



Asian Turtle Program, PO Box 179, Office # 1302, Thanh Cong Tower, 57 Lang Ha, Hanoi. Tel; +84(04)35149750  
13<sup>th</sup> January 2011

## **Recent concerns raised about the health of the Hoan Kiem Turtle in Hanoi's famous lake.**

The Hoan Kiem Turtle in Hanoi's central Hoan Kiem Lake is famous in Vietnam due to the 16<sup>th</sup> century legend that relates to this species. Known as Swinhoe's Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) the species is critically endangered due to a combination of habitat loss and illegal hunting and trade. A single large animal now remains in the Hanoi lake but appears to be suffering with some injuries to its shell. A number of newspapers have reported this was caused by the invasive Red Eared Slider Turtle (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) attacking the turtle although this is unlikely. The concern is now that the animal might be sick and need treatment but with such a large and endangered animals there are of course risks to capturing and handling it for treatment.

The ATP has recommended the turtle is left in place and monitored for unusual behaviour such as basking on cold days for any visible determination in the wound on the carapace. If the animal is moved for treatment international experts such as the team who moved the Chinese animals should be contacted and involved if possible and necessary planning and holding facility prepared but regardless could pose a risk to the animal.

Photos of injuries to the Hoan Kiem Turtle from 30<sup>th</sup> December 2010,  
From VNExpress website <http://vnexpress.net/GL/Xa-hoi/2010/12/3BA24DDB/>

The injury on the neck appear to be old and healed, apparently it occurred 10 around 10 years ago



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The more recent injury to the front of the carapace are from unknown causes but are being largely blamed by the media on red eared sliders.



During 2010 the *Rafetus swinhoei* in Hoan Kiem has suffered a number of injuries recorded in the press. On the 6<sup>th</sup> September 2010 the turtle in Hoan Kiem lake was seen with a fishing hook in the carapace. Repeated calls have been made from conservationist, including the ATP to improve security at the lake to stop harmful fishing methods and littering.

Photos from Tien Phong online:

<http://www.tienphong.vn/Thoi-Su/511718/Cu-rua-Ho-Guom-dinh-luoi-cau-chum.html>



Photos from 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010, *Rafetus swinhoei* in Hoan Kiem lake seen with rubber in its mouth.



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