



# Asian Turtle News

News from the Frontlines of Conservation

The Asian Turtle Conservation Network (ATCN)

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## Workshop for the Hoan Kiem Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) in Dong Mo Lake, Son Tay District, Hanoi, Vietnam. 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2009, a workshop was held in Son Tay district of Hanoi to discuss the large Swinhoe's soft-shell turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) recently rescued in the district. The species is of critical importance, with only four animals known to exist in the world despite extensive surveys; two animals in Shouzhou zoo China and two in Vietnam.

In November last year, a 69kg turtle, the same species as the legendary Hoan Kiem Turtle in central Hanoi, escaped from Dong Mo lake after flooding caused the dam to break. Thankfully the presence of a full-time Asian Turtle Program (ATP) conservation team at the site, and the quick response of local authorities including Forest Protection Department (FPD), People's Committee and police, combined with the critical coordination role of a the team from ENV's Wildlife Crime Unit resulted in the successful rescue and return of the animal to the lake.



Bui Dang Phong of Cuc Phuong National Park leads the discussion section.

The workshop was held by Cleveland Metroparks Zoo's Asian Turtle Program (ATP) and Cuc Phuong National Park's Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC). With representatives from the local FPD, People's Committee, local schools and lake owners as well as Dong Mo Lake golf course participating. Information on the species' importance and threats as well as its occurrence in Dong Mo Lake and the successful rescue were presented. A lively discussion followed which brought up many interesting issues and resulted in those present agreeing that greater cooperative effort should be made to protect the animal and learn more about the species in the lake. A report from the workshop will help to establish a more secure future for the turtle or turtles in the lake.

The workshop was made possible with kind support from the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) and the Melbourne Zoo.



Large crowds were present as the turtle swam off into the dark lake to loud cheers.



The breached dam which released an estimated 28 million tonnes of water (and the turtle) over a two-day period. Amazing that the turtle survived. this escape...

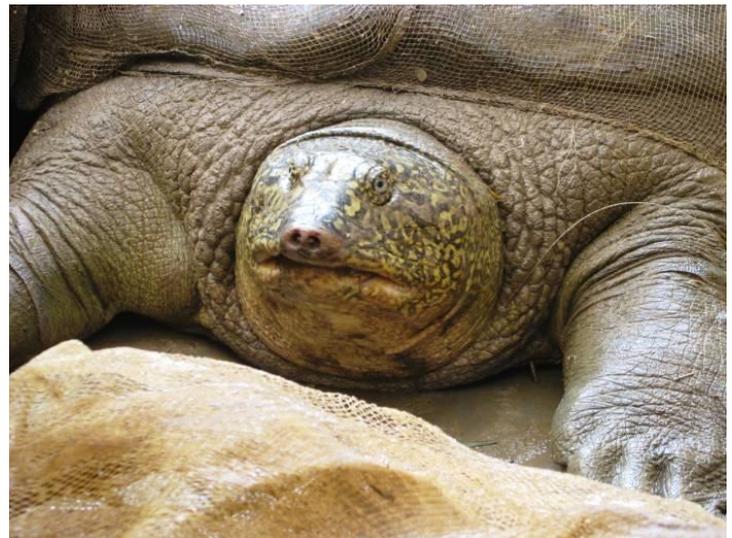


An Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV) film crew interviews FPD officials. Footage taken during the rescue was used for a special documentary which was shown on national VTV in December 2008.

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



The *Rafetus swinhoei* shortly before its return to the wild.