



Asian Turtle Program Indo - Myanmar Conservation



Indo-Myanmar
Conservation

Protecting today so we can see tomorrow...

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Photo of Hoan Kiem Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) was taken on the 6th of August 2018.
Photo by: Nguyen Tai Thang - ATP

More than one individual of Swinhoe's Softshell Turtle living in Dong Mo lake?

For many years since our team started to focus our conservation efforts of Swinhoe's Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*), also known as Hoan Kiem Turtle, in Dong Mo lake, Son Tay town, Hanoi, local fishermen have stated that there is more than one individual of these giant turtles inhabiting the lake. This belief arises from different sightings of what fishermen believed were different sized animals or the size of holes in nets that they believed were ripped by the turtles. However, as is often the case with such 'Fishermans Tales' we have always been cautious to make these claims. All the photographs taken by the team so far appear to be the same individuals, with transparencies of the head marking overlaying between the photographs.

The one individual regularly photographed seems to be the old individual rescued by the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) following its escape during flooding and a dam break in 2008. At the time the

animal weighed 67kg but we believe this animal could have grown even large in the past decade. Fishermen claim the second animal is much smaller, weighing from 40kg to 50kg, but is very shy and hard to observe, with the possibility that more individuals survive in the large lake.

On the 6th of August 2018, when making observation around a no-fishing zone, near an artificial nesting beach built by the ATP, for the first time our team observed two large soft-shell turtles simultaneously. The two turtles were 100m distance from each other. Specifically, when we were capturing a video of one turtle, another turtle with smaller size emerged at the distance about 50m from our boat. We were taken by surprise and could not photograph this turtle. However, the team did observe some features of this turtle which included striking yellow patterns on its head, short nose and a size that would approximate to a turtle weighing about 40kg.

This observation was not enough to confirm beyond doubt that there are two individuals of Hoan Kiem turtles in Dong Mo lake, but it did bring about new possibility for the conservation of the world's most endangered turtle species.

We are hoping to improve and extend the existing artificial nesting beach and are discussing ways in which a floating platform for a beach could be developed to avoid problems caused by water fluctuation in the lake that occasionally submerge the nesting beach.

If you would like to donate to support our work to confirm additional animals in Dong Mo Lake and at other sites we work please visit http://asianturtleprogram.org/pages/support_atp.html

Together we can save the worlds rarest turtle. Giving Swinhoe's Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) a chance of survival

Press release: Tim McCormack - ATP/IMC
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Photo by: Nguyen Tai Thang - ATP



Glorious sunset at Dong Mo lake.

Photo by: Nguyen Tai Thang - ATP/IMC



Breathtaking scenery of Dong Mo lake.

Photo by: Nguyen Tai Thang - ATP/IMC