



## Asian Turtle Program Indo - Myanmar Conservation



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One of the divers of Research Institute for Marine Fisheries takes the plunge into Dong Mo lake.  
© Pham Xuan Quyen (ATP/IMC).

## Divers visit Dong Mo Lake to prepare for the capture of the Swinhoe's Softshell Turtle in Vietnam

A team of divers from the Research Institute for Marine Fisheries have visited Dong Mo Lake in northern Vietnam to make investigations ready for the capture of the world's rarest turtle, Swinhoe's Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*).

Trapping will be completed in late spring and over the summer (if the current COVID-19 crisis allows) in the two lakes that contain the species in Vietnam, Xuan Khanh and Dong Mo lakes.

The divers have been looking at the sediment depths and net placement options for the activity that will be carried out in partnership between the Hanoi People's Committee, Hanoi Fisheries Department, Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo Myanmar Conservation (IMC) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).



The teams used two boats to survey the lake and support the divers. © Pham Xuan Quyen (ATP/IMC).

A number of traps have been prepared, including the deep water traps pictured, but it is not clear which will be successful as bait testing by the ATP/IMC did not determine any preference by the species.

However, this trapping is critical to determine beyond doubt the species of the animal in Xuan Khanh Lake, identified as a *Rafetus swinhoei* through Environmental DNA (eDNA).

It is also crucial to confirm the sex of both individuals; we are hoping for a male and female, an outcome that will give the opportunity to breed the species. Finally, radio transmitters will be attached to track the animals within the lakes to allow monitoring and increase the understanding on their behaviour and habitat use.

17<sup>th</sup> March 2020

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The divers of Research Institute for Marine Fisheries log their results. © Pham Xuan Quyen (ATP/IMC).



Specialist diving equipment was necessary to reach the lake bottom. © Pham Xuan Quyen (ATP/IMC).



The size of Dong Mo means it is essential to reduce the available pace for the *Rafetus* before trapping. © Pham Xuan Quyen (ATP/IMC).



The weather conditions were kind and allowed for a successful day for the team! © Pham Xuan Quyen (ATP/IMC).