2014 has been a busy year for turtle rescues in Hanoi, 28 turtles of 6 species (Indotestudo elongata, Cuora mouhotii, Cuora picturata, Geoemyda spengleri, Manouria impressa and Malayemys subtrijuga) have been handed into the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) office in Hanoi for transferring down to the Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC) in Cuc Phuong National Park, Vietnam. The majority of these animals have been brought in as a result of the growing trade trend in Hanoi, in which demand for exotics such as tortoises and freshwater turtles along with lizards, geckos and snakes seems to be growing.

Many of the animals were reportedly purchased through Facebook traders. But difficult to be kept as pets, many of these luckless reptiles are becoming sick or dying. With very special requirements in terms of habitat (temperature and humidity) and diet, very few keepers are able to keep their pets alive. When considering the lifestyle of many turtles is over 40 years, to keep them is a lifelong responsibility.

A large number of animals are in a very poor condition when handed in. After months in captivity in less than ideal conditions, they have been underweight, weak and sick. Unsurprisingly, some of the weaker animals have died shortly after being handed in. However, many of the animals have made it down to the rescue centre in Cuc Phuong and are settling into their new home. Hopefully some of these animals will make it back to the wild in the future.

Some animals in the intensive care unit (ICU) have required tube-feeding since August 2014 as they had been too weak to feed themselves. It will likely require many more months of intensive treatment if they are to make a full recovery.

Here is an update on some of the lucky animals that have been handed in the past

Goldie: Arrived in the office on the 23rd of January 2014. Having been painted gold, he is now returning to his more natural brown colour and enjoying a 64m² enclosure set in the national park where his species naturally occurs.
Splinter (pictures below): protected Elongated Tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata*). Splinter was received in July 2013 after falling from a fourth floor balcony in Hanoi during which the shell was split almost in half. He is now settling in to the main population at the TCC.

Splinter: before and after being transferred to TCC. Photo by: Timothy McCormack - ATP

Please support conservation of Asian tortoise and freshwater turtles. DO NOT BUY TURTLES AS PETS. The ATP would like to remind you:

- Many species of tortoise and freshwater turtle are protected under national law in Vietnam and elsewhere in the region, purchase of such protected species is considered as illegal.

- Most species of tortoises and freshwater turtles in Vietnam and the south-east Asia region are threatened by wildlife trade for food, medicine and pets. Please do not add to the pressure of extinction by buying turtles.

- Do not encourage your friends to buy turtles as pets. If you are keeping turtles, please consider transferring them to a rescue centre.

Date: 23rd December 2014
Press release: Timothy McCormack & Nguyen Thuy Thuy - ATP

To see more on the Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC) and the work they are doing, please visit their website: [http://www.cucphuongturtlecenter.com/](http://www.cucphuongturtlecenter.com/)

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Thank you

We would like to thank those individuals who have transferred animals to the rescue centre in Cuc Phuong National Park and are now aware of the importance of protecting Vietnam’s threatened turtle species. We would also like to thank Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund for supporting care of these animals whilst in Hanoi and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) veterinarians who have provided supportive care for animals in Hanoi before they can be moved to the Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC).

*Indotestudo elongata* transferred to ATP staff in Hanoi by Mr Son. Photo by: Pham Van Thong - ATP