

Asian Wildlife Trade Bulletin

News from TRAFFIC's Wildlife Trade Initiative
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South Asian ministers pledge regional co-operation in tackling illegal wildlife trade

South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network to be established

In May 2008, the eight member countries of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) pledged to tackle illegal wildlife trade in the region.

In a Ministerial statement known as the "Jaipur Declaration", the SACEP countries supported the development of a South Asia regional strategic plan on illegal wildlife trade and the establishment of a South Asia wildlife enforcement network (SAWEN).

The eight member countries also endorsed a South Asia regional strategic plan on illegal wildlife trade that will focus on key areas of work, including co-operation and co-ordination; effective legislation, policies and law enforcement; sharing knowledge and effective dissemination of information; intelligence networks and early warning systems; and capacity building.

The Declaration followed the Eleventh Meeting of the Governing Council of

SACEP, where Environment Ministers from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, issued a Statement stressing the importance of mutual networking and technical support to address the needs of the region in combating illegal wildlife trade.

"Regional co-operation can provide the best solution for regional problems," the Ministers said.

SACEP is an inter-governmental organisation established in 1982 for promoting regional co-operation in South Asia in the environment field.

Outgoing SACEP Director-General Dr Arvind A. Boaz said the commitment lays the foundations for a co-operative effort to crack down on illegal trade and to improve the management of wild species and the implementation of CITES in the region.

"This is the first comprehensive wildlife trade initiative of its kind in South Asia

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SACEP Ministerial Representatives in Jaipur.
Photo Credit: Samir Sinha/TRAFFIC

TRAFFIC
the wildlife trade monitoring network

and SACEP is confident it will lead to further commitment in the region, and even closer South-South co-operation to address illegal wildlife trade problems effectively," Dr Boaz added.

The Head of TRAFFIC India, Samir Sinha, said that regional co-operation was absolutely essential in tackling the challenges of wildlife trade.

"TRAFFIC warmly welcomes the initiative by all eight countries of South Asia in taking this important step of coming together and seeking to address poaching and illegal trade as a region," he said. "We look forward to helping make this initiative a conservation success."

The Jaipur Declaration endorses the outcomes of the First Regional Workshop on the South Asia Wildlife Trade Initiative which was held in Nepal from 31 January–1 February 2008. The workshop was organised by the Government of Nepal, SACEP, WWF Nepal and TRAFFIC and was made possible thanks to funding from the US Department of State, SACEP and WWF.

TRAFFIC has been involved in similar regional efforts worldwide, including the inter-governmental Regional Action Plan and its Wildlife Enforcement Network that has been established by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the development of the European Community Action Plan on CITES Enforcement.

For more information, contact Samir Sinha on ssinha@wwfindia.net

Contraband channel closed for business in the Russian Far East

In May 2008, seven Sino-Russian smugglers were given stiff punishments for their complicity in two separate illegal wildlife trading operations. The seizures that led to the convictions were the two biggest ever recorded and the product of months of collaborative work between Nature Protection operative officers, law enforcement agencies, WWF-Russia Far East (WWF-RFE) and TRAFFIC.

In the first case, a total of 900 bear paws from black and brown bears, four Amur Tiger skins, more than 60 kg of Tiger bones, and 531 Saiga horns were seized by the Border, Internal and Customs services of Russia's Primorskii Province in August 2007. After a long trial, the six persons involved in the crime syndicate responsible for the smuggling were convicted, with the most active members sentenced to eight years of imprisonment and a fine of 200 000 rubles each (approximately USD8 500). The Chinese and Russian accomplices were sentenced to seven and a half and four and a half years in prison respectively.

The second case began when Russia's Far Eastern Customs seized a total of 29 kg of wild ginseng roots bound for China. The case was concluded in May 2008, when the leader of this crime syndicate was sentenced to four years in prison. Throughout these cases, WWF and TRAFFIC provided zoological expertise and collected trade and operative information to provide legal assistance.



Confiscated bear gall bladders.
Photo Credit: Sergey Lyapustin

Natalia Pervushina, the Program Coordinator for TRAFFIC in Russia, applauded Russian authorities for the comprehensive legal action.

"Economic crimes and crimes of nature have long been separated in the Russian Federation's Criminal Code – resulting in much weaker sentences for those involved in illegally trading wildlife", she said "TRAFFIC and WWF hope these penalties show that the government will no longer allow this to be the case."

"While we cannot revive the killed animals, or replant the wild roots," she added, "the level of collaboration between enforcement agencies, the government and non-profit organizations in working to enforce control on the Sino-Russian border and eliminate a major contraband channel gives us reason to be encouraged."

New Fines for Illegal Hunting Announced in Russia



Photo Credit: Sergey Lyapustin

On November 1 2008, in conjunction with the start of another ungulate hunting season in Russia, WWF and TRAFFIC applauded officials on the significant fine increases for illegally harvesting animals listed in Russia's Red Data Book.

The new fines, the product of two years of consultation between TRAFFIC, WWF and Russia's Nature Protection agencies, are being celebrated as potentially deterring a sizable amount of illegal hunting in Russia.

Established by the decree of the Nature Resources Ministry N 107 issued on 28 April 2008, the new fines are 25 times higher than previously for hunting Amur Tigers (USD18 520), Far Eastern Leopards (USD18 520) and Japanese Cranes (USD5 500); and 20 times higher for hunting White-naped Cranes. Also protected by the new fines are the Spoonbill, the Oriental White Stork, the Lesser White-Fronted Goose, the Baikal Teal, the Mandarin Duck and the Amur Serow.

TRAFFIC reaches out to consumers in Asia

Recent TRAFFIC work has reached out to Asian consumers to highlight the need for public participation in stopping illegal wildlife trade in the region.

In Japan, TRAFFIC has produced an educational DVD entitled *Our Life and Wildlife – What is CITES?* The film, which goes into a uniquely in-depth discussion in four separate chapters, aims to educate Japanese travellers about sustainable consumption and about CITES – the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Using the elephant ivory trade and vicuna trade as two examples of what will happen to wild resources if they are not consumed sustainably, the video calls upon viewers to think more deeply about the environment they are leaving for future generations.

The DVD has been distributed throughout Japan to diverse audiences, including company employees, college students, public libraries and government agencies and ministries as part of an ongoing project being generously funded by the Japan Lottery Association.

In India, TRAFFIC has been reaching a variety of stakeholders under its consumer awareness campaign ‘Don’t Buy Trouble’. The primary target has been to educate tourists, both domestic and international, and other consumers on issues related to illegal wildlife trade. A short film has been produced to urge viewers to think before buying wildlife products, highlighting aspects of the illegal wildlife trade with images of poaching and trade in charismatic species such as Tiger, Leopard, rhino and elephant. Other lesser-known species are also profiled, including mongoose, reptiles, marine turtles, birds, primates, butterflies and other insects, musk deer and medicinal plants. The film can be viewed at:

http://wwfindia.org/about_wwf/what_we_do/traffic/index.cfm

An innovative partnership with Times Out of Home, a unit of Times Innovative Media, Ltd., has allowed high-profile display of TRAFFIC’s “Don’t buy trouble” posters at India’s Mumbai and Delhi airports in late 2008. The posters draw attention to the various national and international laws protecting wildlife, warning passers-by about the legal consequences of engaging in such trade. Both the film and airport advertisements were produced as part of TRAFFIC’s ongoing consumer awareness work in India.

In Viet Nam, TRAFFIC has implemented a campaign with pictures of endangered species on stickers asking people not to consume them. The eye-catching stickers, which focus on four endangered species traded in Viet Nam: bears, tigers, rhinos and pangolins, have been placed on everything from cupboards and doorjams to motorbike helmets since their production.

In August and September 2008, TRAFFIC worked alongside WWF in Viet Nam to host a public service announcement design competition. The competition called for innovative messages to discourage the illegal trade of wildlife and attracted over 170 entries. The six top prize winners have since been reworked by Saatchi & Saatchi Design Company and will be released country-wide in Viet Nam’s newspapers, magazines, and roadside bulletins soon.



Viet Nam awareness campaign poster.
Photo Credit: WWF/TRAFFIC/Nguyen Huong Lan

Both the sticker campaign and the design competition were part of the project “A Matter of Attitude – Reducing consumption of wildlife products in Ha Noi, Viet Nam,” an awareness campaign that is being funded by DANIDA and jointly implemented by TRAFFIC and WWF Greater Mekong Programmes.

For more information contact Lisa Kelley at lkelly@traffic.netnam.vn

Scaling up pangolin trade enforcement efforts

Despite being protected by national and international laws and conventions, pangolins *Manis* spp. are still heavily traded in Asia for their meat and for their use in traditional medicines. This fact has been highlighted by several recent and significant seizures, including two in Viet Nam during 2008 in which nearly 24 tons of pangolins were confiscated and one in Indonesia that resulted in the seizure of nearly 14 tonnes of frozen pangolin.

To address this problem, TRAFFIC and Wildlife Reserves Singapore – which manages the Singapore Zoo, the Night Safari and Jurong Bird Park – held a workshop in Singapore



Photo Credit: Chin Sing Yun/TRAFFIC



Baby pangolins.

Photo Credit: EW/TRAFFIC

from 30 June to 2 July 2008 on the trade and conservation of pangolins native to South and South-east Asia. The workshop brought together over 75 government leaders, academics, conservationists and veterinarians from 15 countries. The objectives were to identify priority actions to reduce the illegal trade of pangolins and to allow experts to share information and knowledge about pangolins and the pangolin trade.

Government agencies presented the successes and obstacles they face in their national jurisdictions to combat the illegal pangolin trade. Other institutions provided technical inputs on specific aspects related to the trade and conservation of Asian pangolins including information on feeding habits and behavior, available population assessments, and trade dynamics.

Participants worked together to identify top priorities for future research and action in the fields of biology and ecology; trade and law enforcement; husbandry and rehabilitation; and education and awareness. Draft recommendations for future action focused on the need to gain further information about pangolin population status and rehabilitation requirements; develop a trade monitoring network and centralized reporting system; build law enforcement capacity; and improve educational materials for enforcement agencies, children and the media.

A second major output of the workshop was the agreement among participants to create a Pangolin Working Group. The working group will be responsible for coordinating follow-up action and finding ways to improve the co-ordination of research, fundraising, exchanging information and supporting enforcement activities. This directly complements the current focus within the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network to increase law enforcement action against pangolin smuggling.

TRAFFIC has been carrying out surveys in South-east Asia on the pangolin trade, specifically in Indonesia, Malaysia and Viet Nam, since August 2007 in order to improve understanding of the pangolin trade and its regional dynamics. This work has been made possible by the support of SeaWorld&Busch Gardens Conservation Fund, and the National Geographic Society. The Katala Foundation Incorporated (KFI) also provided valuable assistance in conducting a preliminary survey of pangolin trade in Palawan, Philippines.

For more information, contact Chris Shepherd at cstsea@po.jaring.my

TRAFFIC pilots sustainability standards for Medicinal and Aromatic Plants in Cambodia, India and China

Following the pioneering efforts to establish the International Standard for Sustainable Wild Collection of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP), TRAFFIC is now testing these criteria with demonstration projects in India and Cambodia and China.

Under the umbrella of "Saving Plants that Save Lives and Livelihoods", TRAFFIC is piloting mechanisms for the sustainable management of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) through the use of ISSC-MAP. Basically this involves a set of guidelines that promotes five principles: maintaining wild MAP resources; preventing negative environmental impacts; legal compliance; respecting customary rights; and applying responsible business practices.

Global in scope, the project is being piloted in India (in the States of Uttarakhand and Karnataka), Nepal (Eastern Himalayan region), Brazil (Amazon region), Lesotho (Southern Africa) and Cambodia (Greater Mekong). Phase one includes working in close collaboration with key stakeholders to select both the species and the field site using detailed criteria. Following this, a comprehensive resource assessment is undertaken before local communities are enlisted to help develop a detailed management plan to harvest the species in a sustainable manner.

TRAFFIC's work in Cambodia brought together stakeholders from local communities, traders, research organizations, NGOs, government and universities, amongst others. Two species were selected at this meeting in May 2008, the shrub Krakao *Amomum ovoides*, and the rare tree Tepiru *Cinnamomum cambodianum*. Both are found in the same field site, Prek Thnot Community Protected Area in Bokor National Park, south of Phnom Penh.

In India, TRAFFIC's work on phase one has included two workshops, one in Uttarakhand in late February 2008 and one in Karnataka in May 2008. At both workshops, ISSC-MAP was introduced to key policy makers, Forest Department officials, educational institutes, pharmaceutical companies, MAP cultivators and collectors, traders, and other NGOs. In Karnataka, two species were also selected from each of



Medicinal plant ingredients in China.
Photo Credit: James Compton/TRAFFIC

two sites: *Salacia chinensis* and *Embelia tsjeriam-cottam* at Shirgungi village in Katgal Range; and *Ailanthus triphysa* and *Myristica malabarica* at Illeman village in Tirthahalli Range.

Aside from workshops, TRAFFIC's project staff have undertaken field work at all three of the sites to assess the status of these species in their countries at large and *in situ* at their specific field sites.

According to Thomas Osborn, TRAFFIC's medicinal plants specialist in the Greater Mekong region, the project has generated a huge amount of interest in the countries of implementation with high levels of stakeholder participation. "There is a long way to go, but through ISSC-MAP we are well on the way to providing a replicable model for the sustainable wild collection of medicinal plants," Osborn said.



Sustainable collection of cinnamon bark.
Photo Credit: Eang Hourt Khou/TRAFFIC

The Saving Plants that Save Lives and Livelihoods project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and implemented by WWF/TRAFFIC Germany and the IUCN Medicinal Plants Specialist Group.

The second project, funded under the European Community's EU-China Biodiversity Project (ECBP), aims to develop a model for the sustainable harvesting of medicinal plants in the mountainous landscapes of the upper Yangtze River Basin of China. This incredibly biodiverse location contains an estimated 75% of the commonly harvested plant species for Traditional Chinese Medicine. In this project, ISSC-MAP is being used towards designing locally appropriate management tools.

TRAFFIC, working jointly with WWF, IUCN, provincial forestry departments and TCM experts, has helped to translate ISSC-MAP into Chinese and to modify the document to

conform to local standards. The revisions to the document are in draft form and have been thoroughly reviewed via consultation with national experts. Despite the challenges brought by the tragic events of the Sichuan earthquake, which affected some of the medicinal plant habitats, fieldwork is continuing with the full suite of partners.

For more information about the project in Cambodia, contact Thomas Osborn at tosborn@traffic.netnam.vn; in India, contact Samir Sinha at ssinha@wwfindia.net, and in China, contact Xueyan Liu at xyliu@wwfchina.org.

ASEAN Anti-Wildlife Crime Task Forces get further support from USAID

The first three years of the Support Program for the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN), jointly implemented by TRAFFIC and Wildlife Alliance (formerly known as WildAid) via a co-operative partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has achieved many important milestones, including the establishment of a dedicated national Wildlife Crime Task Force by a majority of member countries and a Program Coordination Unit, based in Bangkok, Thailand.

Based on this success, the Support Program recently obtained multi-year funding for a second phase of work (Phase II) that will focus on dismantling some of the region's key wildlife trafficking routes. A recent meeting in Lao PDR in May 2008 set the scene for an even more intensive co-operation between ASEAN nations and their trading partners in controlling illegal trade in wild animals and plants.

The over-arching goal of the ASEAN-WEN Support Programme-Phase II will be to reduce illegal wildlife trade in Southeast Asia by dismantling some of the region's key wildlife trafficking networks. This will be achieved through a continuing refinement of a three-part strategy: Strengthening ASEAN-WEN's capacity to reduce wildlife crime; strengthening and sustaining the network; and increasing political will and public support for the network.

The 2008 annual regional meeting, hosted by Lao PDR, brought together police, Customs and CITES Officers from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The Vientiane meeting aimed to allow participants an opportunity to review the progress of ASEAN-WEN implementation at national and regional levels. In recognition of the fact that wildlife crime is one of the world's most lucrative forms of organized crimes and that its syndicates are operating from East to West, delegates from the United States, New Zealand, Interpol, ASEAN Secretariat and the CITES Secretariat were also present at the meeting.

A significant output of the meeting was that the region's national Anti-Wildlife Crime Task Forces agreed to form a joint Special Investigations Group (SIG) to bolster cross-border wildlife crime suppression. The group will link up with INTERPOL and local law enforcement throughout the

region to ensure seizures are followed by more arrests and prosecutions.

Klairoong Poonpon, Senior Liaison Officer of the ASEAN-WEN Program Coordination Unit, said that this meeting provided ASEAN-WEN members “a chance to first figure out how to sustain the Network and second, a chance to fine-tune its enforcement capacity, allowing them to go after the major smugglers in the region”.

The meeting was facilitated by the Lao PDR Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry’s Department of Forestry, with logistical and financial support from the ASEAN-WEN Program Coordination Unit (PCU) and the ASEAN-WEN Support Program, which is sponsored by USAID. Malaysia will be the next chair of ASEAN-WEN beginning May 2009.

For more information, contact TRAFFIC’s Dave Lawson dave@iucnt.org.



Photo Credit: ASEAN-WEN

TRAFFIC East Asia - Regional Office

Room 2001, Double Building,
22 Stanley Street
Central, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2 530 0587
Fax: (852) 2 530 0864
Email: trafficea@biznetvigator.com
Timothy Lam, Senior Programme Officer

TRAFFIC East Asia China Programme

c/o WWF China Programme Office
Room 1609, Wen Hua Gong,
(Laodong Renmin Wenhua Gong Dongmen)
Beijing Working People’s Culture Palace
Beijing 100006, People’s Republic of China
Tel: (86) 10 65227100 (3213)
Fax: (86) 10 65227300
Email: teachina@wwfchina.org
Xu Hongfa, Wildlife Trade Programme Co-ordinator

TRAFFIC East Asia - Japan

6th Fl. Nihonseimei Akabanebashi Bldg.
3-1-14, Shiba, Minato-ku
105-0014 Tokyo, Japan
Tel: (81) 3 3769 1716
Fax: (81) 3 3769 1304
Email: traffic@trafficj.org
Akiko Ishihara, Senior Representative

TRAFFIC East Asia - Taipei

PO Box 7-476,
Taipei 106, Taiwan
Tel: (886) 2 2362 9787
Fax: (886) 2 2362 9799
Email: treatai@ms1.hinet.net
Joyce Wu, Programme Officer

TRAFFIC Europe - Russia

c/o WWF Russia Programme Office
Nikoloyamskaya str.19, building 3
109240 Moscow, Russia
Tel: (7) 495 727 09 39
Fax: (7) 495 727 09 38
Email: avaisman@wwf.ru
Alexey Vaisman, Senior Programme Officer

TRAFFIC Southeast Asia – Regional Office

Unit 9-3A, 3rd Floor, Jalan SS23/11, Taman SEA
47400 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia
Tel: (603) 7880 3940
Fax: (603) 7882 0171
Email: tsea@po.jaring.my
Azrina Abdullah, Regional Director

TRAFFIC Southeast Asia – Greater Mekong

c/o WWF Vietnam and Greater Mekong
39 Xuan Dieu Street
Ho Tay District, Ha Noi
Viet Nam
Tel: (84) 4 3719 3115
Fax: (84) 4 3719 3093
Email: traffic-indochina@traffic.netnam.vn
Nguyen Dao Ngoc Van, Senior Projects Officer

TRAFFIC India

WWF India Secretariat
172-B, Lodi Estate, N. Delhi 110003, India
Tel: (91) 11-41504786
Fax: (91) 11-43516200
Email: ssinha@wwfindia.net
Samir Sinha, Head

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