



## Asian Turtle Program Indo - Myanmar Conservation



Indo-Myanmar  
Conservation

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An adult *Platysternon megacephalum*, thankfully most of the animals are hook free and are eating well.

Photo by: Tim McCormack - ATP

## X-raying Big Headed Turtles in Hanoi, Vietnam

On the morning of 21<sup>st</sup> November 2015, the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo-Myanmar Conservation (IMC) and Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC) of Cuc Phuong National Park, Vietnam worked with the iVet clinic in Hanoi to x-ray 45 Big Headed Turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*) from the TCC. In total, from 42 live and 3 dead animals from recent confiscations X-rayed fish hooks were found in 2 dead animal and 4 live animals, some of these will need surgery to remove the hooks.

Of the animals x-rayed 23 came from a large confiscation of highly threatened turtles that were transferred from the Hanoi Soc Son rescue centre to the Turtle Conservation Center (TCC) on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2015 after their rescue from the illegal wildlife trade. Additional Big Headed Turtles were being held at the TCC originating from confiscations made in Ninh Binh Province in August 2015. As it is well noted that local

hunters are using fishing hooks with bait to catch this species it was expected that some of the animals may have ingested fish hooks.

The Big-Headed Turtle (*Platysternon megacephalum*) is currently listed as Endangered by the IUCN Red list and fully protected under Vietnam national law, Decree 32/2006/ND-CP. However, this species are still suffering from extensive illegal hunting and trade throughout its natural range. Recently, a large number of Big-Headed Turtle has been seen and confiscated from illegal trade in Vietnam which is likely further threatening the survival of this species in Vietnam. The species is now being kept at the TCC and a project by the Centre for Rescue and Conservative Organism (CRCO) of Hoang Lien National Park in northern Vietnam with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is focusing on the species. With challenges in keeping this aggressive species together in captivity it is still critically important

that projection of the species in the wild is improved and that any confiscations are transferred to equipped captive rescue centres.

Dealing with the confiscations and care has taken a lot of the ATP and TCC staff time and resources. We urgently need more support to allow to continue with the treatments and care of these animals and receive more confiscations in the future.

A big thank you to all the staff from ATP and TCC who worked the weekend to get this done and the iVet team. If you would like to support please visit:  
[http://www.asianturtleprogram.org/pages/support\\_atp.html](http://www.asianturtleprogram.org/pages/support_atp.html)

Press release by: Timothy McCormack  
Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015

Thank you to the World Land Trust, Bristol Zoo, Zoological Society of London, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Wildlife Conservation Society and Turtle Survival Alliance who have all held support the rescue and treatments so far.



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Hoang Van Ha of the ATP helps prepare animals for the x-rays.  
Photo by: Tim McCormack - ATP



An x-ray of a large fishing hook in a juvenile *Platysternon megacephalum*, some of the hooks seem impossibly large for the animals they are in.



An other slightly smaller hook, although the location makes it difficult to access.



Vets at the iVet clinic in Hanoi worked all morning flat out to get 50 x-rays done. Photo by: Tim McCormack - ATP