

DIVERSITY

Vietnam is considered one of the most important hot spots for turtle diversity in Asia with 25 different native species of tortoise and freshwater turtles, including five soft-shell species and 20 other hard-shell turtle species. Vietnam also is home to at least two endemic species of turtles that are found nowhere else in the world, as well as the legendary Hoan Kiem turtle, *Rafetus swinhoei*, one of the most famous and rarest turtles in the world.



Photo by Bui Dang Phong

THREATS

All of Vietnam's turtles are threatened by hunting and trade to meet the insatiable demand mainly from consumers in China, where turtles are consumed in special dishes or used to make traditional medicine.

Evidence suggests that wild populations of most turtles species in Vietnam have declined significantly over the past 15 years, leaving fragmented and degraded populations surviving in the wild.

VOLUME OF TRADE

ENV's Wildlife Crime Unit has documented 434 cases involving illegal hunting, smuggling, or trade of tortoises and freshwater turtles since 2005. These figures include 163 smuggling cases accounting for more than an estimated 25 tons of turtles or approximately 30,000 individuals.

Given that only a small fraction of trade is believed to be apprehended, this would suggest that the quantity of turtles being smuggled to China is significantly higher.



Photo by Bui Dang Phong

LEGAL PROTECTION

Of the estimated 25 species of tortoises and freshwater turtles native to Vietnam, 16 are listed as "critically endangered" or "endangered" on the international IUCN Red List of endangered species. Seven more are listed as "vulnerable", and the remaining two are not listed or given the status of "lower risk". All but three species are listed on Appendix II and III of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES), prohibiting international trade of listed species without a CITES permit.

Seven species are protected under Vietnam's endangered species law, Decree 32 prohibiting hunting and trade of listed species and their derivatives without a legal permit.

OUR NATIVE ENDEMIC SPECIES

A special creature, the Vietnamese Pond Turtle (*Mauremys annamensis*), is endemic to a few provinces in central Vietnam. Living in lowland ponds, marshes, and waterways, this species' habitat is also threatened by agriculture and development. Efforts are underway to increase protection for this species, currently protected under Vietnamese law, and set aside safe habitat to allow for recovery.



Photo by Bui Dang Phong



Photo by Ben Hayes

SOFT-SHELLED TURTLES ON THE MENU

Although most hard-shelled turtles are smuggled to China, there is a substantial consumer market for soft-shell turtles in Vietnam. The Chinese soft-shell turtle is one of five native soft-shell species. It is readily farmed throughout most of Vietnam, and chances are that if you see a soft-shell of this species in a restaurant, it is legal and came from a farm.

TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT TURTLES!

Vietnam's turtles are in trouble. However it is not too late to take decisive action. Here are ways that you can help protect our turtles:

- Do not buy or consume hard-shell turtles or products made from turtles.
- Before ordering soft-shell turtle on the menu, make sure that it is a Chinese soft-shell turtle species, and that it was born and raised on a farm. Make a point of asking the restaurant owner and demanding farm-raised turtles only.
- Help educate others so that your friends and family will understand why it is important to preserve our unique biodiversity and protect turtles and other wildlife.
- Report turtle hunters and traders to local authorities or call us at ENV.

REPORT WILDLIFE CRIME

1800-1522

YOU can make a difference!