

SHORT NOTE

SEIZURE OF LIVE OTTERS IN BANGKOK AIRPORT, THAILAND

Chris R. SHEPHERD* and Panjit TANSOM

TRAFFIC

*member of the IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group

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On 22 January, 2013, TRAFFIC reported that the Royal Thai Customs officers working at the Wildlife Checkpoint of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport discovered 11 live otters when they scanned a bag that had been left at the oversized luggage area of the airport (TRAFFIC website, 2013). The otters, six Smooth Otters *Lutrogale perspicillata* and five Oriental Small-clawed Otters *Aonyx cinereus* were all juveniles and are suspected to have been smuggled out of Thailand, bound for Japan to be sold as exotic pets.

The bag bore no tags and nobody claimed it, and therefore no arrests were made. Officials of Thailand's CITES Management Authority, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plants and Royal Thai Customs Stated in a press conference that they are investigating the case under Section 27 of Customs Law B.E.2482, Section 16-17 of Customs Law B.E.2469 and Section 23 of Customs Law 2482, as well as the Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act, B.E 2535 and Animal Epidemics Act, B.E 2499.

While there are frequent seizures of live animals at the airport, this is the first involving otters. The otters will undergo health checks before being handed over to the Huay-Ka-Kaeng Breeding Center in Uthai Thani for care.

Both species are considered Vulnerable by IUCN in the Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN, 2012) and are listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Both species are threatened largely due to degradation and loss of habitat. The scale and impact of hunting and capture for commercial trade in some parts of Southeast Asia was once thought to be minimal (Melisch *et al.*, 1996), however, more recently perhaps, poaching for otter skins in many parts of Asia has become a severe threat (Meena, 2002; Poole, 2003; Duckworth and Hill, 2008). More research and monitoring is required to better gauge the current extent of the trade in otters in Southeast Asia and the impact such trade is having on wild populations. Efforts to reduce the poaching and illegal trade are urgently needed.

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TRAFFIC. Eleven live otters found in airport luggage – 22 Jan. 2013 - <http://www.traffic.org/home/2013/1/22/eleven-live-otters-found-in-airport-luggage.html>
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RÉSUMÉ

SAISIE DE LOUTRES A L'AEROPORT DE BANGKOK, THAILANDE

Le 22 Janvier 2013, TRAFFIC a signalé que les agents des douanes royales thaïlandaises travaillant au check-point de la faune sauvage de l'aéroport international Suvarnabhumi de Bangkok, avaient découvert 11 loutres vivantes lorsqu'ils ont scanné un sac laissé dans la zone des bagages surdimensionnés. Les loutres, six loutres à pelage lisse *Lutrogale perspicillata* et cinq loutres cendrées *Aonyx cinereus* étaient toutes juvéniles et étaient probablement destinées à quitter clandestinement la Thaïlande, sans doute en partance pour le Japon pour être vendus comme animaux exotiques de compagnie. Le sac ne portait aucun étiquetage et personne ne l'a réclamé. Par conséquent, aucune arrestation n'a été faite. Les loutres feront l'objet d'examens sanitaires avant d'être remises au Centre de reproduction et de soins de Huay-Ka-Kaeng à Uthai Thani.

RESUMEN

DECOMISO DE NUTRIAS VIVAS EN EL AEROPUERTO DE BANGKOK, TAILANDIA

El 22 de enero de 2013, TRAFFIC informó que los funcionarios de la Real Aduana Thai que trabajan en el Puesto de Control de Fauna en el Aeropuerto Internacional de Suvarnabhumi, Bangkok, descubrieron 11 nutrias vivas cuando escanearon una valija que había sido dejada en el área del aeropuerto destinada a equipaje excedido en tamaño. Las nutrias, seis nutrias lisas *Lutrogale perspicillata* y cinco nutrias asiáticas de uñas pequeñas *Aonyx cinereus*, eran todas juveniles y se sospecha que estaban siendo contrabandeadas hacia fuera de Tailandia, destinadas a Japón para ser vendidas como mascotas exóticas. La valija no tenía etiquetas, nadie la reclamó, y por lo tanto no se hicieron arrestos. Las nutrias van a pasar por chequeos de salud para luego ser entregadas al Centro de Reproducción Huay-Ka-Kaeng, en Uthai Thani, para su cuidado.