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More protection needed for turtles in Asia

by Craig Hoover, Programme Officer, TRAFFIC North America and Peter Paul van Dijk, Senior Programme Officer, TRAFFIC Southeast Asia

Rising demand for tortoises and freshwater turtles in Asia, and especially southern China, has provoked concern that many Asian species are in serious decline in the wild and that some species are already facing extinction.

Turtles and tortoises are used for food, traditional medicine, religious release, decoration and as pets. Of these uses, food and traditional medicine pose the greatest threat to their survival. Market studies and analyses of trade dynamics conclude that this harvest is generally non-specific - any available species is targeted to supply the trade. Given the enormous demand for turtles and tortoises, and the relatively late age and low levels of reproduction of these species, even a small harvest can cause a turtle population to decline significantly - and in some cases, even disappear.

In response to this crisis in biodiversity, TRAFFIC, WWF and The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), brought together 40 regional turtle experts from 16 countries, primarily within East and Southeast Asia, to discuss the trade problem. Turtle ecologists, government representatives, international conservation NGOs, traditional Chinese medicine practitioners, and zoological advisors convened in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 1-4 December 1999 at the *Workshop on Trade in Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles in Asia*. The workshop provided a forum to gather available information on the status of more than 80 individual species at national levels; map trade routes and types of demand; analyse legislative and enforcement frameworks protecting turtles; and assess national and regional threats to turtle populations posed by the trade.

The immediate aim in addressing this critical conservation issue is to reduce



Photo: TRAFFIC/D Sharma

Giant Asian Pond turtle in a pet shop, Penang, Malaysia

or eliminate collection from native populations and reduce demand in consumer countries. The workshop participants identified a combination of immediate and long-term measures to assist the conservation of Asian turtles.

The workshop developed a variety of recommendations urging, among others, for a thorough review and improvement of national legislation for effective protection of turtles in the region as well as for prompt enforcement of all local, state and national regulations and legislation concerning the conservation of turtles.

Further, the workshop recommended that out of the 93 turtle species found in the region those that are still not listed in the CITES Appendixes, should be added to them.

The workshop also underlined that the collaboration with the media, schools and other institutions to develop campaigns that boost awareness and generate financial returns to support conservation of native turtle populations is crucial for the success of the efforts carried out.

Complete workshop proceedings will be published in March 2000. Currently, the full text of the workshop conclusions and recommendations is available on the TRAFFIC website at www.traffic.org.

The workshop was funded by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety; the Office of Scientific Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Chelonian Research Foundation, USA; Kari and Andrew Sabin; and the Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden, Hong Kong.

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Photo: TRAFFIC/D Sharma

Giant Asian Pond turtle in a pet shop, Penang, Malaysia

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COP 11 Conference Room



In the run-up to 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to CITES this April, TRAFFIC has launched the *COP 11 Conference Room* - a regular feature of the TRAFFIC Network website bringing Internet users the latest information, news, updates and views on COP11.

"As a leading expert on wildlife trade issues, we play a vital role in ensuring the effectiveness of CITES - and the key to that effectiveness is information," said TRAFFIC International Communications Manager Sabri Zain. "We aim to make the website's *Conference Room* a central information resource for others to gain access to both our outputs and up-to-the-minute information on CITES priority issues and current developments. Hopefully, it will become an indispensable and influential resource for decision-makers prior to, during and after COP11."

The *Conference Room* features various sections. 'About CITES' has information dealing specifically with CITES and the COP. The 'News Room' highlights the latest press releases, statements and features related to CITES. The 'Briefing Room' has the relevant briefing papers, position statements, fact sheets and policy documents related to priority issues being raised at the COP, while more detailed reports and publications can be found in the 'Library'. The 'Links' page offers a selection of CITES-related websites and organisations supporting CITES work.

The TRAFFIC website was set up in November 1997 and now has at least 100,000 'hits' every month. The COP 11 Conference Room can be located at <http://www.traffic.org/cop11>

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TRAFFIC review influences a new swordfish recovery plan

by Caroline Raymakers, Fisheries Research Officer, TRAFFIC Europe

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) held its 16th Regular Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 15-22 November 1999.

Swordfish *Xiphias gladius* caught special attention this year and repeated reference was made to TRAFFIC Europe's review,

Slipping the net: Spain's compliance with ICCAT recommendations for Swordfish and Bluefin Tuna.



Photo: Miguel Murcia

At the meeting the 27 member countries agreed to a 10-year recovery plan to rebuild Swordfish stocks in the North Atlantic. This was an important step forward, not only because overfishing jeopardises the future of the species, but also because the livelihoods of fishermen depend on these fisheries.

TRAFFIC Europe's report was released on the commencing day of the ICCAT meeting was the result of a two-year project. It included field surveys undertaken in Spain in summer 1998 and an analysis of legal measures that were in force in August 1999, namely ICCAT Recommendations, European Union (EU) Regulations and Spanish national legislation.



Photo: Miguel Murcia

Landings of Swordfish and Bluefin Tuna *Thunnus thynnus*, also called Northern Bluefin Tuna, were recorded in seven Spanish harbours on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. The survey results revealed that 44% of the Swordfish observed weighed less than 25kg, ICCAT's recommended size limit, and 51% of the Bluefin Tuna weighed less than 6.4kg. These figures suggest that Spain, one of the major fishing countries in the world, exceeds the 15% ICCAT tolerance by multiple of three for both species.

However, in the ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics

(SCRS) 1998 report, it is recognised that Spain is not the only ICCAT Party to exceed set limits for its Swordfish and Bluefin Tuna fisheries. France, Japan, Italy, Morocco and the USA, among others, also have problems with compliance. The TRAFFIC review indicates that the Spanish legislation adopted to manage tunas and tuna-like fisheries complies with both ICCAT Recommendations and EU requirements.

In recommendations proposed by the report, TRAFFIC underlines the importance of adopting strict management measures for Swordfish in the Mediterranean as well as applying sanctions against ICCAT Contracting and non-Contracting Parties, for example, by allocating lower annual catch quota to those nations that are fishing in contravention of international recommendations and regulations. The report also recommends setting up programmes to record discards and by-catch from Swordfish and Bluefin Tuna fishing vessels, particularly with reference to sharks caught by Swordfish longliners in the Atlantic.

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Building Enforcement Capacity in East Asia

by Crawford Allan, Global Enforcement Assistance Co-ordinator, TRAFFIC International



Photo: TRAFFIC/Crawford Allan

The CITES enforcers of twelve countries, mainly from East Asia, gathered in December 1999 for a five-day training seminar that focussed entirely on the roles that law enforcement personnel fulfil in their daily work. A comprehensive package of training and exercises had been developed by the CITES Secretariat, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise - United Kingdom and TRAFFIC, with presentations by the countries from the region and some guest speakers from outside the region. TRAFFIC's involvement came hot on the heels of the signature in November 1999, by the CITES Secretariat and TRAFFIC of a Memorandum of Understanding, to formally recognise and promote collaboration on CITES capacity building. Presentations were made by several TRAFFIC offices in attendance and TRAFFIC International provided one of the trainers. The sessions led by TRAFFIC focussed on monitoring and investigation of illegal trade. The driving force behind the seminar was the Hong Kong Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD, the CITES Management Authority for this Semi-Autonomous Region of China), which funded and hosted the event.

The Seminar was not entirely based in the classroom. Some relief from the intense tutorials and exercises was afforded through a field trip to an AFD reserve, providing an insight into the work of the AFD. This was also illustrated through a presentation of its collection of CITES-listed live specimens and products which had been seized in recent years. It was clear that much was learned during the seminar, for the delegates and trainers alike, setting a good foundation for future collaboration and more effective CITES law enforcement. This was the second such seminar in the region in the last five years and illustrates an effective means to maintain contacts, refresh experienced staff, train new staff and introduce new developments in CITES

enforcement. The undertaking or continuation of similar programmes in other regions needs to be encouraged.

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Agarwood: Threatened multi-cultural resource?

by Angela Barden, Research Officer, TRAFFIC International

Used for incense, perfumery and medicine, the value of the fragrant wood of *Aquilaria* species, agarwood, has been recognised for thousands of years. International trade in agarwood dates back at least 800 years and currently threatens six of the 15 tree species in this Indomalayan genus. TRAFFIC's recently completed study of CITES implementation for *A. malaccensis* and the wider trade in agarwood confirms earlier concerns regarding conservation and trade controls.



Photo: TRAFFIC/Michael Song

Agarwood chips are the most common form of agarwood in raw trade

TRAFFIC first investigated the trade in agarwood in 1994, TRAFFIC India's report *Trade in Agarwood*, being a key source of information considered by the Parties in deciding to list *A. malaccensis* in CITES Appendix II in 1995. *A. malaccensis* is the only species currently listed in the CITES appendices. A review of the implementation of *A. malaccensis* listing was identified by the CITES Plants Committee as a priority under the CITES Significant Trade process for the period 1998-2000. The CITES Secretariat contracted the TRAFFIC Network to study CITES implementation in key range States, with TRAFFIC India and TRAFFIC Southeast Asia taking the lead. Initial research showed that it was impossible to study the trade in *A. malaccensis* without investigating the trade in other agarwood-producing *Aquilaria* species. The research was therefore widened to consider the larger agarwood trade.

A summary report documenting TRAFFIC's research was circulated at the Ninth meeting of the CITES Plants Committee in June of 1999. The full report was submitted to the CITES Secretariat, who in turn circulated it to all *A. malaccensis* range States in September 1999. The findings of the study, including market reviews in seven countries, are to be presented in a forthcoming report compiled by TRAFFIC International, with funding support from Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit (BMZ).



Photo: TRAFFIC / Michael Song

Agarwood incense sticks are popular in many countries, including India, Japan and the Middle East

When infected by certain fungi, *Aquilaria* trees produce a fragrant resin-like substance popularly referred to in trading circles as agarwood among other names. The greatest volumes of resin are found in trees aged 50 years or more. However, not all *Aquilaria* trees produce agarwood, with uninfected trees being of negligible commercial value. If agarwood is present, it exists in unpredictable quantities and qualities that can only be fully determined once the tree has been split open. As a result, trees are indiscriminately felled in search of the highly prized 'black gold' resulting in the drastic decline of wild populations.

Agarwood is used in a variety of ways, including in traditional medicine systems such as Ayurvedic, Tibetan and Traditional East Asian medicine. Its pleasant fragrance makes it popular ingredient of perfumes and tends to be mixed with less expensive carrier oils such as sandalwood. Agarwood is also burned to create incense for example in India, Japan and the Middle East. Less commonly, it can be used as an insect repellent and as an ingredient in wine.

Agarwood is traded in several raw forms including chips (the most common form of raw agarwood in trade), powder, timber pieces, and very occasionally, roots. The price of agarwood depends on a complex set of factors including country of origin and fragrance strength, but not the species that the agarwood is from. Reported wholesale prices for chips have ranged from USD25 to USD1000 per kilogramme in Singapore. Agarwood oil, produced through the steam distillation of agarwood powder, is the most commonly traded processed product. It is virtually impossible for traders or consumers to assess the purity of oil offered for sale, however, agarwood oil can range in price from USD5000 to USD10000 per kilogramme.

CITES Annual Report data show that 20 countries traded a total of over 1350 t of *A. malaccensis* from 1995 to 1997. This represents only part of the global

agarwood trade. Taiwan Customs data that show that Taiwan alone imported over 2000 t of agarwood (species unknown) during these same three years. The main CITES-reported exporters during this period were Indonesia and Malaysia, whilst the largest importer was Singapore, confirming this country's importance as a major international agarwood trading centre. Several Middle Eastern countries were identified by CITES Annual Report data as being major consumers of *A. malaccensis*. TRAFFIC research suggests that this region consumes the largest amount of agarwood of all species in trade.

Problems with CITES implementation included inconsistent trade reporting, determining sustainable export volumes and identifying agarwood in trade. TRAFFIC's research also found evidence of ongoing illegal trade - over 68 t of agarwood was seized in India alone from 1994 to 1998.

The agarwood trade involves a variety of players including local harvesters, various middlemen, governments and consumers. Collaboration among these different stakeholders will be vital to the success of efforts to bring the agarwood trade within sustainable levels. TRAFFIC's report calls for such collaboration together with other measures to more effectively control agarwood harvests and trade, and makes specific recommendations aimed at more effective CITES implementation for *A. malaccensis*.

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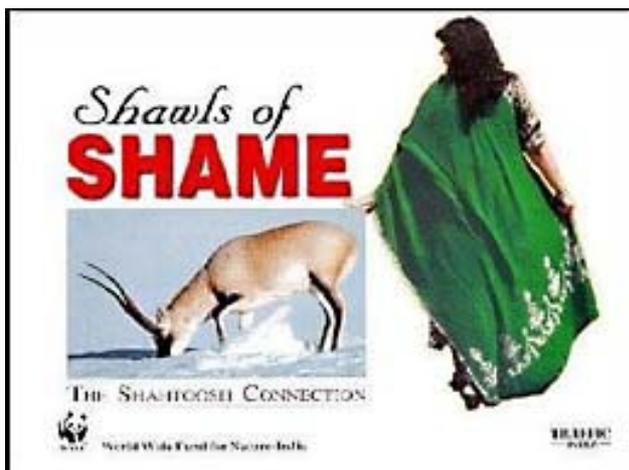
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TRAFFIC joins forces with celebrities to end shahtoosh trade

In October 1999 celebrities joined TRAFFIC and WWF India in calling for an end to the shahtoosh trade which drives a large-scale poaching of Tibetan antelope *Pantholops hodgsonii* (chiru) on the plateaux of China. A TRAFFIC East Asia and TRAFFIC India review summarised the latest information about the status of



chiru and illicit trade of shahtoosh. It also served as the foundation for a successful campaign against shahtoosh trade in India, Hong Kong, Europe and the USA, gaining wide attention by the media and consumers worldwide.

International trade in shahtoosh, which is a luxury fibre made from the wool of chiru, has been prohibited under CITES since 1979. The only notable exception is the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, where the chiru wool is woven into shahtoosh shawls and scarves to be smuggled to consumer markets worldwide. Shahtoosh shawls range in price from USD1000 to USD5000. An estimated 20,000 animals have been killed each year to obtain the wool for the consumer market. The wild population is now estimated to be 70,000.

The summary report titled *Fashion Statement Spells Death for Tibetan Antelope* recommended, among other actions, that all the countries should stop all internal trade, export and import of shahtoosh products whilst consumers should refuse to buy and wear such products.

In India, the campaign spearheaded by TRAFFIC India and WWF India, with a helping hand from celebrities and politicians, has been the biggest success to date. Prominent adverts in newspapers urged people to "Say no to shahtoosh" and warned of the penalties of possessing a shawl or engaging in the illegal trade. The campaign, which was backed by the Delhi Government, also appealed for information about those flouting the law. As a result, an

anonymous phonecall resulted in a raid on an exclusive auction held in a five-star hotel in Delhi. A shahtoosh shawl was seized from the auction and two persons, including the organiser of the auction, were arrested.

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Bear-Trade stakeholders find common ground in Korea

by Judy Mills, Director, TRAFFIC East Asia

Altogether, there may be only 50,000 individuals of Asian bear species left in the wild, spread across habitats and fragmented populations from India, though China, and into the ASEAN countries, according to renowned bear biologist Dr. Chris Servheen.

Dr. Servheen was one of 21 speakers at the Third International Symposium on Trade in Bear Parts, in Seoul, South Korea, 26-28 October 1999, which was organised by TRAFFIC East Asia, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, and the Bear Specialist Group of The IUCN-World Conservation Union.

More than 100 stakeholders from disparate professions and cultures came together in the Seoul symposium to discuss the impact of trade in bear parts on the status of bears world-wide. This was the third symposium of its kind, following on from a first and second organised by TRAFFIC and WWF in 1992 and 1995 in the USA. Seoul was chosen as the venue for the third such meeting because Koreans are among the most avid users of bear bile as medicine and as a health tonic.

The main messages from symposium participants were that Asian bear species are still in serious trouble in the wild, demand for gall bladders of wild bears for use as medicine remains a threat to the survival of Asian bear species, and all sides - including traditional medicine communities - wish to work together to solve these problems and conserve bears in the wild.

While mainland China's bear farms now produce some 6,000 kg of bear bile annually, which is more than what the entire country consumes, conservationists questioned whether this oversupply was helping wild bears or creating more users and uses of bear bile. In fact, a spokesman for Korea's traditional medicine community said that 50 kg of bear bile is "quite sufficient" to satisfy South Korea's purely medicinal needs each year. "There is a tendency to misuse bear bile due to its reputation as a health enhancer", said Lee Yong Jong of the Association of Korean Oriental Medicine.



Photo: WWF / Marek L. Ibersky

Though the representative from China said China would like permission to market its excess bear bile internationally, a representative of the Animal Welfare Institute in the United States called for a ban on international trade in bear gall bladders, bile and feet (the latter of which are considered a culinary delicacy in parts of Asia). Despite these divergent opinions, a majority of symposium participants seemed to favour a reduction in trade in bear gall bladders and bile to a level that would satisfy only urgent health care needs.

Organisers and participants alike supported the creation of an international working group to suggest actions that would reduce the threat trade poses to wild bears, while still meeting the health care needs of people.

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Reptile trade booms in Tanzania

by Simon Milledge, Programme Officer, TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa

According to an on-going TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa study, the live bird export volumes have declined by more than three-quarters since 1994 as a result of trade restrictions imposed by the Tanzanian government, CITES, importing nations and airline companies. On the other hand, the trade in live reptiles and amphibians is growing fast. A total of over 65 000 reptiles were exported from Tanzania in 1998 showing an increase of over ten-fold between 1991 and 1998.



Photo: WWF-Canon / Olivier Langrand

The study that investigated this important shift in the live animal market in Tanzania found that spiny-tailed lizards, geckos and chameleons constituted almost three-quarters of the reptile trade between 1991 and 1998. The study also found that the notably high amphibian diversity will most likely lead to a rapid rise in demand in the near future. The most traded species are the Rubber-banded frog, African bull frog, Mottled shovel-nosed frog and bubbling kassina.

Although the bird trade appears to be in a much more sustainable level, some priority species, particularly parrots and large waterbirds, will continue to need closer attention.

In the past, as one of the largest exporters of live birds in Africa, Tanzania has received considerable attention concerning levels of sustainability and general policy. TRAFFIC research, CITES-significant trade studies and workshops have been carried out and considerable progress has been recorded. In particular a revised quota system, reducing the number of non-quota species in trade and encouraging captive breeding has proven very successful.

The study that was embarked in 1998 is also analysing the three main tools for controlling the live export trade: licences, quotas and permits. A report on TRAFFIC's studies of the live animal export trade from Tanzania will be published later in the year to encourage conservation action.

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Wildlife trade in the Russian Far East under scrutiny

by Tom De Meulenaer, Director, TRAFFIC Europe

In November 1999 the *International Workshop on Enforcing Wildlife Trade Controls in the Russian Far East and North East Asia* was held in Vladivostok, Russia, bringing together over 40 delegates and wildlife trade experts from the Russian Federation, the Peoples Republic of China, the Republic of Korea and various international non-governmental organizations.



The Russian Far East is a land of salmon streams, pristine seashores, natural hot springs, and vast stretches of untouched forest that are amongst the largest and best preserved in the northern hemisphere. In this region a rich biological diversity prevails with habitat for rare and endangered species of global importance such as the Siberian Tiger, *Panthera tigris altaica*, and the Amur Leopard, *Panthera pardus altaica*.

Poaching of these rare species for Asian wildlife medicinals and trophies, intensive subsistence hunting, over-fishing, and ruthless exploitation of the forestry resources are of serious concern. Much of these wildlife resources are destined for markets in China, Japan, Korea and other Asian countries.

During the workshop, the delegates reviewed a large amount of up-to-date information on the conservation status and the legal and illegal trade in a number of species that occur in northeast Asia, and are of common concern. Besides the Tiger and Leopard, these species include the Brown Bear *Ursus arctos*, Asiatic Black Bear *Ursus thibetanus*, and Musk deer *Moschus* spp., all of which are listed CITES and to which all three participating countries are signatory Parties. Attention was also drawn to the trade in Sea cucumbers and Asian Ginseng, which are protected in Russia, but appear to be heavily exploited for export to Asian countries.

The participants agreed that the CITES Authorities, Customs Administrations, and other enforcement bodies in the three countries should co-operate effectively at a national and regional level to strengthen the implementation of CITES and to stop illegal trade with CITES-listed species.

During comprehensive discussions, the participants agreed on a range of activities that would significantly improve CITES implementation and enforcement. These include practical steps to enhance co-operation between East Asian Customs administrations on CITES, to review the CITES implementing legislation in each of the three countries and remedy weaknesses, to organize common capacity building and training activities, and to ensure that public awareness and education activities are conducted.

Finally, it was agreed that the results of the workshop had to be made available to the relevant authorities in other northeast Asian countries.

The participants appealed to various organizations and agencies, including the CITES Secretariat, the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and the International Criminal Police Organisation (ICPO-Interpol), to help and support this effort.

The Workshop was organised by the State Committee of the Russian Federation on Environmental Protection and TRAFFIC Europe, with financial support from the Save the Tiger Fund, and in collaboration with Global Survival Network (GSN), Fund Phoenix, and the Russian Programme Office of WWF.

Also available a report titled 'Wild Animals and Plants in Commerce in Russia and CIS countries' by TRAFFIC Europe. For more information, contact [TRAFFIC Europe](#).

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Straddling Stocks Agreement important to large migratory fish

The catches of migratory fish species in the Southern and Indian Oceans have increased steadily since 1980s, mainly due to the improved efficiency, range and effort of Southeast Asian fleets. Large migratory fish (LMF) are threatened also by an anticipated increase of fishing effort from China and elsewhere as well as the growing consumer demand of shark meat in Southeast Asia.

The TRAFFIC Oceania report Sustainable Use of Large Migratory Fish in the Southern and Indian Oceans: Gaps in the International Legal Framework investigated how well the existing international agreements provide management framework for the sustainable fishing of LMF such as tunas, billfish and oceanic sharks.

The report identified the UN Straddling Stocks Agreement for 1995 as providing the most comprehensive and legal guide to facilitate conservation and sustainable use of LMF. However, many major fishing nations of the region, among others India, Madagascar, Malaysia, South Africa and Thailand, have not ratified or acceded to the Agreement. The study also found, that most of the other agreements reviewed lacked core legal obligations for sustainable fisheries, emphasising only short-term economic, social and political objectives.

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TRAFFIC is a joint programme of IUCN–The World Conservation Union and WWF*–World Wide Fund for Nature. It aims to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature.

The TRAFFIC Network works in co-operation with the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

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