



Asian Turtle News

News From The Front Lines of Conservation

The Asian Turtle Conservation Network (ATCN)

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Turtle-focused Field Skills Training Course in Myanmar Helps Prepare Next Generation to Conserve Turtles

Myanmar - Conservation International (CI) and the Vietnam-based Asian Turtle Program (ATP) carried out a tortoise and freshwater turtle field skill training course aimed at providing students and young professionals with basic skills that will help them conserve turtles in Myanmar.

The weeklong course, carried out November 14-20 at Yadanabon Zoo in Mandalay and the Minsontaung Wildlife Sanctuary (WS) in nearby Mandalay Division, was attended by a diverse group of 21 participants, including park rangers, zoo staff, lecturers and PhD candidates. With a mix of taught instruction and hands on practical experience, the captive facilities at Yadanabon Zoo and the natural habitat of the critically endangered Myanmar Star Tortoise (*Geochelone platynota*) at Minsontaung WS provided an excellent setting for the training.

The training course, which has been run for three years in Vietnam and two in Cambodia, is designed to introduce trainees to practical field research skills with a focus on conservation. Components include scientific research methodologies and study design, turtle identification, measuring and mapping, documenting of field records, nesting and reproduction, interview and field survey techniques.

COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

The captive facilities at Yadanabon Zoo allowed students to work hands on with some turtle species during the turtle identification exercise. This allowed them to see for themselves some of the key diagnostic characteristics used to identify the 24 species native to Myanmar.

After a morning of lectures and roll-playing exercise used to learn valuable interview techniques, skills were put to use in a local village near Minsontaung WS.

During practical field survey training, aquatic turtle traps were set in a lake at Minsontaung WS. Amazingly, the practice trapping session yielded two Myanmar flap-shell turtles (*Lissemys scutata*) caught in a single trap baited with boiled eggs.

The trainee's learned how to complete field records for turtles they encounter in the wild, collecting valuable information on the turtles and the habitat in where they were encountered.

A section on nesting and reproduction at Minsontaung WS was perfectly timed to coincide with nesting of a Burmese star tortoise (*Geochelone platynota*) at the sanctuary's captive breeding facility. During the training, six eggs were laid and protected in-situ.



Trainees handle an endemic and critically endangered Arakan Forest Turtle (*Heosemys depressa*)



Interviews conducted by trainees in local villages bordering Minsontaung Wildlife Sanctuary



A critically endangered Burmese-roofed turtle (*Kachuga trivittata*) at the Yadanabon Zoo in Mandalay



A Burmese flap-shelled turtle (*Lissemys scutata*)



A Burmese star tortoise (*Geochelone platynota*) laying eggs during the training course at Minsontaung WS



Trainee's competing field records using an elongated tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata*) at Yadanabon Zoo

PROJECT TEAM

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Additional information about conservation activities across the region can be viewed on the Asian Turtle Conservation Network



A beautiful section of the lake at Minsontaung WS where course participants practiced trapping aquatic turtles