



**Education for Nature - Vietnam**

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## Press Release

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### ***Tam Biet Turtle*** **Film to Strengthen Public Awareness and Help Protect Turtles**

**April 18, 2008** – Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV), working in partnership with the Vietnam-based Asian Turtle Program and Cuc Phuong National Park, has produced a short film aimed at protecting Vietnam's turtles. The film, entitled, *Tam Biet Turtle* ("Goodbye" Turtle) follows the perspective of a turtle caught by a hunter and sold into the wildlife trade, and then transported north across the border to the markets of China. Unfortunately, in reality, this is the fate of many of Vietnam's native turtle species that end up in the trade.

**U tube link:** <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=oFJdONb0OqM>

Produced by ENV's Dang Minh Ha and Danny Weiss, the film will be screened as part of a series of turtle-focused awareness activities run by ENV and the Asian Turtle Program. These organizations are currently working together at several key project sites in Vietnam to protect critically endangered species in their habitat. ENV carries out school and village awareness activities specifically focused on turtles in local communities, and conducts seminars on "The Asian Turtle Crisis" at universities throughout north and central Vietnam.

#### **The Asian Turtle Crisis**

Vietnam is home to 25 native species of tortoises and freshwater turtles. All but two of these species are listed as threatened on the IUCN Red List of Endangered Species (2007). In the past, turtles were mainly consumed locally by people living in remote areas or near the forest. However starting in the late 1980's, increased demand for turtles for use in specialty dishes and traditional medicine in China resulted in the wholesale exploitation of many of Vietnam's native species. Hunters and traders quickly ravished wild populations wherever they could be found. Based on the accounts of former turtle hunters and traders, by the late 1990's, wild populations in most accessible areas were nearly exhausted, surviving only in greatly reduced numbers within protected areas and parks.

In 2000, experts estimated that as many as 10,000,000 turtles are traded annually in Southeast Asia, most of these for export to China. Populations can not be sustained at these harvest levels, and evidence suggests that entire turtle populations are being wiped out as a result of the illegal trade.

Turtles need to be able to reproduce over the course of many years in order to maintain population stability and growth. While eggs and young are susceptible to predation, adults in the wild have few enemies and generally survive to reproduce for many years. However, in this modern world, humans have assumed the role of "super-predator", preying upon adult turtles, arresting reproduction in wild populations, and causing catastrophic population declines and local extirpation amongst species.

#### **Lend a Hand and Protect Our Turtles**

The future of most of Vietnam's 25 turtle species remains uncertain. We need to act now to end exploitation and trade of our endangered turtles, and preserve these unique creatures as part of our precious natural heritage for future generations. Help stop the turtle trade.

Here is how you can help:

- **Leave wildlife in the wild:** Do not disturb, touch, or take any turtles that you observe in the wild.
- **Don't consume wildlife:** Do not buy, eat, or use products made from turtles. Instead, if you see turtles or turtle products advertised or on display, contact the local authorities or call the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline.
- **Help educate others:** Help others understand the crisis facing Vietnam's turtles and ask them to get involved in protecting turtles and other wildlife.
- **Report wildlife crimes:** If you see turtles in the hands of hunters or traders, or in markets and restaurants, contact your local authorities or the ENV National Wildlife Crime Hotline on 1-800-1522

### **Acknowledgements**

ENV wishes to thank the Auckland Zoo and Cleveland Metroparks Zoo for their support in producing this film. ENV also wishes to thank experts from the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) for their comments and input, Cuc Phuong National Park for providing a location for the film, Turtle Conservation Center manager Bui Dang Phong and other national park staff for the various roles they played and assistance they have generously provided in production of the film.

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### ***About Education for Nature - Vietnam***

Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam's first non-governmental organization focused on conservation of nature and wildlife. Our mission is to foster greater understanding amongst the public about the need to protect Vietnam's rich natural heritage and the living world around us. Through our creative and innovative approach to addressing key conservation and environmental issues, we aim to influence attitudes and behavior, and encourage greater public participation in this important and challenging task.

### ***ENV's efforts to stop wildlife crime***

ENV is widely recognized as a leader in NGO efforts to address the challenging issue of combating the illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam. In addition to targeted awareness activities and campaigns on television, public radio, and in newspapers, ENV works closely with journalists to increase the coverage and frequency of reporting on wildlife trade issues.

ENV's new Mobile Wildlife Awareness Unit travels throughout the country hosting public events and wildlife trade awareness activities for community groups, university students, businesses, and other local partners. The mobile awareness team also conducts training for protected area staff and government partner agencies, and is working to develop local wildlife trade monitoring groups through recruitment for the National Wildlife Volunteer Network.

ENV's educational resource team produces a range of wildlife trade focused educational materials including films, posters, school curricula, and special publications encouraging public participation in stopping the illegal wildlife trade.

In early 2005, ENV established a Wildlife Crimes Unit (WCU) to monitor and track wildlife crimes, and assist authorities in enforcing relevant wildlife protection laws. The WCU operates a national hotline for public reporting of wildlife crimes and tracks each case through to the end, often assisting with the placement of confiscated wildlife. These cases are documented on ENV's wildlife crimes database, which contains the circumstances and outcomes of nearly 1000 recorded since January 2005.

***Freshwater Turtle Species Program***

ENV has been working with the Vietnam-based Asian Turtle Program to protect Vietnam's turtles. Collaborative activities include site-based conservation projects focused on critically endangered species, national awareness campaigns, close cooperation with enforcement agencies with efforts to combat the illegal trade of turtles and other wildlife, and training and capacity building.



**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!