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New smart phone application to facilitate public reporting of wildlife crimes

Hanoi, July 23 2014 - Education for Nature – Vietnam has launched a new “ENV – Report Wildlife Crime” app, which enables the public to report wildlife crimes accurately, quickly, and easily using their smart phones or devices.



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Burgeoning wealth and increasing disposable income have boosted local demand for wildlife consumption in Vietnam. Every year, tons of wild animals were trafficked to meet the demand for exotic wildlife dishes and traditional medicine made from wildlife. Vietnam has already witnessed the

extinction of our native rhinos in 2010; unless we can effectively reduce consumer demand and bring effective enforcement in combating illegal hunting and trade of wildlife, which is supported by strong legislation and backing from decision-makers, we can also expect to imminently lose other species such as our tigers and elephants.

A major element required to prevent this tragedy and ensure the sustainability of efforts to conserve Vietnam's biodiversity is the mobilization of public action in protecting wildlife. Through establishment of [ENV's National Toll Free Wildlife Crime Hotline](#) in 2005, a mechanism has been established to enable and encourage active public involvement. Whilst the public are encouraged to report crimes to authorities, they may also choose to do so through ENV which then tracks the cases through to conclusion, assures that there is an adequate response to the report by authorities, and keeps the public informed of the results. This process therefore supports enforcement agencies to be more effective and transparent, improving responses to wildlife violations.



Recognizing the opportunities presented by the rise in use of smart phones in Vietnam and the need to move with technological advances to effectively engage the public, ENV has been working with developer James Campbell over the past nine months to create an application that would provide an easy and practical means for the public to report crimes to ENV.

“The main idea behind the development of this app is to make the process of reporting wildlife crimes as streamlined as possible,” said Campbell. *“By utilizing smartphones, reporting violations takes very little effort while yielding incredibly detailed information.”*

The process is incredibly simple: for example, if someone observes a gibbon, the user only needs to open the application, snap a photo or two, fill out a few simple fields describing the violation, and then “submit” the report with the touch of a button. The information, along with the photos and GPS coordinates of the violation, will be immediately transferred to ENV’s Wildlife Crime Unit. ENV can then contact the appropriate agencies with precise information about the nature and location of the violation, permitting a more effective and timely response by the authorities.



“As the use of smart phone applications rapidly gains popularity in Vietnam, we are pleased to be able to bring into service an application that will greatly contribute to the protection of wildlife,” says Ms. Nguyen Thi Phuong Dung, Vice Director of ENV. “ENV’s Wildlife Crime Unit has more than eight years of experience working directly with both the public and the authorities to tackle wildlife crimes. Putting this smart phone capability into the hands of the public is exactly what is needed to mobilize greater public involvement in combating wildlife crimes.”

ENV’s Wildlife Crime Unit has documented more than 7,000 cases since 2005. While not all cases end in success, hundreds of animals have been confiscated, ranging from bears, gibbons, and leopard cats, to otters, lorises and marine turtles. More than a thousand other cases have resulted in success as restaurants have removed menus and advertisements, wildlife markets have closed, and websites and forums have banned online wildlife advertisements.

“We still have an uphill battle ahead of us,” says Dung. “We are confident that with the help of the public and the continued cooperation of authorities, we can bring about the change necessary to protect our own endangered wildlife and also fulfill our global responsibility to protect the world’s wildlife, where consumption in Vietnam is a factor, too.”

ENV would like to thank Mr. James Campbell for his dedication in developing this app and IT consultant Mr. Nguyen Manh Canh for his support in setting up and testing the application in Vietnam. ENV also wishes to thank Humane Society International-Australia for their support in developing this important tool.

The application is currently available for Android devices. In the near future, the app will also be released for IOS and Windows mobile.

You can download the “**ENV – Report Wildlife Crime**” app here:
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.env.crimeReport>

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About Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV)

Education for Nature - Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam's first non-governmental organization focused on the conservation of nature and protection of the environment. Our mission is to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about the need to protect nature and wildlife. We employ creative and innovative strategies to influence public attitudes and mobilize Vietnamese citizens to live in balance with the natural world. We work closely with government partners to strengthen policy and legislation and directly support enforcement efforts in the protection of endangered species of national, regional and global significance.

About ENV's Wildlife Crime Hotline

ENV maintains a toll-free National Wildlife Crime Hotline (**1800 1522**) to facilitate reporting of crimes by the general public. Trained case officers from ENV receive calls and transfer information about wildlife crimes to appropriate local authorities. Each case is then documented and tracked through to conclusion. Members of the public are kept informed of the results of cases that they report to ENV.

So far, ENV has documented more than 7,000 wildlife crime cases resulting in confiscation of hundreds of animals, closure of wildlife markets and restaurants, removal of advertisements, and punishment to violators, as well as voluntary action by hundreds of violators after initial warnings were issued by ENV.