

TRAFFIC POST

the wildlife trade monitoring network

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TRAFFIC INDIA'S NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA



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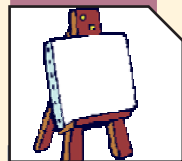
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TRAFFIC ALERT

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WILD CRY

Illegal wildlife trade threatens the future of many species in the wild. This section highlights the plight of one such species in trade.

Unearthing secrets of a "double-headed" snake: Red Sand Boa

South Asia: Fighting 'tooth and nail' to address wildlife crime in the region



On the occasion of World Environment Day, celebrated on 5 June every year, the Office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) conducted an interview with Mr Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India, on issues related to wildlife crime in South Asia and associated implications for the region. The interview, as given below, was published on the website of UNODC at <http://www.unodc.org/southasia/en/frontpage/2011/june/interview-samir-sinha-on-wildlife-crime.html>

Wildlife trade refers to the commercial use by people of wild animal and plant resources. While most of this trade is legal, a significant portion of it is not. Over the years illegal wildlife trade has emerged as a form of transnational organized crime that is threatening the existence of many wild species across the globe.

Please explain what is wildlife crime and how does it impact society. There are many elements of nature whose sustainable utilization is critical to human livelihoods. For example, medicinal plants, marine harvests, food products of wild origin etc. Wild products are also used for fuel and fodder, as building material, to make clothing, handicrafts, ornaments etc. Eco-tourism is another important potential contributor to livelihoods. Regarding the ecosystem values of such natural elements, they play a key role in ensuring clean air and water, amongst other necessities and mitigating various environmental threats.



Left to right: Mr. Samir Sinha with the Hon. Minister of Environment and Forests, Shri Jairam Ramesh, at the launch of TRAFFIC India's report on illegal trade, trapping and use of owls in India in November 2010

© TRAFFIC India

Illegal wildlife crime, by its very nature, destroys and removes - mostly unsustainably - these elements of natural wealth of a region that rightfully belong to its people, putting at stake their well being and livelihood opportunities for short term gain. It has the potential to threaten social equity and sustainable inclusive growth. It also presents risks to human health and bio-security. It results in significant loss of revenue to governments while generating massive proceeds for criminals, which may include insurgent groups. Some of these ill gotten proceeds of crime can be directed against State institutions themselves, thus threatening the security of States and communities.

What are the main factors that drive wildlife crime? The prime factors that drive wildlife crime include a burgeoning demand for natural products such as Tiger parts (e.g. claws, bones, skins, whiskers) and their derivatives, Rhinoceros horns, ivory, various medicinal plants, timber, reptile skins, birds, turtles and tortoises, marine products, including shark derivatives, sea cucumbers etc., across international borders, coupled with poor understanding of the elements of such crime amongst law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. Wildlife crimes are usually seen as crimes without a visible victim and not as something that affects society at large, thus receiving low priority and poor attention from enforcement agencies and society. Sometimes, the high economic incentives offered by such crimes coupled with the low probability of getting caught and the even lower probability of getting convicted, serves as an incentive for many to get involved in such crimes.

What have been the general trends of wildlife crime in South Asia? Have there been any recent changes in the trends? During the past two decades, we have witnessed a sudden increase in the demand for wild animals and plants from South Asia. The products mentioned earlier are some of the examples. Most species are in demand in China and South-east Asia whereas several have specialized markets (like Agarwood in the Middle East) that include countries in the Far East and Europe. All the species mentioned are protected by domestic laws or international conventions. Perceived earlier as a local criminal activity, wildlife crime has today emerged from the shadows as a form of transnational organized crime, with organized criminal syndicates operating poaching and trade networks involving endangered species. By its very nature, wildlife crime is dynamic in nature. The target species, methods of wildlife crime, concealment, transport, routes etc., all can be seen to change rapidly from time to time to keep a step ahead of law enforcement efforts. As a classic example, the illegal trade in Red Sanders wood has seen a dramatic shift in recent years, with earlier demand from Singapore and Japan being presently dominated by a huge demand from China.

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Many truckloads of this valuable timber have been intercepted while being transported across India from the states of Andhra Pradesh and a small part of Tamil Nadu - where the species is endemic - to Nepal, Myanmar and even directly to China across Ladakh! Several hundred tonnes of this wood have also been seized in Nepal in the last few years.

What are the existing policies and mechanisms to address wildlife crime at the international and regional level? How can these translate into results? Most countries across the region have strict national laws to protect their wildlife resources and also a good system of nature reserves. Strong and well implemented national laws are the key to secure such resources systems. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) remains the umbrella international agreement on trade in wild species of flora and fauna. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. All countries of South Asia except Maldives are signatories to the CITES Convention.

There is also a series of bilateral agreements - already in place or under development - amongst several countries in the region including India-Bangladesh, India-Bhutan, India-China, India-Nepal and Nepal-China that focus on collaboration to deal with wildlife crime.

The Member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) recently adopted the SAARC Convention on Cooperation on Environment at Thimphu, Bhutan on 29 April, 2010. The scope of this Convention includes collaboration on wildlife conservation and combating illegal trade in wildlife and bio-resources.

The recent establishment of the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) in January 2011 in Paro, Bhutan, is a milestone in the region's efforts to address wildlife crime in the region. Led by member nations of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the establishment of SAWEN has been facilitated by TRAFFIC, with support from agencies like the CITES Secretariat, UNODC, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization and NGOs including WWF. The US Department of State has supported this initiative with a grant.

These collaborative efforts will certainly yield very good results in curbing wildlife crime as countries and agencies will be able to share information on such crimes and criminals in an effective manner. Also, this would strengthen common approaches to investigations and learning from each other's best practices. The support of organizations like UNODC, INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization and the CITES Secretariat would be crucial to the success of such efforts. Improving awareness of wildlife crime issues across the region would facilitate greater compliance and prevention of this crime.



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Can you give examples of good practices which have helped to prevent these crimes? Wherever agencies have collaborated and come together to share expertise and information, results have been there to see. There have been several instances where poachers have been arrested and wild products have been seized on the basis of shared information. NGOs like TRAFFIC and WWF have played a catalytic role to improve understanding of such issues amongst enforcement agencies and to strengthen their capacity to respond effectively to such challenges. We have been privileged to work with various agencies including Forest Departments, Police, Army, Paramilitary, Customs, Railways and the Central Bureau of Investigation, etc., towards such efforts. Technical support has also been provided by agencies like the Wildlife Institute of India.

Introduction of wildlife sniffer dogs, use of metal detectors to detect snares and traps and promoting the use of better forensic tools to deal with wildlife crimes, as has been pioneered by TRAFFIC in the region, have

yielded very good results in prevention and investigation of these crimes.

What needs to be done further to strengthen wildlife law enforcement and prevent wildlife crime? Constant collaboration, sharing of expertise and information as well as a joint effort across Government agencies and other relevant agencies and institutions is the key to securing the natural heritage of our region against pillage and plunder. Development of knowledge and skills amongst agencies across various levels is crucial. Fighting wildlife crime needs to become a national, and thereby, a regional and global priority. Support of specialist agencies like UNODC would also be vital to secure the success of such efforts. TRAFFIC, with its expertise in monitoring wildlife trade, is committed to work together with countries and key stakeholders in the region to help ensure that wildlife crime does not become a threat to the survival of species in the wild.

Wildlife officials across Indo-Nepal border meet to curb wildlife crime



On 16–17 May 2011, Uttar Pradesh Forest Department (Govt. of India) and WWF-India organized an Indo-Nepal trans-boundary meeting to discuss issues related to wildlife conservation across their shared borders. TRAFFIC India participated in this meeting along with the park managers from both countries, senior officials from the Wildlife Departments of the Governments of India and Nepal, officials from WWF-India, WWF-Nepal, TRAFFIC India and the Wildlife Institute of India.

The meeting was the first consultative meeting organized after a formal agreement between India and Nepal was signed in 2010 for better management of forest areas along the 1751 km Indo-Nepal border.

TRAFFIC India, represented by MKS Pasha, Coordinator of TRAFFIC India, provided an overview of the species and their parts which are most common in the illegal wildlife trade; existing treaties, instruments, bilateral agreements that regulate this trade; the role of other enforcement agencies such as police, Customs, border security forces, etc., in curbing wildlife crime; need for co-ordination between such agencies; a centralized crime database which could be easily available to both countries; formulation of joint wildlife task forces and special squads; specialized joint training of enforcement officers in both countries that also allows participants to exchange experiences and knowledge; the role of SAWEN (South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network) for curbing international wildlife crime and various other significant aspects pertaining to this trade.

At the meeting, TRAFFIC India was asked to help conduct special wildlife law enforcement training programmes for various concerned agencies of both countries; establish an information network in the region; create a common wildlife crime database and introduce a sniffer dog training programme in Nepal for detecting snares and traps set up by poachers.

Mr Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India, commented, "It is encouraging to see that our experience and knowledge in the field has been appreciated by the governments of both countries. We are looking forward to working with them on every aspect of curbing wildlife crime in the region".

Besides issues related to wildlife trade, other aspects of wildlife conservation such as monitoring Tiger and prey populations, developing national action plans to protect key species, intensifying joint patrolling of border areas, restoring border habitats etc., were also discussed in detail.

Key trans-boundary areas to benefit from this collaboration include Sukhlaphanta-Lagga Bagga-Pilibhit, Bardia-Katerniaghat-Khata, Banke-Suhelwa, Jhapa-Darjeeling and Kosi Tappu.

"E-8" a new hope for elephant conservation



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On 24 May 2011, eight range countries of Asian and African Elephants pledged to eradicate the smuggling of ivory and poaching of the species to ensure their survival for future generations. The pledge was taken in New Delhi at the 'Elephant-8 Ministerial Meet' which brought together Ministerial and high level delegations in charge of wildlife in eight countries that are home to the most significant populations of Asian and African Elephants. The meeting was jointly organized by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, in collaboration with the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Wildlife Trust of India and the Wildlife Institute of India.

The eight participating countries – Botswana, Congo, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Thailand – have decided to lead efforts in their respective regions to ensure the long-term survival of the elephant and its habitat. This is a major step forward in securing the long term future of the elephant in all range countries, through collaborative global action.

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Introducing the event, India's Minister of State (I/C), Environment and Forests, Shri Jairam Ramesh said: "This Ministerial marks the start of a concerted global effort to secure the future of the elephant, not just in India, but in all the 50 countries in which it is found. The elephant is an iconic cultural symbol across many countries including ours, and I look forward to India's continued leadership role in its conservation efforts".

TRAFFIC India was invited to participate in this meeting and provided inputs on elephant poaching and illegal trade in ivory. The threat from poaching and illegal trade in ivory was identified as one of the most important threats to the future of elephants in the wild. TRAFFIC requested all participants to co-operate in strengthening trans-boundary enforcement, including adopting a joint strategy for controlling and monitoring elephant populations across borders.

Mr MKS Pasha, Co-ordinator of TRAFFIC India who represented TRAFFIC at this summit said, "E-8 should eventually evolve into a significant platform for consultative processes and agreements pertaining to decisions related to ivory trade". This suggestion was welcomed and put forward for further deliberation.

Mr Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India added, "Illegal trade in live elephants across borders has hardly been documented. There is a strong need for monitoring this. Further, a detailed database of the elephants in captivity should be maintained to monitor their birth and death. These initiatives will definitely have a huge impact on ensuring a safe and secure future for wild elephants".

Other key issues discussed during this important meeting were: building knowledge on conservation, skills and resources to eradicate poaching of the species in the wild and illegal trade of ivory and other elephant parts; reduction in human-elephant conflict; engaging with local communities in the management and conservation of elephants and their habitats and to launch programmes to create general awareness about the significance of elephants and their habitats.

India releases Tiger population estimates



A Tiger population estimation report released by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, in March 2011 estimates the national population as 1706 animals, substantially more than the 1411 animals reported following the previous Tiger population estimation in 2007.

The latest total includes 70 Tigers found in the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, which were not included in the previous survey because of the difficulty in surveying mangrove habitats. This time however, camera-traps and DNA analysis were used to estimate Tiger numbers in the reserve.

But even without the Sundarbans, the latest figures indicate a 12% increase in the overall Indian Tiger population, which the Hon. Minister of Environment and Forests, Shri Jairam Ramesh described as "a very encouraging sign."

The current figures were released at the start of a three-day international conference on Tiger conservation organized in New Delhi in March 2011. The conference brought together Tiger experts to review implementation of the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP), a worldwide plan finalized by world leaders at the historic Tiger summit held in November 2010 in St. Petersburg, Russia, to bring Tigers back from the brink of extinction.

Mr Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India said, "Poaching driven by illegal wildlife trade is the most significant threat to the Tiger today. The growth in Tiger numbers indicates that measures undertaken by the Government to curtail poaching have begun to have an impact on Tiger numbers. However, the efforts need to be intensified and accelerated for it to show long term results".

The final All India Tiger Estimation Report that includes landscape and site specific estimates of Tigers and prey along with detailed methodology used, camera trapped area in each site, effective sampled area, estimates of each site as obtained by different methods of analysis, population estimates, and discussion of the results, will be released on 25 July 2011 by the Hon. Minister of Environment and Forests, Shri Jairam Ramesh.



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Customs Department sharpen skills to fight wildlife crime in Maharashtra



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The National Academy for Customs, Excise & Narcotics (NACEN), Western region, with support from TRAFFIC India, organized a workshop in Mumbai on 14–15 June 2011 on “Strengthening Wildlife Law Enforcement”. Thirty officials from the Customs department and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence of the Western region, Mumbai, participated.

The two-day workshop aimed to provide participants with an overview of organized illicit wildlife trade and introduce them to the latest tools and techniques available to curb it. The workshop was inaugurated by Mr Arun Tondon, Additional Director General, NACEN. Dr A. R. Rahmani, Director of BNHS (Bombay Natural History Society) was the Guest of Honour. Also present were Mr T. K. Samant, Joint Director and Mr B.P. Singh, Deputy Director of NACEN.

Mumbai's well established air, sea and land route connections prompt illegal wildlife traders to smuggle their goods through this city. Marine species like seahorses, shells and corals are

smuggled to other parts of the world through Mumbai which also serves as a major smuggling route for other wildlife and related goods including Red Sanders, ivory, live birds and other animals.

Mr Arun Tandon, expressed his concerns over the illegal wildlife trade and stressed the vital role of Customs in the enforcement and control of such trade. He reminded participants about the largest-ever snake skin seizure that took place in Mumbai on 20 December 2005, when a staggering 55 000 reptile skins were seized by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence at Mumbai Port.

Mr Tandon congratulated TRAFFIC India for their leading role in arranging specialized training events in wildlife law enforcement for Customs officials.

Mr Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India, described the need for sophisticated methods to tackle organized transnational wildlife crime and also reinforced the significant role played by Customs in curbing illegal wildlife trade.

Dr Deepak Apte, of BNHS, conducted a special session with the participants on marine trade issues and identification of shells, corals and other marine products in illegal wildlife trade.

Relevant materials, including a compendium of recent wildlife seizures in the region and the listing of relevant laws, were distributed to participants. Other material distributed included CDs on various related themes and books, posters, etc., pertaining to wildlife law and enforcement issues.

A wildlife forensic sample collection kit developed jointly by the Wildlife Institute of India and TRAFFIC was also distributed to participants. The customized kit enables officers to collect samples for forensic analysis as per prescribed protocols. An identification kit for ivory was also distributed. This kit has been uniquely designed and adapted to test ivory on the spot and will be of immense value to Customs officers.

NACEN will continue to organize such workshops for its officers in the future. There are plans to organize annual training programmes for its officers in order to curb wildlife crime and TRAFFIC India has been asked to conduct these specialized training sessions.

Besides conducting specialized training with the Customs in Mumbai, TRAFFIC India has regularly organized similar workshops on wildlife enforcement for an array of audiences across the country. So far, TRAFFIC India has conducted more than 40 wildlife enforcement workshops and provided specialized inputs and training at an additional 40 workshops organized by other agencies.

TRAFFIC India at international conferences on wildlife protection



© Chris Shepherd

Conservation of Asian Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Workshop in Singapore:

Wildlife experts from TRAFFIC along with other experts from around the world met in Singapore on 21–24 February 2011 to deliberate on the future of Asia's tortoises and freshwater turtles.

Seventy experts present at the workshop evaluated the current status of these species in Asia and confirmed that freshwater turtle and tortoise populations around the world are bearing the brunt of years of illegal and unsustainable trade. They are among the world's most threatened groups of animals. Perhaps nowhere is the situation more critical than in Asia.

The participants stressed that illegal and unsustainable trade was the greatest threat to the survival of this highly threatened group of species and that laws and conventions in place to protect these animals were simply not being enforced.

TRAFFIC India, represented by MKS Pasha, provided an overview of the tortoise and freshwater turtle trade in South Asia including the trade in Star Tortoises from India. He said, "India is the largest source country for illegal trade in Star Tortoises. Most of the trade from India is towards Malaysia and Thailand and is usually routed by air. Between 2000 and 2010, 42 cases of seizures of Star Tortoises have been recorded in India of which 96% have been at airports. The total number of tortoises seized was more than 26 000".

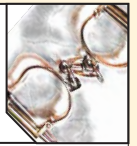
He further commented, "Efforts need to be intensified at the field level so that enforcement officials can curb illegal collection of Star Tortoises from the wild. Currently nearly all seizures are taking place at airports. Specialized training programmes need to be conducted on detection of this species, especially when being brought to the airports".

To learn more about the workshop and the key findings, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2011/2/28/too-little-done-to-address-trade-threat-to-asias-tortoises-a.html>

Asia for Animals workshop in China: TRAFFIC participated in the Asia for Animals conference, one of the largest gatherings for animal protection in Asia, held from 10–14 June 2011 in Chengdu, Sichuan province of China. TRAFFIC's role at the conference was to share with the audience an overview of illegal wildlife trade, the impact it has on our wildlife, the *modus operandi* of this trade, laws pertaining to this trade and other related issues. TRAFFIC India was represented at the meeting by Shubhobroto Ghosh, Programme Officer.

TRAFFIC India's film depicting illegal wildlife trade in India entitled "Don't Buy Trouble" was showcased and helped create awareness of this issue. More than 300 conservationists and animal protectionists from 25 countries attended the meeting that was being held for the first time in China.

TRAFFIC Alert



Facebook brings down Goa frog poacher

On 9 June 2011, Goa forest officials raided the house of a youth in Ribandar village after his posts on the social networking site Facebook of killing and eating Indian Bullfrogs. The post tipped off a network of wildlife NGOs in the State. During the raid, the officials found traces of cooked frog meat, which was seized as a part of the investigation. The youth however managed to escape and fled to Mumbai.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

The Indian Bullfrog *Hoplobatrachus tigerinus*, is a large species of frog found in India, Pakistan and Nepal. In India, it is protected under Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This prohibits hunting of, or trade in the species and its parts. The species is also listed in Appendix II of CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) that prohibits export of the species for commercial purposes from India. Despite legal protection, the trade in frog's legs in the Jumping Chicken (a popular name for Indian Bullfrogs), a local delicacy in Goa, continues in alarming numbers.

Of late, illegal wildlife trade has also gained ground on the Internet. A wide range of protected species are openly advertised on popular websites around the world. While efforts have been intensified to strengthen on the ground enforcement to curb this trade, regulating Internet based trade has not been sufficiently addressed. There is a need to monitor these 'virtual' markets in order to bring an end to this growing threat.

Source:

<http://www.savethefrogs.com/frogblog/frog-news/the-indian-bullfrog-in-imminent-danger/>
<http://www.indiablooms.com/EnvironmentDetailsPage/environmentDetails100611a.php>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoplobatrachus_tigerinus
<http://www.ias.ac.in/currsci/25mar2011/806.pdf>
<http://www.cites.org/eng/news/world/19/6.shtml>

Promoting responsible trade in wood products



WWF-India in collaboration with the United Nations Information Centre, Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH), Federation of Rajasthan Home Textiles and Handicrafts Exporters (FORTHE), Federation of Rajasthan Handicraft Exporters (FORHEX) and other project associates organized a conference on “Responsible wood trade, forest certification and market links” on 27–29 May 2011 in Jaipur, Rajasthan. The European Union had provided funding support for this project.

TRAFFIC India actively participated in this conference that aimed to share knowledge on various international laws and treaties that regulate this trade. The participants included SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) wood processors and timber traders, exporters of wood-based products, forest and plantation managers, growers, timber traders and trade associations, paper and pulp companies, retailers, representatives from the Government, certification bodies and NGOs.

The objective of the conference was to understand various approaches towards and best practices of responsible wood trade in the context of increased environmental measures in both domestic and international markets; share the experiences of Indian industry on sustainable sourcing of wood from forests and outside forest areas; conduct business to business meetings among the companies committed to promote market links for responsible wood trade and credible forest certification and, lastly, build capacity among SME wood processors and traders to supply only certified forest products.

TRAFFIC India delivered a talk on “Legality in Wood Trade - Compliance in Export Markets of Europe and USA”. The presentation aimed to guide those involved in exporting plants and plant products to the USA as well as to Europe.

TRAFFIC India also shared information with regard to various laws and court rulings which are relevant to forest conservation in India especially for the three Indian states of Kerala, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, where the present project (Sustainable and Responsible Trade Promoted to Wood Processing SMEs through Forest and Trade Networks in China, India and Vietnam) is being implemented.

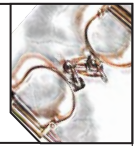
New forensic manual to identify Shahtoosh wool and shawls



WII (Wildlife Institute of India) has brought out a manual that provides details of various forensic techniques to identify Shahtoosh wool and shawls and presents an overview of the illegal trade in these items. The publication was printed with support from TRAFFIC India and Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Government of UK) and will be used for wider dissemination amongst enforcement agencies.

Tibetan Antelope or Chiru *Pantholops hodgsonii* is an endangered species found in the Tibetan plateau and surrounding high altitude areas. At least three to four Tibetan Antelopes are believed to be slaughtered to make one Shahtoosh shawl. Although the antelopes are killed in the Tibet Autonomous Region, their wool is woven nearly exclusively by weavers of Jammu & Kashmir in India. Therefore, almost all the Shahtoosh enters India and exits as shawls, all illegally.

TRAFFIC Alert



Poachers kill a rhinoceros in Kaziranga and remove its horn

On 14 May 2011, poachers killed a rhinoceros at Kaziranga National Park in the Gopaljaroni area of Sonitpur east forest division in Assam, near the Biswanathghat forest range of the park. The rhinoceros was killed while it was wandering outside the park. Besides its horn, the poachers also removed the animal's bones and flesh.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

The Great Indian Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* is poached for its horn which is used in traditional medicines in East Asia. Reports have indicated that the horns are usually traded as a single piece and can fetch 5–10 times the price of an African rhinoceros horn. The poaching of rhinoceroses for illegal wildlife trade is one of the major threats to the species in the wild. Since the beginning of 2011, two rhinoceroses have been poached in Assam.

The Great Indian Rhinoceros is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and Appendix I of CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). These legislations prohibit all domestic and international trade in the species.

Of late, illegal wildlife trade has also gained ground on the Internet. A wide range of protected species are openly advertised on popular websites around the world. While efforts have been intensified to strengthen on the ground enforcement to curb this trade, regulating Internet based trade has not been sufficiently addressed. There is a need to monitor these 'virtual' markets in order to bring an end to this growing threat.

Source:

<http://www.deccan.com/nation/nationalnews.asp#Rhinoceros%20poachers%20want%20horn.%20tail>
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article4152951.ece>
http://www.rhinocerosresourcecenter.com/ref_files/1175862313.pdf
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Poachers-kill-rhino-in-Kaziranga-chop-off-its-horn/articleshow/8351415.cms>

OUTPOST:
TIME magazine exposes plans for Chinese rhinoceros 'farming'



The 13 June issue of TIME magazine reveals a secret plot in China to breed imported White Rhinoceroses commercially for their horns to be used in medicine even though this activity would be in direct contravention of national and international laws, and which contradicts statements made in 2010 by Chinese officials at an international meeting and representatives of the traditional Chinese medicine industry.



© Martin Harvey / WWF-Canon

In March 2010, members of the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies, whose headquarters are in Beijing, made a declaration saying they did not want their industry tainted by the use of parts and derivatives of endangered species.

Later that month, Chinese officials had affirmed to world governments at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) that there were no intentions to permit rhinoceros farming in the country, yet a TIME reporter uncovered detailed business plans by an ammunition's company to sell and market rhinoceros horn pills, with an aim to generate a 60 million dollar profit annually.

Asian demand for rhinoceros horn is fueling a rhinoceros poaching spree in southern Africa, which has seen the number of animals illegally killed in South Africa alone rise to 333 in 2010, and shows no signs of abating.

The plan to profit commercially from the importation of live rhinoceroses into China, as alleged by TIME, is also problematic for South African authorities who have reportedly allowed the exportation of 103 live White Rhinoceroses since 2007. TIME reveals that these animals' horns may be whittled down by up to one kilogramme each year, using a "self-suction living rhinoceros horn-scraping tool". None of the live rhinoceroses sent to China were meant for commercial purposes.

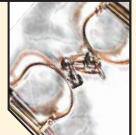
For more information, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2011/6/7/time-magazine-exposes-plans-for-chinese-rhino-farming.html>

CITES UPDATE:
Geneva to host the 61st meeting of the CITES Standing Committee



Geneva, Switzerland, will host the 61st meeting of the CITES Standing Committee on 15–19 August 2011. An agenda and working documents will be posted on the CITES website before the meeting at: <http://www.cites.org/eng/com/SC/index.shtml>

TRAFFIC Alert



Assam Rifles seize 15 kg of Tiger bones, skulls in Manipur

On 1 May 2011, Assam Rifles personnel seized a large quantity of Tiger parts, including 15 kg of bones and skulls from four smugglers at Sita track in Manipur's Chandel district bordering Myanmar. Having discovered the transportation route of banned wildlife parts, the troops launched an operation and intercepted a jeep headed towards the border town of Moreh, carrying four individuals along with the animal parts. The four smugglers are residents of Tengenoupal in the district.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

The Assam Rifles is the oldest Central Para Military Force in India. The Force was raised mainly to guard the alluvial plains of Assam and since then has always extended a helping hand to humanitarian causes and in natural calamities.

Over the years, many seizures of Tiger parts, Red Sanders and other wildlife have been undertaken by these paramilitary forces in the region.

TRAFFIC India expresses deep appreciation for the efforts undertaken by Assam Rifles for helping to curb wildlife crime in the region. It is heartening to learn that agencies other than forest and wildlife agencies are interested in carrying out wildlife seizures and have taken a leadership role in reducing wildlife crime.

Source:
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/Assam-Rifles-seizes-15-kg-tiger-bones-skulls/articleshow/8146821.cms>

CITES UPDATE: CITES expedites efforts to combat organized crime targeted at elephants and rhinoceroses



The Ivory and Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) met in Gigiri, Kenya, on 17–19 May 2011, to discuss urgent actions against crimes targeting these two pachyderms.

Despite considerable successes on the part of the law enforcement community, the smuggling of elephant ivory continues to occur at significant levels and those behind the illegal trade do not appear to be deterred by the regular losses they are suffering at the hands of border control agencies.

The status of some populations of rhinoceros species also seems bleak. For instance, South Africa has seen dramatic increases in rhino poaching in recent years: 13 rhinoceroses poached in 2007, 83 in 2008, 122 in 2009 and 333 in 2010. This level of poaching is putting South Africa's rhinoceros population, estimated at about 21 000, under pressure.



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The market dynamics of the illegal trade in ivory and rhinoceros horn, including supply and demand mechanisms which have led to a sharp increase in black market prices, are not yet fully understood.

This significant meeting in Kenya was attended by 20 top law enforcement officers representing wildlife authorities, Customs, investigators, national parks, the police and enforcement agencies from 12 countries (China, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe). The Task Force also deliberated on the intelligence supplied by Australia, Canada and the USA.

Four of the five organizations of the recently-formed International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (a partnership between CITES, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank and the World Customs Organization) were also present at the meeting and offered their support to the national agencies in their battle against organized criminal groups and networks. A representative of the Lusaka Agreement dealing with regional enforcement issues in East Africa also attended.

The Task Force learned of possible new demands for rhino horn from the art and antiques trade, which would require further investigation.

The participants agreed that greater communication, collaboration and co-ordination was needed at national and international levels and they committed to increase exchanges of information.

John Scanlon, Secretary-General of the CITES Secretariat, said: "The CITES Secretariat has issued several alerts and intelligence briefings to national and international law enforcement agencies in recent years. These have contained information to enable them to improve their risk-assessments, targeting and profiling in relation to illegal trade in elephant ivory and rhinoceros horn. The Task Force meeting has enabled us to acquire the most up-to-date overview of what is happening and we will soon prepare and circulate fresh briefings. It has also confirmed suspicions we held regarding new 'markets' or consumption areas in relation to rhinoceros horn."

For more information, please visit <http://www.unodc.org/documents/E-PR-Enforcement-Nairobi.pdf>

IN FOCUS:
Trouble in Parrot Paradise: Trade in Alexandrine Parakeets



Abrar Ahmed, ornithologist and a consultant to TRAFFIC India on bird trade related issues, highlights the illegal trade in Alexandrine Parakeets which has become a threat to the species in the wild



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The Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* is one of 12 parrot species found in India. It is found throughout the country and is the most preferred species in the Indian live bird trade. Its predominantly green hue, large size (53 cm compared to other parakeets that are about 35 to 42 cm) and distinctive red shoulder patch distinguishes it from other Indian parakeets.

The species is listed under Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 which prohibits its poaching and trade. International trade is further regulated through CITES where it is listed in Appendix II. However, illegal trade continues with hundreds of captive specimens kept as pets throughout India (Ahmed, 1997).

The Alexandrine Parakeet has always been a popular species in the pet trade market. The alluring red patch on its shoulders, the red ring around its collar, its ability to survive in captivity, its comparatively large size and relatively long life span make it an attractive species for bird-keepers and traders. (Ahmed and Menon, 1995).

This parrot is traded throughout the year but the bulk of the trade is in chicks of between three and four weeks' old that are collected from various forest areas in India in the months of April–May, while fledged chicks are trapped in July–August (Ahmed 2001).

The collection of chicks is principally carried out in parts of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Punjab, from where the birds are transported, accompanied by traders, to bird markets in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Patna, Lucknow and Kolkata. Some specimens are smuggled by Indian dealers via Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh to bird markets in the Gulf region.

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Seizure reports such as that of nearly 200 Alexandrine Parakeets in Bangladesh en route to Pakistan in July 2010, and a recent seizure in May 2011 in Delhi of 52 birds indicate that there is both a domestic and overseas market for this species.

The scarcity of old cavity bearing trees used for nesting, along with rampant trade in the species is believed to be impacting on the wild population.

This could be counteracted through concerted enforcement actions at the grassroots level where the actual collection of chicks occurs, combined with regular raids at existing bird markets coupled with campaigns to create awareness among buyers about the legal implications of buying parakeets. Adequate rescue and rehabilitation facilities for the seized birds are also required at key areas to ensure the welfare of seized specimens.



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Parakeets seized in Ahmedabad

WILD CRY

(Illegal wildlife trade threatens the future of many species in the wild. This section highlights the plight of one such species in trade.)

Unearthing secrets of a “double-headed” snake: Red Sand Boa



Red Sand Boa *Eryx johnii*, also commonly known as the Indian Sand Boa, is a non-venomous species found throughout the dry parts of the Indian subcontinent. It is variable in colour and may occur as reddish-brown to dark brown, black or speckled grey and even yellow. It is a medium sized, thick-set snake, growing to an average of up to 75 cm. Unlike most snakes the tail is almost as thick as the body and gives the reptile the appearance of being “double-headed”.

Legal status:

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule IV

IUCN Redlist: Not listed

CITES: Appendix II

Collection of and trade in this species is banned in India; international trade is restricted under CITES.

Threat: Until recently, the Red Sand Boa did not face any serious threat other than being popular with snake charmers who displayed it as a “double-headed” snake. However, now this morphological curiosity has landed this harmless snake in serious trouble. In recent years, India has witnessed a massive upsurge in demand for Red Sand Boas in its domestic illegal market. Reports have indicated that new age superstitions are a major driver in illegal trade of the species. These range from the more common ones such as they bring good luck to their keepers, to the more bizarre ones like the claim that the snake contains Iridium (one of the rarest elements in the Earth's crust and highly expensive) and hence has supernatural powers.

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WILD CRY

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“The smugglers claim that a meteor shower in South India between 1000 AD and 1300 AD had deposited isotopes of iridium on earth which accumulated in the tissues of the sand boa. This 'bio-iridium' claims to give magical and supernatural properties to the animal and that the extract from the snake could cure several chronic diseases like AIDS. This extract and even the blood of the snake finds a place in the illegal trade as these are also used as an aphrodisiac in Gulf countries. It is claimed that the snakes are being smuggled to China, South East Asia and Gulf Countries via Chennai and Bangalore” reports Deccan Herald in its article Victim of Recession.

Reports also suggest that the red colour of the snake is due to the accumulation of the iridium deposited in its skin. Reports have further indicated that this belief has created such demand for this snake that hundreds of thousands of Indian Rupees are being quoted for its purchase. This clearly indicates that the prices are at best ridiculous and meant to dupe people. Hundreds of messages can be seen on some websites soliciting buyers or sellers for the 'double-headed snake', '*do muha saanp* (Hindi, two-headed snake)' or more frequently the code word 'double engine' or simply 'DE', all referring to the supposed double headedness of the snake. The heavier the snake, the higher the value it commands. Snakes weighing above 3.5 kg are most in demand. The snakes are not just being sold but also rented out for hefty sums.

The scale of this trade has reached such levels that people have begun stealing specimens of this species from zoos and other guarded facilities. The latest example was at Jija Mata zoo in Byculla, Mumbai, where a Red Sand Boa was stolen on 29 May 2011. Two more thefts have been reported in Kerala, from Thiruvananthapuram zoo and from the Government Ayurveda College Research Centre.

The southern states of India are the worst affected. The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department is investigating 60 cases of trade in this snake. Chikballapur near Bangalore in Karnataka is another centre of poaching of this species. However, cases have also turned up from across the country.

Mr. Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India adds, “It is perturbing to learn that new age superstition is a likely driver of this trade. This implies that those involved are well educated people. At this stage, it is important for enforcement agencies to understand the dynamics of this new trade and plan action accordingly”.

Sources:

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/21088/victim-recession.html>

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WILD CRY

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Unearthing secrets of a “double-headed” snake: Red Sand Boa

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SOME SEIZURES OF RED SAND BOA SINCE 2009

S. No	Date of seizure	Number of snakes recovered	Location
1	10/01/2009	3	Bibinagar, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh
2	07/05/2009	2	Palakkad, Kerala
3	10/07/2009	1	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala
4	30/07/2009	1	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala
5	12/12/2009	1	Silvassa, Gujarat
6	07/01/2010	2	Kubeer Mandal, Adilabad, Andhra Pradesh
7	06/02/2010	1	Kamalpur, Gulbarga, Karnataka
8	02/03/2010	1	Kamalapur village, Gulbarga, Karnataka
9	09/06/2010	1	Thottapalayam village, Sathyamangalam, Tamil Nadu
10	23/06/2010	2	Ludhiana, Punjab
11	30/07/2010	21	Jaipur, Rajasthan
12	08/09/2010	1	Thottapalayam village, near Sathyamngalam, Tamil Nadu
13	25/09/2010	1	Khanna, Punjab
14	09/10/2010	1	Bangalore, Karnataka
15	15/10/2010	1	Kalmeshwar, Maharashtra
16	05/11/2010	1	Pathapalya police station, Bagepalli Taluk, Chikballapur dist, Karnataka
17	03/12/2010	1	Bajaj Nagar Square, Nagpur, Maharashtra
18	07/12/2010	1	Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
19	15/01/2011	2	Slums in Gajanan Mandir locality, Chandrapur, Maharashtra
20	05/03/2011	1	Rabale, Mumbai, Maharashtra
21	29/04/2011	1	NH-3, Ulhasnagar, Thane, Maharashtra
22	01/05/2011	1	Ulhasnagar, Thane, Maharashtra
23	29/05/2011	1	Byculla Zoo, Mumbai, Maharashtra
24	06/07/2011	1	Koppa, Chikmagalur, Karnataka
25	05/11/2011	2	Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh

SIGNPOST: Other Significant news stories to read



Disclaimer: Links to external news items as given below are provided for information only and are not intended to represent TRAFFIC's policies, positions, opinions or views on the issues raised in the items.

Sharks in soup (India goes against world in not banning shark fin trade): Shark fins fetch a lot of money. It is not the hammerhead which brings the best price, but the smaller milk shark. Shark fins reportedly sell for ₹ 250-400 per kg in the wholesale market. As the capture and slaughter of sharks is not banned in India, the practice, illegal in several other countries, takes place openly. Read more at <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/sharks-soup>

Moreh worry for wildlife bureau: The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has expressed serious concern over Manipur's Chandel district bordering Myanmar becoming the preferred transit point for the smuggling of animal parts and forest products from India to South-east Asia. The issue came up during a meeting convened by the Bureau on 6 June 2011 at Guwahati, Assam, for controlling poaching and illegal trade in wildlife in the north-east. Read more at http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110607/jsp/northeast/story_14079257.jsp

Live Leopard and other animals found in luggage at Bangkok airport: Passport, tickets, Leopard cubs? That's exactly what a United Arab Emirates man was found carrying when police arrested him at the Suvarnabhumi International Airport on 13 May 2011. Seven live infant animals—four Leopards, a bear, a gibbon and a marmoset—were found in the suspect's bags. Read more at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2011/5/13/live-leopards-and-other-animals-found-in-luggage.html>

Future of Asian snakes at stake: A crucial meeting on the future of Asia's traded snake species took place in April 2011 in Guangzhou, China. Some 60 experts representing close to 20 governments and international and national organizations met to consider conservation priorities and management and enforcement needs related to the trade of snakes. They focused on the markets and commercial trade in snakes originating in East, South, and South-east Asia. Read more at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2011/4/12/future-of-asian-snakes-at-stake.html>

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