

Take away his tigers

It all started in 1996 with six illegal tigers reportedly bought by the Thanh Canh Enterprise in Binh Duong province. The law at that time, as it does today, stated that it was illegal to keep wild animals unless they were of legal origin. However, enforcement of the law back at the time was weak, and ten years later in 2006, the owners had acquired more than 100 animals including endangered primates, about 60 bears and many other species, many of which lacked legal permits, according to local authorities.



In addition to the original tigers, a secret breeding program had produced offspring, which authorities suspect were being sold into the trade. In fact, in 2007, a tiger cub was observed at Thanh Canh by ENV investigators, at a time when the owners were claiming that there were no births.

In 2007, the issue of private individuals keeping tigers came under the national spotlight and lacking facilities to place confiscated tigers, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development settled on registering the tigers at six existing establishments. The idea was that the owners would be keeping them for “conservation”, and would be prohibited from any form of commercial trade in the tigers or their parts.

However, like the laws protecting tigers and prohibiting them from being collected on farms back in 1996, enforcement of the law has proven difficult for some provinces. Notably, tigers have died and “disappeared” at some farms or the destruction of their remains has been carried out in a questionable manner without verification by local authorities. A known wildlife trader in Thanh Hoa keeps frozen tigers in a freezer at his farm, arguing that he should be permitted to sell them to recover the costs of caring for his illegal animals. Another establishment is implicated in the sale of tiger cubs to two other establishments in violation of the law. The leakage from farms, however small, suggests that larger cracks are forming in the ban on commercial trade of tigers from registered facilities in Vietnam.



A tiger cub at Thanh Canh entertainment park was discovered by ENV during an investigation in 2007. At the time, the owners claimed to authorities that they were not breeding tigers.

Photo: ATP

Indeed, at Thanh Canh, the owner and his son were convicted in March 2011 for selling six tigers between 2003 and 2006, most of which he confirmed had come from his “non-commercial” establishment. Subsequently, the owner received three years of probation while his son is serving a two-year sentence for their crimes.

Given the conviction handed down by Binh Duong courts, the Thanh Canh Enterprise has lost its right to keep tigers, and indeed any other form of wildlife. It is time that Thanh Canh’s six remaining tigers be transferred to a government run facility where they can be managed in accordance with the law.

Binh Duong authorities should not look for support from higher levels in enforcing the law, but muster the strength on their own to take action in this case. This would send a message to two other tiger establishments in the province,

both of which have also been implicated in alleged tiger crimes, that the only way they may keep their tigers is to obey the law fully. Thanh Hoa authorities might do the same, unveiling the protection of their resident tiger trader and confiscating all 12 of his tigers, including the two frozen tigers in his freezer, to send the same message.

In November 2010, Vietnam joined other nations in their commitment to end tiger trade across the native range of tigers. Vietnam is a growing consumer of tiger bone medicine, and as a major consumer, has a responsibility to itself, and all other nations to put our own house in order.

This means implementing immediate measures to protect tigers in their habitat wherever they remain, cutting off all domestic sourced tiger trade from our farms and arresting the development of any form of commercial tiger breeding and trade within Vietnam. Our borders need tightening, while cooperating with law enforcement agencies in neighboring countries and within the region, to root out and terminate trans-national tiger trade operations that bring tigers into Vietnam.

Let’s start by taking the tigers away from a convicted felon and showing tiger farmers, traders and the world, that we mean business!

Report corruption

If you are aware of authorities accepting money or gifts from individuals involved in wildlife trade or wildlife farming, please report the incident to the National Anti-corruption Department at

080 48 228

Public activism on the rise in fighting wildlife crime

The public plays an essential role in combatting illegal hunting and trade in wildlife. Without their support, authorities have little chance of success in their efforts.

ENV extends its thanks to more than 3,000 members of the National Wildlife Protection Network who volunteer their time checking businesses, restaurants, markets and other consumer establishments to help ensure they are complying with the law. Local networks have been established by ENV in eight major cities, and hundreds of other volunteers are actively involved in a total of 32 provinces. ENV also welcomes the growing support that comes directly from ordinary citizens all over the country, who report crimes and help evaluate the effectiveness of responses by local authorities to reported crimes.



Many young people from north to south have joined the ENV Wildlife Protection Network with monitoring regimes established in nine cities

Photo: ENV

A new evaluation system put in place by ENV and tested in central Vietnam, will soon be available for public review on the ENV website measuring enforcement responses to publicly reported crimes nationally. This new initiative is aimed at helping to provide feedback to the public, and other interested parties, on how well their local enforcement branch is performing.

“Stopping illegal hunting and trade in wildlife requires popular support. This means encouraging the public not to consume wildlife, and also getting them actively involved in helping to stop crime” says Tran Viet Hung, ENV operations director. “This vast and growing network also helps promote transparency in how we collectively combat wildlife crime, an essential element in the long-term success of these efforts” added Hung.

New volunteer recruitment drives will focus on several more cities before the end of the year, after which, local chapters will be established to support compliance monitoring operations.

Thanks to all of you who have actively joined in the fight to save Vietnam’s wildlife!

Help with transferring bears

If you have an illegal bear that you wish to transfer, let us know and we will help you get it placed in one of the rescue centers. Call us at

1800 1522

Enforcement advisor

Wildlife farming is good for local livelihoods?

Q: It seems that wildlife farming could greatly benefit the livelihood of many people. People who oppose wildlife farming seem to follow the idea of placing animals over people. Why can't we farm animals to improve peoples' lives and protect them in nature at the same time?



The development of bear farming has all but wiped out the very last of Vietnam's bears in the wild.

Photo: ENV

A: There is little opposition to wildlife farming if such practices could balance the needs of both wildlife in nature and humans at the same time. However, we oppose any practice that leads to extinction of a species in the wild, or complicates the protection of wildlife, making the jobs of law enforcers and forest rangers more difficult.

Certain species may be potentially good candidates for farming because of their breeding ecology, growth, and profitability. However, we recommend that careful consideration be given to how to effectively protect wild populations of the same species, if trade is legalized.

Specifically, how will authorities distinguish between legal and illegal animals and their products? How will farms be controlled to prevent laundering? What impact will increased demand for the product have on wild populations? If these species are to be

protected in parks and protected areas to ensure that they remain part of our natural environment, then how effective is this form of protection? Can farming a species and protecting it in nature work side by side in TODAY's Vietnam? These are the questions that need to be considered before we decide that something is simply a good way to improve local livelihoods.

We have lots of options to help improve peoples' livelihoods in many different ways. Wildlife species have few options left for survival and no voice in ensuring their own future. Our collective responsibility is to ensure that the options we take use a balanced approach, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

**Every animal counts!
Your decision may save a species from extinction.**

Quang Ninh still a popular place for bear bile tourism

Q: I understand that the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism has banned tour operators from visiting bear farms. However, I recently saw some bear farms in Quang Ninh still taking Korean tourists into their farms. This sort of business is not only illegal, but also is an embarrassment for our country. Are the owners of these farms above the law?

A: A series of recent investigations by ENV have indeed indicated that three bear bile tourism businesses out of seven still operate in Quang Ninh. Two of the locations are allegedly owned and operated by the same man. Surveillance of Korean tour groups shows them going in and out of these remaining farms, though less frequently than before the ban. But the problem still persists.

We agree that it is embarrassing that such activities continue at one of the most popular tourist destinations in our country. ENV is addressing the issue with authorities, and will continue to monitor operations and encourage local authorities to take action to eliminate all bear bile tourism activities at these farms.

From the front...

Macaque misses chained life

There once was a macaque at a café in a central province. An ENV case officer for central Vietnam worked long and hard to have the macaque confiscated from the owner, as it was purchased and possessed in violation of the law. When finally after months of discussions, the animal was confiscated, it was released many kilometers away back into nature. But a week later, it was back on a chain at the café. The owner explained that the macaque had been homesick and after being released, had probably walked many kilometers through rice fields, swam across two rivers, and possibly took a No. 5 bus to make it back to the district capital where it (apparently) wished to be chained to a tree in front of the café once again.



Photo: Confidential

Crime log

HANOI

In early August, Hanoi Forest Protection Department (FPD) confiscated a rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*) from the SOS village and transferred the animal to the Soc Son Rescue Center. The case was reported by a local volunteer to the ENV Wildlife Crime hotline one month earlier (Case ref. 3529/ENV).

On September 15, Hanoi Environmental Police (EP) confiscated two king cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*) and two pheasants that were being illegally transported by two men. The subjects claimed that they bought the animals in Lang Son province and planned to sell them in Hanoi. Both subjects are waiting to be prosecuted (Case ref. 3688/ENV).

QUANG TRI

On August 23, Quang Tri FPD and local police confiscated a large quantity of wildlife including five king cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*), three clouded monitors (*Varanus bengalensis*), two reticulated

pythons (*Python reticulatus*), 13 turtles and 12 kg of common rat snakes (*Ptyas mucosus*). The subject claimed that she bought the animals for VND 12,4 million (USD \$600) from another woman residing in Huong Hoa District. Both women and the rental car driver are waiting to be prosecuted (Case ref. 3659/ENV).

On September 1, Quang Tri FPD responded immediately to a tip from a local volunteer and confiscated a rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*) that was chained to a tree at a local coffee shop. The animal was then released back into a local forest (Case ref. 3660/ENV).

On September 30, Huong Hoa district FPD confiscated five common palm civets (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*) that were being illegally transported by a man who claimed that he bought the animals in Lao Bao town and planned to sell them in Dak Rong district. The subject was fined VND 5 million (USD \$250) and the animals were released into the Bac Huong Hoa Nature Reserve (Case ref. 3719/ENV).

THANH HOA

On August 21, Thanh Hoa FPD confiscated 450 kg of elongated tortoises (*Indotestudo elongata*) which were being illegally transported by a man residing in Phu Yen province. According to authorities, the shipment was heading for Quang Ninh. The subject was fined a total of VND 250 million (USD \$12,500) (Case ref. 3671/ENV).

QUANG BINH

On September 13, a local resident voluntarily turned over two four-eyed turtles (*Sacalia quadriocellata*) to the Cuc Phuong Turtle Conservation Center. This person has also been a very active member of the ENV National Volunteer Wildlife Protection Network in recent months (Case ref. 3666/ENV).



Confiscated civets await release back into nature by authorities in Quang Tri.

Photo: Cong Sang

Buying and selling wild animals and their parts is a CRIME.

BINH THUAN

On September 16, the owner of a resort in Phan Thiet City was forced to turn over three macaques to Binh Thuan FPD. The animals were immediately released into Ta Ku Nature Reserve. The case was reported by a foreign tourist (Case ref. 3665/ENV).

GIA LAI

On September 8, a tourist company voluntarily turned over a registered sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*) to the provincial FPD. The animal was immediately sent to the Animals Asia Foundation (AAF) Bear Sanctuary at Tam Dao National Park (Case ref. 3673/ENV).

DAK LAK

On September 7, Dak Lak authorities arrested two men for illegally transporting 80 kg of black-shanked douc langur (*Pygathrix nigripes*) bones. The authority is prosecuting the subjects (Case ref. 3675/ENV).

KHANH HOA

On September 19, Ninh Hoa district FPD confiscated a large quantity of wildlife including 10 water monitors (*Varanus salvator*), 50 turtles, 10 common palm civets (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*), 23 brush-tailed porcupines (*Atherurus macrourus*) and 15 Indochinese rat snakes (*Ptyas korros*) from a resident's home. The subject received an administrative fine of VND 15 million (USD \$750) and all the live animals were released into Ea Krong Rou forest (Case ref. 3708/ENV).

TRA VINH

On September 21, authorities confiscated a green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) from a local fisherman and released it back to the sea. The case was reported one week earlier in an internet



A Green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) kept at a local fisherman's house shortly before it was confiscated and released by Tra Vinh authorities.

Photo: Tra Vinh Fishery Department

newspaper. According to the article, a local person wanted to buy the turtle from the subject for VND 40 million (USD \$2,000) but the subject did not agree (Case ref. 3685/ENV).

BINH DUONG

In late September, Binh Duong EP in cooperation with FPD confiscated four yellow-cheeked gibbons (*Hylobates gabriellae*) from a private farm and a resident's home. The animals have been transferred to the Cu Chi Rescue Center but authorities have not yet determined the punishment level for any of the subjects involved in the case (Case ref. 3711/3712/ENV).

NGHE AN

On September 28, Nghe An authorities arrested three men residing in Ha Tinh province for illegally transporting 209 kg of elephant tusks. According to authorities, the shipment originated in Huong Son district, Ha Tinh province and was heading for Vinh city, Nghe An province (Case ref. 3715/ENV).

Punish criminals today to prevent crime tomorrow.

The ENV Wildlife Crime Unit

ENV's Wildlife Crime Unit (WCU) was established in 2005 to facilitate and motivate public involvement in efforts to combat wildlife trade, and to improve the effectiveness of front line law enforcement agencies. The WCU administers a public toll-free national hotline for reporting wildlife crimes. Information reported through the hotline is passed on to the appropriate authorities. ENV then works closely with law enforcement agencies, tracking each case through to conclusion, and documenting the results on ENV's Wildlife Crime Database. The WCU has documented more than 3,700 wildlife crime cases as of September 2011

The main aims of the WCU are to:

- Encourage public participation in efforts to stop the illegal trade of wildlife
- Provide support to law enforcement agencies tasked with combating wildlife crime
- Document crimes and work with authorities to identify and address factors that contribute to wildlife crime

ENV's Wildlife Crime and Investigation Unit's efforts to end illegal hunting and trade of wildlife are made possible thanks to the generous support from the following institutions:

Humane Society International (HSI)

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)

SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)

Houston Zoo

Auckland Zoo

Freeland Foundation

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation

Contact Us

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ENV Vietnamese Website: www.thiennhien.org

ENV English Website: www.envvietnam.org

Wildlife Crime Gallery: www.savingvietnamswildlife.org

ENV Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/EducationforNatureVietnam>

Stop Wildlife Crime!



If you observe wildlife being kept, sold, transported, traded, consumed, or advertised, contact your local authorities or call the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline:

Hotline: **1800 1522** Email: **hotline@fpt.vn**