



Asian Turtle Program

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14th May 2014

Below: Photo shows the confiscated turtles at the Quang Ngai FPD headquarters before transferring to the TCC rescue centre



Photo by Nguyen Thanh Luan - ATP

Threatened turtles confiscated from the illegal trade in central Vietnam successfully rescued

On the 23rd of April 2014 Quang Ngai City Environmental Police and the Forest Protection Department (FPD) of Quang Ngai province, central Vietnam, confiscated 21.3 kilograms of wild animals following the inspection of luggage at Chin Nghia Bus station in the city. In the cargo hold of a coach a suspect was travelling on they found two cases containing nine turtles and seven snakes.

The turtles were identified as two endangered Elongated tortoises (*Indotestudo elongata*), two Giant Asian Pond Turtles (*Heosemys grandis*) and five Eastern Black-bridged Leaf Turtles (*Cyclemys pulchristriata*). Within Vietnam both the Elongated Tortoises and Giant Asian Pond Turtles are protected. The snakes were identified as three King Cobras (*Ophiophagus hanah*), one Asian Cobra (*Naja naja*) and three Oriental Ratsnakes (*Ptyas mucosa*).



Above: Mr. Nguyen Quang, chief of the Quang Ngai Forest fire mobile team transferring the turtles to Nguyen Thanh Luan from the Asian Turtle program

Photo by Quang Ngai Forest Protection Department

Mr. Huynh Phong, the suspect travelling with the illegal wildlife, claimed he was only carrying the animals for a friend from Dong Nai province to Quang Ngai city with instructions to transfer the crates to his friend's mother without knowing their content. This case highlights one of the methods of shipping and concealing illegal good on local buses and trains, something which is likely occurring daily throughout the country. Shipments are often difficult to detect and pose a huge problem for wildlife protection authorities.

On the 7th of May, the snakes were released back to the wild in the Nui Ngang Lake's area of Ba To district, Quang Ngai province. The Asian Turtle Program (ATP) has been working closely with Quang Ngai province's Forest Protection Department for over six years and throughout this time Quang Ngai FPD have always been supportive of tortoise and freshwater turtle conservation in the province. Through this collaboration it was possible to transfer the turtles found in illegal shipment to the Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC) in Cuc Phuong National Park in northern Vietnam. The positive outcome in this case is exemplary for the growing collaboration between conservation organisations such as ATP, TCC, the environmental police and Quang Ngai FPD. This is already the second time this year that Quang Ngai FPD has confiscated endangered and protected turtles – in March 2014 they also successfully transferred a critically endangered Bourret's box turtle (*Cuora bourreti*) to the TCC. Although the turtles are being taken care of at the TCC, hopes are high that they can be released to their natural habitat in Vietnam in the near future.

Written by: Nguyen Thanh Luan - ATP



The ATP would like to thank the Quang Ngai Environmental Police and Quang Ngai FPD for their excellent work and collaboration in this and other cases. We would also thank Cuc Phuong National Park and the TCC for continuing to provide a pleasant and safe home for rare turtles rescued from the trade. Also the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund and Cleveland Metroparks Zoo for support.

[Find this press release online on the ATP website](#)



Photos above (top to bottom):

- Photo shows the confiscated turtles at the Quang Ngai FPD headquarters before transferring to the TCC rescue centre
Photo by Nguyen Thanh Luan - ATP
- Mr Ho Phuc Thien the head keeper at the TCC inspected all the animals on arrival before they start their quarantine period.
Photo by Nguyen Tai Thang - ATP
- All turtles arrived safely and in good health after a long journey from Quang Ngai province to Cuc Phuong National Park. After a three month quarantine period the animals will join the main population.
Photo by Nguyen Tai Thang-ATP