



Education for Nature - Vietnam
P.O. Box 222
Ha Noi, Vietnam
Tel/Fax: +84 4 3 514 8850
Email: communication.env@gmail.com
Website: www.envvietnam.org

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Press Release

Young volunteers taking action to protect Vietnam's wildlife

***Hanoi, 21 November 2010* – The three most active volunteers from the ENV's Wildlife Protection Volunteer Network received recognition at ENV's Annual Wildlife Protection Network Volunteer Meeting held from November 19-21. The meeting brought together active volunteers from throughout the country and highlights the critical and essential role the public plays in helping protect wildlife.**

In early 2005, ENV established a Wildlife Crime Unit (WCU) to facilitate public action in the reporting of wildlife crimes and assist government agencies tasked with wildlife protection. The WCU operates a toll-free national hotline which allows members of the public to report wildlife crimes, anonymously. Information reported to ENV through the hotline is passed on to the appropriate authorities to take effective action. Up until November 2010, the WCU has documented more than 3,000 cases.

To complement the work of the WCU and encourage more direct involvement from the public, ENV introduced its Wildlife Protection Volunteer Network in 2007. The network now has about 2,700 members located throughout Vietnam, mainly concentrated in urban centers. ENV's volunteers assist by monitoring business establishments to ensure that owners remain in compliance with the law after enforcement measures have been taken, as well as report new crimes that they discover along the way.

"Volunteers serve as the 'eyes and ears' of ENV's Wildlife Crime Unit," says Nguyen Thi Phuong Dung, Co-director of ENV. "Their role is essential in our efforts to stamp out wildlife crime."

In 2010, ENV initiated a pilot program, establishing locally led "volunteer clubs" in Da Nang, Hue and Ho Chi Minh City. "The local clubs were to facilitate more structured and regular monitoring of businesses in these major cities, and enable local leadership to facilitate recruitment and retention of members," says Dung. "Although the program is new, we have been impressed by the commitment and energy of these local clubs."

Nguyen Thanh Hung, a high-school volunteer and leader of ENV's Volunteer Club in Ho Chi Minh City expresses his passion for the work he does as an ENV volunteer: "I initially became a volunteer to protect wildlife just because of my love for animals. But, as I took part in monitoring business establishments and coordinating other volunteers' work, I realized, I am part of solution and can contribute to the protection of wildlife."

ENV hopes that the efforts of young volunteers like Hung will inspire others to take action either by volunteering, reporting wildlife crimes to local authorities or to the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline, or simply by choosing not to consume wildlife or products made from wildlife. "The role of the public in stopping the illegal consumption and trade of wildlife should not be underestimated," says Dung. "Mobilizing public support is the key to successful efforts to put an end to illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam."

In addition to attending an awards ceremony hosted at the Press Club in Hanoi, the group of active volunteers participated in three days of training which included special segments on environmental communication, time management, and species identification. Participants also contributed their ideas

on the larger issue of tackling the illegal wildlife trade and discussed ways to improve ENV's national Wildlife Protection Network.

ENV wishes to thank the **Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)** for supporting this important initiative. ENV would also like to thank the Press Club for their valuable sponsorship of a free venue for the ceremony.

Related links:

Wildlife Volunteer Network recruitment film: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3V_EYI0xko

ENV Vietnamese language website: www.thiennhien.org

ENV English website: www.envietnam.org

Stay up to date with ENV on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=47162312016>

ABOUT ENV

Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam's first non-governmental organization focused on the conservation of nature and the environment. Our mission is to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about environmental issues of local, national and global significance, ranging from the protection of wildlife and natural ecosystems to climate change. We employ creative and innovative strategies to influence attitudes and mobilize Vietnamese citizens to live in balance with the natural world and to take action to protect Vietnam's precious environment.

ENV Programs

ENV specializes in four major program areas that collectively form ENV's integrated and strategic approach toward achievement of our mission. These include:

- Combating wildlife crime
- Raising public awareness
- Working with key decision-makers to strengthen policy and legislation
- Strengthening protected area management through education and training

Contact:

Mr. Tran Viet Hung

Communication and Public Awareness Manager

Email: viethung.env@gmail.com

Mobile: 0978462195