From the 15th to the 27th of July 2018, a survey team from the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo Myanmar Conservation (IMC) undertook a 2-week interview survey in Vietnam’s Dien Bien province. Despite extreme weather with heavy rain and flooding throughout Northern Vietnam in preceding weeks, our team conducted nearly 80 interviews in 8 districts and the provincial capital of Dien Bien province. 30 Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Field Records were made and 5 species, namely, the Lesser Chinese Softshell Turtles (Pelodiscus paviformis), Wattle-necked Softshell Turtle (Palea steindachneri), Keeled Box Turtle (Cuora mouhotii), Impressed Tortoise (Manouria impressa) and Southeast Asian Leaf Turtle (Cyclemys oldhamii) were observed in local trade.

Interview survey in north-western Vietnam – positive information for the Hoan Kiem turtle

Despite extreme weather with heavy rain and flood in Northern Vietnam over the past weeks, the survey team conducted nearly 80 interviews even when the going got tough. Photo by: Nguyen Tai Thang – ATP/IMC
Notably, 15 out of 80 interviews provided positive information on the existence of Swinhoe’s Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) in the wild in Bien Bien province. One area in particular is of interest to the team with recent accounts and clear descriptions of a large softshell turtle with characteristics of *Rafetus*. With no recent reports of hunting or captures of large turtles the team is hopefully some animals still survive in the wild.

With the ATP team now working at multiple locations we urgently need to expand the Rafetus team to give better coverage of our project sites. If you would like to support please visit: http://asianturtleprogram.org/pages/support-atp.html

We would like to send our thanks to the Dien Bien authorities, especially Dien Bien Forest Protection Department for their legal support to this survey. We would also like to thank Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, British Chelonia Group, Turtle Conservation Fund and The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund for supporting the Rafetus project.

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