



Asian Turtle Program Indo - Myanmar Conservation



Indo-Myanmar
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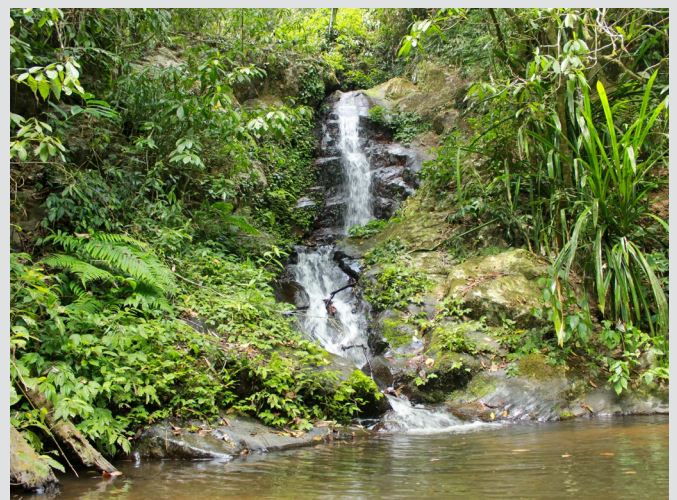
A Big-headed Turtle (*Platysternon megacephalum*) relaxes in its natural habitat after being successfully released in Pu Mat National Park.
Photo by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP/IMC.

Screening and release of turtles in Pu Mat National Park, Vietnam

Between December 2019 and May 2020, the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo-Myanmar Conservation (IMC) worked with Save Vietnam's Wildlife (SVW) and Pu Mat National Park (NP) to complete the necessary health checks and genetic screening for seven Big-headed Turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*) before releasing them, and two Keeled Box Turtles (*Cuora mouhotii*), into the wild in northern Vietnam.

These turtles had been rescued from the illegal wildlife trade and rehabilitated at the Pu Mat Rescue Centre (PMRC) in Pu Mat NP, Nghe An Province until they were fit and strong enough for release in May 2020. As always, we aim to follow the IUCN's wild animal release guidelines as best we can, to do this we collect blood, faecal and saliva samples to be tested for disease-causing pathogens and parasites and investigate the genetics of the Big-headed Turtles.

The main two pathogens we look for are *Mycoplasma* spp. and Turtle Herpesvirus (some strains of the



The Big-headed Turtles were released in suitable habitat like this rocky waterfall and surrounding streams.
Photo by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP/IMC.

turtle herpesvirus are particularly virulent), we also examine samples for a range of small parasites. With regards to genetics, we use DNA analysis to determine which population the turtles are from and if they can be appropriately released in the target area.

Finally, the Big-headed Turtles were fitted with radio transmitters so that we can monitor their movement and behaviour following release.

We would like to thank: Save Vietnam Wildlife and Pu Mat National Park for their cooperation in this release, Fondation Segré Conservation Fund and the EDGE of Existence programme and Cleveland Metroparks Zoo for their support to this project, our other project partners, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), Paignton Zoo, Nordens Ark, the Centre for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (CRES), and all of our numerous partners who have contributed along the way. Particular thanks go to the hard-working staff who took part in the release and those who have spent months, taking great care of this especially difficult-to-keep turtle species at the PMRC.



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Press release by: Jack Carney - ATP/IMC

For further information please contact:

Asian Turtle Program - Indo-Myanmar Conservation

Room 1806, C14 Bac Ha Building, To Huu road,

Nam Tu Liem Dist., Hanoi, Vietnam

PO Box 46 - Hanoi International Post Office

Tel: +84 (0) 24 7302 8389

Email: info@asianturtleprogram.org

Website: www.asianturtleprogram.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/AsianTurtleProgram



Big-headed Turtle (*Platysternon megacephalum*) are endangered but releases like this one will help support and boost wild populations.

Photo by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP/IMC.



Two Keeled Box Turtles (*Cuora mouhotii*) also returned to the wild during this release.

Photo by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP/IMC.



The Big-headed turtles were fitted with radio transmitters so that we can monitor their movement and behaviour following release. Photo by: Pham Nhu Quynh – ATP/IMC.