TIKTOK PARTNERS WITH ENV TO TACKLE WILDLIFE CRIME

17 TIGERS SEIZED IN NGHE AN IS A GOOD START

CHURCHES AND PAGODAS ARE NO PLACE FOR WILDLIFE

News from the front lines of ENV’s efforts to protect wildlife
**CRIME FIGHTERS**

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, ENV has continued the fight for wildlife. In September 2021, three sting operations with police were carried out resulting in the arrest of three wildlife traders and the confiscation of a live Asiatic black bear cub, as well as the seizure of 200 vials of suspected bear bile and 400 grams of pangolin scales – among many other live animals rescued throughout September.

**WILDLIFE CRIME DATA AT A GLANCE**

2,666 new wildlife crime cases in 2021, comprised of

7,295 individual violations

66.5% of cases result in confiscation/arrest

538 live wild animals have been confiscated/transferred after reports to ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline

1,686 new cases are reported by the public to ENV each year

9.8 new cases are reported by the public to ENV each day

1,802 internet crime cases documented in 2021, comprised of

6,113 individual violations

87% of all internet crimes reported to ENV result in a successful outcome

**BIG PICTURE**

20,980 wildlife crime cases comprised of 56,684 violations have been logged by ENV since 2005

**SHUTTING DOWN ONLINE MARKETS**

Recently, there has been a rise in internet crime where online markets, such as Facebook groups with thousands of members, are buying and selling wildlife online. Thanks to an established partnership with Facebook and other major social media platforms, ENV has been continuously deactivating these groups, essentially closing down wildlife markets. In August and September alone, ENV successfully shut down 24 online markets serving a customer base of 109,964 members. These groups ranged across a wide variety of species and violations, including major bird, turtle, and snake groups; groups with a diverse variety of live animals and animal products; specialized groups for otters, macaques, and leopard cats; groups for bird trapping equipment; wildlife hunting groups; and regionally focused groups, such as the “Dak Lak Hunting” group.
TikTok partners with ENV to Tackle Online Wildlife Crime

Since 2018, ENV has partnered with Facebook to tackle wildlife trade violations on their platform, resulting in thousands of violation links removed and accounts belonging to online wildlife traders deactivated. Since then, ENV has continued to expand our partnerships to include other social media giants like Google (YouTube), as well as local platforms like Zalo and Shopee. In September 2021, the popular short video platform TikTok officially partnered with ENV, further strengthening ENV’s efforts to combat wildlife crime online.

First TikTok Sting Success Yields Hefty Fine

ENV secured the first-ever successful sting operation from a wildlife case on TikTok, the popular video-sharing social network, following a report in June 2021 through the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline about several Oriental small-clawed otters being offered for sale on the app. After initial contact with the seller, ENV contacted police in Binh Duong province and arranged for the otters to be delivered to undercover police. One individual was arrested, and in September 2021, the case went to trial. The court ordered that the individual pay a VND 500,000,000 fine for trafficking wildlife online – roughly USD $22,000! This was the first such success from a case involving the advertisement of wildlife on TikTok.

Targeting Online Ivory Traders

In September, ENV’s online wildlife crime fighters conducted this year’s second online crime reduction campaign targeting ivory sellers. During the course of the first week of the campaign, 135 new cases were logged comprised of 375 violations. Case responses ranged from issuance of warnings and voluntary removal of links, to initiating a law enforcement response for more serious ivory crimes.

In 2021, ENV has carried out a total of 8 species-focused crime reduction campaigns targeting online sellers who advertise live animals, as well as parts and products from focus species such as bears, tigers, marine turtles, pangolins, rhinos, and elephants (ivory). Similar crime reduction campaigns are carried out each year by ENV, with a resolution success rate averaging 80-90% overall.
In July 2021, ENV released the latest public service announcement (PSA), *When Rhinos Lose Their Face, Consumers Lose Face Too* – a short film that emphasizes how respect is earned through honorable acts, not by trying to impress others with rhino horn.

In this comedic film, the protagonist is a young, ambitious businessman on his way to an important meeting. The audience is drawn to him – a respectable person who helps strangers through acts of kindness. However, while his good deeds are well-intentioned, he is motivated by a futuristic app that awards him a point for each good deed. As he tries desperately to earn more and more points, he eventually makes a fatal flaw, rooted in ignorance, and shamefully presents rhino horn to a business partner. By the end of September, this film was broadcast by 58 TV channels across Vietnam.

ENV’s latest PSA is the 47th public service announcement produced and aired on TV stations throughout the nation since 2005. PSA messages range from species-specific demand reduction, to promoting public reporting of wildlife crimes, with each one running for roughly three months and reaching millions of viewers.

**VOICE OF VIETNAM RADIO SHOW RECOGNIZES PROGRESS IN REDUCING RHINO POACHING NUMBERS**

ENV’s monthly radio show on Voice of Vietnam (VOV), the most-listened to radio station in the country, highlighted recent progress in reducing the number of rhinos poached in South Africa. ENV attributed the positive trend in part to greater awareness in Vietnam, strengthened law enforcement, and the harsh penalties being handed down by courts to rhino horn traffickers.

During the broadcast, ENV Law and Policy Director, Bui Thi Ha, called upon authorities to aggressively pursue arrests and prosecutions of the leaders of criminal networks that buy rhino horn from poachers in Africa and smuggle it into Vietnam.

The September VOV show was the 176th monthly ENV radio show that has been aired on VOV. These 176 shows have reached millions of listeners since 2005.
VIRALLY PROMOTING PUBLIC REPORTS OF WILDLIFE CRIME

The latest in a series of short films produced to promote public reporting of wildlife crime through ENV’s Wildlife Crime Hotline was released in September. The film was shared via ENV’s Vietnamese social media platforms, with an estimated reach of more than 3,500 people and accounts on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Watch the film here (in Vietnamese): ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline Viral Film

VOV RADIO ADVERTISING IN CENTRAL VIETNAM

Following a second month of airing radio advertisements in three central provinces of Vietnam that were focused on demand reduction and reporting wildlife crime, ENV is brainstorming new experimental advertisements to increase public reporting of wildlife crime in the area. Current advertisements feature celebrities urging the public not to consume wildlife, however, ENV wishes to develop a range of advertisements that can be tested in the central region to determine which type of ad(s) elicit a greater response from the public.

These ads in central Vietnam are in addition to ENV radio advertisements on the national VOV station. Beginning in 2021, ENV has been running “deterrence” advertisements aimed at spreading the message that strict penalties for wildlife crime are real, while urging the public to report wildlife crime to the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline.

DETERRENCE: STOPPING ONLINE CRIME BEFORE IT STARTS

While the crime unit fights an incoming tide of internet violations by removing links, issuing warnings, deactivating accounts, groups, and sites, and working with police to seize wildlife and make arrests, the communications arm of ENV is giving the Crime Unit a hand by reducing crime through deterrence.

Since 2020, ENV has bombarded social media with hundreds of advertisements aimed at deterring wildlife crime and securing more help from the public to report violations. Below are some examples of ENV’s viral wildlife crime deterrence ads.

"Do not advertise products from tiger teeth or claws. You can be fined up to VND 70-100 million Report violations to ENV’s Wildlife Crime Hotline"

"Be wise! Money cannot buy back the time you will lose in prison. The highest sentence for wildlife crime is 15 years in prison. Report wildlife violations to the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline 1800-1522”

"When bears lose their paws, traffickers lose their freedom. Advertising, storing, or transporting bear paws can result in up to 15 years in prison. Report violations to ENV’s Wildlife Crime Hotline 1800-1522”

"Không quảng cáo sản phẩm nanh, mông hổ"

"Dùng dại dò! Tiền không thể mua được thời gian bạn đã đánh mất"

"15 Năm Tử"

"Gấu mặt chỉ, người chí mạng tử do!”
In September, ENV’s Law and Policy team released a briefing to all 499 National Assembly members following the formation of the new National Assembly in May this year. The briefing was aimed at ensuring new lawmakers are aware of the challenges Vietnam faces in its efforts to tackle wildlife trafficking. The briefing also included ENV’s “10 Critical Actions to Tackle Wildlife Trafficking in Vietnam,” a list of priorities for Vietnam that ENV updates and releases annually.

“Familiarizing National Assembly members with the situation is the first step in a multistep process,” says Bui Thi Ha, ENV’s Law and Policy Director. “Identifying officials within the government that have an interest in the issue and are willing to get involved is the first objective, then engaging those leaders to act upon their interest will follow.”

ENV started working with key leaders in the National Assembly and relevant committees more than a decade ago. New elections always require a re-engagement initiative, particularly with new members. The arrival of Covid-19 in Vietnam in 2020 played a part in resetting national priorities as the country continues to deal with the crisis.

In September 2021, ENV also sent similar packages to provincial council members (Provincial-Level Assemblies) in 13 prioritized provinces.

**ENV has identified the 10 below critical actions that the Vietnamese government should take in order to effectively tackle the illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam.**

- Take down the leaders of wildlife criminal networks
- Eradicate corruption
- Establish effective deterrents
- Reduce the risk of future pandemics associated with wildlife consumption and trade
- Implement a clear ban on any form of commercial trade of endangered species
- Strengthen management of conservation facilities and non-commercial facilities
- Finish the job: End bear farming in Vietnam
- Strictly regulate and manage commercial wildlife farms
- Hold local authorities responsible for eradicating wildlife crime in their jurisdictions
- Pull the plug on internet wildlife crime
Most Law Enforcement Agencies Take Public Reporting of Crime Seriously

In September, ENV issued its annual law enforcement responsiveness report, which evaluates how law enforcement agencies all over the country respond to publicly reported wildlife crime. With huge numbers of cases reported to ENV each year and each case being tracked through to conclusion, ENV is able to evaluate whether there is a response following notification, and whether that response was successful. ENV also evaluates live animal successes as well, given that such cases tend to require a timely response by authorities.

Out of 1,035 actionable cases reported to authorities in 2020, the national average response rate was 97.6%, with 33.2% of those cases resulting in success. Enforcement agencies in Da Nang and Binh Duong led the nation with response rates of 100% each, and 64% and 62% success rates respectively.

Read more about law enforcement responsiveness to wildlife crime in Vietnam here: The Law Enforcement Responsiveness Report 2020

Env Prosecution Team Working With Prosecutors to Strengthen Deterrence

In 2018, ENV developed a team of “ENV prosecutors” to track criminal wildlife trafficking cases and provide active support to police, prosecutors, and the courts during the investigation and prosecution process on priority cases in order to ensure that these serious crimes result in sentences that deter crime.

The ENV Law and Policy team also provides routine support to agencies within the criminal justice system on application of relevant laws for cases involving wildlife.

A report just released by ENV details criminal cases in Vietnam from 2018-2020, and shows that Vietnam is making substantial progress in court cases that tackle wildlife crime. Find the report here: ENV Wildlife Crime Prosecution Review
The seizure of 17 tigers in Nghe An province in August was another important step forward in extending the rule of law to three districts in Nghe An where wildlife traffickers have enjoyed a certain degree of freedom from the reach of law. It is no accident that these three districts are home to nearly 13% of all wildlife traffickers convicted in Vietnam over the past 10 years. These districts are perhaps best known as centers for tiger trafficking, with possibly hundreds of tigers being kept and raised by private households at any one time – that is, before they’re slaughtered and sold to both Vietnamese and Chinese customers.

ENV initiated a strategic campaign to address tiger trafficking in Nghe An in 2019, providing key central and provincial agencies with profiles of key tiger traffickers, and heavily advocating with the People’s Committee to extend the rule of law to these “trafficking hotspot” districts. In late 2020, the first law enforcement action was executed, resulting in warnings issued to a number of suspected tiger farmers. ENV and police inspectors visited the homes of major traffickers, though no tigers were found during these inspections. In March, the provincial People’s Committee issued an instruction to subordinate agencies asking that they aggressively address the issue, as advocated by ENV.

In July, the Economic Police advised ENV that their investigation would yield results shortly, after which tigers were seized from two separate locations, totaling 17 animals.

ENV has commended the actions of both the People’s Committee and the Economic Police for executing successful operations resulting in these seizures. ENV has also provided police with information showing that the tigers that were seized from private households belonged to a notable tiger trafficker in the province.

Current ENV efforts focus on supporting the placement of the tigers as well as the police investigation, ensuring that the seizures result in prosecutions and imprisonment.
In September, the ENV Law and Policy team sent awareness postcards to priests and monks at 564 churches and 835 pagodas nationally. This was the second round of communications forming part of a broader campaign aimed at addressing wildlife crime at religious establishments.

In late 2020, ENV crime statistics showed that an unusually high number of live animal possession cases were at churches, mainly in southern provinces. Meanwhile, an investigation of street vendors selling turtles in Ho Chi Minh City linked back to the Buddhist ritual of releasing live turtles in pagoda ponds in some cases. In both the church and pagoda cases, the animals were illegally sourced.

ENV embarked on a crime reduction campaign targeting pagoda turtles and live animal possession cases (mainly macaques) at churches. Designed as a communications campaign targeting parish priests and Buddhist monks, ENV initially aims to raise awareness and secure cooperation to address wildlife violations. The awareness is then backed by a rigorous enforcement campaign involving police and Forest Protection Department action where violations are found, followed by regular monitoring of violating establishments.

As of the end of September, ENV has begun to receive responses from at least three pagodas offering their support in helping to transfer turtles kept in their ponds. ENV expects that additional sites with turtles will be reported, and is actively working with law enforcement on transfers at a number of other establishments.
At the end of September, 327 bears remained on bile farms in Vietnam, a 92% reduction from the more than 4,300 bears in captivity in 2005 when the government initiated efforts to phase out bear farming. Since 2005, ENV has led a multifaceted campaign to bring an end to bear farming in Vietnam that has yielded substantial progress over time. Successes include strengthening laws to protect bears, actively working with police to address bear crime, engaging bear farmers, and partnering with celebrities and the public to reduce consumer demand and keep the issue a national priority.

A passage from an inspiring letter by one of the 97,184 young Vietnamese students that sent letters from all over the country to ENV, urging bear bile farmers to give up their cruel and illegal business of exploiting bears. This excerpt was posted on ENV’s Vietnamese social media in September, resulting in hundreds of new pledges by the public not to consume bear bile. So far, ENV has collected a total of 240,984 pledges from Vietnamese citizens.

Last year, ENV distributed thousands of similar letters to bear farmers throughout Vietnam urging them to give up their bears and stop bile farming.

Each month, ENV sends postcards to every bear bile farmer in the country, reminding them that the bears they keep are illegally sourced, and that the bear bile business is itself illegal and a dying industry. In short, life is better if you transfer your bears!

Since 2019, a total of 43 bears have been transferred to rescue centers by bile farmers, with many more transferred from other bear-keeping facilities, such as the Hanoi Circus and numerous tourist facilities.
Vietnam’s criminal justice system has failed to utilize the law effectively in order to arrest, prosecute, and punish rhino horn traffickers.

Since the enactment of the revised penal code in 2018, there have been 20 seizures of rhino horn, with 18 of these seizures resulting in arrests. Fourteen of these 18 cases resulted in prosecution and conviction. Eleven of the 14 convictions resulted in a prison sentence for one or more subjects, and a total of 16 rhino horn traffickers were imprisoned, with sentences ranging from 1 year to 12.5 years. The average prison term for rhino horn trafficking in Vietnam stands at 6.35 years – considerably higher than the already outstanding 4.71 years for wildlife trafficking cases overall.

In fact, Vietnam’s criminal justice system has an exceptional track record in dealing with wildlife traffickers in general, and may be considered superior to that of most other nations, including many developed countries. Read more in ENV’s 2020 prosecution report: ENV Wildlife Crime Prosecution Review

In the past few years, Vietnam has arrested four major top-tier traffickers, some of them being leaders of international wildlife trafficking networks. All four individuals were prosecuted, and all four were sentenced to prison. A number of other important arrests and prosecutions of lower-level leadership have also occurred, most prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced to prison.

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As the delta variant swept through segments of the population in July and August, particularly in southern cities, by September, vaccinations became more readily available to the public, and the number of Covid-19 cases reported each day began to decline.

Meanwhile, the ENV team is just back to the office after more than a month working from home, and we are relieved to report that all of our team has been vaccinated.

**THROWBACK**

ENV’s Run for Rhinos was a 5, 10, and 26 km race held in Hanoi on December 11, 2016. More than 600 runners, including both Vietnamese citizens and expats, joined in the race dedicated to protecting rhinos, with teams from the US, French, and UK Embassies, as well as teams from USAID, corporate businesses, and NGOs. Widely covered by TV and other media outlets, the race came at a time when Vietnam had not yet recognized the role it plays as both a consumer and trafficking country for rhino horn. What a journey it has been since!

Watch highlights from the Run for Rhinos here: [ENV Run for Rhinos 2016](https://youtu.be/RLt5OYpRu14)

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT**


Did you know that 55 African elephants are killed each day for the ivory trade? In September, ENV launched our latest campaign on GlobalGiving with the aim of amplifying ENV efforts to end demand and trade of African elephant ivory in Vietnam. The senseless demand that threatens wild elephants can be reduced, and the Vietnamese traffickers responsible for supplying the demand can be stopped and punished. Help us protect African elephants by joining this cause today.
Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam’s first non-governmental organization focused on the conservation of nature and the protection of the environment. ENV combats the illegal wildlife trade and aims to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about the need to protect nature and wildlife. ENV employs creative and innovative strategies to influence public attitudes and reduce demand for wildlife trade products. ENV works closely with government partners to strengthen policy and legislation, and directly supports enforcement efforts in the protection of endangered species of regional, national, and global significance.

ENV STRATEGIC PROGRAMS

Since 2007, ENV has focused its activities on three major program areas that comprise ENV’s integrated strategic approach for addressing illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam. These include:

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

ENV’s efforts to combat illegal hunting and trade of wildlife are made possible thanks to the generous support of the following partners:

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