

Asia Wildlife Trade Bulletin

News from TRAFFIC's Asia Wildlife Trade Initiative
Issue 10, September 2010

Chinese Medicine communities commit to rejecting the use of Tiger parts



TRAFFIC symposium with WFCMS on 12th March, 2010 © Xu Ling / Traffic China

TRAFFIC's China Programme has been working closely with the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) community in China.

One outcome from this co-operation is a World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (WFCMS) commitment from its 195 members in 57 countries not to use Tiger bone or any other parts from endangered wildlife.

The statement was made at a symposium jointly held by TRAFFIC and WFCMS on 12th March in Beijing. It notes that some of the claimed medicinal benefits of Tiger bone have no basis.

The use of tiger bones was removed from the TCM pharmacopeia in 1993, when China first introduced a domestic ban on tiger trade.

The statement also calls on all WFCMS members to promote tiger conservation and encourages them to abide by all relevant international and national regulations on wildlife trade.

"The Societies' public declaration is a clear signal that the traditional Chinese medicinal community is now backing efforts to secure a future for wild Tigers," said Professor Xu Hongfa, head of TRAFFIC's programme in China.

As an international traditional Chinese academic organization, the WFCMS stated that it had a duty to research the conservation of endangered species, including Tigers.

"In the meantime, we ask our members not to use endangered wildlife in traditional Chinese medicine, and reduce

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TRAFFIC
the wildlife trade monitoring network

the misunderstanding and bias of the international community,” said WFCMS’s Huang Jianyin.

“The traditional Chinese medicine industry should look for substitutes and research economical and effective substitutes for Tiger products, which will improve the international image and status of traditional Chinese medicine and promote TCM worldwide.”

Later, TRAFFIC met with TCM practitioners in Shanghai on two occasions. A seminar with TCM Academic leaders on 14th May resulted in a commitment from the TCM sector to take greater responsibility in conserving valuable wild medicinal species and reject the use of endangered species such as Tiger through strict adherence to national laws and international conventions.

At a WFCMS forum attended by pharmaceutical companies and medical treatment organizations on 4th June, participants heard about the severe threats to medicinal species caused by excessive exploitation and illegal trade. Participants expressed their willingness to reject the use of endangered species and protect and sustainably utilize non-endangered species for the sake of sustainable development of TCM.

“It is imperative we focus our conservation actions to protect wild Tigers during the current Chinese Year of the Tiger,” said Professor Xu. “The leadership shown by the TCM community to reject the use of certain ingredients, including Tiger bone, to protect endangered wildlife species, is an important step in reaching out to TCM practitioners, industry and consumers.”

The WFCMS is an international academic organization based in Beijing, with 195 member organizations spanning 57 nations where traditional Chinese medicine is used. It aims to promote the development of traditional Chinese medicine, which is a primary form of healthcare delivery in China, and widely regarded as an important part of China’s rich cultural heritage.

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South Asia forges consensus on wildlife enforcement network



Seized animal skins in Nepal: a wildlife enforcement network in South Asia will help keep enforcement authorities ahead of the wildlife traffickers © Jeff Foott / WWF-Canon

Experts from South Asia have laid the foundation for a South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) as a co-ordinated regional response to combat illegal poaching and trafficking. Seven member countries agreed to the establishment of a secretariat and an outline work programme for the network.

The historic First Meeting of the South Asia Experts Group on Illegal Wildlife Trade was concluded in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 19th May 2010 with the objective of helping wildlife law enforcement agencies become better organized than the criminals themselves. As a major step towards a co-ordinated and collaborative mechanism, the Experts Group agreed that an action-oriented approach under the newly formed SAWEN should be pursued without delay.

The experts from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka agreed the structure, functions and operational parameters for SAWEN, including ideas for developing multi-lateral activities based on strong inter-agency co-operation at the national level.

“Co-operation and co-ordination between the government agencies supported by their international counterparts is of utmost importance to effectively tackle illegal wildlife trade in the region,” said Hon. Mr Deepak Bohara, Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation, Government of Nepal, in his closing address.

The Government of Nepal has offered to drive this process further in hosting the network and acting as an interim co-ordinator for the network. Over the next six months, it will focus on co-ordinating key information and identifying further resources and expertise from member countries to develop joint operations, training programmes, communication plans and fundraising to enable the network to begin interdicting major trafficking activities. The Government of Bhutan has offered to host the next meeting of SAWEN members.

The First Meeting of the South Asia Experts Group on Illegal Wildlife Trade was hosted by the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Govt. of Nepal, and supported by WWF Nepal and TRAFFIC. Funding support for the meeting was generously provided by the US Government's Department of State.

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Sniffer dogs on patrol in India



Five sniffer dogs trained through a TRAFFIC India programme have entered service with Forest Departments across the country © TRAFFIC India

On 29th July 2010, five dogs specially trained to sniff out illegal wildlife products joined the ranks of the Forest Departments of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Jharkhand in India

The dogs have been trained to detect hidden wildlife articles such as Tiger bone and skin, Leopard bone and skin and bear bile.

The dogs and their 10 handlers have completed a rigorous nine month training programme at the Dog Training Centre, 23rd Battalion of Special Armed Forces, Bhopal.

The procurement of the dogs and the training programme was facilitated by TRAFFIC India.

It is the second phase of TRAFFIC India's sniffer dog training programme. Previously two dogs were trained and later deployed by the Forest Departments of Haryana and Uttarakhand.

TRAFFIC has helped establish sniffer dog programmes to detect smuggled wildlife parts in several countries including in the Russian Far East and Europe.

“Illegal wildlife trade has evolved into an organized transnational activity threatening the survival of many species in India,” said Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India.

“In order to curb this growing menace it is necessary to deploy the best enforcement practices available including the use of sniffer dogs, which have a proven track record in detecting crime and serving as a long-term deterrent.”

Both the Indian Forest Department and the 23rd Battalion of Special Armed Forces have contributed their expertise in support of training dogs in crime detection.

Dr H.S. Pabla, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden, Madhya Pradesh, said, “Today, Tigers in India need protection like never before. We are confident the sniffer dogs programme, which has proved successful in curbing illegal wildlife trade in other

countries, will further strengthen enforcement efforts in India.”

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Russian and Chinese Customs meet to tackle illicit wildlife trade



Russian and Chinese Customs have signed an agreement on co-operation to tackle wildlife crime © TRAFFIC

Chinese Customs officers met their counterparts in Russia in early July to discuss co-operation on tackling cross-border illicit wildlife trade.

The meeting led to the signing of a protocol on collaboration between the Vladivostok branch of the Russian Customs Academy and Shanghai Customs Academy.

TRAFFIC and WWF Russia warmly welcomed the move.

“The collaboration between Russian Customs officers and their counterparts in China is an important step forward in efforts to stem the illicit cross-border trade in wildlife goods,” said Natalia Pervushina, TRAFFIC’s Programme Co-ordinator in the Russian Far East.

Customs training and co-operation on wildlife protection were high on the meeting agenda, which took place from 5-9 July.

WWF Russia and TRAFFIC have a long-term co-operation agreement with the Vladivostok Customs Academy.

Over more than a decade TRAFFIC and WWF Russia have helped train around 500 officers and students from the Academy, assisted with implementation of a highly successful sniffer dog programme and published many training manuals on wildlife trade issues aimed at students and enforcement officers.

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Sustainable management of TCM Plants promoted at Biofach 2010

TRAFFIC and WWF presented information on the sustainable management of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) plants resources in China at the 2010 Shanghai International Organic Trade Conference (BioFach), held from 27-29th May at the Shanghai International Exhibition Center.

It was TRAFFIC’s second exhibition at BioFach and aimed at promoting awareness of the FairWild certification process to the wild TCM plant harvesting industry and reaching potential traders for TCM products.

The booth attracted a wide range of stakeholders including plant extract traders, TCM plant processors, traders, and researchers, herbalists doctors, as well as officials and reporters. Many visitors expressed an interest to be kept in touch with future FairWild developments.

Biofach is the only organic products trade fair in China and TRAFFIC and WWF’s display included posters, images and TCM plant samples to illustrate the concept and importance of sustainable management of these industry raw materials.

Highlighted was TRAFFIC’s collaborative work on the EU China Biodiversity Programme (ECBP)-funded project on “Sustainable Management of Traditional

Medicinal Plants in High-biodiversity Landscapes of the Upper Yangtze Ecoregion”.

Mountain landscapes in the upper Yangtze River basin are internationally recognized for their biodiversity values and listed as the top priority area for biodiversity conservation in China.



The WWF/TRAFFIC booth at Biofach 2010 in Shanghai, where information on sustainable management of TCM resources was presented
© TRAFFIC China

An estimated 75% of commercially harvested Chinese medicinal plant species are found in the region, but many are endangered due to over-harvesting.

In order to mitigate the degradation of populations of TCM species and improve local plant harvesters' livelihoods, TRAFFIC China launched the above project in 2007 as a cornerstone of ECBP's programme in China.

The WWF/TRAFFIC booth demonstrated the project's implementation in Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi Provinces and the training courses held to teach collectors about the FairWild certification system and the International Standard for Sustainable Wild Collect of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP) guidelines; two sustainable

resource management criteria adopted as the principal tools in implementing the project.

FairWild certification entitles collectors to sell their products at a premium price, so acquiring the certificate is a continuous economic incentive for people whose livelihoods depend on collection of wild plants to harvest them sustainably.

Harvesters seeking FairWild certification who participated in TRAFFIC's training on sustainable collection of wild Nan Wu Wei Zi, or Southern Schisandra (*Schisandra chinensis*) in Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi provinces have already reaped the benefits. Following a test order of 500 kg of Southern Schisandra, a US buyer has ordered 2 tonnes at a price favourable to the producers.

FairWild certification of wild collected plant products began in 2008 and is managed by the FairWild Foundation. It provides end consumers with transparency and assurance that the products from wild sources are produced in a socially and ecologically sound manner. It encourages collectors, workers and companies involved in the wild plant collection trade to work together on truly sustainable production practices and to receive a fair price for their goods. The system includes guidelines for collectors, producers and decision makers for planning and implementation of a sustainable resource management system—the "International Standard for Sustainable Wild Collect of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants" (ISSC-MAP).

ISSC-MAP defines principles and criteria to establish wild resource management systems in collection areas and enables those involved in collection to monitor the changes and impacts made by harvesting activities over time. The guideline was developed in 2006 and has been tested at six locations worldwide, one of them in China through a project entitled "Sustainable Management of Traditional Medicinal Plants in High-biodiversity Landscapes of the Upper Yangtze Ecoregion".

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Noi Bai airport staff and Vietnamese environmental agencies learn how to tackle wildlife trafficking

In June 2010, Viet Nam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) partnered with the Civil Aviation Administration of Viet Nam to launch a U.S.-funded training course to help end wildlife trafficking.

Two "Wildlife Trade Regulation Courses" trained approximately 70 staff and enforcement officers at Noi Bai International Airport.

They included check-in counter attendants, baggage handlers, Customs officers, immigration staff and security officials along with members of INTERPOL, Customs, Environmental Police and the CITES Management Authority.

The two back-to-back workshops provided participants with knowledge on the impacts of illegal wildlife trade, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), relevant national legislation, smuggling techniques, species identification, and the handling of confiscated items.

Airports around the world and particularly those in South-East Asia play key roles as transport hubs for illegal wildlife trade.

There is growing recognition that airport and airline employees can play an important role in stopping wildlife trafficking and with adequate training, their capacity to detect wildlife smuggling during the course of their daily duties can be enhanced.

"It's time to put a stop to criminals using our airports to smuggle protected and endangered species" said Mr Nguyen Ngoc Binh, Deputy Director General of Viet Nam's Directorate of Forestry.

"Only by working together can we hope to counter effectively the well-organized and well-financed criminal syndicates involved in the illegal wildlife trade".

MARD's Directorate of Forestry helped facilitate the training through its association with the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN), the largest regional environmental law enforcement network in the world.

ASEAN-WEN is supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Department of State and is technically assisted by TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, and FREELAND Foundation.



Around 70 airport staff and enforcement officers were trained in how to combat wildlife trafficking © TRAFFIC

This was the eighth training of its kind in South-East Asia. The course has been presented to more than 1,100 participants throughout the region, most recently at Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Bangkok, Thailand, and at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Malaysia.

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Trapping for food threatens Spoon-billed Sandpipers

The Spoon-billed Sandpiper, one of the world's most threatened birds, is rapidly heading towards extinction because young birds are being targeted for human consumption.

Spoon-billed Sandpipers nest only in the far north-east of Russia. In 2000, around 1,000 breeding pairs were known, but by 2009, the number had plummeted to just 120–220 pairs, a decline of 88%.



A Spoon-billed Sandpiper caught by a hunter in the Bay of Martaban, Myanmar, is released by local children after intervention by the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Expedition, January 2010 (photo: Rob Robinson / BTO).

During that time, adult survival appeared unchanged and breeding success was reasonable, but the recruitment of young birds back into the adult population was zero in all but one of the years studied.

Now an international team of scientists has discovered the apparent reason behind the dramatic decline and why young birds are particularly at risk.

First, the team had to find where the birds spent the winter months.

In both 2009 and 2010, they located around 200 Spoon-billed Sandpipers—the majority of the world population—wintering in Myanmar, most of them in the Bay of Martaban where local people target wading birds for food.

“For a species with such a small known population, it is likely that hunting in the wintering area is the major cause of the species’s decline,” said Christoph Zöckler of ArcCona, a Cambridge-based Consultancy.

The problem is exacerbated because young immature birds are more likely to be caught and spend the whole of their first year on the wintering grounds.

During the monsoon season (May–September), when adult Spoon-billed Sandpipers are far away on their breeding grounds, birds are particularly targeted by local hunters because fishing becomes difficult.

“The unintentional targeting of young Spoon-billed Sandpipers during the summer months explains the lack of recruitment of new birds into the breeding population,” said Zöckler.

TRAFFIC and IUCN have been developing indicators to monitor trends in the status of species used for food and medicine, including those utilized in Asia.

They show that birds and mammals used for these purposes are generally more threatened than those that are not.

Overall, 12% of all bird species are globally threatened with extinction, but a much higher percentage—23%—of those used for food and medicine are under threat.

To prevent the Spoon-billed Sandpiper’s extinction urgent action is needed, both to find ways to give local people economic alternatives to hunting birds and to persuade hunters to release any sandpipers they catch.

“Without such action, the world will lose one of its most charismatic birds,” said Zöckler.

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TRAFFIC gratefully acknowledges funding support from WWF Netherlands for the Asia Wildlife Trade Initiative Bulletin.

