



EDUCATION FOR NATURE – VIETNAM

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The Adventures of Lucky Turtle; Board Game A New Educational Resource for Children

Asia's tortoises and freshwater turtles are critically threatened by the combined impacts of the hunting for the illegal trade and loss of habitat. Since the early 1990's the systematic and wide-spread exploitation of turtles has devastated wild populations across the region in order to feed the insatiable demands of export markets, mainly in China.

Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) has developed a board game to help children learn about Vietnam's turtles and raise awareness about the many dangers and difficulties that turtles face during the course of their lives.

The game starts at birth. The object is for players to roll the die and avoid landing on certain squares, and especially trying to avoid being sent to the "Evil Trader's Den". Bonus moves can be won by answering questions correctly about turtles featured on "Dr. Turtle Cards", and a player wins when he or she makes it successfully to the "Forest Where No Man Ever Goes" (The End).

This innovative educational approach allows students to learn about turtle ecology, habitat preferences and favourite foods as well as dangers turtles face in their struggle to survive. In a bid to overcome these challenges students learn how difficult it is for turtles to live safely and discover how they can get involved in helping to protect turtles in their habitats.

The Lucky Turtle board game was designed for up to six players, and is part of an educational package designed by ENV focused on turtles that includes a lesson plan for schools (in final stages of development), illustrated children's story, the Adventures of Lucky Turtle, Green Forest special issue on turtles, and two posters. ENV plans to distribute the educational package at the beginning of the next school year (September) to environmental education programs working in communities bordering parks and protected areas where conservation priorities include tortoises and freshwater turtles. The Lucky Turtle Board Game is distributed free to participating community-based environmental education programmes throughout Vietnam.

ENV wishes to thank the **Auckland Zoo** for their generous support in developing this important educational resource.

About ENV

Education for Nature–Vietnam (ENV) was established as Vietnam's first environmental education-focused NGO, built upon the success and experience of the community-based Conservation Awareness Programme at Cuc Phuong National Park. ENV specialises in training of environmental educators, and carries out a variety of educational programmes and initiatives aimed at raising awareness and understanding about the environment, and the need to protect nature and wildlife in Vietnam.

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Turtle Facts

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23 Species Native to Vietnam

There are 23 species of tortoises and freshwater turtles native to Vietnam. Five of these species are soft-shell turtles, and the remaining 18 are land tortoises or freshwater hard-shelled turtles.

All of Vietnam's Species are Threatened

All 23 of Vietnam's tortoise and freshwater turtle species are listed on the IUCN Red List of threatened species. Fourteen of Vietnam's turtle species are listed as *Critically Endangered* or *Endangered* on the Red List.

Struggle for Survival

Turtles are threatened by the combined impacts of hunting for the wildlife trade and loss of habitat. Most hard-shell turtles in the trade are presently exported from Vietnam to China where they are consumed as food and used in traditional Chinese medicine.

Legal Protection

Five species are specifically protected under Vietnam's principal wildlife protection law, Decree 48 (2002). Thirteen species are listed on Appendix II of the Convention on the Trade of Endangered Species (CITES), regulating trade across international borders.

A Profitable Enterprise

There is a growing commercial market for soft-shell turtles in Vietnam, consumed mainly in restaurants throughout the country. Farming of the Chinese soft-shell turtle (*Pelodiscus sinensis*) has become an immensely successful enterprise in Vietnam.

An Unprofitable Enterprise

Hard-shell turtles are not easily farmed for commercial purposes. This is principally due to their ecology. Requiring many years to mature and laying few eggs, it may take ten or more years to raise a newly born turtle to a size suitable for selling. The investment in food and care during this period exceeds the market price for most species making the farming operations unprofitable.

Laundering of Wildlife

There are no clear examples of turtle "farming" operations in Vietnam for hard-shell turtle species. Most "farms" claiming to breed and raise hard-shell turtles are laundering turtles illegally collected from the wild.

The World's Most Endangered Turtle

The Hoan Kiem turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) has recently been named the most endangered freshwater turtle in the world (2003). A single living example of this species can be found in Hoan Kiem Lake in downtown Hanoi. Experts from Hanoi National University and WCS are surveying other potential sites where the species may survive in the wild.

Cuc Phuong National Park Leads Turtle Conservation Efforts

The Turtle Conservation Center (TCC) at Cuc Phuong National Park was established in 1998 under an international project managed by Fauna and Flora International (FFI). The program was transferred to the national park in 2002, and presently is involved with developing breeding assurance populations of six native species, in addition to the facilities being utilized to raise public awareness about the Asian turtle crisis, train wildlife protection officers, and carry out specific conservation research projects.

New Network Links Turtle Efforts in Nine Asian States

The Asian Turtle Conservation Network (ATCN) was established in 2003 to provide support to regional turtle conservation efforts and facilitate the free flow of information between programs and projects that will advance the cause of conserving Asia's endangered tortoises and freshwater turtles.