



Asian Turtle Conservation Network

May 31, 2004

Vietnam-China CITES Training for Enforcement Officers

Identification of species commonly found in trade at China and Vietnam border

Date: May 28, 2004

Location: Horizon Hotel, Ha Noi, Vietnam

Description of Event

TRAFFIC Indochina hosted CITES training for customs department officers from Vietnam and China. The four-day workshop was held in Hanoi from 26 to 29 May 2004 with the overall objective of strengthening control over cross-border trade of wildlife, and improve the effectiveness of CITES enforcement. In addition to training specific to CITES implementation along the border, participants were provided with specific training relevant to identification of commonly traded species, to include tortoises and freshwater turtles, pangolins, and primates.

As Vietnam's CITES scientific authority, the Institute for Ecology and Biology Resources (IEBR) carried out the species identification component of the workshop, followed by a visit to Cuc Phuong National Park where the participants received first-hand instruction on turtle and primate identification techniques, using the captive facilities there.

In all, about 10 Vietnamese customs officers attended the workshop and 15 representatives from the Chinese customs service and national CITES authority.

Prof. Nguyen Xuan Dang delivered the IEBR lecture on species identification in the morning of 28 May 2004. The lecture included three parts: (1) a brief introduction to taxonomy, general identification procedure and methods for confiscated animals (about 30 minutes); (2) An introduction to identification characteristics of some important animal species, including pangolins, primates, and turtles (about 60 minutes) and (3) A test to review the lesson on identification.

With regard to the turtle identification part, IEBR training introduced participants to 16 species of turtles native to Vietnam, with each species represented in a table listing some specific characteristics of the species and a photograph.

At Cuc Phuong National Park, turtle identification skill-building training was carried out by Bui Dang Phong, manager of Cuc Phuong National Park's Turtle Conservation Center (TCC) and Douglas Hendrie, Asia Regional Turtle Conservation Coordinator for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. Living examples of 14 commonly traded species were used to introduce participants to key identification characteristics for each species. Participants then received a guided tour of the park's Turtle Conservation Center.

Lessons Learned

(1) The time allotted for training customs officers on turtles was insufficient for any of the participants to acquire even basic turtle identification skills. Any workshop focused on building turtle identification skills should incorporate a basic introduction to the species and their distinguishing features, practice and review using live or photographic examples (more time

required if photographs are used), and an evaluation process that scores the participants and provides some indication of what they have learned.

(2) IEBR, the scientific authority for CITES in Vietnam does not have the capacity to carry out such training given their relatively low level of knowledge relating to tortoises and freshwater turtles. A future training course should potentially focus on building such capacity within the CITES scientific authority.

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Vietnamese and Chinese Customs department Officers participate in a turtle identification workshop in Cuc Phuong national Park



Bui Dang Phong, manager of Cuc Phuong National Park's Turtle Conservation Center (TCC) explains basic turtle identification skills



Bui Dang Phong displays a live turtle in order to teach key characteristics for successful identification