotline in mid 2007 by a Ho Chi Minh resident. (WCU Ref. Case 565B)

Ha Tay FPD inspected a restaurant in Ba Vi National Park and instructed the owner to remove wine jars containing geckos and cobras following a report by a foreigner to the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline. (WCU Ref. Case 1126)



A success story in Dong Nai province where FPD confiscated three yellow-cheeked gibbons that were being kept at a restaurant



Members of the National Wildlife Volunteer Network in Da Nang complete survey forms after conducting a survey of restaurants and businesses in the city. Over one and a half days, 110 restaurants and hotels were inspected, of which wildlife crimes were recorded in 25

Vinh Phuc FPD confiscated and incinerated monitors and cobras taken from several wine jars from a local restaurant after an informant reported the crime to the hotline.

Also in Vinh Phuc province, a communal policeman voluntarily turned over a three-week old leopard cat to Tam Dao National Park. The leopard cat was subsequently transferred to the Small Carnivore conservation Program in Cuc Phuong National Park. (WCU Ref. Case 1135, 1209)

Thanks to a tip-off to the Wildlife Crime Hotline from a concerned citizen in Ninh Binh, the local FPD inspected a restaurant and confiscated several wine jars of geckos, while another restaurant agreed to remove snake wine following a warning issued by ENV. (WCU Ref. Case 1130, 1189)

## May 2008

In Hanoi, a popular restaurant voluntarily stopped displaying wine jars containing bear paws following continued monitoring by ENV and volunteers and subsequent discussions urging the restaurant owner to comply with the law. Similarly, a shop owner removed a bear bile sign and a website administrator removed an online bear bile advertisement following discussions with WCU staff. All of these cases were first reported to ENV by members of the public. (WCU Ref. Case 1137, 1251, 1106).

**“Every animal counts! Your decision may save a species from extinction.”**



The rangers from Pu Hu Nature Reserve of Thanh Hoa province confiscated a leopard cat from a local house after receiving information from an ENV monitoring officer that had visited the site. The animal was later released back into the forest. (WCU Ref. Case 1235)

Responding to initial reports from ENV monitors conducting surveys in Quang Ngai, an FPD mobile team inspected and confiscated over 70 kg of turtles, snakes, Indochinese water dragons and monitor lizards from three restaurants. The live animals were released and remains of the other animals were incinerated. The restaurant owners were issued fines totaling nearly 20,000,000 VND. (WCU Ref. Case 1267, 1273, 1276).

Thanks to a tip-off from a foreigner to the hotline, Ho Chi Minh FPD confiscated a live macaque from a resident's house of District 2. The macaque, which reportedly had been kept illegally for a long time, was subsequently transferred to Cu Chi rescue Center. (WCU Ref. Case 1234).

### June 2008

A monitor lizard was confiscated from a restaurant in Dien Bien City after volunteers from ENV's National Wildlife Volunteer Network inspected the restaurant and reported the crime to the FPD. (WCU Ref. Case 1290)



A leopard cat rescued by Forest Rangers from a hunter's home in Thanh Hoa province



ENV has witnessed a steady flow of lorises in the trade where they are commonly purchased as pets. Lorises are fully protected under Group 1B of Decree 32. Confiscated lorises can easily be placed at any number of rescue centers in the north and south.

The Hai Phong FPD confiscated two wine jars of bear paws from a restaurant thanks to a timely report to the Wildlife Crime Hotline by a concerned resident. The bear paws were then incinerated. (WCU Ref. Case 1282)

After receiving information from an ENV monitoring officer, the Quang Nam Mobile FPD inspected and confiscated 31 kg of wildlife including banded kraits, monitor lizards, an Asian giant soft-shell turtle, Indochinese box turtles, and pythons from a resident's house. All of the animals were released at the Song Thanh Nature Reserve. The subject is awaiting punishment. (WCU Ref. Case 1232)

The Can Tho Department of Agricultural and Rural Development, in cooperation with police, found two macaques being kept at a restaurant following a report by a resident to the hotline. The macaques are presently pending transfer to a rescue center. (WCU Ref. Case 1182)

Hanoi Environmental Police confiscated a leopard cat being kept illegally at a restaurant in Dong Da District following a report to the hotline from another foreign visitor. The leopard cat was later transferred to Soc Son Rescue Center. (WCU Ref. Case 1106, 1319)

Forest rangers confiscated a range of wildlife in wine including 14 bear paws, three king cobras, three pangolins, four monitor lizards, seven coucals and 185 kg of geckos from a restaurant in Bac Giang City. The violation was reported to ENV by a local resident via the hotline. (WCU Ref. Case 1228)

An ENV network volunteer discovered a restaurant in Ha Nam advertising bear bile. After subsequent monitoring and discussions, the restaurant owner agreed to voluntarily remove the sign and cease the illegal activity. (WCU Ref. Case 1238)

***"Make an example of criminals today to prevent crime tomorrow."***

## About the ENV Wildlife Crimes Monitoring Unit

Established in January of 2005, the ENV 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 disposal of the animals or animal parts, and the punishment administered to the perpetrator 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, 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

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*Wildlife Crimes - Vietnam* is produced quarterly by Education for Nature Vietnam in Vietnamese language and is distributed to Provincial People's Committees, functional agencies tasked with wildlife protection, and protected area managers and rangers in 64 provinces.

An English language version of the bulletin is also produced and distributed within the conservation community.

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### **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](mailto:Hotline@fpt.vn)



### **Stop Wildlife Crime**

If you see wildlife in restaurants or other business establishments, contact your local authorities or the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline

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

**You can make a difference!**