



Asian Turtle Program Indo - Myanmar Conservation



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Indo-Myanmar Conservation in collaboration with Son Tay Forest Protection Department and Kim Son Commune Police organized the agreement signing event among local fishermen. Photo by: Nguyen Van Trong - ATP/IMC

Fishing Agreement Signed to Conserve World's Rarest Turtle

About 40 km from the centre of Hanoi lies a spectacular Dong Mo Lake. It was created in 1971 through the construction of 1200m of dyke and a small dam and nourished by the Muoi and Cau Dam streams originating in the nearby Ba Vi mountain. The lake swells to approximately 1,400 ha during the wet season. It is also the home to the world's most endangered turtle species, Swinhoe's Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*). The species is now on the verge of extinction, with only three animals being known in existence - two other individuals reside China's Suzhou Zoo and the third was confirmed in the wild by scientists in 2007 in Dong Mo Lake near Hanoi.

On 10th July 2017, fishermen working on Dong Mo Lake participated in a meeting co-organised by the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo-Myanmar Conservation (IMC) and Son Tay Forest Protection Department (FPD), Kim Son commune police and Yen Bai commune police. Total 45 fishermen and two lake owners along with a ranger from the

local Forest Protection Unit and an ATP representative all signed the agreement as a way to acknowledge the importance of the species and show their agreement not to catch or harm the turtle.

During the meeting, Ms. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Yen, representative from Son Tay FPD, made a short presentation on the importance of Hoan Kiem turtle and some regulations on protecting *Rafetus swinhoei*. She asked fishermen not to catch Hoan Kiem turtle by any means and not to use electro-fishing equipment and fish-hooks lines and not to carry out fishing activities in No-fishing-zone in Dong Mo Lake. The meeting was attended by Mr. Do Trong A, Kim Son commune police chief, who shared Mr. Linh's viewpoint. Additionally, he briefly mentioned the attempt to catch *Rafetus swinhoei* made by some residents in Phuc Yen village in March 2015. He said such wrong-doing was a violation against the Vietnamese law on wildlife conservation.

Thanks to community activities carried out annually on Dong Mo lake, local villagers and fishermen are well aware of the significance of the Hoan Kiem turtle and have been playing a more active role in protecting the turtle. Prior to the event, Mr Nguyen Van Hai, a local fisherman, sent IMC staff two pictures of *Rafetus swinhoei* which he had taken while fishing in Dong Mo Lake.

We would like to thank the Kim Son commune Police, Yen Bai Commune Police and Son Tay Forest Protection Department for their supports for this activity. We would also like to send our sincere thanks to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) and IUCN for supporting Rafetus project



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Nguyen Tai Thang from IMC gave a presentation highlighting the importance of the conservation of the legendary Hoan Kiem turtle in Dong Mo lake.

Photo by Nguyen Van Trong – ATP/IMC



A local fisherman at work in Dong Mo Lake.

Photo by: Nguyen Tai Thang – ATP/IMC



A photograph of the *Rafetus swinhoei* in Dong Mo Lake taken by a fisherman, Nguyen Van Hai, in June 2017



A beautiful sunset at Dong Mo Lake.

Photo by: Nguyen Tai Thang – ATP/IMC