

Compiled Notes on the Wildlife Trade in Vietnam
October 1999

Report to TRAFFIC Vietnam
Cuc Phuong Conservation Project
Douglas B. Hendrie
October 31, 1999

Nha Trang (October 2, 1999)

Visited a wildlife trader in the city of Nha Trang at 1400 hrs. The front room of the shop was full of stuffed mammals and other wildlife. Among those observed were two pangolins, a leopard cat, several crocodile heads (Cuban?), glass jars full of snakes, including banded krates (*Bungarus fasciatus*), an otter (sp?), mounted deer heads, and a macaque. A stuffed softshell turtle and numerous (15+) mounted sea turtles were also observed.

The dealer, described as an “evil” man by staff, claimed that he could get any animal on order within three days. When asked whether he possessed any turtles for sale, he led us into a room beyond the front of the shop which was once a kitchen and still had several large iron stoves and ovens. Removing panels from the front of the ovens, he produced two juvenile *Malayemys subtrijuga*, one adult *Pyxidea mouhoti*, a large *Manouria impressa*, and a live juvenile sea turtle (Green?).

It is likely that the turtles he possessed were native to the region, as his shop did not have the appearance or quantities consistent with a weigh station along an extended trade route. Additionally, the location and obscure nature of the shop suggested that he did not sell to tourists. Based on the information from our visit, I would categorize this dealer as “small-time”.

Dealer information:

Mr. Le Ba Mao
19 Tang Bat Ho st.
Nha Trang
(058) 821390

DX Market (October 6, 1999)

Observed 18 turtles in the market at 1100 hrs including *Indotestudo elongata* (1), *Cuora galbinifrons* (2), *Geomyda spengleri* (6), *Pyxidea mouhoti* (2), *Sacalia quadriocellata* (1), and *Ocadia sinensis* (3).

Noted:

Indotestudo elongata: The *I. elongata* was an adult, weighing approximately 1 kg, according to the shopkeeper. She was asking 100,000 VND (\$7.19) for the turtle. Large *I. elongata* are rare on the pet market.

Ocadia sinensis: The three *O. sinensis* were juveniles, one a yearling (carapace < 50 mm). This was the first observation of a yearling *O. sinensis* at DX.

Geomyda spengleri: The six *G. spengleri* were all adults. The shopkeeper said that they were from Tam Dao, as reported before, though this information could be erroneous.

Sacalia quadriocellata: Adult.

All other turtles were juveniles.

Ninh Binh FPD October 10, 1999

Ninh Binh FPD stopped a truck from Ha Tinh on highway 12 civets (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*) (20 kg), over 30 kg of snakes, and 380 kg of what were described as sea snakes. The snakes were identified as *Ptyas korros*, *M. mucosus*, and *Elaphe radiata*. The “sea snakes” were not identified. Project field biologist Le Trong Dat inspected the shipment in Ninh Binh on Oct. 11 and retrieved two common palm civets that the park requested for intended recovery and release.

Ninh Binh October 15, 1999

Ninh Binh FPD rangers seized a truck that originated in the city of Hue on Highway 1 that contained a cargo of turtles, snakes, and pangolins. Along with the driver, two traders were accompanying the cargo north to an unknown destination. The traders claimed to be only passengers on the truck and were released while the driver was fined. The turtles (38 kg) included *Indotestudo elongata* (14kg) and a cumulative 24 kg of *Manouria impressa*, *Pyxidea mouhotii*, *Cuora galbinifrons*, *Cyclemys tcheponensis*, *Malayemys subtrijuga*, and *Heosemys grandis*. Species were determined by representative samples released to the Cuc Phuong Conservation Project, though weights reflect FPD records. At the time of the seizure, inspection was not possible by project staff familiar with identifying species. Also confiscated were 35 kg of live pangolins and 43 kg of snakes (unidentified).

Ninh Binh October 16, 1999

Ninh Binh FPD rangers apprehended a trader as he attempted to board a public bus in Ninh Binh city with 28 crab-eating macaques in his possession. The crab-eating macaque is native to southern Vietnam suggesting that Ninh Binh was a transit point for the trader. No other information was available about the seizure and the point of origin and destination were unknown.

Ninh Binh October 16, 1999

After receiving information from an informant, Ninh Binh FPD rangers stopped a private car on Highway 1 that originated in Vinh, and confiscated two Asiatic black bears and a clouded leopard from the vehicle. According to rangers, authorities had made previous attempts to stop the same trader without success. However, following notification of the car’s pending arrival in Ninh Binh, and after several hours of waiting, the vehicle was spotted and stopped. Both bears and the clouded leopard had received severe wounds to

their left front leg, probably caused by steel traps. Tilo Nadler of the Frankfurt Zoological Society, who inspected the seizure, noted that the traders had German manufactured sedatives (Ketamine) in their possession, used to sedate the animals prior to transport.

The bears and clouded leopard were transported to Cuc Phuong National Park for treatment and recovery. According to Cuc Phuong veterinarian Ule Streicher, all three animals will survive, though both bears will ultimately lose use of their front left paws.

Dong Xuan Market, October 17, 1999 (1300 hrs)

Captive wild mammals were observed for the first time in some months at Hanoi's Dong Xuan market. A woman occupying a stall to the left of the reputed wildlife dealer displayed a pigmy loris and red-bellied squirrel within her shop. The market also had a large number (>75) of tokay geckos and 23 turtles of six species. Turtles included eight juvenile *Pyxidea mouhotii*, nine juvenile *Cuora galbinifrons*, three adult *Geomyda spengleri*, one adult *Sacalia quadriocellata* (green-eyed and mottled plastron/red stripe-male), one subadult *Ocadia sinensis*, and a large adult *Cyclemys tcheponensis* with a black plastron and dark features.

Note: The *Pyxidea mouhotii* observed were in extremely rough shape with predator-marked and damaged carapaces. Turtles were divided amongst four dealers.

Ninh Binh October 29, 1999

Ninh Binh Forest Protection Department rangers stopped a truck on Highway 1 in the vicinity of Ninh Binh Provincial city after receiving information from an informant that the truck was carrying wildlife. The truck, originating in Soc Trang Province in the extreme south of Vietnam, was stopped at 0900 hrs on the morning of the 29th after rangers staked out the highway for nearly nine hours. Bound for Quang Ninh Province in the north, the trucks cargo contained 948 kg of mixed snakes and 36 kg of turtles.

Inspection of the cargo revealed six species of turtles, including *Cuora galbinifrons* (14), *Pyxidea mouhotii* (13), *Cyclemys tcheponensis* (22), *Manouria impressa* (2), *Ocadia sinensis* (6), and *Mauremys annamensis* (1).

Snakes included *Ptyas sp.*, *Bungarus fasciatus*, *Elaphe radiata*, *Elaphe sp.*, cobras (*Naja naja?*), and other unidentified snakes.

The two occupants of the truck, a driver and hired assistant, were detained while Ninh Binh rangers sorted out a permit from the Soc Trang Forest Protection Department that they had for the shipment. The permit was issued on the basis that the trade of animals contained within the shipment had "no impact upon the ecology of wild populations" in the area of origin. Ninh Binh rangers had to establish whether the animals contained within the shipment were indeed from Soc Trang and authorized under the permit.

In addition to the question of “sustainable harvest” from Soc Trang Province, it appeared that at least some of the animals were from areas other than those designated on the permit, based upon the presence of *Mauremys annamensis* (1) in the shipment, an endemic to the provinces in and around Hue and Da Nang, considerably further to the north of Soc Trang. The *Mauremys annamensis* and a single adult *Ocadia sinensis* were retained by the Cuc Phuong Turtle Conservation and Ecology Project, while the rest of the shipment was presumably returned to the trader under the existing permit.

END