

## New partnership to help disrupt illegal wildlife trade networks

*An Australasian partnership with TRAFFIC*

South-east Asia is an important region for biodiversity and an increasing global priority for averting extinction; most taxonomic groups are more threatened here than anywhere else, largely as a result of overharvesting. The region plays a critical global role in both supply and demand in the illegal and unsustainable trade of wildlife (Nijman, 2010; Sodhi *et al.*, 2010; Duckworth *et al.*, 2012).

Across this region, increasingly co-ordinated and prioritized efforts are supporting direct conservation action towards species protection through both *in-situ* and *ex-situ* initiatives (Rao *et al.*, 2014). However, long-term species survival is dependent on the evolution of effective enforcement systems along all stages of illegal wildlife trade chains, supported by local communities and coupled with sustained, widespread reduction in market demand (Duckworth *et al.*, 2012).

Ten Australian and New Zealand member institutions of the Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) have come together in partnership with TRAFFIC in South-east Asia to improve understanding and ultimately to disrupt criminal networks facilitating the illegal trade of wildlife occurring in South-east Asia.

The partners so far include ZAA, Taronga Conservation Society Australia, Perth Zoo, National Zoo and Aquarium, Dreamworld, Hamilton Zoo, Auckland Zoo, Wellington Zoo, The New Zealand Department of Conservation and The Australian Museum.

The partnership is centred on financial support for a TRAFFIC Wildlife Crime Data Analyst to be responsible for collating, managing, analysing and reporting on all wildlife trade-related crime in South-east Asia, and a Research Officer to aid in improving data management and analysis. Effective crime data analysis and reporting will help proactively combat illegal wildlife trade through the identification and disruption of transnational, organized criminal networks operating across different commodities and species. It will also improve identification and understanding of trade trends, locations and methods involved which, in turn, will improve enforcement through more targeted training and informed analytical assessments for assisting with and securing prosecutions.

The partnership further aims to use zoo and museum-based expertise and data in reducing trade impacts on biodiversity through modelling sustainable industry policies, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships, driving research on husbandry and genealogy of species affected by trade, as well as implementing community engagement strategies.

As part of this project, Taronga Conservation Society Australia has released the Wildlife Witness phone app in partnership with TRAFFIC. This app aims to empower locals and tourists to South-east Asia and Australia to report suspected incidents of illegal wildlife trade.



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JOHN E. SCANLON, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF CITES (RIGHT) WAS INTRODUCED TO THE WILDLIFE WITNESS APP DURING A VISIT TO TARONGA CONSERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA, PICTURED HERE WITH TCSA'S DIRECTOR, CAMERON KERR.



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The Wildlife Witness mobile phone app will allow suspected illegal wildlife trade to be reported to TRAFFIC, so that relevant information can be passed to enforcement officials for information/action. The initial target audience is the travelling public (particularly Australians) visiting South-east Asia.

Available for both iPhone and Android devices, Wildlife Witness enables users to report directly any suspicious wildlife trade by taking a photograph, pinning the location of an incident and sending these important details to TRAFFIC's Wildlife Crime Data Analyst.

Although only six months since inception, this partnership offers many exciting opportunities for sharing expertise, resources and networks towards delivering a sustained impact on the fight against wildlife crime.

### References

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*Kira Husher, Community Conservation Manager,  
Taronga Conservation Society Australia.  
E-mail: khusher@zoo.nsw.gov.au*