

May 7, 2015

VIETNAM BEAR DAY Ending bear farming in Vietnam: Ten years of progress

Hanoi, May 7th 2015: Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV) and our partner organizations are joined by ENV Bear Ambassador My Linh in celebrating ten years of progress in working to end bear farming and trade in Vietnam. The celebration of Vietnam’s ‘Bear Day’ falls on the one-year anniversary of the successful closure of bear bile tourism operations in Ha Long Bay, and also coincides with the release of a new ENV study indicating a substantial reduction in bear bile consumption over the past five years.



ENV Bear Ambassador My Linh advocating for an end to bear farming in Vietnam

The demand for bear bile poses a critical threat to bears in Vietnam and in the region. In 2005, more than 4,300 bears were kept at farms across the country and exploited for bile, used as a form of traditional medicine to treat bruises and other ailments. Virtually all of these bears were illegally hunted from the wild.

However, in 2005, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development implemented measures to phase out bear farming in Vietnam beginning with the registration and identification of all captive bears on farms. Since then, bear bile farming and trade in Vietnam has declined greatly as government agencies, local and international organizations, and the public have become actively involved in putting an end to this cruel and illegal industry.

This year, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development reported that there were 1,250 bears remaining on farms in Vietnam, a 72% decline since 2005.

The results of a 2014 attitude survey of more than 3,000 residents across Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh and Da Nang found that bear bile consumption had dropped by approximately 61% since 2009 when an identical survey was carried out examining attitudes of bear bile consumers.

Bear farms in Ha Long city were operating by illegally selling bear bile to Korean and other tourists. This tourism activity was shut down permanently in May 2014 following a joint enforcement campaign by Quang Ninh People’s Committee, relevant government agencies, and ENV.

ENV Bear Ambassador and celebrity pop star My Linh joined ENV and our partner organizations for the celebration emphasizing the plight of Vietnam’s bears in captivity.

“Vietnam’s bears have suffered miserable lives in captivity, many coming into farms as young cubs and spending all their lives in cages”, said My Linh.

“We have made great progress over ten years but this effort is not over until there are no more bears being exploited for bile on farms anywhere in this country.” My Linh called upon the public to join her and raise their voices to put an end to bear farming in Vietnam once and for all.

My Linh's comments were echoed by ENV Executive Director Vu Thi Quyen. *"Today we celebrate great progress that is well deserved by our government partners and others that are engaged in this struggle to put an end to the bear bile industry here."*

"It is too early to declare success", said Quyen, "We have 1,250 bears to go before we can declare victory. However, we can take pride as a nation that we have come this far together with government, civil society, the business sector, the media, celebrities and the public working together to address a serious problem within our society and threat to our biodiversity." Quyen added, "When the bear farming and trade ends, bears will have a chance to recover in the wild."

In conjunction with Vietnam Bear Day, volunteers from ENV's 5,000-strong national wildlife protection network are hosting "End Bear Farming and Trade" events in 15 major cities to raise awareness and encourage people to join the fight on behalf of Vietnam's captive bears. These cities include Hanoi, Hai Phong, Thai Nguyen, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Hue, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Binh Duong, Dong Nai, Ho Chi Minh city and Can Tho.

Also on the occasion of Vietnam Bear Day, ENV has released its [latest public service announcement \(PSA\)](#). The PSA features well-known actor Trung Hieu urging the public to create a better world for the future of our children by putting a stop to the use of bear bile.

ENV wishes to thank the World Animal Protection for their long-term support to government and ENV in helping end bear farming and trade in Vietnam, as well as Four Paws International, a recent addition to ENV's strategic partnership. Additionally, ENV wishes to emphasize the critical contribution of the Animals Asia Foundation in establishing a successful world-class sanctuary at Tam Dao National Park for bears confiscated from the trade or rescued from bear farms, and Free the Bears who are currently developing the bear rescue center at Cat Tien for placement of bears in the south of Vietnam.

ENV would also like to thank the Hanoi Daewoo Hotel for their generous support of this event, marking the launch of a new partnership with ENV in efforts to protect Vietnam's bears and other endangered wildlife.

More information about ENV's strategic campaign to end bear farming and trade in Vietnam can be found at <http://envietnam.org/index.php/what-we-do/env-species-focused-campaigns/end-bear-farming-and-trade>

More information about ENV's latest analysis of change in bear bile use can be found at http://www.envietnam.org/images/News_Resources/Publication/Analysis-of-change-in-bear-bile-use-2015.pdf

Additionally, watch our short film highlighting ten years of ENV commitment and progress in ending bear farming and trade in Vietnam: <https://youtu.be/jlFq1NkSLEE>

For more information, please contact:

Nguyen Thi Van Anh

ENV Communications Coordinator

Education for Nature - Vietnam (ENV)

Address: Block 17T5, 17th floor, Room 1701, Hoang Dao Thuy Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi, Vietnam

Tel: +844 6281 5424

Email: communication.env@gmail.com

Website: www.envietnam.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EducationforNatureVietnam>

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

Bears and the law

Vietnam is home to two species of bears; the Asiatic black bear (*Ursus Thibetanus*) and the Malayan sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*). Both species are strictly protected under the [Decree 160/2013/ND-CP](#) and

Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ([CITES](#)).

Bear farming and the bear bile industry

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

Phasing out bear farming

In 2005 the Vietnamese government launched efforts to phase out bear farming. The first step of this process was to register all of the approximately 4,300 bears being held in captivity on farms, and insert microchips in each one so that they can be identified during future inspections. The phase-out process began once all known captive bears were registered, and now any new bears discovered on a farm without microchips are to be confiscated and the owner punished.

Bear tourism shut down in Ha Long

The bear bile tourism industry in Ha Long Bay began around 2007, with several businesses illegally showing live extractions and selling bear bile to tourists. After nearly seven years of efforts by ENV working in partnership with the Quang Ninh People's Committee and relevant agencies, in May 2014, the bear bile tourism business at Vietnam's prestigious Ha Long Bay was shut down for good.

Other achievements

Rescue centers and sanctuaries have been established or are under development to receive captive bears that are transferred from farms. These include the Animals Asia Foundation bear sanctuary at Tam Dao National Park, Soc Son Rescue Center, the Cat Tien Bear Rescue Center administered by Free the Bears, and a new facility in Ninh Binh being developed by Four Paws International.

More than 60 celebrities have joined ENV over the past decade starring in 30 different public service announcements and radio advertisements urging their fans and the public not to consume bear bile and help put an end to bear farming in Vietnam.