

May 2010

## Under the cover of conservation: breeding of tigers at private farms must end

Proponents of tiger farming will have you believe that they are saving tigers. With recent estimates of around 30 wild tigers remaining in Vietnam, it seems that we should focus on breeding tigers so that when hunters finally kill off the last of our wild tigers, we will still have some tigers left, if only in cages.

Because of this, some tiger farmers claim that they are protecting the future of Vietnam's tigers. But are they? What exactly are they breeding tigers for? For conservation? Or are they simply using "conservation" as a cover for a profitable business?

A twelve month investigation of tiger farming and trade by ENV and partner law enforcement agencies found that at least three of Vietnam's seven tiger farms appear to be involved in the illegal tiger trade. Some farmers failed to report births or falsely recorded births and deaths at their farms, reportedly in order to sell tigers out the back door of their farms.



ENV's investigation found that monitoring and controls of tiger farms were inconsistent and ineffective, and local authorities generally lack the capacity and will to discover and address illegal activities occurring at some farms.

Moreover, many tiger farmers utilize their influence and connections to avoid difficulties with the law, while selling the idea to the media and public that they are saving tigers.

"Any person breeding tigers is doing it for one reason only... to make money. Tigers are simply too expensive to keep and multiply for any other purpose." (Source: Tiger farmer in Vietnam)

If tigers are to be preserved in captivity, this mission is the responsibility of the State, not that of poorly supervised private farmers.

A successful conservation breeding program requires managers and scientists to evaluate genetic composition of their captive tigers and breed the tigers to preserve maximize long term genetic diversity. Behavioral aspects of wild tigers must also be preserved in captive populations that would allow offspring to eventually be returned to the wild. Conservation breeding should reflect a long-term plan that results in preservation of the species.

Today's breeding farms aim to maximize reproduction capabilities. Breeding at these farms should be prohibited and careful consideration given to allow breeding only at closely supervised state-run establishments, such as zoos with long-term strategic plans that will ensure preservation of the species.

## Tiger investigation highlights

Between March 2009 and March 2010, ENV and Vietnamese government partners carried out an initial investigation of the tiger trade in Vietnam.

Key findings in the tiger trade investigation include:

- Since 2006, ENV's Wildlife Crime Unit has documented 104 crimes involving tigers. Sixteen of these cases have involved seizures of a total of 29 tigers including frozen or unfrozen remains, or tiger bones. One incident involved two live tigers. None of the tigers seized are believed to have been sourced from the wild in Vietnam.
- Privately owned establishments are keeping a total of 84 tigers (2009) in captivity. All of the original (founding) tigers at these establishments were purchased or obtained illegally.
- Three of the seven tiger farms are suspected of involvement in illegal trade based on witness accounts, illegal activities linked to these farms, or records that indicate unreported and suspicious births and deaths at the farms.
- Vietnam is a major consumer of tigers smuggled into the country from Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, and possibly Malaysia.
- The Cau Treo Border gate in Ha Tinh province is the most important gateway for tiger smuggling into Vietnam.
- Several key figures in Vietnam have been identified that may control much of the illegal trade of tigers into Vietnam. These include several investors in a major tiger farm in Laos that appear to be one of the main source of tigers smuggled into Vietnam.
- Whole frozen tigers or tiger bones are used to make tiger bone glue. Consumers typically obtain tiger bone glue through personal contacts with brokers, witnessing the event to assure authenticity of the product, and less often purchasing products over the counter.
- Tiger Traditional Medicine (TM) products are intended for Vietnamese consumers, not exported.
- Punishment issued by the courts against tiger traders has been light and generally insufficient to deter illegal activities. Based on research by ENV, a total of 27 people have been arrested in relation to 16 tiger trade cases. However, only two people were sent to prison and two others were not charged at all. The remainder received suspended sentences or probation.
- Most arrests have involved middlemen or low level brokers involved in smuggling or trade. Local authorities appear unwilling to pursue major criminal figures that may control much of the illegal trade.



A frozen tiger confiscated in Hanoi by Environmental Police in 2008

*Photo: Tran Van Cuong, Hanoi EP*

## Euthanasia: An option for consideration in dealing with confiscated wildlife

One of the most difficult issues that wildlife protection authorities face is how to dispose of confiscated wildlife. If the animals are healthy and native to the area where the confiscation occurs, authorities often release them back into the wild. This may be the most obviously attractive approach, as it is believed that the released animals will then wander off and adapt to their new home, living out their lives in their new environment. It seems like the right thing to do. It fits well with the idea of preserving life and saving wildlife.

Sadly, there is little evidence to suggest that animals released into a strange environment after their ordeal in the trade survive. In fact, it is likely that many of the animals fall prey to others, deteriorate from stress or sickness and die, or are simply caught again before they can adapt to their environment. Some, at least, may survive, and assuming that release does not introduce disease into nature or result in other impacts on the local ecosystem, the desired psychological benefits are achieved. The animal, once captive, is free.

A second important option for wildlife protection authorities is to place animals at a rescue center or zoo. This option offers a more likely opportunity for the animal to survive (for at least some species), and also reduces the risks associated with releasing animals back into the wild.

Rescue centers, conservation programs and zoos offer other advantages, such as initiating conservation breeding programs for the most endangered species, education and research, and genetic preservation. Placement of the most endangered species is clearly the recommended option when release is not appropriate or practical.

Another common practice by wildlife protection authorities involves auctioning off confiscated wildlife and selling it to farmers and traders. This practice permits authorities to dispose of animals while contributing funds to the state budget. Proponents of this practice say that confiscated animals are often transferred to wildlife breeding farms, where they form the basis for future breeding operations and contribute to the livelihood of wildlife farmers.

A rival interpretation suggests that authorities have no idea where the wildlife they sell goes, and that most animals they sell simply go on to consumer markets. Moreover, experts conclude that the practice of local authorities selling off confiscated wildlife has the effect of perpetuating the illegal trade by “laundering” illegal wildlife through the state and selling it back into the trade. In such cases, authorities who should be perceived by the public as the protectors of wildlife are seen as playing the role as middlemen in the wildlife trade.

***“Ultimately, the mission of the Forest Protection Department is to protect the forest and wildlife, not to generate incomes for the State.”***

Some conscientious Forest Protection Department staff have voiced concerns over this practice, recognizing how selling wildlife is inherently in conflict with their responsibilities as rangers.

Despite this recognition, the problem remains what to do with large quantities of snakes, monitors, and other wildlife that are confiscated since it is probably not suitable to release large quantities of these animals into the wild. Local zoos and rescue centers do not have the room to accommodate such numbers.

Euthanasia is another option that should be considered in dealing with confiscated wildlife that cannot be placed or released back into nature. Some people may consider it cruel to euthanize a healthy animal for no reason other than to dispose of it and prevent it from continuing into the trade. A more common response is that destroying an animal is like “throwing away money.”

ENV stands behind the idea that euthanasia should be considered as an “option” and weighed against other alternatives in deciding the fate of animals confiscated in trade. Euthanizing a shipment of pangolins



confiscated by authorities may appear cruel, but in fact, humanely spares the pangolins from being sold back into the trade, only later to be slaughtered or die in captivity. By disposing of the pangolins in a humane way, the pangolins' suffering ends quickly, and the cycle of trade is broken when the animal is not returned to the market, helping reduce wildlife trade and the likelihood that other pangolins will end up in the trade.

Destroying a shipment of pangolins without question denies the state revenues from the sale, but the state has other means to generate revenue from enforcement.

The questions remains, what to do with confiscated wildlife when release is not an option and rescue centers and zoos cannot take surplus animals

Photo: HCM EP

Administrative and criminal fines issued to subjects can be substantial and confiscation of the “tools” of trade, including vehicles and transport, as allowed under the law, can all contribute to the state coffers.

If we are to preserve our wildlife through this period of rapid economic growth, then we need to end the unintended involvement of Forest Protection Departments in the wildlife trade business. While auctioning off wildlife may be permitted under the law, it is an irresponsible act to permit those that we entrust in wildlife protection to both protect and sell wildlife. This practice constitutes a clear conflict of interest and must end if we are to meet our obligations to the state and the people.



Forest Rangers in Quang Nam province prepare to release snakes and other wildlife confiscated in the province

*Photo: Quang Nam FPD*

## Prioritizing options for dealing with confiscated animals

(1) Under certain conditions and where appropriate, release is a first option. Animals must be healthy in order not to introduce disease, the habitat must be appropriate, the animal should be native to the area, and the impacts that the release might have on the ecosystem should be considered (releasing predatory snakes into a habitat could impact wild bird populations, for example).

(2) Confiscated animals should be placed in rescue centers, zoos, and conservation programs where there are NO commercial links to these operations. Placement is particularly important when dealing with endangered species, including not just those protected under Decree 32, but also species listed in the Vietnam Red Book and IUCN listing of globally threatened species. DO NO SELL endangered species. It is irresponsible under any circumstances to do so and in conflict with the roles and responsibilities of the Forest Protection Department.

(3) Euthanasia should be considered as an option for dealing with confiscated animals that cannot be released back into nature or placed at rescue centers, zoos, and conservation centers.

The idea of euthanasia may seem wasteful and counter-culture, but it is an important and humane tool that should be used under appropriate circumstances to deal with animals that would otherwise end up back in the trade.

If you need help dealing with a shipment of wildlife, we will do our best to assist you. Here is what we can do:

- Help with identification
- Help you find permanent placement for animals that you have confiscated
- Connect you to experts with scientific knowledge of the species that you have confiscated
- Publicize your successes
- Provide other advice on dealing with a specific shipment of wildlife

Call our hotline for assistance: 1-800-1522

## Police captain nails bear tourism kingpin

Police have been watching a bear farm for several months. The owner, Mr. Viet, keeps 35 bears at the farm where he is running a bear bile operation for tourists. Most of his clients are Koreans, brought in busloads each day to witness a bear bile extraction and sample bear bile in wine before buying large quantities of his bear bile to take back to Korea. Mr. Viet is in partnership with a Korean named Mr. Kim, who ensures that a steady flow of tourists come to his farm. Another Korean, Mr. Yeong, is employed by the farm to handle the tour groups.



It is a sunny day and a quite hot. The security guard at the gate stands in the shade of a small building. Another large group of tourists have just entered the farm. Environmental Police Captain Son, sitting in a café within sight of the farm's entrance, speaks into his cell phone, giving the signal to fellow officers just up the road.

He gets up and quickly walks across the street to the entrance of the farm and identifies himself to the security guard and orders him to open the gate. The security guard reluctantly agrees, knowing that it is probably his last day of work at the farm. Just as the gate opens, a convoy of unmarked police vehicles arrive and speed through the gate, screeching to a halt in front of the farm entrance.

Several farm employees try to delay the arrival of the police by confronting Son's men, but they are quickly detained and handcuffed.

Son's men enter the facility and find a bear sprawled out on a table in front of a room full of startled Korean tourists. The bear farm manager and Mr. Yeong are immediately arrested, along with the bear farm's veterinarian and two other staff. More than 250 vials of bear bile are seized as evidence, along with equipment associated with the extraction of bear bile.

A police interpreter helps take statements from the Korean tourists who were present in the room and Captain Son advises them that purchasing bear bile in Vietnam is a violation of the law. A decision has already been made not to arrest any of the tourists, as the targets of the raid were Mr. Viet and others associated with running the illegal operation.

Mr. Viet privately warns Captain Son that his "important friends" would help him deal with this issue. Captain Son is not impressed with Viet's suggestion that he will escape the law with help from his friends, and when Viet specifically offers a sum of money to Son to help deal with the situation, Son adds attempted bribery to the charges already pending against Viet.

Viet's efforts over the coming weeks to have his influential friends help him fail to change the situation. His friends tell Viet that he has been violating the law, and that their responsibility

to the state prevents them from interfering with the case in any way. Viet is on his own.

Several of Mr. Viet's staff are helpful and provide testimony about Viet's farm operation hoping for leniency from the courts when sentencing is handed down. Viet is convicted of selling products made from critically endangered species and the lesser charge of conspiring to bribe a police officer. He is sentenced to four years in prison in accordance with the new criminal code allowing for stronger punishment for violations of the law involving protected species. Several of Viet's employees are issued fines and probationary sentences. Mr. Young's business visa is revoked and he is sent home to Korea.

Viet's farm is closed and his assets, including several vehicles, equipment, and two properties that were purchased with the proceeds acquired through selling bear bile to tourists were seized by the state and auctioned off, resulting in more than 2.5 billion VND in proceeds deposited into the state coffers.

All 25 of Viet's bears are transferred to the custody of the state, and placed at the Tam Dao Bear Rescue Center.

Over the coming weeks, Son and his team of investigators piece together information from tour group operators and careful examination of financial records and books maintained at the farm reveal the role of Mr. Kim, Viet's Korean partner. A warrant is issued for Kim's arrest, but soon it is determined that he is no longer in Vietnam. Captain Son discusses the issue with his Interpol counterparts in the Ministry of Public Security, and the information is transferred to Korean authorities. One month later, Kim is arrested while having dinner at a restaurant in Seoul and faces charges in relation to his role in the bear farm enterprise.

Bear farmers and other criminals running similar enterprises in Vietnam quickly learn of what happened to Mr. Viet and a number of them close their operations rather than risk prison time and seizure of their assets. Korean tour group operators, facing closure of their business and potential prosecution if further incidents occur, immediately stop bringing tourists to bear farms. Bear bile tourism ends, and Vietnam's reputation is saved.

Captain Son is issued a citation by the provincial People's Committee for his outstanding efforts in investigating and exposing the illegal bear farming operation in the province.

Viet's influential friends have made it clear to others that their friendship and influence will not be misused to undermine the law in

## News

### China: Getting tough on crime

The leader of a criminal gang that was caught in November 2008 attempting to smuggle nearly three tons of pangolins and scales along with thousands of other animals including snakes and civets aboard a fishing boat into Guangdong province, was recently sentenced by the Middle People's Court of Shanwei to life in prison and seizure of all of his property.

### China: Legal protection

A Chinese court has sentenced a man from Yunnan to 12 years in prison for killing a tiger that he shot in February 2009. The man claimed he did not know that the animal was a tiger when he shot it. The court also issued a fine of 100,000 yuan (277,787,000 VND) for the killing, and reportedly an additional 480,000 yuan (1,333,380,000 VND) for state economic losses. (Source: Xinhua News Agency, December 2009)

Tigers were listed in category I of China's National Key Protected Animals in 1988. Any hunting and catching of tigers has been strictly forbidden and all poaching of and illegal trade in tigers should be handled as criminal case. The maximum penalties applied for the smuggling of tigers or their parts and derivatives is life imprisonment or death, concurrently with a confiscation of his/her property.

### Report corruption

If you are aware of authorities accepting money or gifts from individuals involved in wildlife trade or wildlife farming, report the incident to the National Anti-corruption Bureau at [08048228](tel:08048228)

Vietnam and the responsibility of government to serve the interests of the people and the state.

On account of Captain Son's efforts coupled with the harsh penalties issued by the courts, the number of bears being smuggled onto farms in Vietnam decreases over the following year. Likewise, the number of farms keeping bears decreases.

Law enforcement agencies and Forest Protect Departments begin strictly enforcing laws that were developed to protect critically endangered wildlife. The laws begin to work, and the number of people violating the law decrease dramatically. Populations of some of the most critically endangered species begin to recover once they are protected and left alone.

Then Corporal Son wakes up.

Corporal Son's story is fictitious. However, his dream illustrates what could be done in Vietnam to protect our most critically endangered species. Enforcement of existing laws, backed by strict punishment by the courts and the political will and leadership of government, can bring an end to the most serious forms of wildlife crime not filling jails, but deterring others from involvement, reducing crime to the benefit of society and allowing our wildlife to recover.

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## Urgent notice to law enforcement agencies

### Trade of rhino horn

ENV has documented 14 cases involving smuggling of rhino horns in Vietnam over the past four years. Six of these cases involved Vietnamese nationals caught bringing rhino horns from Africa into Vietnam via air. Three other cases involved Vietnamese nationals in crimes that occurred in South Africa. Two more cases saw seizures where the rhino horns were reportedly brought into Vietnam through Laos. Three more cases involved trade operations here in Vietnam where rhino horns were confiscated, but no information was available relating to the source of the rhino products.

In most cases, the rhino horns were positively identified as belonging to the Southern White Rhinoceros (*Cerotherium simum*), a species native to the southern part of Africa.

Three of the past incidents involved Vietnamese nationals coming into Vietnam on Cathay Pacific flights from Hong Kong, while two more incidents involved passengers on Singapore Airline flights arriving in Ho Chi Minh City from Singapore. However, in at least four of the six airport seizure cases, the passengers were travelling from an African country.

### Recommendation

Immigration authorities should screen Vietnamese passengers on flights originating from African countries. Random searches should potentially be extended to passengers from other nationalities entering Vietnam from these countries.

If a suspicious object or substance is found and assumed to be rhino horn, the evidence can be easily tested by the Institute for Ecological and Biological Research (IEBR) to determine if it is indeed rhino horn. Customs agents are advised to follow standard procedures in relation to seizure and detention of evidence and subjects in such cases.

### Additional information

#### Rhinos

There are five species of rhinos remaining globally. The white rhino and the black rhino are found in Africa. Three species are native to Asia, including the Indian rhino (northeastern India and Nepal), the Sumatran rhino (Sumatra, Borneo, and Malaysia), and the Javan rhino, found only on the Indonesian island of Java and at Cat Tien National Park here in Vietnam.



Horns poached from rhinos in Africa are finding their way to markets in Vietnam and China.

*Photo: Bush Warriors, World Press.com*

### Protection status

The Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) prohibits the trade of rhinos and products derived from rhinos such as horns or medicinal products across international borders without a CITES permit. All rhinos are listed under Appendix I of CITES requiring permits from both the country of origin and the country where the products are entering, except the South African and Swaziland populations of the Southern White Rhino which are listed in Appendix II.

### Conservation status

The Javan, Sumatran, and black rhinos are critically endangered. The Indian rhino is listed as endangered, and the white rhino, vulnerable.

### CITES

CITES is the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species, an international treaty for which Vietnam became a signatory in 1994. CITES regulates the trade of endangered species across international borders by requiring permits from CITES offices in host countries for trade of animals listed on one of two appendices. Appendix 1 includes species for which a permit is required from both the country where the transaction originated AND the country where the animals are received. Species listed in Appendix II require a permit from the CITES office in the country of origin, only.

CITES: <http://thiennhien.org/index.php?page=listDocumentView&id=123>

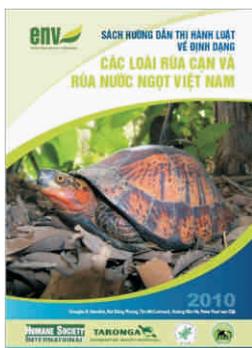
## Announcements

### Resources to support awareness-raising activities available

Notice to Forest Protection Departments, Environmental Police, and other law enforcement agencies. If your department is conducting public awareness activities in relation to wildlife protection or environmental protection, we may have educational resources available that can help you. ENV has limited materials available including posters, wildlife games for children, copies of the Green Forest nature magazine, as well as other educational resources that we can provide your department. If your department is conducting awareness-raising activities, please contact us. View some of our resources:

[http://thiennhien.org/index.php?page=list\\_document&catid=191](http://thiennhien.org/index.php?page=list_document&catid=191)

Get ENV resource support! Contact Ms. Tran Thuy Duong **35148850**.



### Turtle ID guide for law enforcement

A new tortoise and freshwater turtle identification guide is available to download from our website. This guide was produced to assist law enforcement agencies in identification of turtles confiscated in the illegal trade. It includes illustrations and photos of all 25 native tortoise and freshwater turtle species and comparison pages, allowing frontline rangers and police to compare similar species from photos and descriptions. Download a copy. If you have any trouble downloading the file (it is large), contact us and we will send you a copy of the ID book and a training film on the turtle crisis in Vietnam on disc (only a limited number of copies on disc are available).

<http://thiennhien.org/index.php?page=listDocumentView&id=140>.

### Other resources available online

**Tiger investigation:** A summary of a 12-month investigation by law enforcement agencies and ENV of tiger farming and trade in Vietnam: <http://thiennhien.org/index.php?page=listDocumentView&id=148>

**Public Service Announcement:** A new public service announcement urging consumers to seek alternatives rather than use bear bile: <http://thiennhien.org/index.php?page=documentView&parent=172&id=142>

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If you have internet access and wish to be kept up to date on news relating to nature and the environment, subscribe to the FREE ENV weekly Nature and Environment News Bulletin for a recap on the top stories appearing in more than 25 major newspapers and publications and links to the full articles.

ENV has produced the weekly news bulletin for the past seven years and has more than 800 weekly electronic subscribers. Email us at [env@fpt.vn](mailto:env@fpt.vn) if you wish to subscribe to the bulletin.

# Crime log

## Major crimes unit

### Ivory seizures in Hai Phong

There have been four ivory seizures in Hai Phong by Customs agents since late April. These include:

On May 28, 2010, Customs discovered 1.2 tons of ivory hidden amongst a shipment of seaweed that arrived on a ship from Africa in Hai Phong port on May 6, 2010 (Case reference 2524/ENV).

On May 25, 2010, after receiving tip-off from an informant, Customs checked a container offloaded from a ship arriving from Africa and discovered more than a ton of ivory hidden under snail shells. (Case reference 2520/ENV).

On May 14, 2010, Customs checked a container and discovered over a half of ton of ivory hidden under seaweed. The container arrived on a ship that reportedly originated in Malaysia on May 12, 2010 (Case reference 2503/ENV).

On April 29, 2010, Customs inspected two containers arriving on a ship from the port of Mombassa in Kenya and discovered 400 bags containing more about two tons of ivory. Customs were alerted to the shipment by a suspicious phone call to Customs from the Thanh Long Ex-Import company in Quang Ninh province asking them to expedite the clearance procedures. The company planned to re-export the cargo, labeled as seaweed, to China (Case reference 2480/ENV).

### Bear Cub Season bring new bears to Vietnam

Over the past few months, there were four cases involving bear cubs in trade. Each year following the spring breeding season, bear cubs are smuggled into Vietnam, mainly from Laos. According to experts, the cubs are captured after the mother bear has been killed. In most cases, the bears appear destined for bear farms in Nghe An, former Ha Tay (Hanoi), and possibly Quang Ninh, where they kept for the remainder of their lives and exploited for bear bile. Recent cases include:

On the evening of May 19, 2010, Dien Bien police inspected a taxi in Muong Cha district of Dien Bien province and confiscated two bear cubs and a monitor lizard. The cubs weighed a total of 3kg and are pending transfer to a rescue center. ENV investigators suspect that the cubs originated from Laos (Case reference 2508/ENV).

In early of May 2010, a local resident in Sin Ho district of Lai Chau province voluntarily transferred two bear



Bear cubs at a bear farm in Laos, were most likely later smuggled into Vietnam where they will end up at bear farms.

*Photo: National EP*

cubs weighing about 5 kg in total to the Sin Ho district FPD. According to the resident, the bear cubs were found in weak condition in forest several days before so he brought them to his home to take care of them. On May 10, 2010, the cubs were transferred to Soc Son Rescue Center (Case reference 2481).

On April 20, 2010, Duc Tho district police in Ha Tinh confiscated three bear cubs weighing 17.5 kg in total that were being reportedly smuggled into Vietnam from Laos. Police discovered the bears after two subjects were kicked off a bus when the bears, hidden in a bag, began to cry. The suspects were from two districts in Nghe An province that are considered major centers for illegal wildlife smuggling and trade. The cubs were later transferred to Soc Son Rescue Center on April 24 (Case Reference 2445/ENV).

On April 14, 2010, Nghe An provincial EP and Customs checked a car with a Laos registration number and discovered a shipment of wildlife including two bear cubs weighing 3kg each, 25 pairs of frozen bear paws, and 130 kg of turtles. The shipment, which reportedly originated in Laos, was destined for Dien Chau district in Nghe An, a suspected center of illegal activity involving smuggling of wildlife. The bear cubs were transferred to Soc Son Rescue Center on April 24, and the bear paws were reportedly incinerated (Case reference 2426/ENV).

### Cat Loc rhino dead

On April 29, 2010, forest rangers on patrol discovered the remains of a Javan rhino in Cat Loc forest where Vietnam's last rhinos were known to survive in nature. Although only bones remained, suggesting

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

that the rhino had died some months before, the horn had been cut from the skull and WWF researchers found a bullet lodged in one of the rhino's legs. WWF has since concluded that they believe that the rhino was poached for its horn.

Official estimates suggest that there are between 3-5

rhinos surviving in the wild at Cat Tien National Park, but experts privately express concern that the rhino found April 29 may be the very last of its kind. DNA tests on dung samples collected over the past months should help scientists determine how many rhinos, if any remain at Cat Tien (Case reference 2486/ENV).

## Cases of interest

### Lai Chau

#### Golden cat confiscated in Lai Chau

On Jan 12, 2010, a dead Asian golden cat and a live wild pig weighing about 20 kg were confiscated in Sin Ho district of Lai Chau province as they were being transported by car, possibly to the Chinese border. The remains of the animals were reportedly incinerated and three suspects arrested in connection with the case face administrative fines (Case reference 2276/ENV).



Dried remains of black-shanked douc langurs from a 2009 seizure. Langurs are used to make a form of traditional medicine from their bones.

*Photo: ENV*

#### Lai Chau macaques take train to Hanoi rescue center

On January 8, 2010, six macaques that were confiscated by Lai Chau FPD in December following a tip from the public were transferred by ENV by train to Hanoi and placed at Soc Son Rescue Center (Case reference 2168/ENV).

### Bac Kan

#### More douc langur seizures suggest high demand for langurs in medicine trade

On January 19-20, Bac Kan Market Management authorities in cooperation with Bac Can police

seized a total of 15 douc langur skeletons from two buses that were heading for Cao Bang province. The skeletons reportedly originated in Dak Lak province and were to be used to make traditional medicine. In July 2009, a total of 54 dried black-shanked douc langurs were discovered being transported by motorbike, also to Cao Bang province (Case reference 2253 and 2254/ENV).

### Quang Ninh

#### Pangolins seized in Quang Ninh

On Feb 8, 2010, The Ben Binh Traffic Police pursued and stopped a truck driven by a man from Quang Ninh province and confiscated 58 pangolins (220.5 kg). Ten pangolins were later transferred to the Carnivore and Pangolin Conservation Project at Cuc Phuong National Park (Case reference 2306/ENV).

#### Ivory heading for China border crossing

On March 20, 2010, 150 kg of ivory was confiscated by Quang Ninh Traffic Police from a vehicle heading for the Chinese border crossing at Mong Cai. At least one of the suspects was from Yen Thanh district of Nghe An province, a known hotspot for illegal wildlife originating from Laos (Case reference 2365/ENV).

#### Quang Ninh police nab three bears being smuggled to China

During the evening of April 3, 2010, three Asia black bears were confiscated by the Cam Pha police as they were being transported by car north on Highway 18 to the Chinese border crossing at Mong Cai. The bears reportedly originated in Phuc Tho district of former Ha Tay (Hanoi) province and from Dai Yen commune of Ha Long City, the location of at least two major illegal bear bile tourism operations (Cases 1121, 1122). On April 20, 2010, the bears were transferred to Soc Son Rescue Center (Case reference 2413/ENV).

On January 10, 2010, Quang Ninh Traffic Police confiscated a shipment of wildlife including six lorises being transported on a motorbike. The suspect was prosecuted and reportedly released on probation. The lorises were transferred to the Soc Son Rescue Center shortly after the seizure (Case reference 2213/ENV).

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

## Hai Phong

### Pangolin scales discovered in container

On May 12, 2010, customs agents working in cooperation with Hai Phong Environmental Police discovered a shipment of pangolin scales in a container hidden under seaweed. The container was off-loaded from a ship that arrived in Hai Phong port on May 6 from Indonesia (Case reference 2496/ENV).

## Ha Noi

### Golden cat seizure in Hanoi marks first of its kind

On May 21, 2010, Hanoi EP confiscated six Asian golden cats that were hidden in a taxi parked in Dong Da district. Three suspects from Son La province were arrested, claiming that they had caught the golden cats in the forest along the Lao-Vietnam border and planned to sell them in Hanoi to make bone glue. ENV notes that it is likely that these cats were smuggled into Vietnam from Laos and were intended for delivery to a middleman in Dong Da district in Hanoi. It was the first major seizure of golden cats documented by the ENV Wildlife Crime Unit since 2005 (Case reference 2509/ENV).

### Civet seizure leads Hanoi authorities to source

On January 28, 2010, Hanoi Environmental Police and rangers from the Forest Protection Branch inspected a residence and discovered a large number of civets and brush-tailed porcupines, along with a few pangolins and a Malayan porcupine at a home in Hanoi. The inspection followed the seizure of two civets being transported by motorbike, which led authorities back to the source. All of the live animals were transferred to the Soc Son Rescue Center while the remaining dead animals were reportedly incinerated (Case reference 2280/ENV).

### Pagoda lorises seized by police

Environmental Police in Hanoi confiscated three lorises that were observed on display at a popular pagoda in the city. The lorises were subsequently transferred to the Soc Son Rescue Center (Case reference 2405/ENV).

### Cobras and snakes nabbed in trade by Hanoi police

On May 5, Thanh Xuan District Police and Hanoi Environmental Police arrested a man transporting 17 Chinese cobras (*Naja atra*), including one king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*). On May 11, a second seizure by police involved 28 kg of Chinese cobras (*Naja atra*) in Gia Lam District (Case reference 2479 and 2490/ENV).

### Uncommon barn owl seizure in Hanoi

On January 19, Environmental Police seized 14 common barn owls (*Tyto alba*) as they were being transported to a buyer in Hanoi. The owls were



Seven golden cats seized in Hanoi by Environmental Police in May were likely to be used to make traditional medicine from the animal's bones.

Photo: ENV

transferred to the Soc Son Rescue Center and the trader was fined 5,250,000 VND (Case reference 2252/ENV).

## Thanh Hoa

### Two tons of wildlife seized in Thanh Hoa

On January 25, 2010, Thanh Hoa Forest Protection Department confiscated more than two tons of snakes, monitor lizards, and turtles from a vehicle heading north on Highway 1 toward the Chinese border. The shipment included 257 kg of cobras (*Naja atra*), 48 kg of common rat snakes (*Ptyas mucosus*), 17 kg of radiated rat snakes (*Elaphe radiata*), 774 kg of Indochinese rat snakes (*Ptyas korros*), 340 kg of water monitors (*Varanus salvator*) and 742 kg of Asian leaf turtles (*Cyclemys tchaponensis*). The shipment reportedly originated in Khanh Hoa province, but ENV notes that the origin of the animals was likely from Cambodia. The subject was subsequently fined 500 million VND (Case reference 2313/ENV).

### More wildlife seized in Thanh Hoa

On January 24, 2010, Thanh Hoa FPD confiscated 167 kg of wildlife including monitors, wild pig, and civets. The shipment reportedly originated in Quang Binh province and was destined for Hanoi. One subject was arrested in connection with the case, and subsequently fined 40 million VND (Case reference 2314/ENV).

## Nghe An

### More bear paws in trade

On May 25, 2010 the police stopped a bus with a Lao registration number and discovered 30 bear paws and eight Malayan snail-eating turtles hidden in bags aboard the bus. The driver claimed that two

**“Smuggling drugs, human trafficking, and trade of wildlife are all serious CRIMES.”**

passengers picked up in Laos had abandoned the bear paws and left the bus before the police inspection. The bus reportedly originated in Vientiane and crossed into Vietnam through the Cau Treo border gate, and was destined for Dien Chau district in Nghe An. Based on a search of the registration number of the ENV Wildlife Crime database, it was determined that the same registration number was involved in another smuggling case in recent months. Local authorities were advised (Case reference 2521/ENV).

## Quang Binh

### Police encourage violators keeping macaques to obey law

In March 2010, Quang Binh Environmental Police encouraged four different residences to voluntarily turn over a total of eight macaques that were being kept as pets by different households. The macaques were transferred to the Phong Nha Ke Bang Rescue Center (Case reference 2415-2418).

## Quang Nam

### Quang Nam FPD confiscates endangered langur from resident

On February 19, 2010, after receiving a tip from local residents, the Quang Nam FPD immediately inspected and rescued a male grey-shanked douc langur (*Pygathrix nemaeus cinerea*) weighing about 6 kg from a local resident's house in Nui Thanh district. The resident declared that he had caught the langur in a forest in February 2010. The langur was subsequently transferred to the Cuc Phuong Endangered Primate Rescue Center (Case reference 2311/ENV).

## Quang Ngai

### Grey shanked douc transferred to Saigon Zoo

On May 11, 2010, a grey-shanked douc langur (*Pygathrix nemaeus cinerea*) was received by Quang Ngai provincial FPD after they had discovered the langur being kept as a pet at a private household in Chi Linh district. The langur, which is a critically endangered species and endemic to Vietnam, was subsequently transferred to Saigon Zoo (Case reference 2492/ENV).

## Phu Yen

### Shipment of macaques discovered after police chase

On January 2, 2010, Phu Yen police confiscated 96 macaques from a vehicle following a chase through the province that ended with the driver abandoning the vehicle and escaping. The driver was later caught by police and fined 100 million VND for transporting wildlife. The owner of the

macaques was not identified. Eighty-nine surviving macaques were later transferred to Soc Son Rescue Center in Hanoi (Case reference 2204/ENV).

## Quang Tri

### Tiger, panther, and a ton of bones seized at border

On March 7, 2010, border guards confiscated a frozen tiger, a black leopard, and more than a ton of animal bones and horns from a vehicle at the Lao Boa border checkpoint in Quang Tri province. The driver of the vehicle reported that he intended to deliver the shipment to an unidentified man in Quang Binh province, however, the driver is a resident of Yen Thanh district in Nghe An, one of two districts in Nghe An known for being the center of illegal smuggling and wildlife trade activities in northern Vietnam (Case reference 2331/ENV).



The remains of a tiger and black leopard seized in March 2010 by border army inspectors in Quang Tri province.

Photo: Quang Tri FPD

## Long An

### Long An: Cafe involved in wildlife crime

On March 30, 2010, Long An Environmental Police arrested two people suspected of trading wildlife involving a cafe in Duc Hoa district. Police discovered 54 kg of king cobras and 82 kg of pangolins at the cafe where they had been delivered by motorbike. The live pangolins were transferred to the Cu Chi Rescue Center (Case reference 2397/ENV).

## Tay Ninh

### Gibbons seized from cafe in Tay Ninh

During the morning of May 12, 2010, Tay Ninh FPD in cooperation with Tay Ninh Environmental Police confiscated two gibbons and a peafowl from a cafe in

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

Tay Ninh town. The gibbons were transferred to Lo Go Xa Mat National Park (Case reference 2494/ENV).

## Ho Chi Minh

### **Pangolins seized at airport bound for Hanoi**

On March 20, 2010, Ho Chi Minh Environmental Police in cooperation with the Southern Aviation Security confiscated 33 pangolins with a total weight of 158 kg at Tan Son Nhat Airport in Ho Chi Minh City. The pangolins were hidden amongst a shipment of soft-shell turtles that were bound for Hanoi. The pangolins were later transferred to the Cu Chi Rescue Center, and 14 healthy animals were subsequently released into U Minh Thuong National Park in Kien Giang (Case reference 2364/ENV).



One of many live pangolins confiscated by HCM Environmental Police shortly before it was to be shipped by air to Hanoi, and most likely onward from there to the Chinese border.

*Photo: HCM EP*

## Public participation yields results

Many thanks to the hundreds of active volunteers, members of the public, and foreign visitors that have taken the time to report wildlife crimes. Not every case is successful, but our collective efforts are essential in winning the war against illegal wildlife trade and protecting the future of our countries' wildlife.

Here are a few examples from around the country of cases where participation of the public has made a difference:

### **Resident gives up temple turtles**

A resident in Binh Duong province who was keeping 14 yellow-headed temple turtles contacted the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline to request assistance in transferring the turtles to a rescue center. ENV worked with Ho Chi Minh FPD to coordinate the transfer and on January 14, all of the turtles were received by the Cu Chi Rescue Center (Case reference 2216/ENV).

### **Marine turtle rescued and released but other turtles may be victims of local influence**

On January 15, 2010, staff of a conservation project working in the Da Nang area reported to the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline about a marine turtle and approximately 30 freshwater turtles being kept at the home of a government official from the Environment Department of the city. Da Nang FPD inspected the site and confiscated the marine turtle, and together with the Fisheries Department, released it back into the ocean. The presence of the remaining freshwater turtles, including one species specifically protected under the law, remains unresolved. (Case reference 2219/ENV).

### **Gibbons at kindergarten transferred to Cat Tien primate rescue center**

In August 2009, a six-year-old girl notified ENV that her kindergarten was keeping three gibbons

and some macaques as pets in Ba Ria-Vung Tau province. Initial efforts to deal with the case faced obstacles because the kindergarten was a Catholic establishment which required sensitivity in dealing with the case. After nearly five months of discussions and with the assistance of Cat Tien National Park, who ENV had hoped would take the gibbons, all three gibbons were voluntarily transferred to the park on January 30, 2010 (Case reference 1943/ENV).

### **Macaque transferred to nature reserve**

On February 9, 2010, a resident in Dong Nai province contacted the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline to report that she had been keeping a pig-tailed macaque at her house for several years and wished to turn the animal over to authorities in compliance with the law. The macaque was subsequently transferred on March 29, 2010 to the Vinh Cuu Nature Reserve in Dong Nai in good health (Case reference 2299/ENV).

### **Ninh Binh rangers seize stuffed tigers from hotel**

On March 22, 2010, two stuffed tigers were confiscated by Ninh Binh FPD from a resort in Van Long where they were on display in the main lobby of the hotel. The case was first reported to the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline by a foreign visitor (Case reference 2343/ENV).



One of two otters confiscated from a Ho Chi Minh resident after he tried to sell them on the internet.

*Photo: Case 2218 informant*

### **Two otters seized after being offered for sale on internet**

On January 19, 2010, Environmental Police in Ho Chi Minh City confiscated two oriental small-clawed otters from a home after the owner offered them for sale on the internet. The ENV Wildlife Crime Unit was first alerted by a wildlife volunteer about the advertisement, and working with Environmental Police arranged for a visit to the home of the suspect to see the otters. Both otters were transferred to Cu Chi Rescue Center (Case reference 2218/ENV).

### **Macaque finally confiscated after nine-month wait**

On April 13, 2010, a pig-tailed macaque was confiscated from a local resident's house by Ho Chi Minh FPD nearly nine months after it was first reported to ENV by a wildlife volunteer. HCM authorities confiscated one of the two macaques reported to ENV in August 2009. The second macaque had reportedly died. The owner stated that he had been unaware that keeping macaques was in violation of the law. The surviving macaque was transferred to the Cu Chi Rescue Center in HCM (Case reference 1956/ENV).

### **Pythons seized thanks to efforts of wildlife volunteer and quick response of Dong Nai FPD**

On April 28, 2010, a volunteer in Dong Nai reported to the Wildlife Crime Hotline that a local vendor was selling two pythons at the Nho market in Long Khanh town. Xuan Loc district FPD immediately inspected the market and confiscated two Burmese pythons (*Python molurus*) weighing 5.9 kg in total. The pythons were subsequently released at Chua Chan Mountain on May 9, 2010 (Case reference 2470/ENV).

### **Many businesses comply with wildlife protection laws after discussions**

Over the past five months, dozens of restaurants, shops, and businesses voluntarily complied with wildlife protection regulations following discussions with ENV staff. Signboards advertising bear bile, menus, and website advertisements were removed, with subsequent monitoring inspections by ENV monitors, informants, and volunteers confirming compliance. Many of these cases were first reported to ENV through the Wildlife Crime Hotline (Case clearance reference, May 15, 2010: 1870, 1052, 1062, 1464, 1607, 1633, 1992, 1994, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2160, 800, 2296, 2113, 452, 535, 704, 725, 1062, 1975, 1921, 1835, 1636, 826, 1875, 1058, 1007, 771, 591, 621, 704, 725, 771, 800, 869, 1174, 1748, 2229, 2318, 1000, 2289, 2414, 2472, 2289, 1906).

### **Red-shanked douc langur turned over to police in Hanoi**

On Jan 30, 2010 a wildlife volunteer reported to the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline about a red-shanked douc langur being kept at a resident's home in Hanoi. After initial efforts to deal with the case indicated that there were political implications in relation to the case, Hanoi Environmental Police discussed the issue with the owner and convinced him to "voluntarily" give up the langur. The langur was later transferred to the Soc Son Rescue Center (Case reference 2286/ENV).



A red-shanked douc langur that was turned over to authorities in Hanoi after being reported to ENV by a member of ENV's National Wildlife Volunteer Network.

*Photo: ENV*

## In the corner

In November 2009, a foreign visitor reported about a green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and a Vietnamese pond turtle (*Mauremys annamensis*) observed in a café in unnamed city. What might have been a simple case involving notification of local authorities triggering in an effective and appropriate response resulting in the confiscation of two protected turtles, instead, turned into a two month ordeal highlighting the ineffectiveness of local authorities in dealing with basic violations of wildlife protection law.

The case was first reported to provincial FPD on November 18, 2009, however it was not until January 22, 2010 when local authorities took action and confiscated one of the protected turtles (the other was no longer there). Moreover, the ENV case officer responsible for dealing with the crime had to make 26 calls to local authorities over this time period before action was finally taken.

More disturbing was the loss of opportunity to confiscate the marine turtle and questionable ethics in the local FPD's dealing with the case. Specifically, on December 7, the mobile team of the local FPD reported that they had inspected the restaurant and did not find a marine turtle. Three days later, ENV sent in a trusted monitoring officer who confirmed that the marine turtle was still present.

By January when authorities finally decided to act on the case, the marine turtle was gone, reportedly taken home by the owner to avoid confiscation. The Vietnamese pond turtle was then allegedly confiscated and released by authorities.

ENV remains disappointed by the lack of responsiveness and willingness to take action of authorities tasked with wildlife protection in the province in question. ENV further suggests that the authorities responsible for this failure should be held accountable for their failures in order to encourage others tasked with wildlife protection to perform their duties to the best degree possible in the future (Case reference 2021/ENV).

## Crime Statistics

The ENV Wildlife Crimes Unit has logged a total of 2,525 cases between January 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 to May 31, 2010. Classification of cases for the current period include as follows:

Period	Trade operations	Smuggling	Selling	Advertising	Possession	Other	Total *
January 2010	4	11	50	2	10	1	78
February 2010	1	4	12	4	11	0	32
March 2010	17	7	45	4	14	0	87
April 2010	3	6	27	3	17	0	56
May 2010	1	15	9	5	16	3	49
<b>Total 2010</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>302</b>

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

## The ENV Wildlife Crime Unit

The ENV Wildlife Crime Unit (WCU) was established in January of 2005 to facilitate public reporting of wildlife crimes through a national toll-free hotline. Information on crimes received through the hotline is quickly passed on to the appropriate authorities by ENV, after which the WCU tracks each case through to its conclusion. Public sources are kept informed of the progress and outcome of each case, and all cases are documented on ENV's Wildlife Crime Database.

The main aims of the WCU are to:

- Build public support and encourage public participation in efforts to stop the illegal trade of wildlife
- Provide support and assist law enforcement agencies tasked with combating wildlife crime
- Direct intervention in stopping wildlife crime
- Document wildlife crimes and work with authorities to identify and address key factors that contribute to wildlife crime and strengthen policy and legislation to provide greater protection for endangered wildlife

The ENV Wildlife Crime Unit is jointly funded by the Humane Society International, The Whitley Fund for Nature, the MacArthur Foundation, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, and SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Fund.

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ENV Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=47162312016>



## Stop Wildlife Crime!

If you observe wildlife being kept, sold, transported, traded, consumed, or advertised, contact your local authorities or call the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline:

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