

First "Turtle Cup" Soccer Match Held for Dong Mo Lake in Vietnam

Timothy McCormack¹

On March 28th of 2010, the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo organized the first Turtle Football (Soccer) Cup in the village of Nghia Son, in the Son Tay district of Hanoi. The matches involved teams from four villages, and were organized to promote awareness and conservation of the Critically Endangered Swinhoe's Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*), a species known to occur in Dong Mo Lake but recognized as one of the world's most Endangered Species. Presently, only four animals are known to exist globally.

Swinhoe's Soft-shell, also known as the Hoan Kiem Turtle in Vietnam, is important to Vietnamese culture

and history due to a 15th century legend about a mystical turtle living in a lake at Hanoi.

Presentations were made between the matches to highlight the need for community support in protecting the Dong Mo Turtle, and the lake it lives in, for future generations.

Following some closely played matches, one of which went to penalty kicks, the Youth Union team of the village of Ngia Son II emerged as the champions of the day. Because of the success of the first Turtle Football Cup, Mr. Pham Van Thong, the *Rafetus* project coordinator, intends to expand the games in 2011 to include additional communities.

The first Turtle Football Cup for *Rafetus swinhoei* was supported by the Columbus Zoo, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), as well as the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo (CMZ).

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Below: T-shirts: "Turtle Cup" T-shirts carried the awareness message, "Let's protect the legend of Vietnam. Protect the Hoan Kiem Turtle."

Right: The winning team: the youth team of Ngia Son II received sports equipment for their village.



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