

FOUR PAWS rescues two bear cubs from illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam

The cubs arrived at BEAR SANCTUARY Ninh Binh days before Vietnam announces ban on all wildlife trade

Global animal welfare organisation FOUR PAWS has rescued two Asiatic black bear cubs that were confiscated by the environmental police in Lai Chau Province at the Vietnam border to China on 21st July 2020. The cubs, a male and a female, are only a few months old. The accused wildlife smuggler was already closely monitored by the police due to his criminal record on wildlife poaching and trafficking. He was arrested after trying to sell the cubs online via a social media platform.

FOUR PAWS was contacted by the authorities to bring them to its BEAR SANCTUARY Ninh Binh in Northern Vietnam, where they will receive all the care they need to grow up into healthy bears. Only days after the confiscation, Vietnam announced an immediate ban on all wildlife trade including the import of wildlife and wildlife products into the country. FOUR PAWS applauds the Vietnamese government on this landmark step and hopes that it is followed with stringent enforcement efforts.

A small FOUR PAWS team made the 11-hour journey to Lai Chau province on 22nd July and freed the cubs from the tiny cage they were kept in before leaving for BEAR SANCTUARY Ninh Binh on the next day. Before the departure, the cubs received a health check and were fed with milk.

“Both cubs were very stressed and huffed at anyone trying to approach them. The male is quite protective of the female, who is very timid, hiding in a corner and nestling under him. They will now receive all the care they need to calm down and recover from a turbulent start of their lives. Both cubs are in stable condition, but slightly underweight. Our vets are examining them thoroughly and once we are sure they are disease free we will socialise them with another bear cub we rescued earlier this year from similar circumstances,” says Emily Lloyd, Animal Manager at BEAR SANCTUARY Ninh Binh.

The cubs would not survive if released back into the wild, thus they will remain at the sanctuary.

Vietnam bans wildlife trade in light of COVID-19 pandemic

Only days after the two cubs were confiscated from an illegal trader, Vietnam announced on July 24th that the import and trade of wild animals and their parts would be banned under a new Directive.

Moreover, in an unprecedented step, Vietnam has vowed to act against the online sale of wild animals, which is an increasing trend in the region. As one of the biggest consumers of wild animals worldwide this is a major step in not only stopping the next pandemic but also protecting wild animals from being poached from the wild or cruelly bred on farms to meet demands for human consumption like bear bile for pseudo remedial purposes.

“Although the sale and possession of bear bile is illegal in Vietnam it still exists as due to weak enforcement of the laws. We hope that this new directive and subsequent revised enforcement efforts will also affect bear farming and eradicate the illegal sale and possession of bile products. We also hope that these efforts will ensure no new and illegal bears enter bear farms and that any unregistered bears are swiftly confiscated,” says Kieran Harkin, responsible for Wild Animals in Trade at FOUR PAWS.

Following its years-long work on ending illegal bear farming and wildlife trafficking in Vietnam, FOUR PAWS prompts the Vietnamese authorities to enforce the ban comprehensively in order to efficiently protect wildlife.

BEAR SANCTUARY Ninh Binh: A species-appropriate home for rescued bears

FOUR PAWS has been working with local partners since 2017 to free as many bears as possible from their sad fate. In recent years, the number of bears on bear farms in Vietnam has dramatically declined from approximately 936 in 2017 to 406 currently being held on private bear farms. With its bear sanctuary in Ninh Binh, FOUR PAWS is supporting the Vietnamese government to end bile bear farming in Vietnam and provide a species-appropriate home for up to 100 rescued bears once all construction is finished. BEAR SANCTUARY Ninh Binh is not only a safe home for former bile bears, it is also an awareness and education centre for wildlife conservation in Vietnam. Some of the 34 Asiatic black bears currently living in the bear sanctuary were not only victims of cruel bile farming prior to their rescue, but illegally traded as well.

Images of the cubs are available here:

<https://four-paws.canto.global/b/K4UEE> (copyright information in photo properties, link valid 14 days)

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