



Asian Turtle Program Indo - Myanmar Conservation



Indo-Myanmar
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New publication on the hunting and trade of Big-headed Turtles in two protected areas in northern Vietnam

On the 10th of August, 2021, a new paper from the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo Myanmar Conservation (IMC) team and its partners was published in Herpetology Notes, presenting the findings of a Big-headed Turtle threat assessment in northern Vietnam. This publication is a part of the EDGE of Existence Program Fellowship of the ATP/IMC team, led by Ha Hoang, as well as a broader project aimed to assess release strategies for confiscated Big-headed Turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*) in Vietnam. This is even more important now that this species has been upgraded to Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List in 2021.

Interviews with 31 professional *P. megacephalum* hunters, traders and farmers around Pu Hu Nature Reserve and Pu Mat National Park, northern Vietnam, revealed that the illegal hunting and trade of this species began in the area over 20 years ago, overlapping with the peak of the Asian Turtle Crisis, the well-documented decline of many wild turtle populations in Asia. Respondents reported that the main hunting season occurs from March to September and that the traditional bamboo basket trap is considered the most efficient hunting method.

Since peaking in the late 1990s/early 2000s, the volume of *P. megacephalum* being hunted and traded has declined dramatically as wild populations have plummeted; this has been associated with an increased economic value of the species in these illegal markets in which a single kilogram of the species is worth more than the average local monthly income.

Despite all respondents acknowledging that they were aware of the protected status of freshwater



Bamboo basket traps are made and used by professional *P. megacephalum* hunters in both Pu Mat and Pu Hu.
© Ha Hoang – ATP/IMC.



Two of the seven Big-headed Turtles (*Platysternon megacephalum*) being kept at a single household at Pu Hu NR during this survey. © Ha Hoang – ATP/IMC.

turtles, a lack of sufficient enforcement of protective legislation was evident. The high economic value and ease of hunting this species in its linear stream habitats mean urgent improvements to enforcement will be critical to save the remaining populations in both surveyed protected areas.

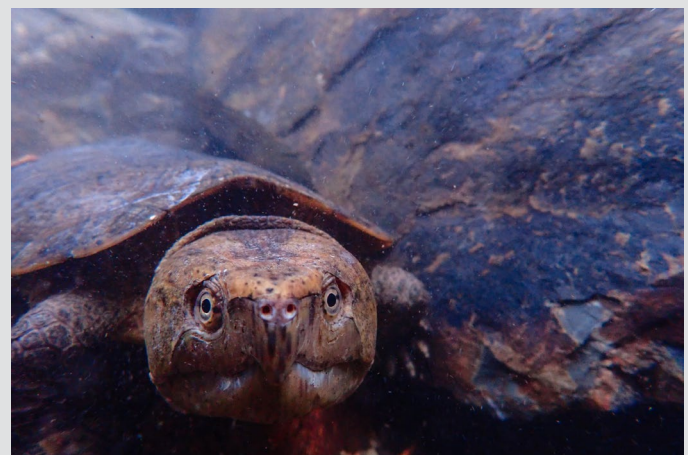
To read the full paper, please access the Herpetology Note website at <https://www.biotaxa.org/hn/article/view/66726>.

We would like to thank the Fondation Segré Conservation Fund, the EDGE of Existence programme, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), Paignton Zoo, Nordens Ark, the Centre for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (CRES), Cleveland Metroparks Zoo (CMZ), Cuc Phuong National Park, Pu Hu Nature Reserve and Pu Mat National Park, and all of our numerous partners for supporting this project.



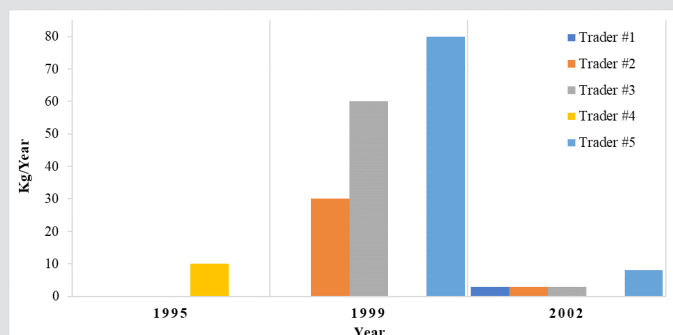
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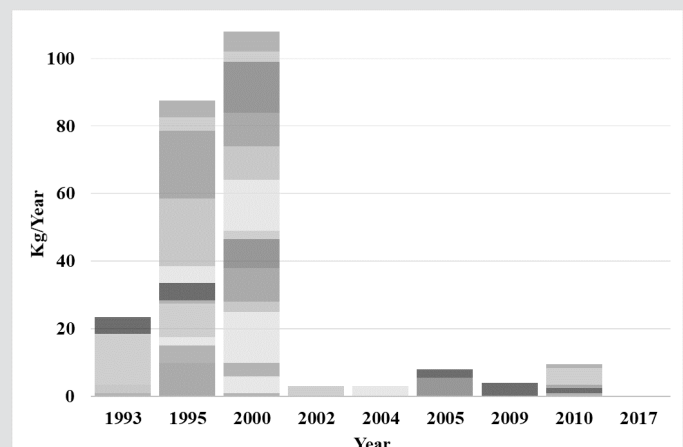


Underwater photo of an adult Big-headed Turtle (*Platysternon megacephalum*). © Ha Hoang – ATP/IMC.

12th August 2021
 Press release by: Sam Hai Son and Jack Carney – ATP/IMC



The volume of trade of *Platysternon megacephalum* by each trader has changed significantly through different periods in Pu Mat NP and Pu Hu NR.
 © Ha Hoang – ATP/IMC.



The volume of *Platysternon megacephalum* hunted in Pu Mat NP and Pu Hu NP has changed significantly over time. Different shades represent data from different hunters.
 © Ha Hoang – ATP/IMC.