



Asian Turtle Program Indo - Myanmar Conservation



Indo-Myanmar
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52 turtles confiscated from a pagoda in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

On the 17th of May 2021, the Forest Protection Department of Ho Chi Minh City checked and confiscated 52 turtles from a pagoda in the city. The turtles included 2 Yellow-headed Temple Turtles (*Heosemys annandalii*), 7 Elongated Tortoises (*Indotestudo elongata*), 13 Giant Asian Pond Turtles (*Heosemys grandis*), 6 Malayan Box Turtles (*Cuora amboinensis*), 4 Eastern Black-bridged Leaf Turtles (*Cyclemys pulchristriata*), 1 Chinese Striped-neck Turtle (*Mauremys sinensis*), and 19 non-native Red-eared Sliders (*Trachemys scripta elegans*). Sadly, the behaviour of release nearly always put the animals in unsuitable conditions in terms of environment and diet, in this situation forest dependent and terrestrial Elongated Tortoises can be seen struggling in the cramped ponds.

The pagoda management board have transferred turtles to the FPD many times before, but the many new turtles keep being brought to the pagoda for release by visitors. This continues to cause challenges for the pagoda and staff who are not able to care for the animals. While all the native turtles were transferred to the nearby Cu Chi Wildlife Rescue Centre with hopes that some can be released back into the wild in the future, the non-native Red-eared Sliders were euthanised.

The release of turtles into pagoda ponds continues to be a headache for the authorities and conservation organisations, with many of the animals protected by law the practise is often involves breaking of national laws, while

the challenges and costs associated with the rescue, rehabilitation and release puts more strain on organisations trying to deal with the illegal wildlife trade that threatens many Asian tortoise and freshwater turtle species with extinction.



52 turtles were confiscated from a pagoda in Ho Chi Minh city. The animals had been released into the pagoda's pond although it was not a suitable environment. © ENV

The local NGO, Education for Nature - Vietnam (ENV), have sent official documents to the pagoda many times proposing proper solutions to this issue as ponds in pagodas and temples are not suitable living environments for wild animals. The ATP/IMC would like to thank all those agencies, NGO and individuals supporting the rescue and release of animals in Vietnam and the Pagoda for supporting activities to protect native turtle species.

SOURCE: www.facebook.com/trungtamgiaoducthiennhien/

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52 turtles were confiscated from a pagoda in Ho Chi Minh city. The animals had been released into the pagoda's pond although it was not a suitable environment. © ENV