



# Asian Turtle Program & Turtle Conservation Centre

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## 47 critically endangered Bourret's Box Turtles have returned home

On the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2019, 47 Bourret's Box Turtles (*Cuora bourreti*) were taken back to the wild in our third release of 2019. A protected area within the species' native range in central region of Vietnam was selected for these lucky turtles. They were likely poached from forest areas in Lao PDR and central region of Vietnam and had spent several months in the illegal trade network before they were confiscated in Quang Nam province in May 2018. These turtles were then rescued before undergoing a health screening process against Mycoplasma and Herpes virus; two of the most significant diseases affecting turtles. Supportive care and treatment for these stressed turtles was provided by the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo-Myanmar Conservation (IMC) and the Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC) of Cuc Phuong National Park.

We are always striving to provide the best we can for animals rescued from the illegal trade and maintained in captivity. A rigorous process for ensuring the genetic and pathological health of turtles before they are released is ideal, despite the substantial costs and difficulties associated with it. It is extremely important to protect wild populations of turtles when returning confiscated turtles to natural habitats.

Timothy McCormack, Program Director of ATP/IMC, said "It's a great feeling to see these animals going back into the wild. This has been a long and challenging rescue, with the level of health screening making this one of the most thorough releases ever undertaken in Vietnam, for any species."

We would like to thank Quang Nam Forest Protection Department for conducting the confiscation last year, as well as the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Zoological Society of London (ZSL), and Thanh Truong Loc Construction Co., Ltd for their support



The turtles were transported in wooden transportation boxes during their long trip from Cuc Phuong to central Vietnam. Photo by: Nguyen Thu Thuy – ATP/IMC.



This tough turtle might have survived hunting dog bites, snare traps and other dangers (evidenced by its healed injuries) before its arrival at the Turtle Conservation Centre last year. Photo by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP/IMC.



A happy return to the wild for this Bourret's Box Turtle (*Cuora bourreti*) on a rainy day. Photo by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP/IMC.

in the rescue and rehabilitation of these animals. Our sincere thanks also goes to the Centre for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (CRES) for processing the health screening samples, and all of our numerous partners who have contributed along the way. Special thanks to the hard-working staff who went on the survey and those who have spent months, taking great care of the turtles at the TCC.



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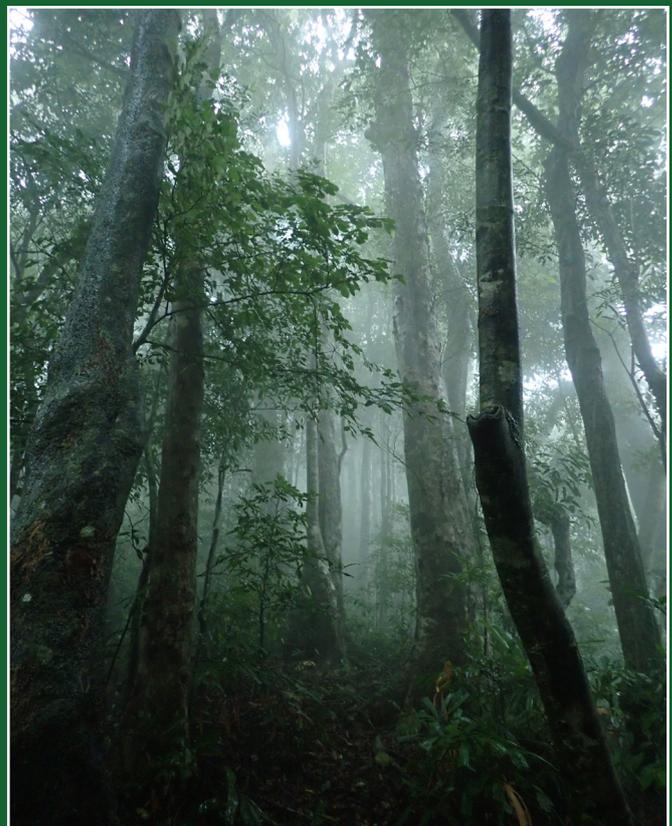
**Turtles were carried by traditional rattan basket into dense forest. Photo by: Nguyen Thu Thuy – ATP/IMC.**



**Do Thanh Hao, Manager of the Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC), happily released one of the 47 Cuora bourreti back to the wild. Photo by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP/IMC.**



**One turtle may have already found her/his new shelter for this winter! Photo by: Nguyen Thu Thuy – ATP/IMC.**



**Pristine rainforest of central Vietnam where 47 Bourret's Box Turtles can now run free. Photo by: Nguyen Thanh Luan - ATP/IMC.**