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Interview survey to find remaining Swinhoe's softshell turtle in Lang Son province, northern Vietnam

From the 26th June to 7th July 2020, a field team from the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo-Myanmar Conservation (IMC) conducted an intensive interview survey in Lang Son province, northern Vietnam, to seek new information for the world's rarest turtle, Swinhoe's Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*).

During 2 weeks of survey, 103 interviews were conducted in 10 districts and 1 city of Lang Son province with 27 field records completed for shells and live turtles of 8 species, included Keeled Box Turtle (*Cuora mouhotii*), Asian Yellow Pond Turtle (*Mauremys mutica*), Big-headed Turtle (*Platysternon megacephalum*), Chinese Softshell Turtle (*Pelodiscus sinensis*), Wattle-necked Softshell Turtle (*Palea steindachneri*), Four-eyed Turtle (*Sacalia quadriocellata*), Indochinese Box Turtle (*Cuora galbinifrons*), and Black-breasted Leaf Turtle (*Geoemyda spengleri*).

Notably, 33 out of 103 interviews provided positive historical information for large softshell turtles in a river section of the Ky Cung river; the most recent sighting with a good description was reportedly in 2019. We will conduct more surveys in this area to collect additional information and hopefully confirm the species.

We would like to thank Lang Son Forest Protection Department for their legal support to this survey. We also thanks Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, USA (CMZ), the Turtle Conservation Fund (TCF), IUCN, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), British Chelonia Group (BCG), the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund (MBZ), Ocean Park Conservation Foundation (OPCF), as well as all individuals for their continuous supports to the Rafetus project.



Pham Xuan Quyen, ATP field staff (right), conducts an interview with local people to collect more information of turtles in the area.

© Pham Nhu Quynh – ATP/IMC.

Date: 20th July 2020

Press release: Pham Nhu Quynh & Jack Carney
– ATP/IMC

For further information please contact:

Asian Turtle Program - Indo-Myanmar Conservation

Room 1806, C14 Bac Ha Building, To Huu road,
Nam Tu Liem Dist., Hanoi, Vietnam

PO Box 46 - Hanoi International Post Office

Tel: +84 (0) 24 7302 8389

Email: info@asianturtleprogram.org

Website: www.asianturtleprogram.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/AsianTurtleProgram

Gorgeous landscape view of Chi Lang district, Lang Son province. © Pham Nhu Quynh – ATP/IMC.



This endangered Keeled Box Turtle (*Cuora mouhotii*) was being kept as a pet in Chi Lang district, Lang Son province. © Pham Nhu Quynh – ATP/IMC.



An endangered Big-headed Turtle (*Platysternon megacephalum*) observed at a local household in Dinh Lap district, Lang Son province. © Pham Nhu Quynh – ATP/IMC.



The upstream of Cam Son Lake in Huu Lung district, Lang Son province. © Pham Nhu Quynh – ATP/IMC.