



THE TRAFFIC BULLETIN SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS SECTION IS SPONSORED BY THE FORESTRY BUREAU, COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURE, TAIWAN: COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING CITES ENFORCEMENT

The following section features a selection of seizures and prosecutions reported since October 2014, to date. Sources are cited at the end of each country section. Readers are referred to the TRAFFIC website (www.traffic.org/media-reports/) for regular updates on cases reported from around the world.

BIRDS

BULGARIA: On 22 October 2014, at a court in Burgas, egg collector Jan Frederick Ross, formerly of Manchester, UK, received a suspended six-month gaol sentence and a fine of EUR2550 (USD3200) following a lengthy investigation by police, assisted by the Bulgarian Society for Bird Protection and the RSPB. Ross pleaded guilty to the illegal possession of 16 birds' eggs, including the egg of a Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* (CITES II), a rare breeding bird in Bulgaria (60 pairs), and three taxidermy specimens. He had already been sentenced three times in the UK for egg collecting; following reports that he was continuing his illegal collecting in Bulgaria, a search of his flat revealed photographs and diaries hidden behind artwork which pointed to the potentially illegal collection of over a thousand birds' eggs including a number of rare breeding birds, such as a clutch of eggs from the Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* (CITES II) (24 pairs in Bulgaria). No charges could be brought against Ross for the taking of these eggs and their location remains unknown.

RSPB: <http://bit.ly/1CPss7L>, 22 October 2014

CAMEROON: On 27 January 2015, more than 300 Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* (CITES II) were seized from a private home in Yaounde. A further 120 were later seized from the same address. A number of Cameroonians and Ghanaians were arrested.

Radio Environment: <http://bit.ly/1LxIEpt>

HUNGARY: On 7 December 2014, 114 live Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* (CITES II) were seized from the car of a Bulgarian citizen at a crossing point in Kiszombor, on the border with Romania. Most of the birds were fitted with closed plastic foot rings, however circumstances suggest that they had been wild-caught. They have been placed in the rescue centre of Szeged Zoo.

CITES Management Authority, Hungary, 7 December 2014

IRAN: In October 2014, a total of 19 Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* and five Barbary Falcons *F. peregrinoides* (both CITES I) were seized at the port of Jask, in Hormozgan province. The birds, thought to have been smuggled in from Pakistan, had been destined for export to a neighbouring country. Two specimens had perished and the remainder were released in the plains of Hormozgan. One arrest.

HARTMUT JUNGIUS / WWF-CANON



Houbara Bustards
Chlamydotis undulata

Some 240 Houbara Bustards bound for Saudi Arabia were recently seized by Iranian authorities in the Sea of Oman.

CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) establishes international controls over trade in wild plants and animals, or related products, of species that have been, or may be, threatened due to excessive commercial exploitation. Parties have their own legislative instrument by which to meet their obligations under CITES. The species covered by CITES are listed in three Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need:

APPENDIX I includes species threatened with extinction which are or may be threatened by trade. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances. An export permit from the country of origin (or a re-export certificate from other exporting countries) and an import permit from the country of importation are required.

APPENDIX II includes species not necessarily yet threatened, but which could become so if trade is not strictly controlled. Species are also included in Appendix II if they are difficult to distinguish from other species in Appendix II, in order to make it more difficult for illegal trade to take place through misidentification or mislabelling. An export permit from the country of origin (or a re-export certificate from other exporting countries) is required, but not an import permit.

APPENDIX III includes species that any Party identifies as being subject to regulation within its jurisdiction for the purpose of preventing or restricting exploitation and as needing the co-operation of other Parties in the control of trade. Imports require a certificate of origin and, if the importation is from the State that has included the species in Appendix III, an export permit is required.

All imports into the European Union of CITES Appendix II-listed species require both an export permit/re-export certificate and an import permit.

On 23 November 2014, some 240 Houbara Bustards *Chlamydotis undulata* (CITES I) and 140 falcons Falconidae spp. (CITES I/II) leaving Iran for Saudi Arabia were seized by maritime police from a dhow in the Sea of Oman. The Iranian captain of the dhow and a Pakistani national have been gaoled. Many of the birds, which had been caught in Pakistan, had perished and the surviving specimens were released in the wild.

Robin des Bois, *On the Trail No. 7:*
<http://bit.ly/19CJGI0>

SPAIN: On 23 March 2015, it was reported that two Spanish nationals had been fined EUR50 000 and EUR5000, respectively (USD55 500/5500) for the illegal trade in and possession of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* (CITES I). The penalties were imposed following a protracted investigation by the Catalonia Rural Ranger Corps investigating the suspected laundering of Peregrine Falcons. The UK National Wildlife Crime Unit was asked to verify the authenticity of UK-issued permits for some of the birds. Although the permits were genuine, fake leg rings had been fitted to the falcons to give the impression they had been captive bred.

Agents also used DNA profiling to prove that the falcons were not related to their alleged parents. Agents seized 18 Peregrine Falcons, which were being held illegally, and are working to re-home the falcons.

UK National Wildlife Crime Unit:
<http://bit.ly/1EMEqTr>, 23 March 2015

CATS

CHINA: On 23 October 2014, at Jinan Intermediate People's Court, Shandong province, a man identified as Zhang was gaoled for six years for smuggling Tiger *Panthera tigris* (CITES I) bones (plus ivory and other wildlife products). He was also fined 50 000 yuan (USD8000). Customs officers at Jinan International Airport discovered the bones in three suitcases in March 2014. Zhang, a resident of Zhejiang province, had arrived from Hong Kong with the items, including a Tiger skull which he reportedly had smuggled from Indonesia.

Shanghai Daily (China): <http://bit.ly/1AKjmJj>, 17 November 2014

INDONESIA: On 12 February 2015, the South Sumatra Military Police, South Sumatra Provincial Natural Resource Conservation Office (BKSDA), and the Wildlife Conservation Society's Wildlife Crimes Unit (WCU) announced the recent arrest of a person who allegedly sold more than 100 stuffed Tigers *Panthera tigris* (CITES I) over a ten-year period. The trafficker is reported to have traded the illegal goods to buyers in southern Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and to a middleman in Jakarta. He subsequently confessed that he purchased Tiger skins and stuffed Tigers in Lampung, Bengkulu, Jambi, and north Sumatra to supply demand in Jakarta and Java. His arrest concluded an investigation that began in 2009 with the arrest of a middleman.

Newswise: <http://bit.ly/1GuDhjk>, 12 February 2015

MALAWI: On 30 January 2015, at Kasungu Magistrates' Court, Ganizani Nkhata was sentenced to four years in gaol after being unable to pay a fine of MK450 000 (USD1000) following his conviction for poaching a Serval Cat *Leptailurus serval* (CITES II) in August 2014. The cat had earlier been rescued and later reintroduced into Kasungu National Park by Lilongwe Wildlife Trust. A GPS tracking collar fitted on the animal for research purposes to monitor its movement in the park and to inform future releases, assisted the authorities in catching the defendant. The signal from the collar led to the roof of the suspect's house in Munye village in Traditional Authority Kawamba.

Nkhata was found guilty on two counts—first for killing the cat, for which he received a fine of MK350 000, and second for malicious damage to GPS equipment (fine of MK100 000).

Lilongwe Wildlife Trust: <http://bit.ly/194Ujtu>, 4 February 2015

RUSSIA: On 6 February 2015, it was reported that a Vietnamese man had been detained on suspicion of involvement in the killing and trading in endangered animals and supplying eating establishments with illegal meat after the authorities raided a restaurant in Moscow and seized big cat skins, heads and around 50 kg of meat. The meat is believed to be from an Amur (Siberian) Tiger *Panthera tigris altaica* and an Amur Leopard *P. pardus orientalis* (both CITES I); fewer than 500 Amur Tigers and only 45 adult Amur Leopards are estimated to remain in the wild. The body parts were sent away for scientific analysis. Officials conducting a subsequent investigation at Sadovod market, Moscow, uncovered what are believed to be the skins of an Amur Tiger and an Amur Leopard.

WWF: <http://bit.ly/1B5KmlG>, 6 February 2015

VIET NAM: On 15 January 2015, police in Bac Kan province seized from a lorry the frozen carcass of a 303 kg Tiger *Panthera tigris* (CITES I) and detained the driver. The animal had been cut into five parts and placed in sacks, wrapped in blankets. Police also seized two sacks containing 53 kg of animal bones, 3 kg of animal bone glue and 3 kg of turtle shells.

Thanhniennews (Viet Nam): <http://bit.ly/1zrx2go>, 16 January 2015

ELEPHANTS

The African Elephant *Loxodonta africana* and Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* are listed in CITES Appendix I

AUSTRALIA: On 5 April 2015, Customs officers at Perth airport seized 110 kg of elephant tusks. The shipment was believed to be travelling through Perth on its way from Africa, en route to Malaysia. An investigation into an international ivory smuggling ring moving goods through Australia is under way by federal authorities.

The ivory, made up of numerous cut tusk parts of varying sizes, is being stored at a secure Customs detained goods storage and is now the property of the Australian Government.

Bunbury Mail (Australia): <http://bit.ly/1CulcRn>, 9 April 2015

CHINA: On 20 January 2015, Hengshui police in Hebei province arrested 14 suspects in an ivory trading ring. Police acted on information that sculptors who appeared to be doing business legally were actually trading ivory. Officers spent about 10 months infiltrating the gang and collecting evidence and later arrested all core members over the following three months.

The Standard (Hong Kong): <http://bit.ly/1uk9CCO>, 20 January 2015

ERRATUM: In Vol. 26(1):22, it was incorrectly stated that almost 12 t of ivory had been seized in early November 2013 by Customs officers in Xiamen city, China. The report should have stated that officials had infiltrated two groups responsible for smuggling this amount of ivory over a period of years (see: <http://bit.ly/1Gcxkel>). We apologise for this error.

CONGO, DEM. REP. OF: On 30 January 2015, police displayed a large consignment of ivory, seized the previous week and believed to derive from more than 15 forest adult elephants from the country's Salonga National Park. It was reported that most of the ivory had been carved in Kinshasa. The shipment was handed over to the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN).

Radio Okapi: <http://bit.ly/1F1VxA6>, 31 January 2015

CONGO, REP. OF: On 28 January 2015, it was reported that authorities had seized 126 kg of ivory in Brazzaville and placed in custody two suspects trying to sell the ivory. A third person evaded arrest. The ivory was estimated to derive from 30 forest elephants, which, it is reported, were probably poached in northern Congo.

WWF: <http://bit.ly/1MRelmw>, 28 January 2015

EGYPT: In late October 2014, Customs officers at Safaga seaport seized 300 kg of raw elephant ivory from a lorry. The shipment mainly originated from East Africa and had been sent to Kuwait where it was taken by truck through Saudi Arabia, passing through Dubai seaport before arriving at Safaga seaport.

In November 2014, Customs officers at Safaga seaport seized 200 kg of raw and worked ivory imported from Saudi Arabia. Some of the raw ivory had been painted with a black stain to resemble coal or wood.

IFAW: <http://bit.ly/1BCfgrp>, 30 January 2015

GABON: On 9 April 2015, it was reported that Jean François Ombenda and Eugene Ndjouhou had each been sentenced at a court in Franceville to six months in gaol and fined one million CFA Francs (USD1000). The pair, arrested in Mounana on 25 February as they were about to finalize a sale of elephant ivory (circa 18 kg), were charged with hunting, possession, transport, selling trophies and illegal possession of a firearm.

Gabon News: <http://bit.ly/1FOdhjs>, 2 March 2015; *Gabon Review (in French):* <http://bit.ly/1JDVE7o>, 10 April 2015

In March 2015, it was reported that a person arrested in possession of 12 elephant tusks had been sentenced to two years in gaol for illegal possession of ivory and corruption attempts.

The Eagle Network, March 2015

HONG KONG SAR: On 10 and 16 February 2015, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), with the assistance of quarantine detector dogs, seized a total of 60 kg of worked ivory inside 12 parcels from Nigeria at the Air Mail Centre, Chek Lap Kok, Lantau Island. The investigation continues.

Press release, GovHK (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government) <http://bit.ly/1EyK1kM>, 18 February 2015

INDIA: On 16 March 2015, police in Kolkata seized one tusk, nine statuettes and other objects made of ivory from the premises of a Salt Lake resident and arrested two persons. Sources said the accused had put up an advertisement on an online shopping portal to sell the items. Officials of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau traced the objects to the address, and posed as buyers before making their arrests.

Times of India (India): <http://bit.ly/1bd8Q7D>, 17 March 2015

KENYA: A court that granted bail to the suspected ringleader of an ivory smuggling gang on medical grounds has had the ruling overturned by the Director of Public Prosecutions until the suspect's appeal is heard. The Kenyan national, who featured on an INTERPOL list of the nine most wanted suspects linked to crimes against the environment, was arrested by international police agents in Tanzania in December 2014 after fleeing Kenya and extradited to face charges in Mombasa. He is charged with possession of and dealing in elephant tusks weighing more than two tonnes. The haul was discovered by Kenyan police in June when they raided a car dealership in Mombasa, after which the suspect fled to Tanzania.

Defence lawyers had argued that their client required medical treatment for diabetes that could not be provided while in custody.

Times Live (South Africa): <http://bit.ly/1xBZYNU>, 18 March 2015

SAUDI ARABIA: On 18 October 2014, it was reported that authorities at King Khaled International Airport, Riyadh, had foiled an attempt to smuggle 588 pieces (reportedly 490 kg) of elephant tusks to east Asia. The ivory was concealed in the luggage of a passenger in transit from an undisclosed African country.

Saudi Gazette (Saudi Arabia): <http://bit.ly/110jCun>, 19 October 2014

THAILAND: In early January 2015, a man from Surin was arrested after 51 tusks (135 kg) of African Elephant *Loxodonta africana* were found in his Taklang village home in Tha Tum district.

Bangkok Post (Thailand), <http://bit.ly/1Aispmu>, 2 January 2015

UGANDA: On 25 January 2015, it was reported that wildlife officers at Entebbe International Airport had seized a shipment containing nearly 800 kg of ivory (CITES I) (and over two tonnes of pangolin *Manis* (CITES II) skins), due for export to Amsterdam, Netherlands. The tusks, which appeared to have been recently removed, were cut into several pieces. The boxes were labelled as communications equipment that needed repairs in Amsterdam, and had been cleared for export by Customs officials, who reportedly said that the containers were too heavy to be scanned by X-ray machines. However, wildlife surveillance teams insisted that they be searched. Three people, including a clerk at the airport, a Customs officer and the driver of a lorry that delivered the cargo were arrested.

In November 2014, it was discovered that more than a tonne of seized ivory had disappeared from government strongrooms. Some of the ivory in this shipment is believed to have been part of that stock (see also under Pangolins).

The Rakyat Post (Malaysia): <http://bit.ly/1Gy2yZP>, 26 January 2015; *New Vision (Uganda):* <http://bit.ly/1zwngtU>, 27 January 2015

On 17 March 2015, Customs officials at Kampala airport seized 50 pieces of ivory from a shipment declared as containing 1000 kg of shea butter, bound via cargo plane for Singapore. Closer inspection uncovered the ivory in barrels of the butter. The persons who delivered the consignment are being sought.

The News Hub: <http://bit.ly/1H3MT4k>, 17 March 2015

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: On 16 March 2015, it was announced that over 200 kg of ivory being transported through Dubai International Airport had been seized. No more details were available as to provenance or proposed destination. The ivory has been handed over to the UAE Ministry of Environment and Water.

The National UAE: <http://bit.ly/1B5TkiW>, 16 March 2015

VIET NAM: On 27 October 2014, Customs officers in the northern city of Hai Phong, Hai An District, confiscated nearly one tonne of elephant tusks stashed in a container of rubber gloves imported from an unknown country/territory, and bound for a third, undisclosed country. According to the shipping documents, the consignment was part of a shipment of two containers of rubber gloves that were being sent to a company in Ha Long City, Quang Ninh province.

Tuoitrenews (Viet Nam): <http://bit.ly/196rDja>, 28 October 2014

On 14 March 2015, Customs officers at Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City, discovered 43.5 kg of elephant tusks hidden in the baggage of two Vietnamese nationals returning to the country from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Subsequent testing conducted by the Institute of Forensic Science under the Ministry of Public Security showed that the tusks were taken from African Elephants *Loxodonta africana* (CITES I). One of the suspects confessed that the two had been hired to transport the ivory from Dubai to Viet Nam.

Tuoitrenews (Viet Nam): <http://bit.ly/1EjrK3C>, 16 March 2015

ZAMBIA: On 30 March 2015, at Livingstone Magistrates' Court, five people caught in February with 14 raw ivory pieces (210 kg) that they were trying to sell to an undercover operative, were each sentenced to five years in gaol.

Game Rangers International press release: <http://bit.ly/1FQxcAY>, 9 April 2015

MARINE / FRESHWATER

BULGARIA: On 23 January 2015 it was reported that Customs officials at Sofia airport had seized two million baby European Eels *Anguilla anguilla* (CITES II) from eight styrofoam containers declared as food items. Two Chinese nationals travelling from Madrid, Spain, were detained. The eels were taken to a rescue centre at the public aquarium in Varna.

Reuters: <http://bit.ly/11499wh>, 23 January 2015

CHINA: In November 2014, a court in Taizhou city, Zhejiang province, sentenced 13 red coral poachers to between one year and six months to six years in gaol and fined the group nearly one million yuan (USD161 440). The two key figures employed 11 sailors to obtain red coral; their vessel was stopped by coast guards in April 2014 with 7 kg of red coral on board.

Ecns.cn: <http://bit.ly/1C48TfX>, 3 November 2014

COSTA RICA: On 19 November 2014, at San José Airport, two tonnes of shark fins bound for Hong Kong were seized. Some 50 bags contained fins from Hammerhead Sharks *Sphyrna lewini* and Oceanic Whitetip Sharks *Carcharhinus longimanus* (both CITES II).

Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7: <http://bit.ly/19CJGiO>

FRANCE: On 5 February 2015, at Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle Airport, Paris, Customs officials seized a shipment of 18 688 dried seahorses *Hippocampus* spp. (CITES II) en route between Madagascar and Hong Kong.

On 15 January, 112 seahorses were found in the luggage of a couple travelling from Shanghai to Spain. They claimed the specimens were to be used to make a broth. The animals were seized and the couple fined an undisclosed amount.

Le Parisien (France): <http://bit.ly/1Cctmv1> (in French), 9 February 2015

INDONESIA: On 27 January 2015, at the District Court in Cirebon, West Java, a trader was sentenced to one year and four months in gaol and fined USD5000 after being arrested with 27 kg of manta ray *Manta* (CITES II) plates. This is the first law enforcement action to have taken place under a new manta ray protection decree approved early in 2014 to protect manta rays and to stop illegal fishing and trading.

On 7 November 2014, some 103 kg of manta ray gills were seized from a suspect's house near Pengambangan Negara fisheries landing area in Bali. This was the largest-ever seizure of manta ray gill plates in the country, which took place as part of a major enforcement initiative against the illegal trade of sharks and rays in Indonesia, which has the largest shark fisheries in the world.

On 10 November 2014, at Surabaya International Airport, East Java province, 226 kg of manta ray gills corresponding to 80 adult manta rays were seized before their onward shipment to Hong Kong.

Currently, two of the suspected illegal traders are on trial separately in Surabaya and Bali; one was arrested in Surabaya last August with 8 kg of manta ray plates while the other was arrested in Bali in September with 103 kg of manta ray plates.

Wildlife Conservation Society: <http://bit.ly/1CAuchb>; *Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7:* <http://bit.ly/19CJGiO>; <http://bit.ly/1Cx6B6MD>, 2 February 2015

PHILIPPINES: On 10 October 2014, a businesswoman whose company was allegedly involved in a smuggling attempt of some 41 t of protected marine species detected at the port of Manila in 2011 was arrested and released on bail. The case involved two containers declared to be transporting rubber that were found to be loaded with 21 169 black coral pieces (*Antipatharia* spp., CITES II), 163 Green Turtles *Chelonia mydas* and Hawksbill Turtles *Eretmochelys imbricata* (both CITES I), 7340 shells and conches *Cassidae*, and 196 kg of sea fans *Alcyonacea*.

Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7: <http://bit.ly/19CJGiO>

On 22 November 2014, in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, nine Chinese fishermen were each fined USD100 000 and in the case of non-compliance sentenced to six months in gaol for smuggling 555 marine turtles (CITES I). Most of those convicted have already spent six months in temporary detention.

Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7: <http://bit.ly/19CJGiO>

SOUTH AFRICA: On 3 November 2014, Kraaifontein SAPS confiscated approximately 160 kg of dried abalones *Haliotis* (and 1127 dried shark fins) from a storage warehouse in Uitzicht, Kraaifontein, after an employee contacted police complaining of a strong smell from one of the units. The case is under investigation.

AllAfrica.com: <http://bit.ly/1tPiumZ>, 4 November 2014

On 7 November 2014, in Cape Town, a tip-off led to one of the biggest abalone busts of the year when officials from the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries department joined police to raid an illegal processing plant. Two Chinese nationals and a Congolese man were arrested. A total of 14 631 dried abalones and 5850 wet abalones was seized.

IOL news (South Africa): <http://bit.ly/1FFIM2k>, 8 November 2014

On 16 February 2015, police acting on information arrested a man from Gordon's Bay travelling in his car in Somerset West, bound for Cape Town, with 15 bags containing 1958 shucked abalones. The man was detained at Somerset West police station.

IOL news (South Africa): bit.ly/1Lxrd7n, 17 February 2015

PANGOLINS

All pangolin species are listed in CITES Appendix II

CHINA: On 3 November 2014, a father and son received gaol sentences for smuggling 10 pangolins *Manis*—the father to three years and his son to two years and six months and fined 15 000 Yuan (USD2443). In 2012, the son had transported the pangolins from Guangzhou province to Hengyang, Hunan province, when the specimens were seized.

Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7: <http://bit.ly/19CJGi0>

HONG KONG: On 17 March 2015, Hong Kong Customs seized 2000 kg of pangolin *Manis* scales from a container at Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound.

Customs officers, through risk assessment, selected the shipment, arriving from Nigeria, for inspection and found the scales in 44 bags.

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region press release (info.gov.hk): <http://bit.ly/1FIMbR4>, 20 March 2015

MALAYSIA: On 26 March 2015, the Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak, Tan Sri Richard Malanjum, called for a review of the law against wildlife crime after imposing the maximum gaol term provided for under the *Wildlife Conservation Enactment 1997* during the appeal hearing of a man previously sentenced for illegal pangolin *Manis* trade. Carlvin Cher Jia Wei of Johor was fined RM10 000 (USD2800) in

November 2014 after 12 pangolins were found in the storage compartment of his vehicle.

During the appeal hearing, the judge said that the current law was too lenient and the defendant's previous sentence "grossly inadequate". He gaoled him for three years and increased the fine to RM25 000 or six months in gaol.

The Star online (Malaysia): bit.ly/1GuT29U, 25 November 2014; *New Sabah Times:* <http://bit.ly/1anrPLt>, 27 March 2015

In December 2014, in the State of Sarawak, 100 kg of scales and other pangolin *Manis* parts found in parcels bound for China were seized by local Customs officials. A court ordered the destruction of the body parts.

Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7: <http://bit.ly/19CJGi0>

UGANDA: On 25 January 2015, it was reported that wildlife officers at Entebbe International Airport had seized a shipment containing over two tonnes of pangolin *Manis* (CITES II) skins (and 800 kg of ivory) that had been due to be exported to Amsterdam, Netherlands (see also under Elephants).

The Rakyat Post (Malaysia): <http://bit.ly/1Gy2yZP>, 26 January 2015;

VIET NAM: On 20 December 2014, 59 pangolins *Manis* were seized from a vehicle in Mong Cai, Quang Ninh province, travelling from the south of Ha Long Bay, heading for the border with China.

In February 2015, police in northern Bac Ninh province seized 42 live Sunda Pangolins *Manis javanica* from poachers—who received fines of undisclosed amounts—and delivered the animals to forest rangers for safekeeping; the rangers then sold the animals to local restaurants.

Until recently, it was legal for registered traders or government authorities to auction off some seized pangolins, but a new law introduced in November 2013 outlawed the hunting, trade, and consumption of any of Asia's four pangolin species.

Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7: <http://bit.ly/19CJGi0>; *The Guardian (UK):* bit.ly/1EvDlqT, 20 February 2015

REPTILES / AMPHIBIANS

AUSTRALIA: On 6 February 2015, at Perth International Airport, two Russian nationals and two Czech nationals were arrested after earlier attempts to export 157 native reptiles and amphibians in packages sent from destinations including Carnarvon, Tom Price and Geraldton, all bound for Europe. Many of the animals were concealed in hollowed-out books and in cigarette packets and included skinks, geckos, frogs and pygmy pythons. Also uncovered were 33 dead reptiles that appeared to have been tagged for use as specimens. Two of the men also allegedly had reptiles hidden in their luggage.



In December 2014, 170 Radiated Tortoises (inset) from Madagascar were seized at Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle Airport, France, from a shipment of sea cucumbers bound for Lao PDR.

During a separate incident in February, 92 reptiles including specially protected species, were seized from post offices in Broome, Derby and NSW, and from a vehicle intercepted in Broome by WVA Police. Three arrests. More than 20 of the reptiles were dead or have since died.

Australian Customs and Border Protection Service: bit.ly/1BCrAT4, 16 February 2015

BANGLADESH: On 20 November 2014, police in Magura District, Khulna Division searching a bus travelling from Jessore to Dhaka, seized 499 Black Pond Turtles *Geoclemys hamiltonii* (CITES I). One arrest.

Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7: <http://bit.ly/19CJGi0>

FRANCE: On 14 December 2014, Customs officers at Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle Airport, Paris, discovered 170 Radiated Tortoises *Astrochelys radiata* (CITES I) concealed in the false bottom of six containers of sea cucumbers. The shipment was en route from Madagascar to Lao PDR. Five tortoises perished; the remaining specimens were to be placed in authorized facilities.

Customs National Intelligence and Investigations Service (France), 18 December 2014

HONG KONG SAR: On 27 February 2015, authorities seized 279 Black Pond Turtles *Geoclemys hamiltonii* (CITES I) from a vessel and arrested the captain and crew members. It was reported that the animals were likely to be destroyed as no facility in Hong Kong was large enough to accommodate the turtles.

inmediahk.net: bit.ly/18LD1Bj (in Chinese), 8 March 2015

INDIA: On 7 December 2014, in Venkatapuram, Andhra Pradesh, police seized bags containing over 800 Indian Softshell Turtles *Nilssoniana gangetica* (CITES I). Caught from the rivers of Andhra Pradesh, they were awaiting delivery to the States of Bihar and Odisha. The turtles were released into Kolleru Lake.

Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7: <http://bit.ly/19CJGi0>

INDONESIA: On 22 January 2015, Fish Quarantine and Inspection (BKIPM) officers in Timika and Denpasar foiled an attempt to smuggle 6500 baby Pig-nosed Turtles *Carettochelys insculpta* (CITES II). Some 1226 animals were seized from a suitcase being loaded onto a flight to Denpasar.

Further investigations revealed that two more suspect suitcases were on the same flight which resulted in the seizure of an additional 5284 turtles in Denpasar.

BKIPM: <http://bit.ly/1FFzxl> (in Bahasa Indonesia), 26 January 2015

PHILIPPINES: In December 2014 and January 2015, some 186 endemic Palawan Forest Turtles *Siebenrockiella leytensis* (CITES I) were seized by authorities during five raids in Manila and in Taytay. The species occurs only on the island of Palawan.

TRAFFIC: bit.ly/1zMKeNC, 2 February 2015

SPAIN: On 6 November 2014 it was reported that officials of the Guardia Civil had seized 8300 tanned skins of various species of snake, lizard and crocodile from a warehouse in Manises, Valencia. The skins were to be made into belts, bags and wallets. The trader, a Spanish national, lacked the documentation proving the legal origin of the skins.

Levante El Mercantil Valenciano: <http://bit.ly/1N45XUc>, 6 November 2015

UK: On 25 March 2015, it was reported that Border Force officers at Heathrow Airport had seized 165 Turquoise Dwarf Geckos *Lygodactylus williamsi* (EU Annex B and classified by IUCN as Critically Endangered). The geckos had been imported in February from Tanzania where the species is found in only two locations. They are now being cared for at a secure facility.

According to Grant Miller, head of the Border Force CITES team, "this was a highly significant seizure. This particular species of gecko is incredibly rare and there are strict laws against its capture in Tanzania".

Other animals were seized from the same consignment and included 136 Bearded Pygmy Chameleons *Rieppoleon brevicaudatus*, 66 Yellow-headed Dwarf Geckos *Lygodactylus luteopicturatus*, 112 Peacock Tree Frogs *Leptopelis vermiculatus* and 192 whip scorpions Thelyphonida. The case is under investigation.

UK Border Force: <http://bit.ly/1NlxCyj>, 25 March 2015; in litt., 12 April 2015

VIET NAM: On 19 November 2014, authorities seized a record haul of over 1000 dead marine turtles (mostly Green *Chelonia mydas* and Hawksbill *Eretmochelys imbricata* turtles (CITES I)) during raids on a warehouse in the coastal resort of Nha Trang. All the specimens were being processed into handicrafts, reportedly for illegal export to China. The case is under investigation.

Times of India (India): bit.ly/1zp9wMV, 25 November 2014

RHINOCEROSSES

All species and populations of Rhinocerotidae are listed in CITES Appendix I except the South African and Swaziland populations of *Ceratotherium simum simum* which are listed in CITES Appendix II.

CZECH REPUBLIC: On 7 January 2015, three Vietnamese nationals were charged with the illegal export of rhinoceros horns. The suspects have been in custody since July 2014. A shipment of two horns of White Rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* was discovered at Vaclav Havel Airport, Prague, in December 2013 after attempts were being made to export the horns to Viet Nam. The rhinoceros had been killed by a Czech national in South Africa. The three Vietnamese had reportedly acted in collusion with an organized group operating in several States. During home searches the police carried out in two Czech towns and in Prague's Sapa market place, further items and documents were seized.

Prague Monitor (Czech Republic): bit.ly/1zp9wMV, 8 January 2015

MALAYSIA: In January 2015, the convicted leader of a rhinoceros poaching network in Nepal was arrested by the Royal Malaysian Police and deported to Nepal. The suspect had reportedly fled Nepal after authorities requested that INTERPOL issue an international wanted persons alert for him. In 2013, the Nepal police, with the support of the Nepalese Army and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, arrested a network of more than a dozen poachers suspected of killing 19 rhinoceroses in Chitwan National Park, including the suspect, who managed to escape. INTERPOL National Central Bureaus in Nepal and Malaysia exchanged information that eventually resulted in the arrest of the suspect.

Environment New Service: bit.ly/1Eyt3OE, 23 February 2015

SOUTH AFRICA: On 1 November 2014, at Johannesburg airport, Customs officials seized 41 kg of rhinoceros horns—34 large pieces—reportedly the largest-ever seizure of

rhinoceros horns in the country. The luggage of two Vietnamese citizens on a brief stopover from Maputo, Mozambique, bound for Hanoi via Doha, was searched after an official on the aeroplane became suspicious of the cargo and reported his concerns to the South African authorities on landing at the airport.

It was reported on 15 December 2014 that security staff and other officials at Maputo international airport were under investigation for their alleged involvement in the case; the luggage of the two suspects had evaded scanning controls usually undertaken on all consignments.

E. Cooper Environmental Consulting: bit.ly/1CAGNLj, 16 December 2014

USA: On 14 January 2015, at Miami District Court, the president and owner of an auction house in Florida pleaded guilty to selling illegal rhinoceros horns (and elephant ivory). He will pay a fine of USD1.5 million and also faces imprisonment.

The suspect pleaded guilty to an illegal wildlife trafficking and smuggling conspiracy in which the auction house sold rhinoceros horns and objects made from rhinoceros horn (as well as elephant ivory and coral) that were smuggled from the USA to China. He was caught as part of Operation Crash—an investigation that has netted numerous criminals in the rhinoceros horn trade in recent years. The defendant and his company sold six Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* horns; two were sold to a Texas resident involved in smuggling the horns to China. Undercover USFWS agents bought two more, and another undercover agent consigned two horns for auction.

Malay Mail online: bit.ly/1BTx9zT, 15 January 2015

VIET NAM: On 27 October 2014, police and Customs officials at Noi Bai International Airport, Hanoi, arrested a Vietnamese national flying in from Bangkok, Thailand, and seized six kilogrammes of rhinoceros horn from her bag, after they were detected by scanners. The suspect said that a person in Bangkok had paid her to carry the horns.

ThanhNien News (Viet Nam): bit.ly/1wDrOcl, 28 October 2014

TURQUOISE DWARF GECKO FROM TANZANIA, SEIZED IN UK.



UK BORDER FORCE

It was reported on 18 March 2015 that a Vietnamese national had attempted to smuggle through Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City, 1.39 kg of rhinoceros horns which had been cut into small pieces and hidden in lobster heads held in a freezing container.

Thanh Nien News (Viet Nam bit.ly/1MNEUwj, 18 March 2015)

FLORA

HONG KONG SAR: On 26 November 2014, Customs officials detected 92 t of “Honduras rosewood” logs being smuggled in four containers at Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound. The shipment had been declared to contain “rubber waste”, and had arrived from Guatemala via Mexico. Two people were arrested and released on bail pending further investigation.

Hong Kong Information Services Department (news.gov.hk): http://bit.ly/1xd6kYD, 17 December 2014

INDIA: On 27 November 2014, the Srikalahasthi police and Special Task Force (STF) acting on information seized some 60 (1.5 t) logs of Red Sanders (Sandalwood) *Pterocarpus santalinus* (CITES II) and arrested 84 people near Srikalahasthi who were in the process of transporting the contraband in seven vehicles.

In a separate incident the following day, Forest Department officials recovered Red Sanders dumps at two locations near Rangampet, Tirupati. The logs were found during operations in the Seshachalam forests undertaken by five teams of the Forest Department. A total of 1.8 t of logs was recovered.

The Hindu (India): bit.ly/1ttPxcd, 28 November 2014

On 2 February 2015, Bengaluru Rural police acting on information raided the house of a convicted criminal in Kattigenahalli in Hoskote Taluk and seized some four tonnes of Red Sanders. The suspect was reported to have planned to export the timber to China.

The New Indian Express (India): bit.ly/1z7zjd4, 3 February 2015

MALAYSIA: On 19 November 2014, Sarawak forestry authorities announced the seizure of 22 306 illegally felled logs in Bintulu, one of the largest such seizures recorded in the State. No arrests. Enforcement officers backed by police were dropped by helicopters into an area in Tatau, Bintulu, to carry out raids, the culmination of two weeks surveillance in Bintulu and Miri.

The Malaysian Insider: bit.ly/1F3oRoh, 19 November 2014

OTHER / MULTI SEIZURES

CAMEROON: Two people have been arrested in Djoum—South in possession of the skulls of three Gorillas *Gorilla gorilla* and one Chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes* (both CITES I). One of the suspects was reported to be a high profile trader in apes, belonging to a large illegal network.

Eagle network, January 2015

The body parts of a dead adult Chimpanzee were found in a bag at the gendarmerie in Campo Ma’an, close to the border with Equatorial Guinea. A number of people—believed to be residents of the area—were arrested on 13 March. The case was to be transferred to the tribunal at Kribi. The seized meat (leg and parts of the torso) was burned.

Sonja Metzger, in litt. to R. Melisch, TRAFFIC, 16 March 2015.

MEXICO: On 10 March 2015, it was reported that an investigation by authorities into the purchase and sale of wildlife via the internet had led to a raid on a storage site in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, where some 40 dead animals were found in a freezer including: a Cotton-top Tamarin *Saguinus oedipus* (CITES I), a Common Squirrel Monkey *Saimiri sciureus* (CITES II), 17 Ball Pythons *Python regius* (II), two Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* (II), three Water Monitors *Varanus salvator* (II), four Burmese Pythons *Python bivittatus* (II) and Red-eyed Leaf Frogs *Agalychnis callidryas* (II). Also recovered were 12 animals that were being kept in poor conditions, including a Sun Parakeet *Aratinga solstitialis* (II), two Blue-and-gold Macaws *Ara ararauna* (II) and two Monk Parakeets *Myiopsitta monachus* (II), as well as Sugar Gliders *Petaurus breviceps*, Eastern Grey Squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis*, Black-tailed Prairie Dogs *Cynomys ludovicianus*, Swamp Crocodiles *Crocodylus moreletti*, a chinchilla *Chinchilla*, and a corn snake *Pantherophis guttatus*. The live animals were taken to La Pastora Zoo Park, where they were to be assessed by veterinarians.

Fox New Latino: http://bit.ly/1FJ67OH, 10 March 2015

SENEGAL: On 31 October 2014, authorities arrested four Nigerians and seized 2600 skins and animal parts, including those of Lions *Panthera leo* (CITES I), Leopards *P. pardus* (I), hyaenas, antelopes and pythons. These dealers were involved in the illegal importation of animals from African countries, for export overseas as well as to supply local sellers.

At the court in Dakar, the four received gaol terms of between one and three months’ imprisonment and fines ranging from 100 000 CFA francs to 1.2 million CFA francs (USD900–9000).

Dakaractu.com: http://bit.ly/1FcwWb, 14 November 2014

THAILAND: Two tourists were arrested at Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok, as they tried to smuggle 144 animals out of the country to Japan in their luggage. These included 110 Pig-nosed turtles *Carettochelys insculpta* (CITES II), groundhogs *Marmota*, snakes and geckos (species not reported). The animals had been purchased at the city’s Chatuchak weekend market.

The Daily Mail (UK): http://dailymail.com/1Ha2yTs, 20 February 2015

UK: On 24 November 2014, at Newport Crown Court, Sun Liu, of Pontypridd, was fined GBP2250 (USD3330) in total (GBP750 for each of three offences), and has to pay GBP1500 costs.

In July 2012, she was stopped by officers as she arrived on a flight from Beijing via Amsterdam. Three boxes held medicines purportedly containing ground rhinoceros horn (CITES I); one had eight portions of a medicine containing bear (I/II) bile and two contained *shenrong weisheng wan* (which includes extracts of Desert Living Cistanche *Cistanche deserticola* (II), *Aquilaria* (II) and Ginseng *Panax ginseng*). Liu was arrested at her home in Pontypridd five months later and charged with three counts of trying to smuggle the items into the UK.

BBC: http://bbc.in/1Ha4M5e, 25 November 2014

On 9 December 2014, at Croydon Crown Court, Peter Prineas of Orpington received a suspended gaol sentence of 10 months after being found guilty of purchasing animal body parts from online auction sites and private sellers. The sentence was suspended for 18 months.

When Scotland Yard’s Wildlife Crime Unit searched his home, they seized the skins of a Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* and a Leopard *Panthera pardus*, the skulls of a Drill *Mandrillus leucophaeus* and four Chimpanzees *Pan troglodytes* (all CITES I), a langur *Trachypithecus* (I/II), and other specimens of protected species.

BBC News: http://bbc.in/19Mtv1G, 10 December 2014; Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7: http://bit.ly/19CJGi0

USA: On 25 March 2015, antiques dealer Tony Guan from Richmond, British Columbia, Canada, pleaded guilty in New York to smuggling rhinoceros horn, elephant ivory and coral to Canada. He was sentenced to 30 months in gaol.

Bao Antiques bought nine items online from an auction house in Florida. Owner Xiao Ju (Tony) Guan was arrested in New York in March 2014 by US Fish and Wildlife Service agents. He purchased two horns of Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* (CITES I) from undercover officers and shipped them to Point Roberts, Washington, a short drive from Richmond, falsely labelling the box as containing “handicrafts”. A search of his shop by Canadian police uncovered ivory, coral and other wildlife items purchased in the USA.

The Canadian Press: http://bit.ly/1bBxQWI, 25 March 2015