



## Asian Turtle Program Indo - Myanmar Conservation



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For more current news and updates on tortoise and freshwater turtle conservation in Asia,  
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The students and instructors pose for a photo in Phou Khao Khouay National Bio-Diversity Conservation Area, Vientiane, Laos. © Nguyen Tai Thang (ATP/IMC).

## First Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Field Skills Training Course held in Laos

Between the 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> July 2019, the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo Myanmar Conservation (IMC) travelled to Laos to lead the first training course for Laotian students on turtle conservation, in conjunction with the Laos Conservation Trust for Wildlife (LCTW). Modules from the course were taught by Vietnamese and English staff of ATP gives student knowledge and experience in a range of useful field skills related to tortoise and freshwater turtle research.

Nine Laotian students and early-career conservationists joined us at LCTW's headquarters at the Lao Wildlife Rescue Centre, Vientiane province, Laos. While this was the 15<sup>th</sup> annual field skill training course held by the ATP/IMC this was the first time the training was held in Lao PDR.



A student tries to identify some turtle species by their photographs. © Jack Carney (ATP/IMC).



Students received a range of lectures on topics such as: turtle ecology and evolution, the Asian Turtle Crisis, research methods and report writing, turtle conservation in Laos, and the role of research in conservation. These taught elements were combined with practical sessions including: identifying Lao's turtle species, compass and GPS use, aquatic turtle trapping, forest surveys, and completing field records.

The ATP/IMC is very excited about the prospect of working more closely with conservationists and researchers in Laos and events like this are a perfect way of collaborating and networking! We have made many new friends as a result of our visit to Laos and will certainly keep in contact with everybody and hope to work with them again in the near future!

We would like to thank Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, USA, and a number of private donors for their generous support which allowed us to offer free funding to each student! It takes a lot of time and money to organise and run this course every year, and even more so in a new country with a new language! We would like to thank all of the ATP/IMC staff, LCTW staff, Laotian students and everyone else who helped successfully deliver this course!



If you would like to support us in making this training an annual event in more countries please visit our support page <https://asianturtleprogram.org/donate/> or contact [support@asianturtleprogram.org](mailto:support@asianturtleprogram.org). Thank you!

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The Lao Zoo had a selection of turtles native to Laos which the students had to identify. © Jack Carney (ATP/IMC).



Time searches are one way of finding turtles hidden within the forest leaf litter. © Jack Carney (ATP/IMC).



The training course helped students to read maps properly and be able to navigate between distant locations. © Jack Carney (ATP/IMC).





One group discovered this tortoise shell in a local household during an interview survey in a nearby village.  
© Jack Carney (ATP/IMC).



Radio tracking equipment is a relatively cheap way to track the movements of tagged turtles in the wild.  
© Jack Carney (ATP/IMC).



The students performed real interview surveys with local villagers during the course. © Jack Carney (ATP/IMC).



Using GPS is a vital skill for carrying out fieldwork in the forests of Laos. © Jack Carney (ATP/IMC).



Tim McCormack, the ATP/IMC Director, and his son, Andrew McCormack, complete a field record for a Khorat Snail-eating Turtle (*Malayemys khoratensis*) in a local market as part of a training exercise.  
© Hoang Van Ha (ATP/IMC)



On the final teaching day, students presented data they had collected during interview surveys.  
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