Press Release

Law Enforcement Officers and Journalists Honored for Their Contribution to Wildlife Protection

Hanoi, October 14, 2015 – Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV) and its supporting partners, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Freeland, hosted the second annual "Outstanding Achievement Awards for Wildlife Protection" ceremony to honor five law enforcement officers and two journalists for their contributions to the protection of wildlife in Vietnam.

Launched in November 2014, the national awards nomination process attracted applications from across Vietnam. Candidates included journalists, police officers, forest rangers, customs officers, border police, fisheries officers, and other members of the law enforcement community with a proven track record in protecting wildlife. The seven winners were selected by a panel of representatives from Freeland, IUCN Vietnam, People and Nature Reconciliation (Pan Nature), TRAFFIC Southeast Asia– Greater Mekong Program and ENV. The winning candidates are:

Outstanding Enforcement Officer Award
1. Huynh Quoc Thang - Customs Officer, Tan Son Nhat International Airport Customs
2. Nguyen Duy Toai - Team Leader, Environmental Police Department, Bac Kan
3. Nguyen Huu Hoa - Forest Ranger, Saola Nature Reserves, Hue
4. Nguyen Trong Khoi - Team Leader, Environmental Police Department, Tay Ninh
5. Tran Huu Hong - Head of Environmental Police Department, Nghe An

Excellence in Journalism Award
1. Do Doan Hoang - Journalist, Lao Dong newspaper
2. Le Thi Hong Van - Journalist, Nhan Dan newspaper

"We are honored to host the second national award ceremony to recognize individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to protecting wildlife," said Vu Thi Quyen, ENV Executive Director. "ENV believes that the hard work of law enforcement authorities, the media, our corporate partners, and the public should be recognized and celebrated."

Vietnam is home to a large number of rare and endangered species, many of which are under serious threat as a result of illegal poaching and trade. Considered a key player in the global wildlife trade, Vietnam is also home to sophisticated and far-reaching organized criminal networks that traffic tons of wildlife every year to meet the increasing domestic and international demand for exotic food, medicine, and products made from wildlife. From 2014 to the end of August 2015, ENV recorded 12 major rhino horn and 34 elephant ivory crime cases. Over 10 tons of rhino horn and elephant ivory were confiscated in August 2015 alone. Rhinos went extinct in Vietnam in 2010 and many other of the country's most endangered species, including tigers, bears, pangolins, elephants, endemic primates and saolas are all at risk of extinction.
“We hope the award winners today will inspire others in Vietnam and throughout the region to make a difference in the fight against wildlife crime,” said the U.S Embassy Environment, Science, Technology and Health Unit Chief, Douglas O’Neill. “We firmly believe it is everyone’s responsibility to help stop the illegal wildlife trade and protect our natural heritage.”

The ceremony also acknowledged official corporate and media partners, as well as notable contributions from civil society and the public. These groups all play a critical role in assisting in the protection of Vietnam’s endangered wildlife.

The event was part of the USAID-funded Asia’s Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking (ARREST) Program, an alliance of non-governmental organizations and other agencies, including ENV and Freeland, working together across Southeast Asia and China to stop wildlife trafficking.

ENV would like to thank the Sofitel Plaza Hanoi for generously supporting this event and for their partnership with ENV to protect Vietnam’s wildlife.

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Note to Editor

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the lead U.S. Government agency that works to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient societies to realize their potential. Following 50 years of improving lives through development and humanitarian assistance, USAID is the principal U.S. Government development agency partnering with countries throughout the world to promote peace, prosperity and security. Please visit www.usaid.gov or follow www.facebook.com/USAIDAsia for more information.

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. Please visit www.envietnam.org or follow www.facebook.com/EducationforNatureVietnam for more information.

Freeland is a frontline counter-trafficking organization working for a world that is free of wildlife trafficking and human slavery. Our team of law enforcement, development and communications specialists work alongside partners in Asia, Africa and the Americas to build capacity, raise awareness, strengthen networks and promote good governance to protect critical ecosystems and vulnerable people. Freeland is also the lead implementing partner of "ARREST" (Asia’s Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking), the U.S. Government’s largest counter-wildlife trafficking program, which is sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). For more info, visit www.freeland.org also; follow Freeland on twitter @FREELANDpeople or facebook.com/freelandfoundation