January 12, 2016

ENV Declares War on Pangolin Crime

Hanoi, January 12, 2016, as an urgent response to the massive and unabated exploitation of pangolins to meet demand from consumers in Vietnam and China, Education for Nature - Vietnam (ENV) is taking the unprecedented step of declaring war on pangolin crime. We are calling on the support of our government partners, law enforcement, and the public to put a swift and comprehensive end to all consumption and trade of pangolins and their scales in Vietnam.

According to IUCN, pangolins are the most poached and trafficked animal on earth, with an estimated one million animals being illegally traded in the last 10 years. This trade is driven primarily by Vietnam and China, who are considered the two most critical links in the transnational chain of illegal pangolin traders.

In October 2015, Customs officials in Guangdong, China, seized 11.5 tons of pangolin carcasses, the largest seizure of pangolins in the past five years. Over the last five months alone, there have been at least seven tons of pangolin scales confiscated at ports in Vietnam, in addition to 16 cases, documented by ENV, involving close to a ton of live pangolins seized from smugglers.

Furthermore, these recent seizures have revealed a large and growing international trade in African pangolins, poached to satisfy demand in Asia.

“It is time to take a stand,” says Vu Thi Quyen, Executive Director of ENV. “By declaring war on pangolin crime, we are committing ourselves to a concerted effort, in partnership with government and the public, to protect pangolins. We are fast approaching the point in time where Vietnam no longer plays a role in the illegal trade of pangolins, either as consumer or accomplice.”

Ms. Quyen has outlined ENV’s declaration of war on pangolin crime to encompass four critical components:

- ENV is calling upon local authorities to take aggressive action in addressing pangolin crime at the consumer level by strictly enforcing the laws prohibiting the advertising or sale of pangolins or their parts and derivatives in consumer establishments like restaurants, bars, and traditional medicine shops. Furthermore, ENV will exercise a “zero tolerance” policy, whereby compliance is secured from each and every business for which violations have been reported.
- ENV is launching a sustained campaign to mobilize the public support through the media, social networking, and our national Wildlife Protection Network of Volunteers to report pangolin crimes and help educate consumers.
- ENV is calling upon law enforcement, prosecutors, and the courts to vigorously pursue and punish criminals engaged in the trafficking of pangolins and successfully dismantle organized criminal networks that traffic pangolins into or through Vietnam.
- ENV is calling upon provincial governments to prevent and prohibit any auctioning of pangolins back into the trade following seizures as this practice is both in conflict with the law and is directly supporting the illegal trafficking and trade of pangolins.
ENV’s efforts to combat pangolin crimes were first initiated in 2005 with the establishment of ENV’s Wildlife Crime Unit. Now, in 2016, Ms. Quyen is emphasizing the need for broader public and government support to reduce and terminate Vietnam’s role as villains in the trafficking and trade of pangolins.

“This means stopping consumption 100% and going after major traffickers and their networks,” says Ms. Quyen. “Merely seizing pangolins on the roads and arresting drivers and low-level traders will not make the difference that is needed.”

Pangolins confiscated from smugglers in Nghe An province, November 2015

“We need to actively pursue those at the top, the people who run these criminal enterprises and show them and their associates that they are not above the law, and that they will be prosecuted and imprisoned for their crimes against nature and against Vietnam. Enough is enough.”

Likewise, ENV sees public involvement as crucial to any successful effort to eradicate pangolin crime in Vietnam. “With the support of the public, our hand is strengthened,” says Ms. Quyen. “We call upon the public to join us in this battle that may determine the future of a species. We have the ability to make a difference if we choose to. I choose not to sit on the sidelines and watch this species disappear when now, today, we have a chance to stop this. I am urging the public to make the same resolution, to become ‘pangolin warriors.”

ENV highlighted action that can be taken by the public as follows:

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<th>Call for public action! Four things YOU can do to stop pangolin crime:</th>
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<td><strong>1. Report pangolin crimes</strong> immediately to local authorities or to the ENV Wildlife Crime Hotline 1800-1522. Each report to ENV will be pursued aggressively to conclusion with the aim of eliminating all violations that are reported.</td>
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<td>See ENV’s new public service announcement (PSA) that has just begun airing across the country urging the public to report pangolin crimes at <a href="https://youtu.be/UW9RKV_uFTM">https://youtu.be/UW9RKV_uFTM</a></td>
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<td><strong>2. Take action in your community</strong> by making sure businesses near your home, work, or school are not violating the law. Check restaurants to ensure that they are not offering pangolins on their menus or serving pangolin wine. Check traditional medicine shops to ensure that pangolin scales are not being offered or sold. Report any violations observed to ENV.</td>
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<td><strong>3. Urge your friends, family, and colleagues to get involved.</strong> Spread the word widely through your social networks and other means: “Stop pangolin crime now by reporting violations to ENV and saying ‘NO’ to the consumption of pangolins.</td>
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4. **Report traffickers.** If you have information about illegal traders and traffickers engaged in the smuggling of pangolins, please inform to local authorities or contact the ENV Wildlife Crime Unit on our confidential toll-free hotline 1800-1522. ENV will assist in providing timely information to the appropriate law enforcement agency and track the case through to conclusion, keeping you informed of any results.

For more information, please contact:

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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.

**ENV’s strategic approach to tackling the illegal wildlife trade**

ENV focuses its activities on three major program areas that comprise ENV’s integrated strategic approach for addressing illegal wildlife trade. These include:

- Reducing consumer demand for wildlife products through investment in a long-term and sustained effort to influence public attitudes and behavior
- Strengthening enforcement through direct support and assistance to law enforcement agencies, and mobilizing active public participation in helping combat wildlife crime
- Working with policy-makers to strengthen legislation, close loopholes in the law, and promote sound policy and decision-making relevant to wildlife protection.