



Asian Turtle Program

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31st March 2014

Below: All participants were happy to receive their certificates of training



Photo by: Pham Van Thong - ATP

Tenth Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Field Skill training course at Cuc Phuong National Park

From 22nd – 30th March 2014 the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and the Turtle Conservation Central (TCC) of Cuc Phuong National Park held the 10th annual Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle (TFT) field skill training course for students, young biologists and forestry protection officers at the National Park in Ninh Binh Province, Vietnam.

Over the last decade the training has been popular, providing practical skills and allowing budding young biologists and conservationists to expand their knowledge on tortoises and freshwater turtles in the region. Since the first training in 2005 there have been 119 participants in the course, although mostly 3rd and 4th year students from 23 Universities nationally in Vietnam with occasional Masters or PhD students. Participants have also included individuals from Indonesia and Lao PDR, Forest Protection Rangers (FPD), staff of other NGO's. With a strong focus on interview and field



Pham Xuan Quyen (left) and Nguyen Van Tan practice using radio telemetry equipment in Bong centre at the core zone of Cuc Phuong National Park. Photo by Nguyen Tai Thang - ATP

surveys the ATP has also supported over 16 students to complete research projects of their own following the course, most often as part of a university thesis project. Many participants have gone onto work in conservation or have utilized their skills on return to their province or protected area to complete surveys or provide information to the turtle program.

As always the training in 2014 was enjoyable and provided valuable information for Cuc Phuong National Park. During an interview survey practical undertaken in the buffer zone to the park nine endangered Keeled Box Turtles (*Cuora mouhotii*), a species native to the park, were observed in a single morning. Following discussions with the local households one animal was transferred to the park and efforts will continue to rescue and return the remaining turtles to Cuc Phuong forest.

With a decade of training experience the ATP is more confident with the future protection of Vietnam's wildlife and in particular tortoise and freshwater turtles. Many student and ranger participants are now coming to the course with a high level of English language skills and an understanding of conservation. Its hoped these highly skilled individuals will become leaders of conservation efforts throughout Vietnam in the near future and we look towards the coming decade with hope.

Press release by Pham Van Thong and Tim McCormack

We would like to thank the Ocean Park Conservation Fund Hong Kong (OPCF), Rotterdam Zoo in the Netherlands and London Zoological Society for their support of our activities. We would also like to thank Cuc Phuong National Park and the Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC) who have partnered on the training program since 2005.



The course instructors included Do Thanh Hao, manager of Turtle Conservation Central of Cuc Phuong NP, Hoang Van Thai, Wildlife Rescue Central of Cuc Phuong NP and Timothy McCormack, Sarah Wahl, Nguyen Thu Thuy, Pham Van Thong, Nguyen Thanh Luan, Nguyen Tai Thang from the Asian Turtle Program, most of whom are graduates earlier training courses. We hope in the future to expand the training.

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



(Photo left) A Keeled Box turtle (*Cuora mouhotii*) seen during local interviews in the buffer zone of CPNP. This lucky turtle was transferred to TCC.

(Photo right) Mr. Do Thanh Hao the TCC manager shows students how to identify turtles

Photos by: Nguyen Tai Thang - ATP



Students putting their newly learned interview skills into practice in the buffer zone of Cuc Phuong National Park. Photo by Pham Van Thong - ATP



The GPS practical took students on a treasure hunt trail around Cuc Phuong National Park at sunset. Photo by Tim McCormack - ATP



Hoang Trung Giang a biologist from Hoang Lien National Park, Lao Cai Province is collecting the information of Keeled Box turtle (*Cuora mouhotii*) to produce a field record. On returning to his national park Giang plans to survey for Big-headed Turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*). Photo by Nguyen Tai Thang - ATP



Students took a tour of the turtle enclosures at the TCC. Photo by Tim McCormack - ATP



A Striped-necked leaf turtle (*Cyclemys pulchristriata*) happy to welcome the students this year. Photo by Tim McCormack - ATP