



## Asian Turtle Program Indo - Myanmar Conservation



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# 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Field Skills Training Course 2020

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> August 2020, the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo Myanmar Conservation (IMC) and Cuc Phuong National Park welcomed students from across Vietnam to the 16th Annual Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Field Skills Training Course, hosted once again at the Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC).

13 attendees from a variety of backgrounds, including university students, park rangers, and young conservationists and biologists, travelled to the TCC for a week of classroom learning, practical sessions around the TCC and field trips into local villages and nearby forests. In fact, this edition had the most students from southern Vietnam of any course to date!

We were delighted to be able to run the course this year, given the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite the exceptional work by Vietnam in stemming the outbreak earlier this year, fresh cases at the end of July threatened to force it into cancellation. Nevertheless, we made preparations to ensure the safety of staff and students, while allowing the yearly workshop to go ahead.

During the education-packed week, students completed various lecture modules including turtle ecology and evolution, the Asian Turtle Crisis, real-life conservation case studies from Vietnam, and the role of research in conservation. Classroom sessions were alternated with more hands-on activities which gave students skills in: turtle identification, GPS, mapping and compass use, turtle and egg handling, forest surveys and trapping, and making field records.



Trainers and trainees were excited when participating in GPS practice module in the forest.

© Hoang Van Ha - ATP/IMC.

Although it rained on every day of the course, the training was another huge success and on the last day, the most active day where students complete a series of challenges using the skills they have learnt, the cloud opened up finally. One highlight for the students was recording two Keeled Box Turtles (*Cuora mouhotii*) at a household during local interview surveys, which were subsequently handed over to the team and released back into the forest.

While we cannot run the course for free, we always try to offer students scholarships to attend the course and we cannot thank Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and other donors enough for their generous support for these bursaries!



We would like to thank all of the ATP/IMC staff, TCC staff, students and everyone else who helped successfully deliver this course! In particular, we want to give more thanks to our generous donors and supporters without whom this training course could not be done!

If you want to learn more about this course or ATP/IMC, please visit [www.asianturtleprogram.org](http://www.asianturtleprogram.org). If you want to support us, you can by visiting our support page (<https://asianturtleprogram.org/support-us/>) or contact [support@asianturtleprogram.org](mailto:support@asianturtleprogram.org). Thank you!

13<sup>th</sup> August 2020

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The GPS game challenges students to find markers around Cuc Phuong using newly learnt skills.

© Nguyen Tai Thang - ATP/IMC.



The students performed real interview surveys with local villagers during the course.

© Pham Nhu Quynh - ATP/IMC.



ATP/IMC's Nguyen Thu Thuy holds up a box turtle to show its incredible defence abilities.

© Pham Nhu Quynh - ATP/IMC.



The students hold up their achievement certificates at the end of the course. © Pham Nhu Quynh - ATP/IMC.