From the 7th to the 17th of February 2019, the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) of Indo-Myanmar Conservation (IMC) collaborated with local authorities to host the annual Dong Mo Football Cup in two communes of Son Tay district, Yen Bai commune and Kim Son commune, to promote the conservation of the world's rarest turtle, Swinhoe's Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*), also known as the Hoan Kiem Turtle. Only four individuals of the species are known in existence in the world; of those, two individuals are living in Suzhou Zoo, China. One animal inhabits Dong Mo Lake, Son Tay district, on the outskirts Hanoi, while the other was confirmed living in Xuan Khanh lake which is about 15km from Dong Mo lake to the northwest.

15 teams from 15 villages surrounding Dong Mo lake competed for this year's championship, which is the ninth season of the Cup. Undeniably, the tournament has gradually become a cultural community event which receives great attention.

15 teams from 15 villages surrounding Dong Mo lake competed fiercely for this year’s championship. Photo credit: Nguyen Tai Thang (ATP/IMC).

The Dong Mo Football Cup received great attention from local residents. During the tournament, around 600-700 spectators were present to watch and cheer for their beloved team. Photo by: Nguyen Tai Thang – ATP/IMC.

Dong Mo Football Cup – a community event to support the conservation of the Swinhoe’s Softshell Turtle

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from local residents. During this year’s Football Cup, around 600-700 spectators were present to watch and cheer for their beloved team(s). After ten days of fierce competition, the champions were revealed: Nha Tho village team from Kim Son commune and Chong village team from Yen Bai commune. They were both tough teams and former winners of the trophy. At the awards ceremony, Mr. Nguyen Huy Quyet, representative from the People’s Committee of Kim Son commune, delivered a speech which highlighted the importance of Hoan Kiem Turtle to the locality and expressed the determination from the local authorities and public to protect this legendary species.

We would like to thank Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and the Turtle Conservation Fund (TCF) for supporting this event. A special thanks to the People’s Committees of Kim Son commune and Yen Bai for their continued collaboration on the Rafetus conservation project.

Press release by: Nguyen Tai Thang – ATP/IMC
Date: 26th February 2019

For further information, please contact:
Asian Turtle Program - Indo-Myanmar Conservation
Room 1806, C14 Bac Ha Building, To Huu street,
Nam Tu Liem district, Hanoi, Vietnam
PO Box 46
Tel: +84 (0) 24 7302 8389
Email: info@asianturtleprogram.org
Website: www.asianturtleprogram.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/AsianTurtleProgram

15 teams from 15 villages surrounding Dong Mo lake competed fiercely for this year’s championship.
Photo by: Nguyen Tai Thang – ATP/IMC

The Dong Mo Football Cup received great attention from local residents. During the tournament, around 600-700 spectators were present to watch and cheer for their beloved team. Photo by: Nguyen Tai Thang – ATP/IMC

Nha Tho village team was the winner of the Kim Son commune tournament.
Photo by Nguyen Van Trong – ATP/IMC