

Asian Wildlife Trade Bulletin

News from TRAFFIC's Wildlife Trade Initiative
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Tiger conservation a hot topic for Chinese Year of the Tiger

The international campaign to conserve Tigers has continued apace since the start of the Chinese Year of the Tiger and following the Hua Hin Declaration.

Thirteen Asian governments committed to doubling numbers of wild Tigers by 2022 at the 1st Asia Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation, held in Hua Hin, Thailand in January 2010.

Ministers and senior delegations from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, all 13 Tiger range countries, committed to implementing the measures.

Currently there are around 3,200 Tigers left in the wild. A Century ago the figure was nearer 100,000.

The post-conference Hua Hin Declaration included pledges to protect wild Tigers and their prey from

poaching through regular patrolling of Tiger habitats and elimination of national and cross-border trade in Tiger parts as well as a commitment to support communities living in and around Tiger landscapes and minimize human-Tiger conflicts.

Also in January, the State Forestry Administration (SFA) of China issued a Directive calling for increased protection of wild Tigers through natural habitat management, stronger law enforcement action against illegal trade in Tiger parts and products, stricter regulation of captive breeding regulations and enhanced public awareness campaigns. The Directive also established a hotline for the public to report wildlife crime.

“2010 will determine if the Tiger’s future burns bright or continues to fade away,” said Professor Xu Hongfa, head of TRAFFIC's China Programme.

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TRAFFIC
the wildlife trade monitoring network

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保护野生老虎 制止非法贸易

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
十六	十七	十八	十九	廿	廿一	廿二
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
妇女节	廿四	廿五	廿六	植树节	廿八	廿九
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
二十	二月	初二	初三	初四	初五	初六
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
初七	初八	初九	初十	十一	十二	十三
29	30	31				
十四	十五	十六				

孟加拉虎 © Michel Terretaz/WWF-Canon

Bengal Tiger © Martin Harvey/WWF-Canon

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CITES meeting update

The 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of CITES, attended by delegates from the majority of the 175 member states, concluded in Doha, Qatar, in March, after meeting for 13 days to address the threats posed by international trade to the world's wild animal and plant species.

Marine species get raw deal

The CoP 15 meeting was marked by the repeated rejection of proposals to protect marine species, such as the Atlantic Bluefin Tuna, corals and several shark species.

Of the marine proposals, Porbeagle shark was the only one initially accepted, but it was overturned during the final day of the meeting.

Red and Pink Corals – species that are heavily exploited for the jewellery trade, but greatly overharvested in many parts of their range – failed for the second CITES meeting running to be afforded greater protection within the Convention.

Ivory issues still unresolved

Separately, requests by two countries – Tanzania and Zambia – to relax trade restrictions on their elephant populations, which would have paved way for a future sell-off of government-owned ivory stockpiles, were both voted down at the meeting.

“African nations now seem further away from a consensus on how to deal with the ivory issue than at any time since 1989,” said Steven Broad, Executive Director of TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network.

“The dilemma remains – each year tonnes of legally sourced ivory accumulate in government stockpiles in Africa, yet the continent remains divided on what to do with this resource.”

Tigers and rhinos get CITES support

However, there were some conservation successes at CITES related to Tigers and rhinos, which are facing a global poaching crisis.

Countries with rhino populations agreed to focus on increasing law enforcement, training of guards, strengthening border controls, improving rhino population monitoring, creating awareness raising campaigns in consumer countries such as Viet Nam, and rooting out organized crime syndicates that are behind the increase in poaching and illegal trade.

Meanwhile, Tiger range countries, including China, reached a strong consensus in Qatar on the way forward to address pressing concerns of illegal trade threatening

wild populations of Tiger and other Asian big cat species. CITES governments maintained their position against farming of Tigers for trade in parts and derivatives. A significant market for Tiger products persists in China, but commitments from the Chinese government and traditional Chinese medicine associations point the way forward to making effective interventions to reduce consumer demand and stop illegal trade.



African Elephant © Martin Harvey/WWF-Canon

Immediately prior to the CITES Parties meeting in Qatar, the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (WFCMS) announced in Beijing their commitment to Tiger conservation. The WFCMS, which has 195 member organizations in 57 countries, urged its members not to use Tigers and other endangered wildlife species in traditional medicine.

Enforcement boost

More financial resources for tackling enforcement were agreed in the CITES budget discussions and the recently-formed International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), made up of the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank and the World Customs Organization, committed to engage on a number of joint activities to bring wildlife criminals to justice.

“CITES trade rules can only deliver conservation and economic benefits if they are enforced properly and all too often this is simply not the case,” said Steven Broad, “the new commitments to CITES compliance and wildlife trade law enforcement announced at this conference are crucial steps in the right direction.”

TRAFFIC produced a briefing document for CITES Parties on the importance of law enforcement to the goals of the Convention, including the strategic role NGOs can play in assisting government-led law enforcement efforts – see www.traffic.org/cop15

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Viet Nam's threatened wildlife gets a boost from business

In mid December 2009, Viet Nam's business community got a chance to focus on wildlife protection during the first event of its kind in the country.

A two-day workshop entitled "Corporate social responsibility for the protection of wildlife, the conservation of natural resources and the sustainable development of Viet Nam" was held in the northern town of Tam Dao. Over 100 participants from State-owned companies, private enterprises, governmental advisory bodies and media agencies attended the workshop, which aimed to raise awareness regarding the unsustainable and illegal wildlife trade that threatens Viet Nam's unique biodiversity. Presentations were given by businesses with successful environmental practices and open group discussions focused on integrating commerce, policy and wildlife protection.

In recent years, Viet Nam has emerged as one of the wildlife trade hotspots in South-East Asia, with a growing illicit trade at the domestic and international levels. Although businesspeople are one of the two major consumers of wildlife and its products in Ha Noi, according to research conducted by TRAFFIC in 2005, until this workshop, few efforts had been made to involve the business community directly in the prevention of illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade.

During closing remarks, government organizers from the Central Committee for Communications and Education (CCCE), the main advisory body to the governing Communist Party of Viet Nam, emphasized this connection, stressing that the protection of wildlife is the social responsibility of all Vietnamese people, in addition to being a business decision.

Recommendations generated during the event included a variety of political and economic steps that could be taken to increase protection for rare and endangered species such as Tiger, a species that has dwindled in Viet Nam, with some estimates of as low as 30 individuals remaining in the wild.

Business participants recommended stricter enforcement of existing environmental laws; increased availability and access to information on protected species and wildlife laws; tax reductions or other economic incentives to encourage businesses to protect wildlife; and more stringent punishments for wildlife law infractions.

The workshop was hosted by the TRAFFIC Greater Mekong Programme in conjunction with the CCCE and the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The joint WWF-TRAFFIC campaign to change consumer attitudes and behaviour regarding the consumption of wildlife is funded by the Royal Danish Embassy.



Listening to presentations by environmentally responsible businesses © TSEA-GMP

Such collaborations will be crucial for the promotion of sustainable wildlife consumption and the conservation of natural resources in Viet Nam. Event organizers and participants are currently working on the next steps to address the workshop's outputs.

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"Four-footed" Customs officers track down wildlife contraband

The use of sniffer dogs to detect wildlife products was demonstrated to assembled media at Vladivostok International Airport on 3 March 2010, an event chosen to coincide with the 37th anniversary of the creation of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), in 1973.

The event was organized by officers from the Far Eastern Operative Customs and Vladivostok Customs Sniffer Dogs Services, together with WWF and TRAFFIC.

In 2004, WWF Russia and TRAFFIC initiated a project using sniffer dogs to detect trafficked wildlife products at Vladivostok International airport, where trained Giant Schnauzer dogs successfully detected several packages with wildlife parts and derivatives.

“The project was not systematic, it only took place in the airport, but it was a test of the strengths and opportunities of using this approach to tackle wildlife trafficking,” said Natalia Pervushina, TRAFFIC Europe programme officer and WWF officer.

Today the WWF and TRAFFIC programme works closely with officers from the Sniffer Dogs Service of the Far Eastern Operative Customs, created in June 2008.

A total of 77 sniffer dogs currently work in the Service, 28 of them trained in the Regional Sniffer Dog Centre in the Internal Service Directorate of Primorsky province.

Many species exported from the Russian Far East into East Asia are listed in the Russia Red Data Book and CITES Appendices. Among them are Amur Tiger, Far Eastern Leopard, Brown and Black Bears, Far Eastern Frog, Wild Ginseng, Far Eastern Cucumber, Amur Sturgeon and many others.



Two sniffer dogs guarding a checkpoint © TRAFFIC

“It is vital to identify wild species accurately, to differentiate high value species from lower value ones as well as to assist with the training of dogs for wildlife detection,” said Pervushina.

Meanwhile, a new trend in illegal wildlife export in the region has emerged—that of smuggling derivatives in small quantities hidden on the body or beneath clothing. Under such circumstances only a specially trained dog can readily detect such items.

“Twenty-four seizures connected with various wildlife items were made with the help of sniffer dogs in 2009–2010,” said Michael Borschev, Head of the Sniffer Dogs Service’s Analytical Division at the Far Eastern Operative Customs.

One dog, Kira, together with her owner, Elena Kurbatskaya, seized 10 kg of deer antlers in luggage bound for Seoul in 2009 at Vladivostok International airport.

In total, 137 wildlife items together weighing 30 kg have been seized, the majority by Customs officers in Birobidjanskaya, Blagoveschenskaya and Khasanskaya. Tackling wildlife contraband remains one of the biggest priorities for Customs in the region.

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“Tigernet” launched in India

Tigernet (<http://tigernet.nic.in>), a new system to monitor patterns of Tiger mortalities and where poaching incidents are occurring, was launched in January 2010 by Shri Jairam Ramesh, Hon. Minister of Environment and Forests, Government of India, in New Delhi.

The unique database deals not only with Tigers but also other protected species within Tiger reserves. It was constructed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) with assistance from TRAFFIC India. The database allows enforcement officers such as Tiger Reserve Directors and Chief Wildlife Wardens to input and verify information and use it to strengthen anti-poaching efforts.

The data will help in gauging trends in poaching, the regional and national significance of Tiger mortalities and provide pointers for effective field actions to tackle any problems, including mapping of incidents. It is anticipated the new website will help simplify the reporting of Tiger deaths and allow a more accurate and transparent picture to be generated of the poaching and other threats facing the nation’s Tiger population.

The website also provides an option for concerned citizens to send in reports about suspected wildlife crime.

Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India said, “Collection of streamlined information is the first step toward addressing the root cause of a misdeed and this website has to be seen in this context”.

He further added, “It is hoped that it will engender a spirit of honesty and co-operation among all major stakeholders in Tiger conservation in the country for remedial action to save the majestic predator of the Indian jungles along with all the other denizens that cohabit with it”.

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Understanding Chinese consumer motivation the key to controlling unsustainable wildlife consumption

Concerted action is needed in China to reduce consumer demand for endangered wildlife, according to a new report by TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, into consumer attitudes in China.

Released ahead of Chinese New Year of the Tiger, which began on 14 February, the report, *Understanding the motivations: the first step toward influencing China's unsustainable wildlife consumption*, called for a reduction in wildlife consumption during the New Year celebrations.

“Chinese people favour eating wildlife meat as a tonic in winter and many believe it’s good for their health. They are not aware that this kind of consumption could threaten the survival of endangered wildlife,” said Professor Xu Hongfa, Head of TRAFFIC’s China programme.

TRAFFIC, working with a professional market research company, found that 44% of respondents claimed to have consumed wildlife in the past 12 months, the majority (36%) as food. However, most respondents were aware of the conservation status of China’s National Grade 1 and Grade 2 protected species, and relatively few consumed these in any form.

The surveys found that consumption of wild species, particularly consumption of wild meats and wild animal medicines/tonics is widespread, with most people having either a neutral attitude, or one of acceptance, towards the consumption of wild animals as food.

The report, which focused on six major cities in China, found that the scale and pattern of wildlife consumption varies across the country. Guangzhou has the highest incidence of consumption, followed by Kunming, Chengdu and Harbin. Those with higher incomes and education levels were consistently more likely to consume wildlife as food, possibly due to the prevalence of wildlife consumption in the Chinese business sector.

The factors motivating wildlife consumption are complex and rooted in culture, motivated by both ‘emotional’ and ‘functional’ reasons. Respondents consumed wildlife because they saw it as representing social status and showing respect for guests (‘emotional motivation’) and because they believed it to be nourishing and to have curative values, ideas rooted in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) (‘functional motivation’).



Water snakes prepared for restaurant consumption in Guangzhou © Xu Ling/TRAFFIC

This persistent consumer demand is increasingly placing wild animals and plants, and their ecosystems—both in China and abroad—at risk through unsustainable and often illegal wildlife trade. As a result, wild populations of many species have become depleted in China, and sourcing has shifted to countries in South-East Asia, South Asia, the Russian Far East and further afield.

The study found three principal barriers to wildlife consumption: limited availability, illegality, and price.

“The government of China has demonstrated it has the ability to control wildlife trade through the highly effective temporary suspension of such trade following the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003. However, trade in wild animals for meat and medicinal purposes has subsequently resumed, and is believed to be on the increase,” said Professor Xu.

The report suggests that an effective long-term communications campaign should target both end-users, focusing on those segments of the population that consume the most wildlife and/or have high potential for cutting down on wildlife consumption, and influential individuals and sectors of society able to reach wider audiences.

In China, the media, government wildlife law enforcement agencies, and the traditional medicine community are already helping combat unsustainable wildlife consumption, and these efforts should be strengthened and sustained through a long-term strategy.

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Thailand gets tough on illegal ivory trade

Rising to the challenge posed by the growing illegal ivory trade, the Royal Thai Customs Department carried out a number of high profile seizures at Suvarnabhumi International Airport recently, netting hundreds of tusks, dried elephant tails and worked ivory.

The latest was a seizure of 239 African Elephant tusks, weighing an estimated 2 tonnes in the last week of February. It was reportedly the largest ivory seizure ever in the country.

On the heels of this and another large seizure at the same airport in August last year, of 316 pieces of raw ivory, comes a joint campaign by Thai authorities and TRAFFIC, to raise public awareness of the illegal trade in elephant ivory items sold as souvenirs to holiday makers and others. The “Buy Ivory, Buy Trouble” campaign, launched in March, urges consumers not to fuel the illegal trade by buying and transporting ivory across international borders.

The Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP)—the Thai authority responsible for tackling illegal wildlife trade, in co-operation with the Airport Authority of Thailand (AOT) and the wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC launched the campaign targeting passengers travelling through Suvarnabhumi International Airport.

Elephants are threatened across much of their range because of poaching for the illegal ivory trade. Thailand was recently identified as one of the top three countries most highly implicated in the illicit ivory trade, and was the country of most concern in Asia.

Consumers fuel the illicit ivory trade through buying ivory products without realizing they are often illegal. The campaign, officially launched by Thailand’s

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, H.E. Mr Suwit Khunkitti, includes an exhibition at Suvarnabhumi International Airport by the DNP, the Customs Department, the CITES Management Authority, AOT and TRAFFIC.

Brochures informing the public, especially travelers and visitors, about the problem of ivory trade in Thailand were also distributed. Campaign materials also included luggage tags and information about the laws governing and controlling the ivory trade.

Stickers with the warning message: “It is illegal to take ivory and other elephant products across international borders” were distributed by the DNP to shops selling ivory products in Thailand, asking them to co-operate and spread the message to locals and tourists.

In November 2009, a global analysis of ivory seizures identified Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Thailand as the three countries most heavily implicated in the global illicit ivory trade.



A joint campaign launched at Suvarnabhumi International Airport by H. E. Mr Suwit Khunkitti, Thailand's Environment Minister, fifth from left © TRAFFIC

The Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) report, compiled by TRAFFIC on behalf of Parties to CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), also noted a remarkable surge in ivory seizures in 2009, suggesting an increased involvement of organized crime syndicates in the trade, connecting African source countries with Asian end-use markets.

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Porous China-Myanmar border allowing illegal wildlife trade

Porous borders are allowing vendors in Myanmar to offer a door-to-door delivery service for illegal wildlife products such as Tiger bone wine to buyers in China, according to TRAFFIC's latest snapshot into wildlife trade in China.

The State of Wildlife Trade in China 2008, released in March 2010, is the third in an annual series on emerging trends in China's wildlife trade.

The report found that over-exploitation of wildlife for trade has affected many species and is stimulating illegal trade across China's borders.

"China's border areas have long been considered a hotbed for illegal trade, with remote locations often making surveillance a difficult problem in sparsely populated areas," said Professor Xu Hongfa, Head of TRAFFIC's programme in China.

Tiger and leopard parts were also found openly for sale in western China, although market surveys in 18 cities found just two places where such items were encountered. One of them—Bei Da Jie Market in Linxia city—has a history of trading in Tiger products. There, a total of five surveys between late 2007 and 2008 found one Tiger, 15 Leopard and seven Snow Leopard skins for sale.



Yu'erma Tiger-bone wine near Mongla Stadium, Myanmar © Xu Ling/TRAFFIC

"There is clearly ongoing demand for leopard and Tiger products, but the trade appears to be becoming less visible year-on-year," said Professor Xu, adding that it is unclear if it is because there is less trade in such products or it has become more covert and organized.

The report also examines the trade of other wildlife species in China. In southern China, TRAFFIC identified

26 species of freshwater turtles for sale. The majority of animals were claimed by vendors to be supplied from freshwater turtle farms—many of which do not practice closed-cycle captive breeding and therefore rely on wild-sourced breeding stock.

"If no action is taken, sourcing from the wild coupled with increased captive production to meet an expanding market demand will pose a serious threat to wild species through unsustainable harvesting from wild populations in China and beyond," said Professor Xu.

The report also highlights research into the legality of timber imported into China from source countries in Africa and South-East Asia, noting up to 30% discrepancies between reported import and export timber volumes.

Other topics covered include sustainable utilization of traditional medicinal plants, analysis of wildlife trade information, the *Corallium* trade in East Asia, tackling cross-border illegal wildlife trade on the China-Nepal border, and stopping illegal wildlife trade online.

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Teaming up for wild Tigers

TRAFFIC Southeast Asia has joined with several partner organizations to raise the alarm on threats to wild Tigers in Malaysia.

Efforts began in late 2009 with a WWF Malaysia-TRAFFIC awareness-raising trip to the Belum-Temengor Forest Complex in the north of Peninsular Malaysia, for members of local and international media. The trip came shortly after the dramatic rescue of a Tiger from a poacher's snare in this area, by the Wildlife and National Parks Department and WWF's Wildlife Protection Unit.

The resulting slew of media articles and television reports drew attention to this priority Tiger Conservation Landscape, the plight of Tigers in the wild and also served to present 2010, the Year of the Tiger in the Chinese Lunar calendar, as the perfect time to initiate public and private action towards protecting Tigers in the wild.

The media trip was followed by an exhibition at the Dong Zhen Buddhist Temple which held an annual month-long fair in conjunction with the Chinese New Year celebrations and received thousands of visitors

during this time. TRAFFIC also held several Tiger awareness talks during the festival, answering a range of questions from devotees and visitors about poaching and trade, the use of Tiger parts in traditional medicines and Tiger farming.

TRAFFIC also worked closely with partners in the Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers (MYCAT) to keep Tiger-related issues in the public eye throughout the year including publicizing Malaysia's National Tiger Action Plan and its goal of doubling the number of Tigers in the wild in Peninsular Malaysia by 2020.

MYCAT is a coalition that comprises four of the country's foremost groups that work on wildlife issues and provides a common platform for them to address matters affecting Tigers.



Distributing Tiger-related publications at the temple fair © TRAFFIC

Several cases of Tiger poaching and the abuse of Tigers in captivity were addressed in the press and calls were made for stern action as well as deterrent sentences in such cases.

TRAFFIC has also found a new voice for Tigers in Malaysian Feng Shui master Lillian Too. The partners have just begun work with Ms Too to educate the public that poaching and killing of Tigers for their parts does not bring the user or wearer of these parts good fortune, but bad.

TRAFFIC and WWF-Malaysia also began work with enforcement agencies last month, to help shape a joint taskforce that will act against poachers and encroachers in the Belum-Temengor Forest Complex. By bringing the various agencies to the discussion table to begin drawing up their plans, the two groups have begun a process that could eventually result in a template for more co-ordinated and effective action against Tiger poachers in other landscapes.

In the rest of South-East Asia, TRAFFIC is investigating the trade in Tigers and other Asian big cats along the Myanmar-Thai border, and is also working closely with WWF-Thailand to end poaching and trade in Tigers and Tiger prey species in the Western Forest Complex.

Indonesia is monitoring and collecting information on trade in Tigers to assist the authorities in their enforcement efforts, as well as investigating the poaching and trade in the province of Aceh, Sumatra, with a report of these findings being prepared for publication.

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