

# NEWS FROM THE FRONT

A brief summary of the activities of Education for Nature - Vietnam

Issue 9 - Spring 2014

[www.envvietnam.org](http://www.envvietnam.org)

## Feature story

### Campaign reduces consumer wildlife crime in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City

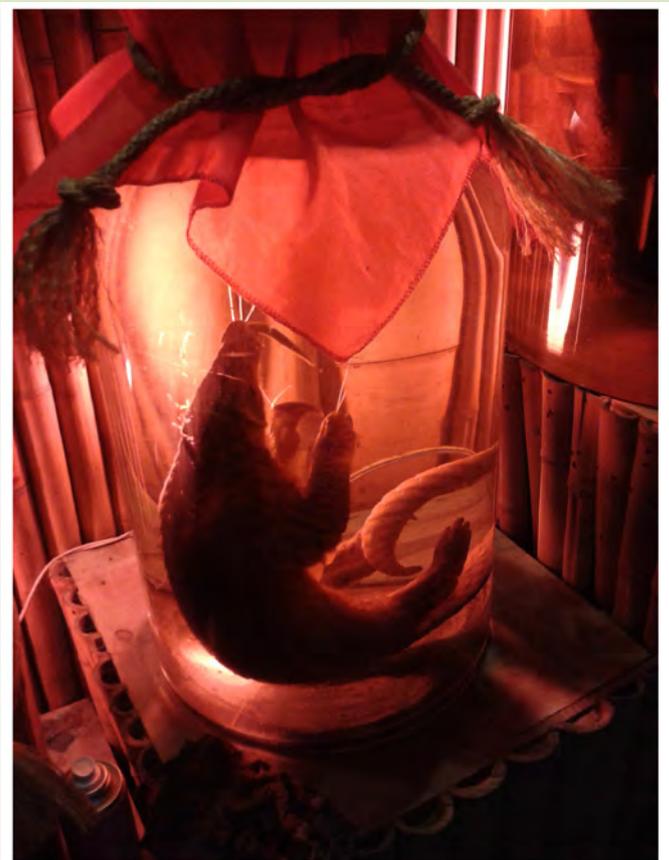
The results of the first phase of an ENV campaign targeting reduction of consumer wildlife crimes in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) indicates an overall success rate of 42% as a result of the campaign.

ENV's campaign focused on conducting intensive surveys in four districts of each city. A total of 2,326 restaurants, hotels, bars, TCM shops, pet stores, and markets were inspected over all of the districts, and violations such as the advertising of wildlife on restaurant menus, the display or sale of live animals, the presentation of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) wildlife products for sale, the display of trophies, and signboards advertising wildlife products, were all documented.

While live animal cases were reported immediately to local authorities, all other cases were reported in detail to the district People's Committee (PC) with a request for the district PC and relevant authorities to address each case. Local authorities were then given two months to address crimes within their districts, before an ENV team returned and inspected all of the establishments previously reported to be in violation of the law again, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the response by the district and the authorities.

This process has now been completed for all eight districts and the results are presently being compiled into a "report card" that will evaluate the prevalence of consumer crime, handling of live animal cases, and overall effectiveness of each district, and both Hanoi and HCMC overall, in dealing with consumer wildlife crimes. Further surveys will then follow to determine how effectively the city PC addresses consumer crimes following the issuance of the report cards.

While the results of the campaign indicate a 42% reduction in consumer crime in the eight districts that were targeted, the performance between Hanoi and HCMC differed widely; Hanoi achieved a 39%



Pangolin in wine in a Hanoi restaurant

success rate, whilst HCMC fared much better with a 52% reduction in consumer crimes. The poorest performing district was Ba Dinh district in Hanoi, achieving only a 24% reduction in consumer crime, and the best performing district was District 3 in HCMC achieving a 61% reduction in consumer wildlife crime.

Further results are detailed in Table 1 below, and it is possible to view or download the summary report for each city on the ENV website: <http://bit.ly/reportcardHN> and <http://bit.ly/reportcardHCM>.

(Continued page 2)

(Campaign reduces consumer wildlife crime... continued from page 1)

In 2014, ENV will work with authorities to further reduce consumer crime in the districts that have already been

completed, while expanding the campaign to additional districts in both cities, as well as in several other major cities.

**Table 1: Results of ENV's consumer crime campaign in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City 2013-2014.**

Report Card	Hanoi	Ho Chi Minh City	Overall
Number of businesses inspected (4 districts in each city)	1,428	898	2,326
Number of businesses where violations were detected	243 (17%)	89 (9.9%)	332
Number of businesses no longer violating the law following enforcement action by authorities	95 (39%)	46 (52%)	141
Number of live animal cases resulting in a successful outcome (confiscation of wildlife)	8 (34.7%)	9 (25.7%)	17

### Crime Fighters

## Internet crime reduction campaign yields 81% success and still going

**As Internet use continues to rise in Vietnam**, so does the advertisement and sale of wildlife products online. ENV therefore works proactively to combat this relatively new method of conducting wildlife trade. ENV's crime reduction campaign focused on the removal of advertisements that offer wildlife for sale on the internet is yielding many successes, as 849 (81%) of the advertisements have been removed from websites and forums so far, following actions taken by the ENV Wildlife Crime Unit (WCU).

This campaign began in November 2013 with a 10-day survey of popular forums and websites in Vietnam in search of advertisements for tiger, bear, rhino, and pangolin products, as well as live animals such as gibbons, langurs, leopard cats, otters and macaques. During the survey, a total of 1039 advertisements on 207 websites and forums were logged by ENV's WCU.

"In November, the easy part was done", said Nguyen Van Quan, ENV's Wildlife Crime Unit coordinator. "The more difficult work was to follow; tracking down each advertisement and having it removed."

As part of the campaign, the WCU is tasked with creating "Wildlife Safety Zones" by securing agreements from web administrators to ban advertising of wildlife on their websites and forums. Thus far, six popular websites and forums have joined ENV and become "Wildlife Safety Zones."

The campaign also has involved some gritty action targeting some of the more serious advertisements. For example one advertisement led to the confiscation of five live otters in Ho Chi Minh City after the WCU, ENV's HCMC team and the HCMC police set up a sting operation to catch the perpetrators.



Bear claws advertised for sale on the internet are fairly common. The campaign has resulted in a 93% reduction in bear product advertisements with 235 advertisements removed



Five otters were offered for sale on the internet in March and subsequent actions by ENV in cooperation with police resulted in their seizure and transfer to a rescue center

(Continued page 3)

(Internet crime reduction campaign... continued from page 2)

One of the Case Officers working on the campaign told us how big a challenge the internet campaign has been for the team: "We have all worked together to check the information and log cases. Sometimes we didn't know how to deal with so many websites as the process of getting them to remove the ads took so long and was so complicated, but now we can see the results we are very proud of what we have achieved."

In addition to addressing remaining violations from the November survey, ENV will conduct a second phase of the campaign in May to keep the pressure on website administrators and identify and target new advertisements that have been placed since the initial survey in November.



This critically endangered Bourett's box turtle is endemic to Vietnam and was confiscated following a "sting" operation in cooperating with police

## Investigations: Mapping criminal networks and going after kingpins

ENV's investigation team is tasked with the critical responsibility of working to identify and profile major criminal networks which are operating both inside and beyond the borders of Vietnam bringing tigers, rhino horn, and other high value wildlife products to Vietnamese consumers.

These efforts have directly resulted in arrests, and ENV provides a relatively steady stream of information to law enforcement agencies in the form of enforcement alerts, classified reports and "findings". While no major kingpins in Vietnam have been prosecuted as of yet for their involvement in smuggling and trade of endangered wildlife, pressure is mounting, and their day is coming.

**Key investigations that are currently underway or nearing completion have focused on:**

- Rhino horn trade: the mapping and profiling of two major syndicates operating from Vietnam with

links to South Africa and Mozambique is almost complete and kingpins have been identified.

- The trade in live and frozen tigers and tiger bone in Indochina: the network profile is nearing completion and kingpins have been identified.
- Marine turtle processing and trade: a preliminary report profiling two major organized criminal networks involved in the marine turtle trade has been completed.
- Douc langur trade: a preliminary report detailing the trade in black-shanked douc langurs is nearly complete.
- Pangolin trade: trade analysis is underway and an investigation is to commence in 2014.
- Ivory trade: ongoing case analysis continues since 2006
- Wildlife farming: an investigation began in 2013 and is currently underway.



Investigators from the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) joined ENV for three days behind closed doors in Hanoi mapping out the illegal tiger trade network. Using advanced software to analyze information collected from nearly 100 tiger cases logged by ENV over the past nine years, as well as reliable information from key informants on the ground, the team was able to successfully identify relationships between key figures that were formerly unknown. The outcomes of the investigation will be used as part of a broader initiative by ENV, involving working with government to seek prosecution of major figures who stand behind the illegal smuggling and trade of tigers and rhino horn destined for consumers in Vietnam.

## Crime Unit statistics January – March 2014

ENV’s Wildlife Crime Unit (WCU) was established in 2005, and operates a national toll free hotline through which the public can report crimes. Trained case officers receive the information and transfer it to the appropriate authorities, tracking each case through to conclusion, and documenting the results and outcome on the Wildlife Crime Incident Tracking Database, a web-based platform for management and analysis of all cases reported to ENV.

Since the establishment of the WCU, hundreds of animals have been confiscated, including a long list of native species such as bears, gibbons, leopard cats, and lorises as well as countless quantities of wildlife meat, and wildlife parts and products, as a result of ENV’s work. Successful actions have resulted in fines and punishment for violators, and in some cases, closures of restaurants and markets. A sizeable part of ENV’s success in addressing wildlife crime has also involved voluntary compliance by business owners following warnings issued by ENV and subsequent monitoring by ENV volunteers.

“Without a doubt, the single greatest achievement of the crime unit has not been the success of individual cases, but the increased transparency and accountability of law enforcement agencies at the local level,” said Douglas Hendrie, a technical advisor to ENV who oversees the crime unit’s development. “‘Business as usual’ ended in 2005 when the crime unit started tracking cases and bringing transparency into the equation.”

Hendrie notes that the “good guys” cooperate with ENV because they share common interests and values with ENV in making a difference. “The bad guys?...well... they are just bad guys, and as the country develops, their numbers will continue to decline.”

Since 2005, ENV has documented 6,528 cases which include 15,349 individual violations.

Details are as follows:

Description	January-March 2014 (violations)	2005-present (violations)
Selling and advertising wildlife	842	8,998
Possession (without legal origin)	132	3,101
Hunting	7	160
Smuggling and trade	80	3,022
Other	0	68
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,061</b>	<b>15,349</b>



Three lucky leopard cats in Dong Thap province seized from traders after a concerned citizen contacted ENV’s Wildlife Crime Hotline



Authorities paint over a sign advertising bear bile as part of a campaign by ENV and local Forest Rangers to remove illegal advertisements

## Tiger farm inspections continue

Inspections continue of all nine private zoos and tiger farms in Vietnam where approximately 115 tigers are maintained in captivity. Inspections are carried out both with local law enforcement and independently by ENV as part of an effort to ensure that private tiger owners are not engaging in illegal activities.

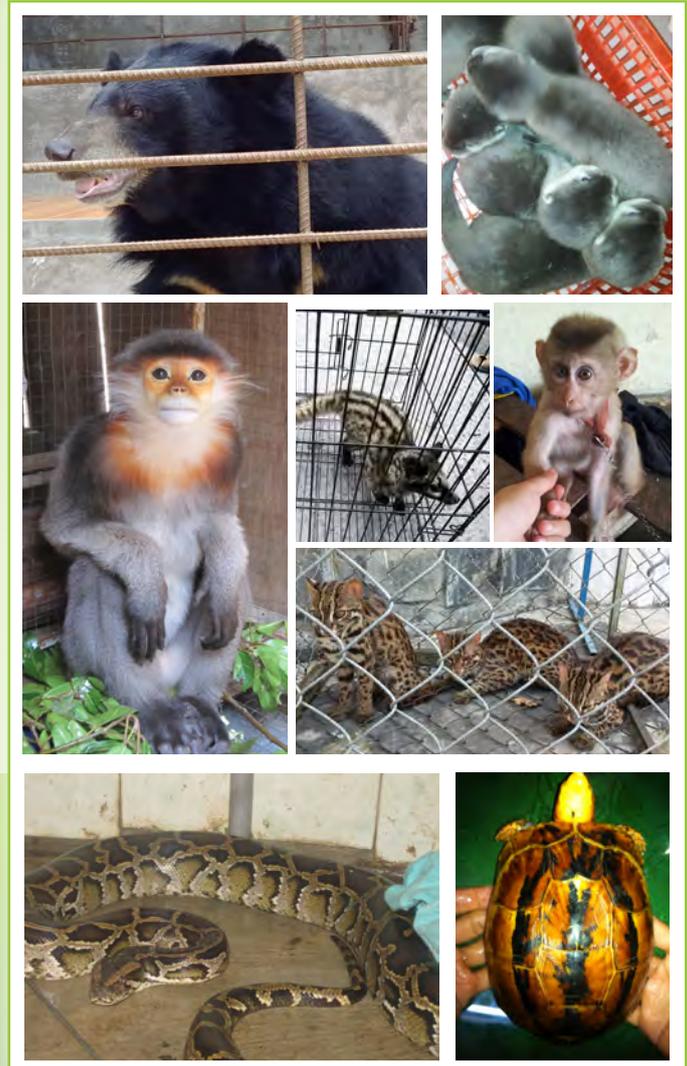


## Thanh's Zoo

**Every time there is a successful case outcome** and an animal is transferred from the hands of traders and sellers, cheering erupts from behind the closed doors of the crime unit within the ENV office. Case officer Thanh, a relatively new member of the team, has been on a roll with repeated successes in her southern region of the country where she manages hotline cases in 32 provinces. Within the WCU, her collection of animals saved from the brink of sure death is referred to as "Thanh's Zoo" and each success is marked with another animal sketch added to the whiteboard.

Thanh is not alone in her successes: the internet crime officer Huyen has prevailed over more than 80% of the cases she manages, eliminating more than 800 advertisements selling wildlife. Case officer Mai has been running the GEO consumer crime campaign and her efforts have resulted in a 42% reduction in consumer crime in eight districts of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Then there is CB Phuong, who handles the more difficult northern region, and has just begun to collect successes for her "zoo". Van Anh, the bear crime officer is less fortunate; her successes are most commonly limited to the removal of bear bile signs, bear paw wine and the occasional live bear, which do not look as attractive or impressive when drawn on the departmental board (except of course, when concerning a live bear!), yet are a key part of our work to eliminate the trade in bear products in Vietnam.

Between January and March, Thanh and her colleagues can claim success in securing confiscation or transfer of five otters, three marine turtles, seven leopard cats, two civets, 15 macaques, a loris, an endangered endemic box turtle, an critically endangered gray shank douc langur, a python, and a bear, amongst seizure of meats and various wildlife products from restaurants and businesses.



**Wildlife crime fighters working to protect their country's wildlife**



## Lam Dong enforcement campaign targets consumer crimes in 12 districts

Thanks in part to support from ENV through an ENV and Australian-based Humane Society International Wildlife Action Grant, Lam Dong Forest Protection Department (FPD), in partnership with the Environmental Police (EP) and Market Management authorities, were able to complete a consumer crime campaign which targeted restaurants and other establishments in 11 districts and the city of Da Lat. The campaign began in October 2013 and concluded in January, with a total of 52 restaurants and other establishments inspected.

Violations were discovered in 18 establishments, resulting in confiscation of 61 live animals including lorises, leopard cats, macaques, civets, and monitor lizards, and a quantity of wildlife meat. ENV participated as an observer during inspections in only three districts.



Animal parts and meat seized by Lam Dong authorities during the three-month long campaign

## Demand Reduction Campaign: On the airwaves

### New TV advertisement: Killing tigers does not impress anyone

ENV's first public service announcement (PSA) which targets tiger bone medicine consumers was released in February. The 30 second advertisement features a rising star in a company who makes a bad impression during his first board meeting, by offering tiger bone as a gift to the other board members who refuse the gift.

By the end of March, the PSA was airing on national VTV1 and on provincial channels in 40 provinces throughout

Vietnam, with additional provinces scheduled to begin airing in April.

"Some people believe that using tiger bone as a form of medicine is also fashionable and a kind of status symbol", says Mrs. Dung, Vice-Director of ENV. "However, in order to grow, develop, and become a progressive and enlightened people, we need to move away from exploiting animals, such as killing tigers, based on falsely-held beliefs about the magical medicinal value of their bones." Tiger bone is commonly given as a gift to gain favor or used as an indicator of status, similar to the perceived status associated with use of rhino horn.

This advertisement is the 18th public service announcement to be produced by ENV so far, and is part of a long-term campaign to reduce consumer demand for endangered wildlife threatened by hunting and trade. The elimination of the demand for wildlife products is absolutely vital as wildlife populations continue to be threatened; sadly, there are estimated to be just 30 tigers remaining in the wild in Vietnam. Time is absolutely of the essence if we are to succeed in preserving this majestic animal in its natural habitat.

Watch PSA here: <http://bit.ly/envtigerpsa>



In the PSA, board members refused to accept tiger bone medicine gift from a new executive



### On the Air with the Voice of Vietnam Radio

Bringing key issues to the public on national radio remains a central part of ENV's efforts to raise awareness and gain public support for efforts to protect wildlife in Vietnam. Since 2005, ENV and Voice of

Vietnam Radio (VOV) have hosted a total of 87 monthly radio shows featuring discussion, interviews, and relevant news on key topics relating to wildlife protection.

During the first three months of 2014, ENV and VOV hosted shows on the issue of wildlife farming, reducing consumer demand for wildlife over the Tet holiday, and urging consumers to give up the use of bear bile.



VTV2 talk show:  
Don't consume wildlife during Tet holidays

ENV's National Bear Program Co-ordinator and Environmental Police participated in a talk show calling on the public to reduce wildlife consumption just prior to the Lunar New Year holiday, when consumption of wildlife is believed to be at its highest each year.

ENV rhino ambassador Xuan Bac tells millions of viewers "rhino horn is not magical medicine"

National superstar and comedian Xuan Bac told millions of viewers across Vietnam that rhino horn is not a status symbol nor a magical medicine during the annual Tao Quan festival event. The festival, which is watched by millions of Vietnamese people as a key part of family entertainment during each lunar New Year, hosts celebrities and comedians poking fun at many critical social and economic issues. Xuan Bac, who traveled to South Africa in 2013 with ENV to see first-hand the impacts of poaching at Kruger National Park, integrated the commentary about rhinos into his routine for the event as part of his continued personal commitment to help bring an end to the killing of rhinos.



Comedian Xuan Bac during a visit to South Africa in 2013 where he did much to improve the image of Vietnam amongst South Africans

Vietnam Idol Uyen Linh urges listeners to help put an end to the bear bile industry

A new radio advertisement released in January features star of Vietnam Idol, Uyen Linh, urging the public to bring an end to the cruel and illegal bear bile industry by committing not to consume bear bile. Uyen Linh has supported ENV's efforts to end bear farming and trade since 2011 when she joined ENV on National Bear Day and signed the 100,000th pledge not to consume bear bile that ENV has collected from the public.



Café Sang

ENV and VTV hosted a seminar for journalists from VTV on the wildlife trade as part of continued efforts to promote coverage of the wildlife trade issue by the media. Forty journalists attended the seminar where a giant pledge card was signed by participants committing not to consume wildlife. The seminar was later aired on the daily morning show, Café Sang.



**In production: Bear PSA features TV actor Trung Hieu**

Another PSA currently in production by ENV targets bear bile consumers and features actor Trung Hieu promising his daughter that his family will never use bear bile after his daughter is moved to tears by a graphic program on TV showing the extraction of bile from a captive bear.



**In Production: Rhino PSA starring famous comedian Chi Trung**

A new PSA currently in production by ENV features famous comedian Chi Trung playing the part of a rich and successful businessman, flaunting his wealth and success to the public by showing them a piece of rhino horn, only to be shamed by the crowd for his ignorance.



**Demand Reduction Campaign: On the street**

**Engaging the public**

ENV teams in Ho Chi Minh City, central Vietnam, and Hanoi carried out eight wildlife trade events in parks and other public forums during the first three months of 2014. The awareness events, which involve the display of exhibit panels, resource distribution, and participatory activities such as a wildlife trade quiz and opinion board, are one important way that ENV keeps its finger on the pulse of public attitudes and opinions.

A total of 252 public events have been carried out by ENV in urban centers throughout Vietnam since 2007 when the mobile program started.



An ENV educator urges students to protect tigers and other wildlife in a district in Nghe An known as a center for tiger trading

**Reaching the next generation in universities: You can make a difference!**

ENV carried out university seminars on the wildlife trade at seven universities during the first three months of 2014, including one in each of the cities of Dong Ha, Hue and Da Nang in central Vietnam, two in Hanoi, and one in Ho Chi Minh City. The university seminars are aimed at raising awareness and building support amongst the next generation in Vietnam, and empowering young people in the belief that “they can make a difference.” Students can get involved by not consuming wildlife, educating others, reporting wildlife crimes, or volunteering with ENV.

ENV has carried out seminars at 90 universities in more than 20 provinces since the program began several years ago.



Vinh University students express their views during a debate on wildlife farming



Students speak out at a university seminar about the wildlife trade in Da Nang



The ENV mobile outreach team and the new Quang Tri Outpost on mission in the province of Quang Tri in March

### Volunteer clubs host bear events in four cities



Volunteers deliver a bear event as part of an expanding program targeting major cities in Vietnam with a range of activities aimed at reducing consumer demand for wildlife

In another attempt to expand outreach activities targeting the consumption of bear related products, during the first three months of 2014 ENV's Wildlife Protection Clubs in Hai Phong city, Hanoi, Vinh City of Nghe An, and in Binh Duong province hosted a total of seven "End Bear Farming and Trade" events in parks and at universities. Linked to the development of "ENV outposts" the volunteer clubs received training, materials, and support from ENV to host the events.



ENV has formed partnerships with luxury car dealers including Mercedes, BMW, and MG as part of a developing campaign to reach rhino horn consumers and would be consumers

### Customs initiative: Raising the profile of wildlife crime

ENV has completed placement of awareness panels at 33 Customs offices in ten priority provinces as part of an initiative aimed at raising the profile of "wildlife crime" amongst frontline Customs officers serving at airports, ports, and border posts.

A general translation of the message on the panels reads, "Wildlife trafficking is a serious crime. Stop smuggling of wildlife at the borders!"

Display panel placements include eight offices in Ho Chi Minh City, including the international airport and main port facility, as well as at Customs offices in Ha Tinh, Quang Tri, Nghe An, and Tay Ninh, where major border crossings are known to be hotspots for wildlife trafficking.

Wildlife trafficking has generally been considered a low priority when compared with other forms of smuggling, such as drugs or high value consumer goods. ENV seeks to raise the profile of wildlife as a priority amongst others for Customs authorities and work with government partners to tighten enforcement at major entry points in Vietnam.

**HÃY NGẮN CHẶN**  
**BUÔN LẬU ĐỘNG VẬT HOANG DÃ**  
**NGAY TẠI CỬA KHẨU**

**Buôn lậu ĐVHD**  
**là tội phạm nghiêm trọng**

Kính báo cáo các loài ĐVHD nguy cấp và loài bị đe dọa theo Điều 300 Hiến Pháp được liệt kê trong Phụ lục 7 kèm

## Government initiative: Promoting wildlife protection amongst government employees



As part of an ongoing initiative aimed at raising awareness amongst government employees, ENV has partnered with a number of ministries at the central level and provincial agencies to place awareness banners in the main lobby and entrances of government buildings. Since the program began, nine ministries have participated with the program including the Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Information and Communication, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Tourism, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the Ministry of Justice. Banners have also been placed prominently in 72 government offices and agencies, mostly at the city or provincial level. During the first three months of 2014, two ministries and 16 additional provincial agencies joined the program that utilizes five different banners: two focused on wildlife consumption, one on bear bile, one on rhino horn, and the last on tiger bone. The banners are displayed for up to several months before being replaced with a new design.

## Market banner campaign: Reaching the public where they shop

Similar to the placement of banners in government offices, ENV has also focused on use of banners in public markets in major cities throughout Vietnam. So far, 155 markets have displayed banners with 55 participating in a program involving the display of five different banners (2 wildlife consumption, tiger, rhino horn, and bear bile awareness messages) for periods of 1-2 months each prior to replacement. Eleven new markets have joined the program during January through March of 2014.

## Ending bear farming and trade

In 2005 there were about 4,500 bears in captivity on bear farms in Vietnam. Nearly all of these bears were illegally sourced from the wild, most as cubs, in direct violation of criminal law. Bile was routinely extracted from the live bears and sold on to Vietnamese consumers.



Inside the gates of Ha Long's bear farms where bears have been exploited to supply Korean tourists for years. Recent actions by the provincial leadership suggest that this type of business will come to an end

However in 2005, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), supported by the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), committed to phasing out bear farming in Vietnam. Over the following year, MARD registered and inserted a microchip into all captive bears on farms, prohibiting any new bears (without registration or microchip) from ending up on farms. The government commitment coincided with the initiation of ENV's national campaign to end bear farming and trade through a combination of reducing consumer demand for bear bile, strengthening enforcement, tightening up legislation and ensuring application of existing laws and policies to prevent further growth of the industry and new bears from reaching farms.

Since 2005, the number of bears on bear farms has dropped significantly with fewer than 2,100 bears currently known to remain on farms and numbers continue to decline.



## Closing Ha Long Bay's Bear Farms

After nearly five months of intensive efforts, hopes are high that the Quang Ninh provincial government will close the bear bile tourism farms in Ha Long City once and for all, following issuance of a directive from provincial leaders ordering the farms to be closed.

Since 2007, ENV, with support from the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), have been campaigning to shut down several bear farms in Ha Long that entertain and sell bear bile to busloads of tourists (mostly from Korea) that visit the farms. The provincial leadership has consistently called for action in dealing with the problem, but responsible agencies within the province have been slow to act, ineffective, and resistant in implementing the orders of their provincial leaders.

Having exhausted nearly every possible means to put an end to bear bile tourism in Ha Long City, ENV embarked on a campaign in November that involved a solid month of surveillance seven days a week outside the bear farms. During the 30 day period, 42 buses were observed entering the two remaining bear farms. As field teams watched the farms, the legislation and policy team at ENV prepared and sent a letter to the Prime Minister, along with copies of more than 70 pieces of correspondence produced over the last six years documenting the monumental effort and lack of results shutting down bear bile tourism in Quang Ninh. As a result of this last-ditch effort to address the issue, the Prime Minister's office called upon the province to deal with the issue decisively, and ENV received a correspondence January 12th from the Quang Ninh People's Committee which instructed provincial agencies to shut down the bear farms permanently and prohibit any visitation to the bear farms. According to the correspondence, "bear farm owners must sign a commitment not to conduct any bear bile tourism business, and only members of staff of these facilities are permitted to enter the farms."

Moreover, the provincial People's Committee formed an interagency inspection force comprised of Forest Protection Department rangers, police, and ENV, to conduct inspections of the farms and ensure compliance with the People's Committee's orders.

On March 19, the Task Force initiated surveillance and inspections, with two teams on the ground for seven days a week. During the first week, three buses full of Korean tourists were prevented from entering farms and turned back. Inspection teams entered the farms



A member of the Task Force looks on as a group of Korean tourists are required to re-board a bus that has stopped at one of the Ha Long Bear farms. During the first few weeks of task force operations, buses were turned away. Since then, there have been no buses recorded

regularly adding further pressure on owners, and since the end of March, there have been no further attempts by farm owners to bring in tourists. One of the farms reportedly closed their business, and the Korean partners collected their equipment from the facility. A second farm, operated by a gangster that has aggressively threatened surveillance teams and even attempted to injure ENV staff during surveillance operations in November, remains open but without customers.

"Having participated in the first round of inspections as a member of the task force, I am hopeful that the authorities will exercise resolve in bringing an end to this terrible bear bile business at Ha Long Bay," says Nguyen Phuong Dung, Vice Director of ENV and manager of ENV's bear program. "However, as we have learned many times in the past, it's not over until it's over and celebration will only come when the gates of these farms are sealed permanently." Dung says that until then, she remains "cautiously optimistic".

The task force will remain active until the end of April, after which the province will determine if continuation is necessary. The province will also install large signs in front of the farms in Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese advising tourists not to enter the farms.

## Pressuring bear farmers to get out of the bear bile business

While ENV’s approach to ending bear farming and trade in Vietnam is fully integrated into its enforcement, demand reduction, and policy and legislative campaigns, one component of interest stands out on its own. Run by a small team of very passionate and committed staff, ENV has been running a program for three years aimed at pressuring bear farmers to “get out of the business”. Dubbed the “Psyops” program internally, ENV targets bear farmers all over the country with regular communications in the form of monthly letters, post cards, and telephone calls, as a form of pressure designed to make them feel uncomfortable with their illegal business and give it up.

Since the program began in 2012, ENV has sent more than 20,000 letters to bear farmers and made 4,568 telephone calls. Regular radio advertising, such as

the new Uyen Linh commercial, PSAs on TV, growing support from celebrities and the public, particularly younger people, and seemingly never-ending noise in the media may be finally taking its toll on bear farmers. ENV has also focused targeted campaigns on two bear farm hotspots, Quynh Luu district in Nghe An province and Phuc Tho district in Hanoi, where large numbers of bears and bear farms are concentrated. “Hotspot” missions involve programs carried out in bear farm communities including market campaigns, farm visits and inspections, bear bile sign removal campaigns, use of the community public address system, programs in schools, and visits to neighbors of bear farmers. All of these activities are intended to place additional pressure on bear farmers and make it increasingly difficult for them to carry on with their business.



A market event in the heart of a bear farming community draws interest from the public



ENV staff visit neighbors of bear farmers as a means of increasing pressure; in the background is a sign advertising a bear farm



Kids watch in silence a short film showing a bear bile extraction that was filmed within their community



ENV volunteers distribute materials to local vendors in the market as part of the hotspot campaign

(Continued page 13)

(Pressuring bear farmers... continued from page 12)

In Quynh Luu district in Nghe An province, where 39 farms were concentrated, the number of bears on bear farms declined by 50% with 32 bears remaining in the district in 2013. In a campaign in partnership with the district Forest Protection Department, 22 of 23 signs advertising bear bile in the district were also removed.

In 2014, ENV has refocused most of the field team's attention on Phuc Tho district in Hanoi, where bear farmers are more resistant to change. Monthly missions to the district provide a source of consistent

pressure on the farmers. As of the end of March, three missions have been completed this year. These have involved meetings with commune leaders, airing three public address system programs in targeted communities, four events in public markets, and visits to 83 neighbors of bear farmers to discuss their neighbor's activities and distribute information. Following up on activities carried out in 2013, several programs are currently being developed for both middle and high schools, including the establishment of Bear Warrior Clubs in local schools and a competition for high school students, to help amplify the message to bear farmers in the district.

## Policy and legislation

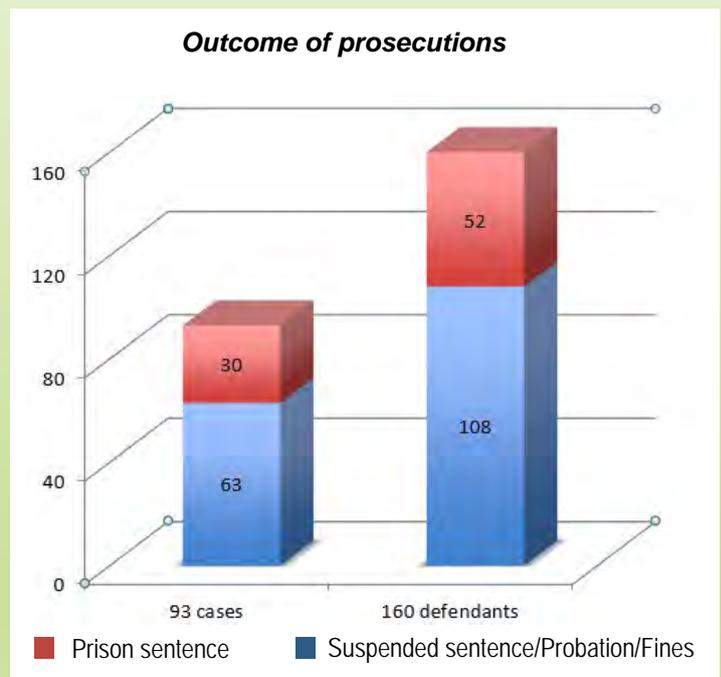
### Review of criminal prosecutions raises questions about effectiveness of current practices in protecting endangered species

In March, ENV released a review of nearly 100 criminal prosecutions for serious wildlife crimes that were documented by ENV's Wildlife Crime Unit between 2010 to the end of 2013. The results of the review showed that only a third of those prosecuted for serious wildlife crimes were sentenced to prison terms, and that during the three year period, there were no arrests or prosecutions of "kingpins" or senior figures in criminal enterprises engaged in smuggling and trade of rhino horn, tigers, ivory, and other high-value wildlife.

#### Some key facts from the review:

- Roughly one-third (30) of the 93 cases brought to trial resulted in imprisonment of one or more of the defendants. Defendants in the remaining 63 cases received suspended sentences or probation.
- Of 160 defendants in 93 cases, 52 were sent to prison for terms averaging 24 months.
- The review shows that only low level criminal operators such as hunters, drivers, middlemen and fixers have been subject to prosecution.
- Only 2 of 17 tiger cases resulted in prison sentences for one or more people involved.
- There were no successful prosecutions of cases involving rhino horn smuggling and trade on record during the review period.
- Of 13 criminal cases involving bears, two resulted in imprisonment of one or more defendants.

ENV concluded as a result of the review that current application of the law does not sufficiently



meet the protection needs of endangered species in Vietnam as intended under the law. The review also would suggest that punishment administered for criminal cases involving protected wildlife may not be sufficient to deter further criminal behavior.

The results of this review are being utilized by ENV as part of a broader initiative aimed at strengthening protection for endangered wildlife through a combined strategy addressing weaknesses in the law, targeting and prosecution of "kingpins", and helping to establish a meaningful and effective deterrence.

A summary report on the review can be found on ENV's website: <http://bit.ly/ENVsummaryreport>

## Overcoming obstacles in tackling criminal networks

Over the past year, ENV has hosted dozens of one-on-one meetings with a range of politicians, judges, prosecutors, and members of the law enforcement community, to gain their insight and advice on how ENV should go about addressing the need to target and “take down” criminal networks that are responsible for much of the illegal smuggling and trade of high-value wildlife such as tigers, rhino horn, elephant ivory, and pangolins.

In March 2014, ENV hosted a roundtable meeting with key members of the law enforcement community, prosecutors, and several judges, to discuss the effectiveness of current laws, enforcement, and punishment and learn more about why kingpins seem impervious to the law.

During the meeting, participants had a refreshingly frank and open discussion about the obstacles they felt stood in the way of effective protection for endangered wildlife in Vietnam. Legislative loopholes, conflicts in the law, and difficulties police face in pursuing investigations of major criminals were raised as concerns at the meeting. Likewise some police representatives expressed concern over light prison sentences, the relatively low priority given to investigations of major criminal networks, and the fact that major criminal figures tend to remain distant from detectable criminal activity.

In February 2014, the Prime Minister issued a directive (No. 3) calling on the courts, police, and relevant agencies and arms of government to strengthen the fight against trans-national organized crime and enhance investigations, prosecution and punishment of



Chief Judge Pham Minh Tuyen presided over the meeting of law enforcement officers and prosecutors discussing the need for stronger laws and punishment

criminals involved in the trade of rhino horn, ivory, and other wildlife.

“We applaud the actions of the Prime Minister in addressing this issue so clearly in the directive,” said Ms. Vu Thi Quyen, Executive Director of ENV. “This sort of attention at the highest levels is necessary to achieve success on the ground.” Quyen added, “We hope that it is sustained over time as this battle will not be won overnight and will require all relevant agencies to think in a different and more ‘outcome focused’ way to achieve success.”

By 2015, ENV plans to have active campaigns in place targeting major kingpins and their networks, lifting the veil of protection that many of these people enjoy, and aggressively pursuing their prosecution and punishment.

## New Fisheries Law strengthens protection for marine species

Another new decree that became law in late 2013 regulates punishment for violations relating to marine and aquatic species. As a result of a close partnership between ENV and the Fisheries Department in drafting the law, Decree 103, which replaced a previous version of the decree, strengthened the law greatly; amongst improvements resulting from ENV support, the new decree now includes violations relating to raising, keeping, and storing protected marine species (absent from the previous version). Additional improvements include setting higher punishment for species based on their protection status (IUCN Red List), and a requirement that confiscated wildlife such as marine turtles be released back into their habitat and dead animals and products confiscated. The maximum fine for violations was also raised to 100 million VND (~\$5,000) from the previous cap of 25 million (~\$1,250).



## Dealing with disposal of ivory stockpiles and other high value wildlife products

In January, ENV issued a formal request to the Central Customs Department to incinerate an estimated 25 tons of ivory that has accumulated from seizures in Vietnam in recent years. The request cited the recent actions of the United States, Kenya, China, and other countries in destroying ivory stockpiles. At the same time ENV also issued a media statement to the press, resulting in extensive coverage of the issue including interviews with senior government officials at the March government meeting.

Mrs. Nguyen Phuong Dung, Vice Director of ENV said in the statement, "We support the incineration of ivory stockpiles because it communicates a strong message to the world about our commitment as a nation to

help stop the slaughter of elephants." Dung noted that past legal sales of ivory in other countries have been a mistake, compromising the effectiveness of enforcement by forcing frontline enforcement officers to regulate legal and illegal products side by side. "Such a system of management is well beyond our present-day capacity to regulate effectively." ENV's initiative coincided with a formal request from CITES Vietnam to the Prime Minister to destroy stockpiles, which is reportedly now under strong consideration.

ENV has long championed requirements that would prohibit local authorities from allowing ivory, tiger bone, or parts or products from other high value protected species to re-enter the market through legal or illegal means following confiscation.

In a 2013 case in Nghe An, efforts by ENV to stop the sale of confiscated ivory resulted in a revision of a court verdict by the provinces chief judge and placement of the evidence in the Natural History Museum. The same judge then issued a correspondence to all 63 courts in Nghe An guiding the courts on proper disposal of ivory.

In a landmark case in a northern province, ENV also successfully prevented the auction of a dead tiger confiscated from traders. ENV has since used the case to ensure that all tigers confiscated in any province of Vietnam are disposed of in accordance with the law, and not resold as was often the case in the past. Similar outcomes have been achieved in recent years for large marine turtle seizures, live bears, and other critically endangered wildlife.



## Speaking out: The voice of the people

The comments below were collected from the public through various activities hosted by ENV.

*"Deep from the bears' eye, the tears spilled out as a message for help. The bear begs people to protect them, not kill them, and give them a peaceful life in the jungle with fresh air, free life and with their family"*

Chu Thuy Quynh, Age 17 after watching ENV's bear bile extraction film at a public event

*"Using the tiger bone medicine is not only a waste of money, but also ineffective in curing diseases and supports illegal activities. Why don't you go to the doctor for diagnosis and a prescription?"*

A man in Hanoi at a public event in February on use of tiger bone medicine



The future looks brighter for Vietnam's wildlife: young people show greater concern for nature and the environment, and display a willingness to get involved in bringing change

*"I also like rhino horn but with one condition the horn must be on the face of a rhino"*

Ngoc Bao Tr n commenting on ENV's viral channel in March

*"People who consume wildlife are really ignorant and backwards because their actions indirectly destroy the environment and slaughter many wild animals in nature"*

Comments from a student at an ENV university seminar held in March in Hanoi.



EDUCATION FOR NATURE-VIETNAM

Education for Nature - Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam's first non-governmental organization focused on the conservation of nature and protection of the environment. Our mission is to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about the need to protect nature and wildlife. We employ creative and innovative strategies to influence public attitudes and mobilize Vietnamese citizens to live in balance with the natural world. We work closely with government partners to strengthen policy and legislation and directly support enforcement efforts in the protection of endangered species of national, regional and global significance.

### **ENV strategic programs**

ENV focuses its activities on three major program areas that comprise ENV's integrated strategic approach for addressing illegal wildlife trade. These include:

- Reducing consumer demand for wildlife products through investment in a long-term and sustained effort to influence public attitudes and behavior
- Strengthening enforcement through direct support and assistance to law enforcement agencies, and mobilizing active public participation in helping combat wildlife crime
- Working with policy-makers to strengthen legislation, close loopholes in the law, and promote sound policy and decision-making relevant to wildlife protection.

ENV wishes to thank the following donors for supporting our efforts to protect nature and wildlife in Vietnam:

- Auckland Zoo
- Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
- Columbus Zoo and Aquarium
- Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)
- Freeland Foundation (ARREST Program)
- Houston Zoo
- Humane Society International (HSI) of Australia
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- Rhinose Foundation
- Save the Rhinos International (SRI)
- SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund
- The Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics
- The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)

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