

Press Release

Ho Chi Minh City, 18th December 2011

Riding bicycles and releasing native fishes to the wild

Ho Chi Minh City, 18th December 2011 – Instructed and supported by Wildlife at Risk (WAR), more than 20 members of the C4E (Cycling for Environment) Club rode bicycles to release native fishes to the wild. This activity aims to call for local people to use native fishes for aquariums and to contribute to repopulating this species. It also raises public awareness on energy saving and environmental protection.

Started from Tao Dan Park, C4E members cycled through HCMC's major streets and visited WAR Office where native fishes were being bred. They carried slogans that drew attention of the public on utilisation of native fishes in aquariums, good luck releasing, as well as environmental protection. Over 250 native rasbora (*Rasbora paviana*) were released to a tributary of Sai Gon River under Cau Den Bridge in District 2. These fishes were bred in the programme titled "Breeding and release native fishes to the wild" that was partly supported by LIN (Center for Community Development).

Rasbora species are relatively common. This species of rasbora is able to live in seriously polluted water. It could also survive in small closed water sources during the dry season. As this fish feeds on organic matters, it is able to clean organic substances from domestic waste water.

According to Mr. Manh Bui Huu, Senior Conservation Officer – WAR: *"For good luck releasing or home aquariums, people should use these native fishes instead of imported ones. This action contributes to repopulating native fishes. We are grateful that more and more residents of HCMC are contacting WAR for native fishes for their home aquariums."*

In the past year, more than 300 native *Betta sp.* were also released to others tributaries of the Saigon River. More native species of fresh water fishes are planned to be released in the future. WAR is willing to provide useful support and consultations for any resident or student who is interested in releasing or raising native fishes.

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A rasbora ready to be released



It takes four days for these Rasbora's eggs to hatch into fry that can swim

Additional information

“Breeding and release native fishes back to the wild” program

In order to maintain the genetic diversity and natural balance, WAR has been conducting a survey on these non-commercial native species in order to breed and release them into the wild since February 2010. Many of these fish can be used for ornamental purpose. Species in this programme include the Crescent betta, Lambchop rasbora, Blackline rasbora, and Pygmy gourami. These species were collected during WAR's survey program in Lam Dong and Dong Nai provinces, Phu Quoc island, and U Minh Thuong National Park, Sai Gon.

The Beta species is distributed throughout Southern Vietnam. This species used to be relatively common in the inner and outer areas of Ho Chi Minh City. However, together with urbanisation, the habitat of these species including canals, marshes, and ponds have been lost. Additionally, the water is so polluted that these species become very rare in the city. These Beta species are able to tolerate water with lower oxygen levels and pollution thanks to their ability to absorb oxygen from the air. They can also survive in the polluted waters where no other fish species can survive. In addition, the favourite food of this species is small animals, especially mosquito larva.

WAR encourages the use of native fish for ornamental fish and the release of these species in order to contribute to native wildlife conservation.

About WAR

Wildlife At Risk (WAR) is dedicated to protecting the biodiversity of Vietnam by combating the illegal wildlife trade and promoting the conservation of endangered species and their habitats.

Founded in 2003 in Vietnam, WAR currently co-operates with government bodies, local authorities, institutions, organizations and individuals both nationally and internationally to implement it's initiatives in four provinces including Ho Chi Minh City, Kien Giang, Dong Nai and Can Tho. WAR is working in three areas including:

- **Wildlife education programs** aim to raise awareness, improve knowledge, foster attitude and enhance skills for stakeholders so that they are able to make educated decisions to change their behaviours towards wildlife protection.
- **Enforcement programs** aim to reduce the exploitation of endangered species and support the confiscation, rehabilitation and possible release of illegal traded wildlife. WAR is working with the Forest Protection Department to support, establish and operate the Cu Chi Wildlife Rescue Station, Cat Tien Bear and Wild Cat Rescue Station, and Hon Me Wildlife Rescue Station.
- **Conservation programs** aim to identify the richness of biodiversity and to safeguard endangered species and their habitats.