

Vietnam races to end bear farming

Ha Noi (December 10, 2017) – Today, more than 800 runners from 43 countries around the globe have come together to “Run for Bears” to signal their strong support for the closing of bear farms, the reduction of bear bile demand, and expediting an end to the cruel and illegal bear bile industry. Hanoi Red River Runners hosted this year’s 11th Annual Hanoi Half Marathon organized by Sporting Republic, in partnership with Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV). This year’s event marks the fifth consecutive year that the race has been run to benefit wildlife protection in Vietnam, and forms part of Vietnam’s National Bear Week, with activities to be held by ENV, World Animal Protection and Four Paws.

In addition to hundreds of individual runners from Vietnam and abroad, “Run for Bears” also attracted the participation of running teams from the American, British, and French Embassies, the Delegation of the European Union to Vietnam, as well as some corporations including Hong Ngoc Hospital, JOLO English, and PEAK Destination Management Company. Famous Vietnamese writer Trang Ha and her family also participated in the race for the third consecutive year.



"This year's event, like each one before it, is the biggest ever. I am so proud that our race highlights the plight of endangered animals in Vietnam. Red River Runners have a huge amount of faith in the work that ENV are doing to tackle bear bile farming and I hope our race gives this issue maximum attention that it deserves," said Jody O'Dea, Hanoi Red River Runners.

The race celebrates the end of 2017 with a number of achievements in expediting an end to bear farming in Vietnam. In the middle of this year, the Vietnamese government reaffirmed its commitment to end bear farming. The second phase of a bear management chipping program also rolled out in hotspots like Hanoi and Dong Nai to strengthen bear farm monitoring. Enforcement efforts have also resulted in a number of bear transfers and confiscations around the country over the year. Significantly, a bear farm owner in Binh Duong had decided to give up bear farming by transferring all nine bears to a rescue center. In November, a new bear sanctuary was opened in Ninh Binh.



"We are pleased to see progress over the past year as efforts are mobilized to expedite an end to bear farming in Vietnam," said Ms. Nguyen Phuong Dung, ENV Vice Director. "Our ultimate aim is to eliminate the bear bile industry in Vietnam in order to give bears the opportunity to recover in the wild."

Ms. Dung called on the authorities to exercise effective monitoring at the remaining farms to ensure that bile is not extracted from bears, and to address bear crimes wherever they occur.

Ms.Dung also urged the public to “stand up and get involved” by committing not to use bear bile, encouraging others to protect bears, and taking action, such as educating others and reporting bear crimes to ENV’s Wildlife Crime Hotline 1-800-1522.

The race kicks off an intensive week full of bear-themed activities supported by a coalition of partners dedicated to the end of bear farming in Vietnam:



- **December 11:** A school program will be organized at Phung Thuong secondary school in the Phuc Tho district of Hanoi - a hotspot for bear farming. Kids will learn about bears, engage in a “Wish for Bears” activity to share their aspirations for protecting Vietnam's bears and hear the debut of a specially written bear song.
- **December 12:** There will be an expert-hosted round table discussion with journalists in Hanoi. On the same day, three bears that were rescued in November will be released into a just-finished outdoor enclosure at the new Ninh Binh sanctuary.
- **December 13:** Local authorities in Dong Nai will continue the second phase of re-microchipping bears at farms within the province. The next generation chips enable scanning without the need to anesthetize the bears. Only chipped bears are deemed legal and so this new technology will help strengthen monitoring of bear farms to ensure no new bears are being sourced from the wild.
- **December 14:** A wildlife trade seminar that includes a wide ranging examination of the issues with captive bears will be organized at a university in Binh Duong province - a bear hotspot area in the South of Vietnam.
- **December 15:** A similar seminar initiative will be organized targeting business people. Additionally, the Hong Ngoc hospital will screen at its entrances a series of Public Service Announcements urging the public not to use bear bile, reaching thousands of patients, staff and visitors.
- **December 16:** “End Bear Farming” events will be organized in 10 major cities across the country - including Hai Phong, Thai Nguyen, Nghe An, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City urging the public not to use bear bile. In Hanoi, a major public awareness raising event will be held at Thu Le Zoo with lots of fun bear-related activities.

ENV would like to thank Hanoi Red River Runners and the Sporting Republic for hosting this annual event in support of bear protection. We would also like to thank World Animal Protection and Four Paws International for their continuous support of ENV’s campaigns in expediting an end to bear farming in Vietnam. Stay tuned for an exciting Bear Week!

The latest ENV Public Service Announcement urging the public to refuse the use of bear bile can be found [HERE](#)

For more details about ENV’s campaign to bring an end to bear farming and trade, please visit [HERE](#)

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Background

Bear farming in Vietnam

In 2005, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and World Animal Protection (formally World Society for the Protection of Animals) initiated a program to register and insert microchips in more than 4,300 captive bears on hundreds of farms throughout the country. This was the first step in an integrated and strategic campaign to phase out bear farming in Vietnam. The registration and microchipping process was mainly aimed at preventing new illegally sourced bears (without microchips) from entering farms and ensuring improved monitoring of farms for illegal activities.

Thanks to the strong commitment from the government, hard work by provincial Forest Protection Departments in enforcing the law, as well as NGOs and members of the public over the last 12 years, the number of captive bears has decreased dramatically to 936 today (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2017).

Bear Coalition

In 2016, a coalition of NGOs was formed to support the efforts of the Vietnamese Government to expedite an end to bear farming in Vietnam. The aim of the coalition is to achieve a situation in which there are no bears remaining on bear farms anywhere in Vietnam. Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV) are part of this coalition along with World Animal Protection, Four Paws International and Four Paws Viet.

Education for Nature – Vietnam

Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam's first non-governmental organization focused on the conservation of nature and the protection of the environment. ENV combats the illegal wildlife trade and aims to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about the need to protect nature and wildlife.

Since 2007, ENV has implemented creative and innovative strategies to influence public attitudes and reduce demand for wildlife trade products. ENV works closely with government partners to strengthen policy and legislation, and directly supports enforcement efforts in the protection of endangered species of regional, national, and global significance.

ENV has been working to end bear farming for more than 12 years, promoting public's awareness and reducing demand for bear bile, actively working with law enforcement to address bear crimes and violations, and strengthening laws and policy relevant to the protection of bears and bringing an end to the bear bile industry in Vietnam.

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