



Education for Nature - Vietnam

P.O. Box 222

Ha Noi, Vietnam

Tel/Fax: +84 4 3514 8850

Email: env@fpt.vn

Website: www.envvietnam.org

September 13, 2012

Press Release

Vietnam Bear Day: Celebrities and the public join forces to call for an end to bear farming in Vietnam

Thursday September 13, 2012: Today, more than 50 national celebrities from throughout the country joined forces with Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) to call for an immediate end to bear farming in Vietnam.

At a press conference in Hanoi, pop star My Linh and comedian and actress Minh Vuong represented a collection of Vietnam's top celebrities in sport, film, music, and entertainment, to highlight the serious threat that bear farming and the bear bile industry pose to the survival of bears in the wild, both in Vietnam and the surrounding region.

"Unfortunately, bears have lost their right to live peacefully in nature," says My Linh. "Bears are captured and kept in captivity to have their bile extracted. If this continues to happen, I cannot imagine what the future of bears will look like."

As My Linh and Minh Vuong spoke to journalists about their desire to see an end to bear farming, ENV volunteers in seven major cities simultaneously hosted public awareness events, calling for an end to bear farming. Events were held in Ha Noi, Ha Long, Hai Phong, Vinh, Da Nang, Hue and Ho Chi Minh cities to focus public attention on the issue, and to encourage people not to consume bear bile or other bear products.

"The bear farming industry in Vietnam poses a major threat to the survival of bears, not just in Vietnam but across the region," says ENV's Vice-Director Tran Viet Hung. "Consumers here in Vietnam represent a minority of the population, and there are plenty of alternatives to bear bile that make this cruel and illegal practice of exploiting bears completely unnecessary in today's modern world. We feel the tide is rising against bear bile farmers who have all but decimated wild populations of bears for their own personal gain, with little consideration for the interests of their communities and the people of Vietnam."

Mr. Hung called on the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to reinforce its 2005 commitment to end all bear farming in Vietnam by aggressively enforcing a ban on bear bile extraction, and to work with the public as well as other government agencies to rapidly phase out bear farming altogether.

Also marking the occasion of Vietnam's Bear Day, ENV announced the winners of a competition for young film-makers to produce a public service announcement (PSA) urging the public not to consume bear bile. During the press conference, My Linh and Minh Vuong presented the "People's Choice" award to Dinh Ngoc Thanh, who racked up the most votes online for his PSA, an "Excellent Message" award to Le Hoai Lam for overall messaging and delivery, and a "Highly Commended" award to Dong Anh 360 group.

Vietnam is home to two species of bear: the Asiatic black bear and Malayan sun bear. Both of these species face serious threats from illegal hunting and trade, and are often sold to bear farms to meet the demand for bear bile and other products made from bears. Today, it is estimated that almost 2,400 bears are being kept on farms. All but a few of these bears originated from the wild.

“The World Society for the Protection of Animals has been working closely with ENV and the Vietnamese government on the phase-out program for many years, especially with the chipping and registration of bears,” says Adam Valvasori, Regional Communications Director with the World Society for the Protection of Animals Asia-Pacific. “With this Vietnam Bear Day event, we hope that Vietnam will set a good example for other countries in the region to bring an end to bear farming everywhere.”

ENV wishes to thank the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) for its continued partnership and support in efforts to end bear farming in Vietnam.

For further details, please contact:

Hoang Hue Linh (Ms.)

Communication and Public Awareness Unit

Education for Nature - Vietnam (ENV)

No. 5 IF1, lane 192 Thai Thinh street, Dong Da district, Hanoi

PO Box 222, Hanoi

Tel/fax: +84 4 35148850 (Ext: 404), +84 94 635 8488

E-mail: communication.env@gmail.com

Website: www.envvietnam.org (English), www.thiennhien.org (Vietnamese)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/EducationforNatureVietnam> (English)

<http://www.facebook.com/ENVvolunteers> (Vietnamese)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/#!/edu4naturevn>

Background: Putting an end to bear farming and trade in Vietnam

End crimes against bears

Vietnam is home to two species of bear: the Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) and the Malayan sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*). Both species are protected under Vietnam's wildlife protection law, Decree 32/2006/ND-CP. It is illegal to hunt, trap, possess, kill, sell or advertise bear or bear products in Vietnam. They are also protected by international law under CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).

Bears are disappearing

The demand for bear bile poses a critical threat to Vietnam's bears. Bears are hunted in the wild and sold live to commercial farms, where they are exploited for their bile to meet consumer demand. Bears are also hunted for their meat and body parts, or to be kept as pets or as 'live trophies' in hotels and businesses.

Bear farming and the bear bile industry

With the rapid economic growth in Vietnam, the use of bear bile has become more popular as a form of traditional medicine. In order to supply the demand, bears are kept in small confined cages, where they regularly have a long syringe repeatedly poked into their gall bladder to extract bile (see [ENV's undercover footage of a bear bile extraction](#)).

The National Forest Protection Department (FPD) states that there are now 2,385 bears in captivity. Scientists estimate that there are more bears in captivity than in the wild. As there have been only a few cases of bears born in captivity in Vietnam, most of Vietnam's captive bears are likely to have come from the wild.

Bear tourism

Another development in the illegal bear bile industry is bear tourism. ENV investigators have found that tourists regularly visit bear farms as part of an organized tour to Ha Long Bay. During some of these visits, tourists witness bile being extracted, taste bear bile wine, and purchase bear bile products. These are all illegal activities under [Vietnam's laws](#).

Since 2008, ENV has carried out surveillance at the entrance to three major bear farms located near Ha Long Bay in Quang Ninh Province. Investigators have documented daily visits to farms by tour buses loaded with mainly Korean tourists.

Phasing out bear farming

In 2005, the Vietnamese government launched efforts to phase out bear farming. The first step of this process was to stop any new bears entering the trade by registering all known captive bears. After this process, the plan was for all unregistered bears to be confiscated and their owners prosecuted. However, weak enforcement and conflicting new regulations have undermined this effort and led to numerous cases of illegally held bears being registered and left in the hands of private owners. Even if bears are registered, it is still illegal for owners to extract bear bile.

What ENV is doing:

Investigation and monitoring:

ENV's [Wildlife Crime Unit](#), with the support of our [National Wildlife Protection Network](#), undertakes regular investigations and surveys of bear farms, and tracks cases involving bears or bear products. The crime team, with the support of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), has also conducted training for rangers and environmental police, specifically to help them investigate the illegal trade of bears in Vietnam.

Working with government and authorities

Information uncovered by ENV or reported to the [wildlife crime hotline](#) that involves bear crimes is passed on to authorities. ENV's bear case officer then works with authorities to help resolve each case effectively.

ENV also works with key government decision-makers and leaders to strengthen policy and legislation protecting Vietnam's bears, and to ensure that current laws are enforced.

Public awareness campaigns

ENV conducts regular campaigns aimed at raising public awareness about Vietnam's bears and reducing the consumption and use of bear bile and bear products. Recent advertising campaigns include bill boards on major highways, bus and magazine advertisements and Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on television and radio. [Public Service Announcements \(PSA\)](#).

Say "No" bear campaign

ENV is encouraging Vietnamese citizens to make a commitment not to use bear bile by signing pledges. Our education team tours the country with a mobile bear exhibit which provides the opportunity for the public to learn more about the plight of Vietnam's bears and sign pledges to show their commitment. More than 105,000 pledges by ordinary Vietnamese citizens had been collected as of June 2012.

Bring peace to Vietnam's bears

ENV held the ["Bring Peace to Vietnam's Bears"](#) national poster competition in 2005. The competition received 96,000 entries expressing concerns and ideas from people of different ages, ethnicities and occupations around the country. Check out some of the exhibited works from this competition in our [media gallery](#).

Background: PSA Competition

ENV launched the Public Service Announcement (PSA) competition in April 2012, to promote a creative response to the issue of bear farming and bear bile extraction. Contestants were asked to produce a 45-second video clip to convey the message "Say NO to bear bile".

ENV shortlisted eight of the best clips, and in July opened up two months of voting to decide the public's favorite. On Vietnam Bear Day, three winners were announced and the following prizes presented:

People's Choice: Dinh Ngoc Thanh

Thanh's PSA used colorful, creative animation and proved to be the clear favorite in the competition, receiving almost one third of the total votes. Thanh is a first year student at the Hanoi Theatre and Film University, in the Theatre Director Faculty. He is also heavily involved in several volunteer initiatives, including his current work as a leader of "Brighten up the Faith" volunteer group.

Excellent Message: Le Hoai Lam

ENV was very impressed with the professional quality of Lam's production and his outstanding message "No matter who you are, say NO to bear bile and any products made from bears". Lam has just finished a Business Management course at Sai Gon Technology University. Although his major is business, Lam has a keen interest in environmental protection activities, and has joined many online environment clubs and forums.

Highly Commended: Dong Anh 360 group

The Hanoi-based group collaborated to produce a very well-made, original PSA with a strong message, and ENV decided to award them a Highly Commended prize. This PSA featured a narrator and animation using hand-drawn pictures.