From the 11th to 18th March 2017, 11 students from seven Vietnamese universities (including one Lao-tian student studying in Vietnam) gathered at Cuc Phuong National Park, Ninh Binh province, northern Vietnam to take part in the 13th Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle (TFT) Field Skill Training Course. The 8-day long training has been hosted by the Asian Turtle Program (ATP) in collaboration with Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC) of Cuc Phuong National Park since 2005.

As often seen in previous training courses, students enjoyed the most up to date knowledge and field skills on TFT research and conservation which is presented through a combination of theoretical and practical sections. Presentation covers various aspects of TFT knowledge and field skills such as Asian turtle crisis, turtle evolution and ecology, turtle identification, nesting and production, data collection, turtle field survey and interview survey techniques. During the interview survey practical this year four Keeled Box Turtles (Cuora mouhotii) were seen in the local village, highlighting that TFT in Cuc Phuong National Park are still under threat in the wild. In addition, for the first time, this year's student had the opportunity to learn more about marine turtle conservation activities in Vietnam with a guest presentation made by Ms. Bui Thi Thu Hien from IUCN Vietnam, who has coordinated a range of marine turtle conservation projects across the country.

We hope to see more young biologist and conservationist taking action to protect Vietnamese unique and threatened tortoise and freshwater turtle species. We would like to thank Cleveland Metroparks Zoo for supporting this activity. As well as Cuc Phuong National Park, Ninh Binh Province for their continued collaboration on this long term joint training activity.

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Press release by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP
For further information please contact:
Asian Turtle Program - Indo-Myanmar Conservation
Room 1806, C14 Bac Ha Building, To Huu road, Nam Tu Liem Dist., Hanoi, Vietnam
PO Box 46
Tel: +84 (0) 4 7302 8389
Email: info@asianturtleprogram.org
Website: www.asianturtleprogram.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/AsianTurtleProgram

Turtle Conservation Centre (TCC) - Cuc Phuong National Park
Nho Quan Dist., Ninh Binh Prov., Vietnam
Tel: +84 (0) 3 0384 8090
Email: haodt.turtleconservation@gmail.com
Website: www.asianturtleprogram.org/tcc-home-page.html
Facebook: www.facebook.com/TurtleConservationCenter

Students practicing semi structured interview skills with an ex-professional turtle hunter in a village bordering Cuc Phuong National Park buffer zone. Photo by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP/IMC.

Completing a field record for a Keeled Box Turtle (Cuora mouhotii) being kept at a local household during the village interview practicum. Photo by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP/IMC.

Group photo of all participants and instructors of the training course. Photo by: Hoang Van Ha – ATP/IMC.