

February 2011

Poor tiger criminals

In November an interesting case was put forward involving two dead tigers in a freezer at a tiger farm in Thanh Hoa province. The owner of the farm is the same “farmer” that has been linked to several major seizures of frozen tigers in Hanoi in recent years, and is also the same man who has been arrested once before trying to smuggle wildlife from Tanzania. It should be further noted that this farmer obtained all of his original tigers illegally from the trade in direct violation of the law.



The Thanh Hoa farm currently has 12 tigers. All the original tigers were illegally obtained.
Photo: ENV

However, the Thanh Hoa tiger farmer appears to have gained the sympathy of provincial authorities according to interviews in the press. Rather than simply applying the law, authorities reportedly ponder whether the “poor farmer” should be compensated for his dead tigers.

Are we expected to feel sorry for the rich illegal tiger farmer (businessman) for the expenses he has incurred raising tigers that he should not have in the first place? Would not selling tigers or their parts violate the ban on the commercial trade of fully protected species like tigers?

In fact, such a sale would violate the law and would undermine Vietnam's international commitment to protect tigers, reinforced during the November tiger summit in St. Petersburg, where range state leaders and senior government officials met and reaffirmed their commitment to protecting the world's last tigers.

ENV joins most of the Vietnamese law enforcement community in strictly opposing the sale of tigers, their parts and products, whether confiscated from trade or originating at farms. Opening the door to commercial trade of tigers and their products will undermine law enforcement efforts, and permit people like the Thanh Hoa tiger farmer to generate income from both his captive tigers and those potentially smuggled through his farm into the trade.

Back in 2007, two dead tigers discovered at this same Thanh Hoa farm were publicly incinerated following a decision by provincial authorities. The incineration of the remains of these tigers eliminated any possibility of the farmer profiting from the death of his tigers.

More recently in Nghe An, provincial authorities demonstrated leadership in efforts to stop illegal tiger trade in a case involving the confiscation of one frozen tiger, tiger bones, and a range of other fully protected wildlife.

In this case, Nghe An authorities transferred the entire shipment to the Vietnam Natural History Museum in Hanoi. Such positive action on behalf of the Nghe An authorities is reflective of a clear understanding that putting animals back into the trade perpetuates a problem that cannot be solved until the trade chain is broken.

In a third case that is pending resolution, ENV anxiously awaits to see if Quang Tri province will proceed with incineration of the remains of the tiger confiscated there in March 2010 or transfer these remains to the Vietnam Natural History Museum.

ENV expects good sense and the law to prevail in Thanh Hoa, and that the suspected tiger trader-farmer will be required to turn over the remains of his dead tigers to authorities, as he should.

ENV recognizes that the issue of commercial farming of wildlife in Vietnam is a hotly contested issue. The

conservation community warns that fully protected species should not be traded, as legal trade in these species will stimulate further demand and complicate law enforcement which must distinguish between legal and illegal products. The law enforcement community understands the value of deterrence in reducing crime, and wants to see clear laws enforced fully.

The captive farming community views wildlife as a resource for commercial exploitation. Those within relevant agencies that support conservation of wildlife in nature are likely out-gunned by those that want to see economic returns from wildlife, including endangered species. For some common species, farming may be a valid option.

However, in the case of tigers and other fully protected endangered species, farming for commercial gain guarantees that these species will be lost in nature. Allowing commercial trade of these species is simply unacceptable to those that wish to see Vietnam's biodiversity survive our race to development.

The dead tigers in Thanh Hoa, Quang Tri, and in all other future cases involving farming or trade of tigers must be confiscated to preserve the law and achieve the spirit of the law, intended to arrest the decline of our endangered wildlife and protect these precious species in the wild.

If tigers must be raised in captivity to ensure survival of the species, this responsibility belongs to government, not private farmers with commercial interests who paint themselves as "poor tiger farmers", while laughing with their profits all the way to the bank.



ENV calls on authorities to help stop the tiger trade by disposing of confiscated remains appropriately.

Photo: Quang Tri Forest Protection Department

Report corruption

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

Department: **080 48 228**

Bear farm owners in Quang Ninh ignore law and continue serving Korean tourists

A recent investigation by a Korean TV station in late September and subsequent surveillance by ENV investigators reveal that Quang Ninh bear farmers continue to engage in illegal exploitation and trade of bear bile, targeting Korean tour groups.

Over the past few years, bear farm tourism in Quang Ninh has attracted a great deal of publicity. This illegal activity involves hundreds of Korean and other Asian tourists visiting the farms each week, where they witness the extraction of bile from captive bears, taste bear bile wine, and buy bear bile and other bear products, which are then smuggled out of Vietnam when they leave the country in direct violation of the law.

ENV has been working to put an end to this illegal practice since 2007 when the bear bile tourism business in Quang Ninh was first discovered. Surveillance by ENV investigators has concluded that these business establishments receive dozens of buses full of Korean tourists each week.



The illegal bear bile tourism business is still openly operating in Quang Ninh where Korean tourists buy bear bile and take it back to their country in violations of CITES.

Photo: ENV

Most recently in November 2010, after a Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) film was aired in Korea, field investigators observed Korean tour groups still entering Quang Ninh farms, confirming that it is “business as usual” for bear bile businessmen in Quang Ninh.

A news segment filmed in October 2010 by KBS Television shows Korean tourists visiting a farm and bile being extracted from a bear. Tourists are then shown purchasing bear bile to take back to Korea.

In October 2009, Environmental Police raided the Viet Thai Tourism bear farm and caught the Korean managers preparing to extract bile from a captive bear for a group of Korean tourists. Authorities later confiscated a total of six bears from two Quang Ninh businessmen and issued administrative punishment to the Viet Thai Company. However, these actions appear to have failed to deter bear bile business owners from further violations of the law.

“We highly appreciate the positive responses of Quang Ninh functional authorities in the case of the Viet Thai operation, however, these first steps haven't been followed by more serious action to bring an end to this practice,” says Dung, ENV Co-director. “These bear bile businessmen are openly challenging the law. It is time that provincial authorities supported by relevant ministries step in and close this illegal form of business for once and for all.”

“This business casts a shadow over the image of Vietnam. It is time to demonstrate that we are serious about our efforts to protect bears and send a message to violators and the public that law is a requirement, not a suggestion, and it applies to all, including businessmen in Quang Ninh who may mistakenly believe that they are above the law,” Dung says.

Link to ENV's KBS film:

[http://thiennhien.org/index.php?page=document
View&parent=172&id=166](http://thiennhien.org/index.php?page=document&View&parent=172&id=166)



A bear at the Nong Trang farm in Quang Ninh province awaits a group of Korean customers.

Photo: ENV

ENV's efforts to protect Vietnam's bears

ENV has been working for more than five years to end bear farming and trade, carrying out a range of activities including investigations and surveys of bear farms, working with authorities to confiscate illegal bears, and combating consumer crimes such as selling bear bile and products made from bears, ENV's legislative and policy arm works to build support amongst key government decision-makers and leaders to improve policy and strengthen legislation aimed at protecting Vietnam's bears, and ensure that current laws are enforced effectively, while ENV's public awareness and education unit carries out campaigns with the aim of reducing the consumption and use of bear bile and bear products. Recent campaigns have include airing public service announcements on TV and radio, campaigning through the media, billboards and advertising on buses, and public events throughout Vietnam hosted by ENV's mobile awareness unit.

International collaboration

DNA analysis yields subspecies ID on confiscated tigers

In 2010, Vietnamese authorities cooperated with international scientific institutions to carry out DNA analysis of eight tigers seized over the last few years in Vietnam. The testing, which was carried out by the TRACE Wildlife Forensic Network based at the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, determined that the eight confiscated tigers included four Indochinese tigers, two Amur (Siberian) tigers, and two Bengal tigers. The analysis aims to help authorities map out the genetic origin of confiscated tigers. However, until further genetic mapping is done of tigers throughout range states, it is impossible to determine if the confiscated tigers originated from farms or were from the wild. Samples are pending collection on recent seizures in 2010.

Crime log

Law enforcement yields positive outcomes

Lai Chau

On December 5, 2010, Lai Chau provincial EP confiscated a 14kg bear cub in Muong Te district. The subject abandoned the animal moments before authorities arrived. The bear cub was transferred to the Animal Asia Foundation's Sanctuary Center at Tam Dao National Park (Case ref. 3275/ENV).



This bear cub was recently found at a bear farm in Hanoi but disappeared before authorities could inspect the farm.

Photo: ENV

Ha Noi

In December 2010, Hanoi Environmental Police (EP) and District Economic Police confiscated four king cobras (*Ophiophagus hannah*) from two separate cases. The first two king cobras were confiscated while being transport by a middle-aged woman on a motorbike on December 2. The woman, residing in Phu Tho province, said that she bought the cobras for 1 million VND/kg and had planned to sell them for 1.7 million/kg in Hanoi. The other two king cobras were confiscated

just before the end of the month from another woman from Vinh Phuc province while she was transporting the animals in a taxi. This woman claimed that she bought the cobras for 33 million VND and planned to sell them in Hanoi. All the king cobras were transferred to Soc Son rescue Center (Case ref. 3028 and 3120/ENV).

On January 7, 2011, Hanoi police confiscated 12 dried red-shanked douc langurs from a car traveling from Dak Lak to the Chinese border. The husband and wife await prosecution (Case ref. 3165/ENV).

Hai Phong

On January 18, 2011, Hai Phong customs confiscated 1.1 tons of elephant tusks hidden amongst plastic materials in a shipping container. The reported origin of the shipment was Tanzania (Case ref. 3195/ENV).

Thai Binh

On January 5, 2011, Thai Binh police confiscated 96 pangolins from a man residing in Ha Tinh province. Police believe the shipment was headed for the Chinese border in Quang Ninh (Case ref. 3166/ENV).

Hai Duong

On December 9, 2010, Hai Duong police confiscated 160kg of pangolins being transported by a young man in a private car on Highway 18 in Chi Linh town. The subject claimed that he bought the pangolins in Hoa Binh province and planned to sell the animals in Mong Cai town of Quang Ninh Province (Case ref. 3114/ENV).

Quang Nam

On January 10, 2011, the Quang Nam FPD confiscated an 11kg python from a truck heading for Da Nang. The animal was immediately released into a local forest (Case ref. 3168/ENV).

Quang Tri

On January 11, 2011, Quang Tri Economic Police confiscated a large quantity of wildlife from two men at a local collection point. The seizure included a stump-tailed macaque (*Macaca arctoides*), three long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*), 10 civets, 10 porcupines and a python. The subjects were fined 13,500,000 VND (Case ref. 3172/ENV).

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

Nghe An

On January 10, 2011, a local fisherman voluntarily turned over a 70kg marine turtle to the Nghe An Fisheries Department. Authorities later released the animal in the same area where it was caught (Case ref. 3164/ENV).

Thai Binh:

On December 14, 2010, Thai Binh EP confiscated a black-faced spoonbill from a hotel in Tien Hai town and released it into the wetland adjacent to Xuan Thuy National Park. The animal was initially caught by a local resident and then sold to the hotel. The black-faced spoonbill is a migratory bird species, listed as endangered in the IUCN Red List of 2010. Habitat loss and illegal hunting are two major threats to this species in Vietnam (Case ref. 3098/ENV).

Ha Tinh

On January 14, 2011, Cau Treo Border Police and customs officers confiscated 87 big-headed turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*) from a truck originating in Laos. Big headed turtles are protected under group 2B of Decree 32/CP-ND/2006 (Case ref. 3187/ENV).

Dong Nai

In January, 2011, Dong Nai authorities raided a number of private homes and business establishments in Vinh Cuu district, confiscating live animals and a large quantity of wildlife meat, skins, paws and other wildlife products, including endangered species. Amongst the wildlife was a langur skin and meat, most likely belonging to a black-shanked douc langur (*Pygathrix nigripes*) (Case ref. 3185, 3188, 3189, 3190 and 3191/ENV).



A lesser adjutant, confiscated by Ha Tinh Forest Protection Department, shortly before being released at the Ke Go Nature Reserve.

Photo: Ha Tinh Forest Protection Department

Public participation yields results

Ha Noi

On December 15, 2010, a resident in Hanoi voluntarily turned over two keeled-box turtles (*Coura mouhotii*) to ENV. The turtles were then transferred to the Turtle Conservation Center at Cuc Phuong National Park in Ninh Binh province (Case ref. 3099/ENV).

On January 27, 2011, a man in Ba Vi district called the ENV hotline and wanted to turn over a loris, which he claimed to have found several days previously in his house. The next day, ENV coordinated with Ba Vi National Park to receive the loris, which will be released back into the forest shortly after the Tet holiday (Case ref. 3211/ENV).

Ninh Binh

On January 11, 2011, a wildlife protection volunteer reported to ENV about five macaques being kept at a

restaurant in Ninh Binh City. The information was transferred to the Ninh Binh Forest Protection Department (FPD) who quickly responded to the case. Authorities inspected the location and confiscated the animals despite strong resistance from the restaurant owner. Authorities plan to release or transfer the animals to Cuc Phuong National Park after Tet (Case ref. 3171/ENV).

Thua Thien Hue

On December 23-24, 2010, the Hue FPD confiscated seven macaques being kept at five different homes and restaurants. The macaques had been reported by the public to the ENV hotline between March and October 2010. Thanks to the collaboration between the Hue FPD and the Soc Son Rescue Center, the animals were safely transferred to Soc Son (Case ref. 1108-2753-2767-2788-2927/ENV).

Punish criminals today to prevent crime tomorrow.

Quang Nam

On December 8, the Quang Nam FPD confiscated a 25kg binturong from the Bach Van Tourist Area in Tam Ky City. The animal had been reported to the ENV hotline along with four macaques. However, when authorities first inspected the site, only four macaques were found. Authorities confiscated the macaques, which were then transferred to Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park in Quang Binh province. ENV continued to monitor the location and found the binturong, which was later confiscated by authorities and transferred to Cuc Phuong Small Carnivore Conservation Center (Case ref. 2055/ENV).



A binturong confiscated in Quang Nam waiting to be transferred to Cuc Phuong National Park.

Photo: ENV

Da Nang

On November 30, 2010, a local resident told the ENV hotline about a loris being kept at a private home in Da Nang City. Several days later, the animal was confiscated by the Da Nang FPD and released into the Son Tra Nature Reserve (Case ref. 3033/ENV).



Two gibbons discovered at a coffee shop in Ho Chi Minh City. They were later confiscated and transferred to the Cu Chi Rescue Center.

Photo: ENV

On December 11, 2010, a group of ENV's wildlife protection volunteers discovered a pig-tailed macaque (*Macaca leonina*) at a cafe in Da Nang City. The volunteers talked to the owner of the cafe who later agreed to turn it over to the FPD. On December 17, the animal was released in the Son Tra Nature Reserve (Case ref. 3095/ENV).

On January 14, a resident in Hoa Vang voluntarily turned over a red-shank douc langur to the Hoa Vang District FPD. The animal was immediately released at the Son Tra Peninsula Nature Reserve (Case ref. 3192/ENV).

Ho Chi Minh

On November 27, 2010, a wildlife protection volunteer told ENV about a yellow-cheeked gibbon being kept at a church in Ho Chi Minh City. During our investigation, ENV learned that the gibbon was female and had been kept at the church for about four years. After discussing the matter with the church priest, it was agreed that the gibbon would be turned over to the FPD and the EP. On December 9, 2010, the gibbon was transferred to the Cu Chi Rescue Center (Case ref. 3020/ENV).

Crime Statistics

Period	Trade operations	Smuggling	Selling	Advertising	Possession	Other	Total
Total 2010	54	93	412	53	300	28	940

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 3,200 wildlife crime cases as of February 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

The ENV Wildlife Crime Unit is jointly funded by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), the Humane Society International (HSI), The Whitley Fund for Nature, the MacArthur Foundation, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), the Rufford, the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, and SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Fund.

ENV wishes to thank WSPA for supporting the production of ENV Wildlife Crime Bulletin.

Contact Us

ENV Wildlife Crime Unit

Education for Nature - Vietnam (ENV)

N5. IF1, lane 192 Thai Thinh Str, Dong Da Dist, Ha Noi

Tel/Fax: (84 4) 3514 8850

Email: env@fpt.vn

ENV Vietnamese Website: www.thiennhien.org

ENV English Website: www.envvietnam.org

Wildlife Crime Gallery: www.savingvietnamswildlife.org

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



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**