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Marine Turtle Survey Indicate Success of Enforcement Efforts

A survey carried out in early December 2006 by the ENV Wildlife Crimes Monitoring Unit in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) indicates that the open trade of marine turtles and turtle products in Hanoi has been greatly reduced over the past year as a result of efforts by the Fisheries Department and encouragement from the Hanoi People's Committee.

The issue of enforcement of the ban on marine turtle products in Hanoi has been of great interest to ENV, which is currently working with Fisheries Departments and other enforcement agencies in a number of provinces to eliminate public display and sale of marine turtles.

"When the Hanoi People's Committee sent out a letter to functional agencies in November instructing them to clean up the marine turtle trade, we were skeptical about what sort of enforcement actions would follow," says Nguyen Van Anh, team-leader of ENV's Wildlife Crimes Unit. "Then when a December report came out from the Fisheries Department indicating that the trade had been eliminated, we promptly set out to check each of the establishments that were previously reported as selling marine turtle products on the list provided in the report." Van Anh says that she was surprised to find that only three of 24 establishments surveyed in July 2006 continued to offer marine turtle products openly for sale.

"This is a huge step forward in efforts to end the illegal trade of marine turtles in Hanoi," Van Anh says. Her team has listed all of the shops and businesses on ENV's Wildlife Crimes Database and will continue to monitor these and other establishments reported to sell or display marine turtles and other wildlife as part of their monthly monitoring program. ENV's monitoring unit reports observations of wildlife crimes to the authorities and documents the outcome of enforcement actions that follow.

ENV wishes to acknowledge the excellent work of TRAFFIC, the Hanoi Fisheries Department, and the Hanoi People's Committee for their positive efforts to bring an end to the marine turtle trade in Hanoi.

About Marine Turtles and Trade

Hawksbill and green turtles are commonly stuffed and sold openly in gift shops at high profile tourist spots throughout Vietnam. Turtle shell is commonly used to make jewelry, eyeglasses frames, and other handicrafts. Additionally, marine turtles are slaughtered for their meat, or kept as pets outside hotels and restaurants.

According to a July 2006 survey commissioned by TRAFFIC and carried out by the Institute for Ecology and Biological Resources (IEBR), 17 of 64 shops that were inspected carried marine turtle products. Jewelry comprised the largest proportion of products available, including bracelets, rings, and earrings, while glasses frames and pipes were also common. A total of 52 stuffed and mounted marine turtles (both Hawksbills and Green turtles) were found during the survey.

Report: *The Trade of Marine Turtle Products in Hanoi by Nguyen Manh Ha and Nguyen Quang Truong. TRAFFIC Indochina report, July 2006.*

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