

Asian Wildlife Trade Bulletin

News from TRAFFIC's Wildlife Trade Initiative
Issue 3, April 1 - September 30, 2007



Elephants, Tigers and Sharks: A Glance at CoP 14

Conservationists descended upon The Hague this past June for the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 14) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Delegates addressed several issues impacting Asian wildlife trade.

African elephants dominated much of the conference discussions. Prior to the CoP, a limited sale of ivory from three southern African countries was given formal approval. During the meeting, Zambia and Chad presented a compromise document, which was passed, on behalf of all African elephant range States, allowing an increase in the one-off sale of ivory to include ivory from stockpiles in Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. This sale will be the only exception to a nine-year suspension on all ivory sales. Japan was approved as a buyer for the one-off ivory sale, while China was not. China and Thailand were again identified as two of the most globally significant domestic markets driving the illicit trade in ivory.

In regards to marine life, two shark species—Spiny Dogfish and Porbeagle—failed to make CITES Appendix II, which places strict conditions on trade. Currently, international trade of the two

dramatically declining populations is largely uncontrolled.

A notable conservation success was the decision to reject the raising of captive Tigers for trade in Tiger parts and reduce the size of large-scale commercial Tiger farms “to a level supportive only to conserving wild Tigers”.

Three countries with wild Tigers—India, Nepal and Bhutan—were joined by the USA in calling on China to phase out the country’s privately run “Tiger farms,” which house almost 5 000 animals. TRAFFIC and WWF, along with a coalition of other organizations, have offered to support China in stepping up law enforcement and shutting down its Tiger farms.

“A legal market in China for products made from farmed Tigers would increase demand and allow criminals to ‘launder’ products made from Tigers poached from the wild,” said Steven Broad, Executive Director of TRAFFIC.

The conference ended with TRAFFIC applauding some conservation decisions, while urging greater conservation efforts to promote wildlife trade sustainability.

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Over the course of 12 days, delegates adopted more than 100 formal decisions strengthening wildlife trade regulations, several of which impact Asian wildlife trade. (c) James Compton, TRAFFIC.

TRAFFIC
the wildlife trade monitoring network

Awareness and enforcement: wildlife trade on the Chinese-language internet

Illegal wildlife trade is currently gaining ground on the Chinese-language internet, where many websites openly advertise threatened wildlife products. Virtual markets now allow buyers and sellers to connect with ease and speed. While wildlife law enforcement has made gains in policing physical markets, the internet presents many new challenges.

To address the growing need for effective internet monitoring related to wildlife trade, TRAFFIC has released a study based on broad-scale surveys of Chinese-language websites for species protected under CITES. The report seeks to promote future efforts to keep online trade legal and sustainable.

The study surveyed popular auction websites, Yahoo and eBay, in addition to several independent websites with wildlife trade themes in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Auction and theme websites in all three markets were monitored for eight months, with auction websites monitored weekly, then later biweekly. Due to a smaller frequency of change, theme websites were surveyed monthly. Keywords were used to find advertisements for wildlife commodities.

Over the course of the study, surveyors identified 4291 unique advertisements for wildlife products. Auction sites from mainland China yielded the highest number of advertisements, followed by Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Many websites surveyed also openly advertised threatened wildlife products, including those derived from numerous high profile species, such as elephants, rhinoceroses, Tigers, and marine turtles. Animals representing a wide range of species could also be ordered from auction sites live or whole.

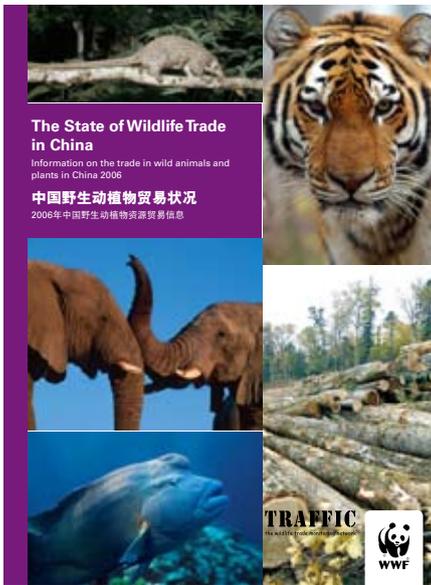
"Internet service providers and websites need to take greater responsibility for keeping wildlife trade legal," said Joyce Wu, Programme Officer for TRAFFIC East Asia.

The report recommends wildlife authorities develop strategies to police virtual markets, make greater efforts to bring web-based markets under the same regulatory structure as physical markets, and alert internet shoppers to the growing use of the internet for illegal wildlife trade.

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Many Chinese-language websites openly advertise threatened wildlife products. Image from reptileparadise.com



A recent TRAFFIC report gives a snapshot of the state of wildlife trade in China in 2006 © TRAFFIC East Asia

TRAFFIC reveals the state of China's wildlife trade

TRAFFIC has published a snapshot of the state of wildlife trade in China in 2006.

The report, in English and Chinese, is the first in an annual series on emerging trends in China's wildlife trade, and provides up-to-date reviews of work being carried out to prevent illegal and support sustainable trade in China.

"*The State of Wildlife Trade in China* provides an overview of wildlife trade over the past year and examines what impact China's consumption is having on globally important biodiversity 'hotspots', and what emerging trends there are in wildlife trade," said Dr Xu Hongfa, Co-ordinator of TRAFFIC's China Programme.

The lead story is on the illegal trade in Tigers and other Asian big cats, whose bones are in demand for traditional medicines and whose skins are sought after for costumes and decorations. Another key article examines trade in live reef fish through Hong Kong and southern China, the world's largest importers of such fish. The dramatic increase in China's wood imports over the last decade, largely driven by the country's rapid economic growth, is also examined. The future of China's yew trees (genus *Taxus*), which are under threat from the unsustainable harvest of bark and needles for the production of anti-cancer medicines, comes under scrutiny.

Other articles examine the pangolin trade in China through a review of recent seizures, the on-going challenges presented by the illegal elephant ivory trade, the China Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network—established in 2006, China's international collaboration to keep wildlife trade legal and sustainable through linking with regional initiatives such as ASEAN-WEN, development of China's conservation community and TRAFFIC East Asia's conservation awareness initiative in partnership with Ogilvy (China).

State of Wildlife Trade in China: Information on the trade in wild animals and plants in China 2006 is available at www.traffic.org. Its production was generously funded by WWF-Netherlands.

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An interactive travelling exhibit entertains and educates students about the importance of wildlife conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources.

© Nguyen Dao Ngoc Van

Travelling exhibit brings message of biodiversity conservation to Viet Nam

TRAFFIC and WWF have launched the second phase of a DANIDA-funded “A Matter of Attitude” campaign to raise awareness and change attitudes towards the illegal and unsustainable consumption of wildlife and wildlife products in Viet Nam.

A travelling exhibit will visit 23 secondary schools in Ha Noi, bringing the message of biodiversity conservation and wildlife trade to the younger generation.

First launched in September 2006, the exhibit has already visited more than 25 Ha Noi secondary schools.

“Ideally, an important exhibit such as this should not be restricted to just a few schools in and around Ha Noi, but circulate to each and every school throughout the country as an extremely effective means of educating the youth today about the importance of safeguarding Viet Nam’s natural resource base for future generations,” said Eric Coull, Representative, WWF Greater Mekong.

The exhibit represents a culmination of meticulous research and collaboration involving environmental educators, conservationists, architects, artists, and graphic and audio-visual designers, including The Bronx Zoo of New York.

Employing a variety of interactive and exciting audio visual displays, the exhibit seeks to entertain and educate students about the importance of wildlife conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Student volunteers from several universities and high schools in Ha Noi have been recruited and trained to guide schoolchildren through each of the displays.

Sulma Warne, TRAFFIC’s Greater Mekong Programme Co-ordinator, has hailed the exhibit as a “unique and exciting experience that will change the way children think about the consumption of wildlife and wildlife products.”

“Today’s young generation represents tomorrow’s future, hence the shaping of their attitudes towards sustainable wildlife consumption is of the utmost importance,” he said.

For more information contact Judith Le at jle@traffic.netnam.vn.

Two years later, Tiger bone smuggler brought to justice

A Taiwan resident was convicted in August 2007 of wildlife trade offences stemming from a 2005 seizure of Tiger bones, pangolin scales, and ivory in Taiwan. After pleading guilty, the

smuggler was fined TWD300 000 (USD9000) and sentenced to one year, two months in jail with three years probation.

Under Taiwan’s Wildlife Conservation Act, the illegal export and import of protected wildlife carries a charge of six months to five years imprisonment, and/or a fine of TWD 300 000 – 1 500 000.

“The custodial sentence will act as a deterrent to this kind of unacceptable behaviour,” said Craig Kirkpatrick, Director of TRAFFIC East Asia. “However, TRAFFIC would like to see far stiffer financial penalties imposed for serious offences such as this.”

In the largest ever single seizure of Tiger bone in Taiwan, and one of the largest in Asia since 2000, Kaohsiung Customs authorities confiscated over 140 kg of Tiger bones, including 24 skulls, in a shipment from Jakarta, Indonesia, on 4 July 2005. Also seized were 400 kg of pangolin scales and five pieces of carved ivory weighing 1 kg.

“Increased and improved enforcement is critical to saving Sumatran Tigers,” said TRAFFIC Southeast Asia’s Senior Programme Officer, Chris Shepherd.

Action should be taken against the markets, trade hubs and retail outlets, especially in northern Sumatra. More specialised anti-poaching units also need to be urgently established.

Indonesia, once home to three sub-species of Tiger—Javan, Balinese and Sumatran—now only has between 400 and 500 Tigers left in the wild in Sumatra. Both Java and Bali Tigers have gone extinct.

For more information contact Joyce Wu at ycjoycew@ms57.hinet.net



A Taiwan resident was recently convicted for his involvement in a shipment of 140 kg of Tiger bones, from Jakarta, Indonesia, to Taiwan on 4 July 2005. © Joyce Wu / TRAFFIC East Asia - Taipei.

Tiger seizure in Ha Noi the first of its kind

On 4 September 2007, Ha Noi police, working in conjunction with the Viet Nam Forest Protection Department, seized two dead Tigers during an early morning raid on a residential property in Ha Noi. The animals, weighing approximately 250 kg each, were located in two freezer containers.

According to reports in *Thanh Nien* newspaper, authorities also discovered organs and tiger meat scattered throughout the apartment, as well as paws from five bear species and monkey bones.

This is the first report of its kind in Viet Nam’s capital.

“The arrest is encouraging news and testament to Viet Nam’s increasing capacity to combat illegal wildlife trade,” stated Nguyen Van, Senior Project Officer, TRAFFIC Greater Mekong Programme.



Ha Noi police recently seized two dead Tigers that suspects say were to be used to make medicinal balm. © Kay Thanh Long at Thanh Nien Online.

“However, this is only the tip of the iceberg as it is not uncommon for illegal trade in wildlife to go undetected and unreported.”

Suspects said the animal products were being used to make medicinal balm. Balm made from tiger and monkey bone is believed to treat an assortment of ailments including: rheumatism, insomnia and lack of appetite.

A search of another affiliated apartment yielded four elephant tusks weighing 62 kg (more than 1.2 meters in length), a whole stuffed tiger, eight bull heads with horns attached, two stag heads, and several bags containing monkey and horse bones.

Authorities are working to confirm the origin of the tigers, which are believed to have come from Myanmar.

The police took four people into custody. The suspects confessed to conducting a three-year long medicinal balm operation and are currently awaiting trial.

For more information contact Judith Le at jle@traffic.netnam.vn.

New TRAFFIC officer appointed to Russian Far East

TRAFFIC has appointed a new Programme Officer to oversee the expansion of its Russian Far East program. Natalia Pervushina, who previously served at the Far Eastern Customs Directorate in Vladivostok, will oversee the monitoring of wildlife trade markets in the Amur-Heilong region. Natalia will be working closely with regional environmental authorities as well as TRAFFIC's Asian affiliates. She recently participated in the International Workshop on the Enforcement of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) in Harbin, China.

Increased numbers of wildlife seizures in the Russian Far East region dictate the necessity and importance of a TRAFFIC presence in the region. In the fourth seizure of Siberian Tiger parts this year, Customs agents in the Primorsky province found 480 bear paws, a Siberian Tiger pelt and bones, and 20 kg of wild ginseng. Earlier incidents in January, February and July also produced three Siberian Tiger skins, over 360 kg of bear paws and 531 Saiga Antelope horns. All seized wildlife products—excluding the saiga horn—came from the Russian Far East.

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TRAFFIC gratefully acknowledges funding support from WWF Netherlands for the Asian Wildlife Trade Initiative Bulletin.

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