

Issue No.24 | October - December 2013

Also available in Vietnamese!

Welcome



2013 marks the tenth anniversary of WAR starting its work in Vietnam. This edition of What's Up is dedicated to all WAR's donors, supporters, partners, friends and especially its dedicated staff who are all a part of WAR's battle for biodiversity conservation in Vietnam. We are grateful to have you on our side!

Highlights of WAR from the past quarter are numerous wildlife education activities for over 17,000 children from different groups. WAR has succeeded in integrating content on wildlife protection into Biology Subject Grade 7 for all students of Binh Thanh District. WAR has launched initiatives to save the Dugong and other endangered marine species on Phu Quoc Island. This has also been a busy quarter for the conservation programme with several surveys being undertaken. A new species of skink was discovered and a butterfly species was found for the first time in Vietnam. Our wildlife rescue stations were not only busy with rescue and release activities but also upgrading their facilities.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you An Extraordinary Christmas and a Fabulous New Year!

Nguyen Vu Khoi, WAR's CEO



These two Leopard Cat cubs were born at Cu Chi Wildlife Rescue Station (WRS), this was a first for the WRS and a milestone for WAR.

Please see inside.

©WAR/Huyen DoThi Thanh

*Celebrating our 10 anniversary
of saving endangered wildlife in
Vietnam!*

In this issue

Conservation.....	2
Enforcement.....	3
Wildlife Education.....	6
Donations and supports.....	7
Publications.....	8
Who is the victim.....	9

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Discovered a new species of skink

During WAR's survey in the forest of Ba To District, Quang Ngai Province in May and June 2012, a new forest skink species of the genus *Sphenomorphus* was described. The species is named as Shea Forest Skink (English), Thần lằn phê-nô shea (Vietnamese), and *Sphenomorphus sheai* Nguyen (Latin name). This species is known only from Quang Ngai Province. With the description of Bato Forest Skink, a total of 12 species of *Sphenomorphus* are currently known in Vietnam.

The species was discovered by Nguyen Quang Truong, a biologist from the Institute of Ecological and Biological Resources (IEEBR), and WAR's experts. Further results of WAR's survey in Quang Ngai Province will be announced in the future.



© Van Deyverder R. Wayne

New butterfly species for Vietnam

Cigaritisxingadavidsoni, a species of Lycaenidae known in Thailand was found by Bui Huu Manh during a biodiversity survey in Nui Chua National Park, Ninh Thuan Province. The sample was collected in dry forest at 200 meters above sea level, in an open area along a trail.

The survey was conducted by WAR with participation by WAR's Vietnamese and foreign experts in May 2013. Further results of this survey will be launched in the future.



© WAR/Bui Huu Manh

Biodiversity surveys of the quarter

A four-day survey on plants, butterflies and fresh water fishes was conducted in Lo Go Xa Mat National Park, Tay Ninh Province last October. A five-day survey on plants, insect, reptile and amphibians was conducted last November on Tho Chu Island. At U Minh Ha National Park, a five – day survey on cajuput forest biomass was conducted last December.

All three surveys were conducted by WAR experts. Results of those surveys will be announced in the coming time.



An insect recorded on Tho Chu Island.
© WAR/Manh BuiHuu

Lesser False Vampire Bat (*Megaderma spasma*) in Tho Chu Island.
© WAR/Manh BuiHuu



Continue releasing fishes to the wild

Last October, over 100 individuals of Fighting Fish (*Betta splendens*) and Rasbora (*Rasbora paviana*) were released to Ben Cat River- a tributary of the Sai Gon River in Binh Thanh District, Ho Chi Minh City. This is the third time in 2013, native fishes have been released back to the wild. For the whole year, more than 500 individuals of Fighting Fish, Rasbora and Three-lined Rasbora (*Rasbora trilineata*) have been released by over 50 students from different universities in HCMC. This is one activity of the WAR's programme entitled "Breeding and releasing native fishes back to the wild" of WAR.

The programme aims to repopulate native fishes in the wild. This releasing activity helps university students understand the importance of native fish breeding and how it contributes to the environmental protection and biodiversity conservation of Vietnam. Numerous students received fighting fishes and rasbora to raise in their aquariums at home. WAR expects that more local people will use native fishes for aquariums and thus contribute to keeping the ecosystem balance.



© WAR/Huyen Do Thi Thanh

Rescue and release



During the last quarter, **82** individuals from 14 endangered wildlife species including Sun Bear, Yellow Cheeked-crested Gibbon, Pygmy Loris, Pig-tailed Macaque, Long-tailed Macaque, Leopard Cat, Malayan Porcupine, Java Mouse-deer, Great Hornbill, Merlin, Common Pheasant, King Cobra, Softshell Turtle, and Asian Giant Softshell Turtle were rescued.

Also in this period, **98** individuals from 12 endangered rescued species were released back to their home forest. These include Pig-tailed Macaque, Large Indian Civet, Malayan Porcupine, Java Mouse-deer, Crested Serpent Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Painted Stork, King Cobra, Bengal Monitor, Elongated Tortoise, Malayan Box Turtle, and Yellow-headed Temple Turtle.

Rescue Asian Giant Soft-shell Turtle

This Asian Giant Soft-shell Turtle (*Pelochelys bibroni*) weighing 27 kilograms is now enjoying comfortable enclosure at Cu Chi Wildlife Rescue Station (WRS). It was confiscated from an illegal trade case and transferred to Cu Chi WRS in October by Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) Forest Protection Department (FPD).

The Asian Giant Soft-shell Turtle is categorised as Endangered (EN) in the Vietnam Redbook. The species population is decreasing rapidly in the wild due to illegal hunting and trading for meat.



The rescued endangered Asian Giant Soft-shell Turtle
©WAR/Lam LeXuan

Cu Chi Wildlife

Painted Stork release



©WAR/Lam LeXuan

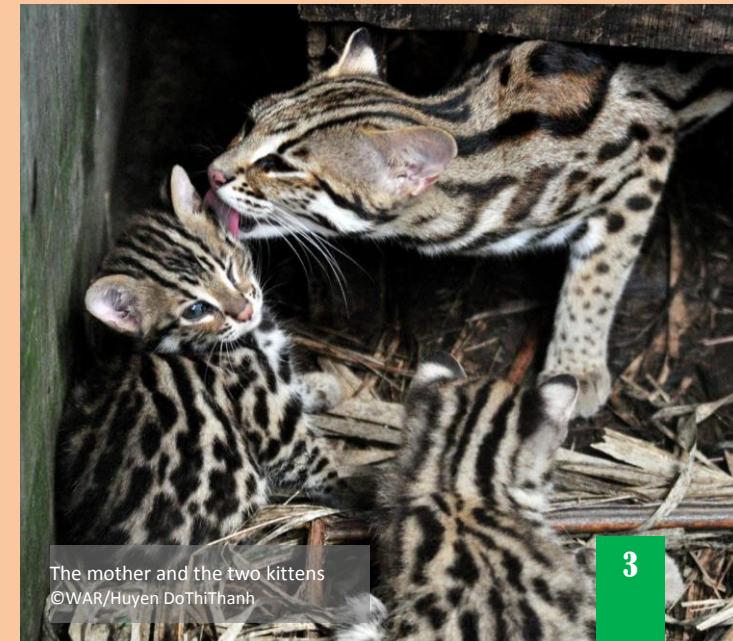
This Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*) is now enjoying its freedom at Lo Go Xa Mat National Park, Tay Ninh Province. It is one of the two individuals of Painted Stork confiscated by Binh Duong FPD from illegal trade on the street and then handled to Cu Chi WRS last September. The two individuals were successfully released in December 2013.

Leopard Cats born at Cu Chi WRS for the first time

The two Leopard Cats (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) handed in voluntarily by a local people nine months ago were coupled successfully at Cu Chi WRS. Last September, after two months of pregnancy, the mother Leopard Cat delivered two kittens. This is the first time, kittens have been born at Cu Chi WRS.

Now the kittens are three months old and they are totally safe and sound. They will be released back to the wild in the future.

Although leopard cats are not under immediate threats from extinction, their population is declining steadily due to habitat loss and illegal hunting for many purposes such as fashion and decoration, meat, medicine and as pets. The Leopard Cat is protected under the 32-HĐBT Decree which prohibits hunting and trading of this species for any purposes.



The mother and the two kittens
©WAR/Huyen DoThiThanh



King Cobra
©WAR/Huyen DoThiThanh



Oriental Pied Hornbill
©WAR/Lan Ho Thi Kim

Unforgettable rescue cases

Over the past years, WAR staff at Cu Chi WRS have been working closely with government bodies to rescue and release approximately 2600 individuals of endangered wildlife. Belows are some of the unforgettable cases at Cu Chi WRS.

The species that delivered most babies at Cu Chi WRS is the **Elongated Tortoise**. Over 30 individuals of Elongated Tortoise were born at the Station and 18 have already been released back to the wild in 2011 and 2012. You can visit the twelve incredible babies at Cu Chi WRS now.

The species that spent the shortest time at the Station is thirty two individuals of **Lesser Whistling-Duck** (*Dendrocygna javanica*). The species was registered at Cu Chi WRS and released in a same day in January this year.

The species that created greatest pressure to Cu Chi WRS is the 35 individuals of **King Cobra** rescued last November from illegal trade. As King Cobra feeds on snakes, each individual of King Cobra at Cu Chi WRS needed a separate enclosure. It's also a very costly business to feed those King Cobras. Given its current capacity and budget, this has proved a strain on the station. Fortunately, the King Cobra were successfully released back to the wild.

The most interactive species is **Oriental Pied Hornbill** (*Anthraceroceros albirostris*). Three individuals of these beautiful giant bird species can now be observed easily at Cu Chi WRS. The birds often stand on flowering tree branches close to visitors and sing a loud song that surprises most of the tourists.

The most exciting wildlife is the **Yellow Cheeked Crested Gibbon**. Visitor to Cu Chi WRS are impressed by these incredible creatures swinging in their comfortable enclosures or playing with each other. People are amazed by the special vocal made in union by all gibbons.

Birds are rescued most commonly at Cu Chi WRS. Since its foundation, about 700 individuals of endangered birds such as Great Horn Bill, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Common Pheasant... have been rescued successfully. The second most common species is the snakes with more than 450 individuals rescued.



Whistling-Duck
©WAR/Khoi NguyenVu



Elongated Tortoise
©WAR/Huyen DoThiThanh



Yellow Cheeked Crested Gibbon
©WAR/Khoi NguyenVu

Endangered monkeys rescued and released

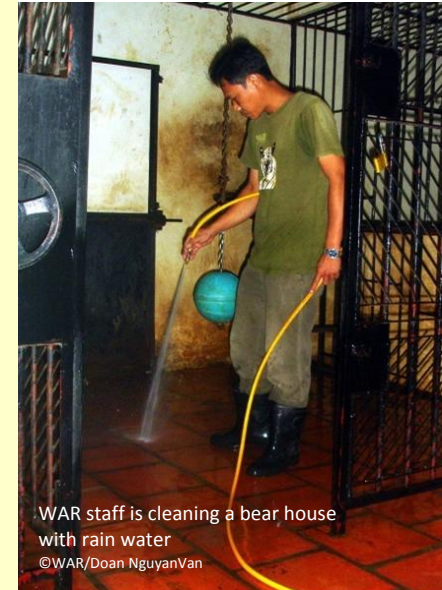
During the past quarter, three individuals of Pig Tailed Macaque have been through a long journey of over 170 km from Hon Me WRS to Lo Go Xa Mat National Park, Tay Ninh Province where they were successfully released. Not long after the three individuals were released, two individuals of Pig Tail Macaque and one individual of Long Tailed Macaque were registered to the station. These two species are categorized in the Vietnam Red Book at VU (Vulnerable) and LR (Low Risk).



©WAR/Doan NguyenVan

Harvesting rain water for domestic and enclosure cleaning

The newly constructed reservoirs and water tanks are now able to provide enough rain water for the station up to date. The rain water will hopefully be enough for the station in the next couple of dry months.



WAR staff is cleaning a bear house with rain water
©WAR/Doan NguyenVan

Cat Tien Bear and Wild Cat Rescue Station

Cat Tien Bear and Wild Cat Rescue Station keeps taking care of its 35 individuals of Moon Bears and Sun Bears and other endangered species such as Leopard, Green Peafowl, and Crocodile. Highlights of this quarter include releasing of 37 individuals of Malayan Porcupine.



©WAR/Cuong NguyenManh

This is one of the 37 individuals of Malayan Porcupine released back to Cat Tien National Park last October. The released porcupines were voluntarily handed over by a farm at Bien Hoa City, Dong Nai Province.

Who is the victim?

Take a look at the photo and guess which species is victim.



©WAR/ Nguyen Vu Khoi

SOS Programme update

During the quarter, all three components of the SOS programme were implemented in secondary schools in HCMC.

Integrating wildlife protection into Biology Subject Grade 7.

HCMC, dated 6 December - A workshop on integrating wildlife protection into Biology Subject for Grade 7 was organised by WAR in cooperation with Binh Thanh District Department of Education and Training (DOET) of Ho Chi Minh City DOET at Truong Cong Dinh Secondary School. At the workshop, after observing a sample lesson on fish, participants learn how to use instruction material entitled "Wildlife Protection – A Guide on how to integrate it into Biology Subject Grade 7" and associated teaching aid tools.

At the workshop, all teachers committed to integrate wildlife protection content into ten lessons of Biology Subject Grade 7. In this academic year, integration programmes will be applied to all secondary schools of Binh Thanh District and some secondary schools of Tan Phu and Binh Tan Districts.



Discussion at the workshop
© WAR/Lan Ho Thi Kim

Visit Cu Chi WRS

Approximately 150 teachers and students from seven secondary schools of Tan Phu District visited Cu Chi WRS during the first semester. At Cu Chi WRS, the students learn, observe and interact with endangered wildlife. They were made aware of rescue activities and what they can do to help endangered wildlife. In the second semester of this academic year, more than 400 secondary school students and teachers will be visiting Cu Chi WRS.



Children feed Yellow cheeked Crested Gibbons
© WAR/Lan Ho Thi Kim

SOS travelling exhibition

After being launched again last December, the SOS Travelling Exhibition has traveled to eight secondary schools in Tan Phu District and three secondary schools in Binh Tan District. Nearly 17,000 secondary students and teachers have enjoyed and learnt about the subject at the SOS Tent. In the coming second semester, the SOS exhibition will be targeting approximately 20,000 students in 16 secondary schools.

HIV affected children visited Cu Chi WRS

More than 40 HIV affected children aged from 5 to 16 years old from Smile Group and staff of Standard Charter Bank (SCB) visited Cu Chi WRS in early December 2013. The group was excited to learn and interact with endangered wildlife, and this way they understood the serious situation of illegal wildlife trade and consumption in Vietnam. They also joined WAR staff prepare food and feed the rescued wildlife; and enjoyed wildlife games and quizzes. The visitors enjoyed the trips and were willing to take part in wildlife protection, despite their disadvantage circumstances. The trip was financially supported by Andrew Vallis, Vice Chairman of Standard Chartered Bank.

Disadvantage children visit Dong Nai Nature and Culture Reserve



Observing forest from a different view.
© WAR/Huyen Do Thi Thanh

November 2013, twenty-five students of Thang Long English and Vocational Training School and staff of Saigon Children's Charity (SCC) enjoyed a one-day trip to discovery nature at Dong Nai Culture-Nature Reserve under financially support by Dragon Capitals Group Ltd. The children were excited while seeking for animal traces and collecting interesting information about plants and animals of the forest. The students also visited the nursery garden and took part in nursery activities such as pulling grass and watering nursery plants. Through this interpretation field trip, WAR expects that the children will understand and appreciate Vietnam's nature and it will encourage them to take practice actions in order to conserve the nature down the line.

Conservation of Dugong and endangered marine species

A project update

Parade for Dugong and endangered marine creatures

Phu Quoc, dated 26 September - A parade to raise awareness of Dugong and Endangered Marine Creatures was conducted at Duong Dong Town, Phu Quoc Island. Despite the weather, over 90 people took part and paraded in motorbikes through the main streets of the Town. Before the parade a meeting was organised at Duong Dong Culture House so that local leaders, local people, tourists and students were aware of the event and could participate in the parade. Approximately 400 people participated including leaders of local authorities on Phu Quoc Island, leaders and staff of Phu Quoc MPA, secondary school students, local people, tourists, and WAR staff and leaders.



The parade
©WAR/Lan Ho Thi Kim

Dugong communication boards and posters

Ten roadside communication boards with message on Dugong protection were developed and installed on all main roads of Phu Quoc Island targeting tourists and local people separately.

In this period, 300 posters on Dugong protection were also hung up in over 100 restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, local people committee's head quarters, schools, market and other

Contests on Dugong and endangered marine species

Six contests on the protection of Dugong and endangered species were organised last October for approximately 1200 teachers and students at the six secondary schools. Participating in the contest that included quiz, game and real situations, students not only learnt about the predicament of the Dugong and endangered marine species but also were made aware of how they could help.

Training teachers and operation of Six Blue Clubs

Last October, Six Blue Clubs named "My Sea" were set up in six secondary schools on Phu Quoc Island including Ham Ninh, Duong Dong 1, Bai Thom, Ganh Dau, An Thoi and Hon Thom. Each Club includes about 50 student members and is managed by two teachers who have been trained carefully on how to set up and operate a Blue Club. In this academic year, each Club meets at least once per month to learn about Dugong and endangered marine wildlife.

Teachers at the training course on operation of Blue Clubs
©WAR/Lan Ho Thi Kim



Students from Hon Thom Secondary School at the contest
©WAR/Do Thi Thanh Huyen

University students learn about wildlife

October 2013 - More than 120 students from the University of Economics, the Banking University, University of Economics and Law learnt about wildlife and wildlife consumption through the Dragon Capital Scholarship Awarding Ceremony.

After listening to a talk on the situation of Vietnam's wildlife, all students enthusiastically took part in some games and quizzes to further learn about Vietnam's endangered wildlife and its consumption. Students with correct answers or those who won a game received a WAR's T-shirt, cap, wristbands or set of ten wildlife postcards, or especially a ticket to join WAR's Summer Move programme next June. The students enjoyed the Ceremony and committed to take part in wildlife protection.



An exciting game to learn about threats to wildlife
©WAR/Ngan Le Thi Kim

It has been ten years since we have started to confront the illegal wildlife trade and biodiversity loss in Vietnam. WAR is grateful for the generous supports and accompanies from all donors, partners and friends. In this quarter, special thanks is for following groups.

Dragon CapitalGroup Ltd. provides opportunities for disadvantage children aged 12-15 years old from Sai Gon Children's Charity to discover the nature of Dong Nai Nature and Culture Reserve. Thanks to the Dragon Capital, university students also had the opportunity to learn about wildlife.

Standard Charter Bank supports HIV affected children from Smile Group to visit Cu Chi WRS and learn about wildlife rescue activities.

The Brigitte Bardot Foundation sponsors food for bears and other species at Cu Chi WRS.

The Douc Langur Foundation (DLF) provides precious supports for primates.

The International Primate Protection Leagues (IPPL) supports enrichment activities at Cu Chi WRS.

Saigon Hash House Harriers sponsors names for a Leopard Cat and a Loris at Cu Chi WRS.

Resort Six Sense at Ninh Van Bay provides supports for rescued wildlife at Cu Chi WRS

WAR is proud to attend the NGO Fair organised by the **Canadian International School (CIS)** and the annual Christmas Bazaar organised by the **British International School (BIS)**.

Volunteers for WAR including Gabber Group who are students from different universities in Ho Chi Minh City, helping with operation of SOS Travelling Exhibition, and volunteers from different countries who worked at Cu Chi WRS.

Visitors at Cu Chi WRS including Vietnamese and foreigners of all ages encourage us to keep fighting for wildlife of Vietnam.

National and International media who cooperates closely with WAR over the past year to confront with illegal wildlife trade and help save Vietnam endangered wildlife.



WAR at BIS's Christmas Bazaar
©WAR/Lan HoThiKim

Supporting materials for integrating wildlife protection into Biology Subject 7

Instruction material entitled "Wildlife Protection – A Guide on how to integrate it into Biology Subject Grade 7"

The Vietnamese language material of more than 80 pages includes three chapters. Chapter 1: Integration Fundamentals includes basic information on Vietnam's wildlife, some positive teaching methodologies and the legal structure of integrating wildlife protection into Biology Subject Grade 7. Chapter 2: Integration objects, content and address includes a detailed information on object, content and where to integrate wildlife protection content for each of ten lessons of Biology Subject Grade 7. Chapter 3: Sample lessons is ten sample lessons of integration including: Animal World, Insect, Fish, Amphibians, Reptile, Bird, Bat, Carnivore, Rodent, Hoof, Primate, and endangered animals.

Set of teaching aid tools

Each integration lesson includes three to eleven live colour photos sized 21X29cm of Vietnam's wildlife and the threats it faces and detailed species information. The colour photos were packed in a manner that helps teachers in using the photos. Each lesson also includes one video clip of three to five minutes long which were developed from approximately 60 live photos of approximately 40 wildlife species and the threats against it. The large photos, video clips and all photos of the video clips were copied into an attached DVD.

Please contact Ms. Huyen Do Thi Thanh, WAR's Wildlife Education Manager at huyen.dtt@wildlifeatrisk.org



Dugong

Dugong dugon



Dugong is a large marine mammal species. They can grow up to three metres in length, and weigh up to 450 kilograms. Dugongs are usually found in shallow water as they feed on sea grass and some other marine plants. They often swim alone or in a small group including a mother and one or two babies.

Due to it being slow moving and having a large body, Dugongs are easily stuck in fishing nets and thus drown. Although Dugong is protected by Vietnamese law, it is still caught for mostly food, jewelry and medicine. In addition, its habitat is being destroyed due to the negative impacts of human. Meanwhile, female dugongs give birth to just one calf about once every three to five years. All these threats has pushed dugongs to the brink of extinction. They are categorised as Critically Endangered (CR) in the Vietnam Red Book.

Phu Quoc and Con Dao are the only two marine areas in Vietnam that have Dugongs. Dugong is going to be extinct unless people take immediate actions to save this unique marine creature.