

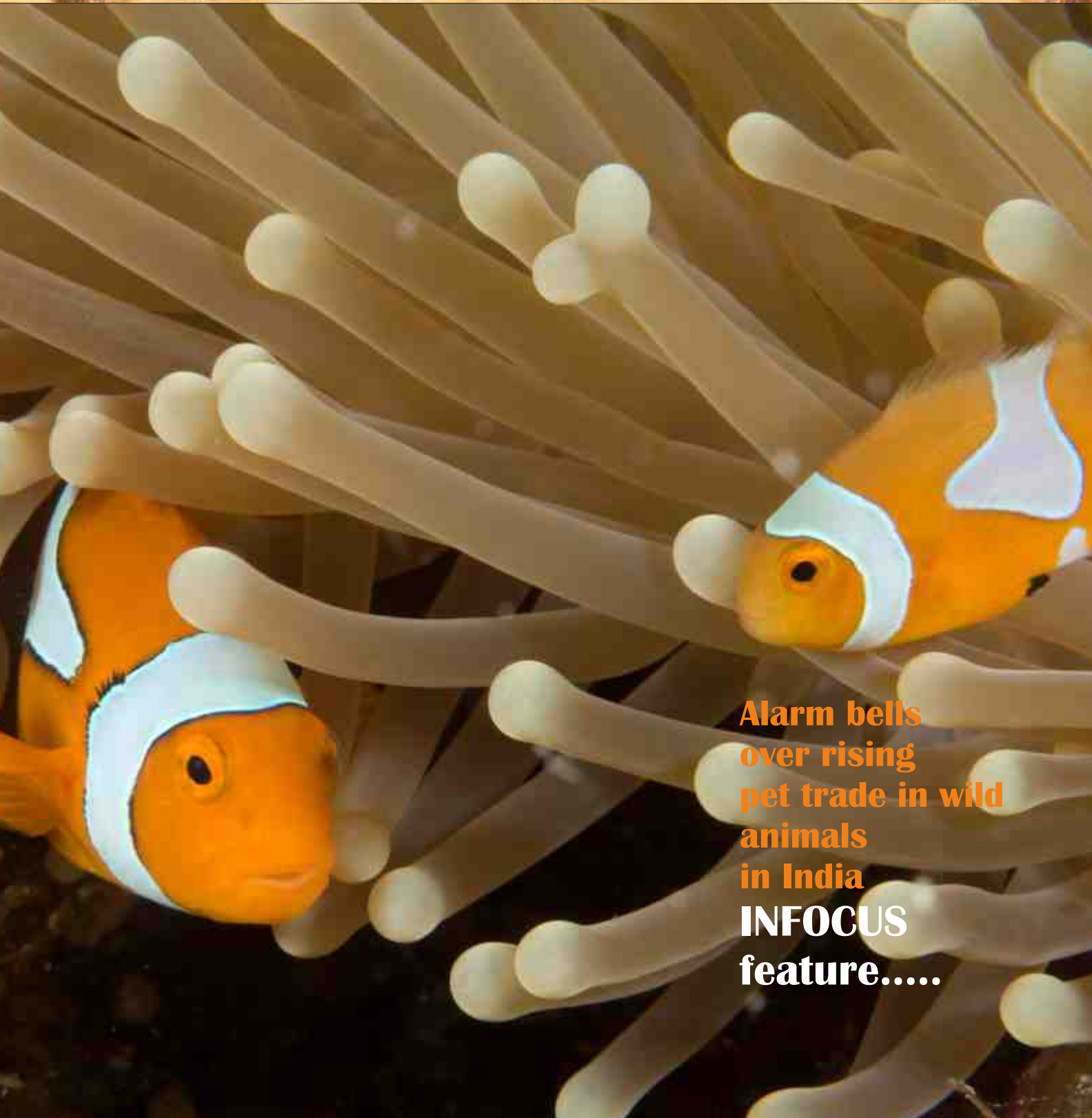
# TRAFFIC

the wildlife trade monitoring network

ISSUE 21  
JULY, 2014

# POST

TRAFFIC INDIA'S NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA



**Alarm bells  
over rising  
pet trade in wild  
animals  
in India  
INFOCUS  
feature.....**



## TRAFFIC Post



TRAFFIC Post is TRAFFIC's newsletter on wildlife trade in India. It was started in September 2007 with a primary aim to create awareness on rampant poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India and how it affects the endangered flora and fauna. Since then it has covered not only issues related to illegal wildlife trade but also highlighted policies and trends related to legitimate wildlife trade especially in timber and medicinal plants.

The newsletter began as a quarterly e-newsletter available only for online distribution. However after a few issues it was converted into a printed edition with three issues coming out every year. The response to the newsletter over the years has been overwhelming and the subscribers continue to increase with every issue.

Besides carrying updates on TRAFFIC's work in India in a given period, the newsletter focuses on the plight of various species in illegal wildlife trade. It also provides early warning through its various sections on illegal wildlife trade trends. The CITES section and the OUTPOST section especially is meant to keep its readers updated on global news related to wildlife trade.

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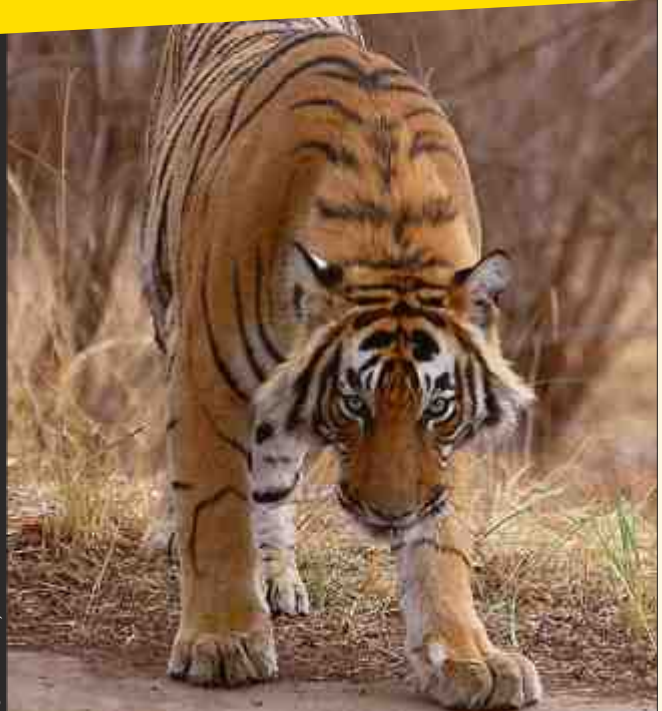
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**Front cover: Clown Fish** by  
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# TRAFFIC

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# POST



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© Rajesh Kumar Mohapatra



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© Elizabeth John / TRAFFIC



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## TRAFFIC ALERT



## IN FOCUS

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## WILD CRY

Illegal wildlife trade threatens the future of many species in the wild. This section highlights the plight of one such species in trade.

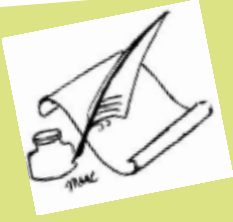
**Weaved in illegal wildlife trade, future for Bayas appears bleak**

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## OUTPOST



## CITES UPDATE



**FROM THE DESK:**  
**Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj,**  
**Head of TRAFFIC in India**



**Poaching and Illegal trade of Asian Elephants revisited**

Although loss of species is triggered by several factors, habitat loss being important among them, poaching for illegal trade has lately emerged as one of the dominating factors. Rampant poaching has often driven a species close to local or global extinction, as poaching for illegal trade often targets the “best” individuals in a population in order to maximize revenue. The same individuals are also those that constitute the fittest breeding stock in a population. The most well-known example is of the Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* in Kerala whose populations had nearly succumbed to poaching pressures in the early 1990s due to selective poaching of males in their prime for their ivory tusks. At that time, poaching of Asian Elephants in Kerala had resulted in a male to female ratio of 1:125 rendering the local populations at a precarious unviable level. Subsequent protection measures, enforcement efforts, and management practices, however, improved the situation and the sex ratio improved to a much safer level. The Elephants in Kerala were thus saved.

Poaching of Elephants for domestic and international trade has been a continuous occurrence in most parts of India, with southern Indian populations affected the hardest, where infamous forest bandit Veerappan is said to have been responsible for the deaths of more than 300 elephants for their ivory. Elephants have also been rampantly poached in eastern India too. As per the estimated trends, Elephant poaching in India rose from 1991-1999 then declined from 1999-2002, with tusk seizures increasing significantly in 2002-2006 compared to 1992-1996 (Niraj et al. 2012).

Spatially, most species that have been poached for illegal trade, e. g., Tiger *Panthera tigris*, Leopard *Panthera pardus*, Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans*, Indian Rhino *Rhinoceros unicornis* have shown geographical clustering of seizures either along the country's borders or around significant locations, e.g. international ports, important tourist sites. In the case of the Elephant, however, no significant clustering of seizures has been recorded either along borders or around significant locations, indicating a more widespread illegal trade, which witnessed an unwelcome resurgence from 2011 onwards. Since October 2013, seizures of approximately 10 tusks, substantial quantities of Elephant bones, and poaching of more than 12 Elephants have been reported from southern and eastern India. There are also reports, yet unconfirmed, of live Elephant trade conducted across India's land borders through neighbouring countries.

TRAFFIC recently conducted a survey into the live Elephant trade at Sonepur fair in the State of Bihar that uncovered a large-scale trade in live Elephants in clear violation of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 (WPA). Trade of Asian Elephants has been conducted at Sonepur fair for several decades, however, what was striking was the very high price tag on each adult Elephant, likely an indicator of an organized trade involving wealthy buyers. This fair has been used to launder Elephants illegally purchased or obtained from the wild to such an extent that authorities in Kerala recently issued a notification that no domestic Elephants would be permitted to be moved into the State from Sonepur or elsewhere irrespective of a valid certificate of ownership. Other States in the country could follow up with similar notifications in order to curb the illegal trade in live Elephants from Sonepur fair.

Sonepur has also become a location for black marketing of endangered bird species, promoting illegal pet trade in species such as Black-naped Hares *Lepus nigricollis*, macaques, and langurs. The fair blatantly displays species, such as Hill Mynah *Gracula religiosa*, the State bird of Chattisgarh, which has almost disappeared from its natural habitats, cranes (*Grus* sp.), Munias (*Munia* sp.), Shikra *Accipiter badius*, Falcons (*Falco* sp.) and Parakeets (*Psittacula* sp.) among others. Trade in non-native species such as Cockatoos (fam. *Cacatuidae*), Conures (of gen. *Aratinga* and *Pyrrhura*), Parrots (mostly *Psittacula* spp.), and Macaws (*Anodorhynchus* spp.) among other species has assumed significant proportions. An unrestricted and open trade has a potential of creating new demands and new hobby makers. Recently, a seizure of Chimpanzees *Pan troglodytes* and Marmoset Monkeys (fam *Callitrichidae*) in Kolkata helped demonstrate the existence of a widespread network for primates in the pet trade. Investigations revealed a possible trade route involving Central and West African countries, the Middle East, Singapore and Bangladesh before animals were transported by land into West Bengal to cater to a growing pet trade market in India.

## Wildlife protection stepped up at Tiger Reserves in India



**B**uilding capacity of the enforcement agencies is a key strategy of TRAFFIC to strengthen wildlife protection measures and curb illegal wildlife trade in India. Capacity building workshops are conducted regularly across India to train enforcement officials from the Departments of the Forest, Police, Border Security Forces, Customs, Railway Police and other enforcement agencies. The workshops bring multi-agencies together in order to build the coordination between them that is vital to combat wildlife crimes. Since 2008, over 3000 officials have been trained in India on new tools and techniques to fight wildlife crime. Recently training workshops have been conducted at Melghat Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra State and Achanakmar Tiger Reserve located in Chhattisgarh State.

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**Melghat Tiger Reserve:** The two-day multi-agency capacity building workshop on Wildlife Law Enforcement and Conservation in India was organized by TRAFFIC, in collaboration with the Maharashtra Forest Department, on 9-10 May 2014 at Amaravati in Maharashtra. The workshop was attended by 55 officials of the Forest Department, Police, State Reserve Police Force, and a few non-governmental organizations.

Mr Bipin Bihari, IPS Inspector General of Police, Amravati Region, inaugurated the workshop and emphasized the need for agencies to work in tandem for fighting wildlife crime in the region. He said: "The onus to protect wildlife lies with various enforcement agencies like ourselves. If we fail to address these issues pertaining to illegal wildlife trade, the consequences on forests and ecosystems will be disastrous". Mr Bihari has assured full support

of the Police Department in the region for curbing poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

The procedures and protocols for wildlife crime investigation and guidelines for filing complaints and other court case filing procedures were introduced by senior Supreme Court lawyers to the participants. Training sessions, giving an overview of illegal international wildlife trade, wildlife forensics, use of metal detectors and protocols on collection of wildlife samples for forensic analysis were conducted.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India introduced various aspects of wildlife crime and investigation techniques and gave an overview of illegal wildlife trade that induces poaching of various species in India and in the region of South Asia. He also introduced the participants to the international wildlife trade convention, CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

TRAFFIC's capacity building workshop was organized to impart technical knowledge and skills to the participants and to build co-ordination between the enforcement agencies working in the region for effective wildlife law enforcement.

TRAFFIC received tremendous support from law enforcement experts from different places in India who participated in the training programme as resource personnel. The team included Mr Varun Kapoor, IPS, IG & Director, Police Radio Training School, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, Dr M. K. Sarkar IFS, APCCF-Working Plan Tamil Nadu- a national expert on medicinal plants; Dr Sunil K Verma, Principal Scientist at Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad who patented primer Technology for DNA analysis, Prof. B. C. Choudhury, an eminent Scientist and a former faculty at the premier Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun; Mr A. K. Jha, Assistant Director of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau; Mr Abrar Ahmed, a bird trade expert; Dr Mukesh Thakur, a forensic and DNA scientist at WII; Mr Ritwick Dutta, Advocate, Supreme Court of India, Mr Saurabh Sharma, Advocate, Supreme Court and Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, IFS, Head of TRAFFIC in India. TRAFFIC also provided resource materials to the participants including wildlife forensic kits for use in the field for collecting samples for investigation and legal evidences to support the prosecution.

**Achanakmar Tiger Reserve:** TRAFFIC in collaboration with Chhattisgarh Forest Department conducted a two day multiagency capacity building workshop on "Wildlife Law Enforcement and Conservation in India" on 10-11 June 2014 at Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh. The training workshop was attended by 55 forest officials, 10 police officers, 10 civil administration and 10 officials from other enforcement agencies. In addition several NGO staff plus print and TV media personnel also participated in the workshop.

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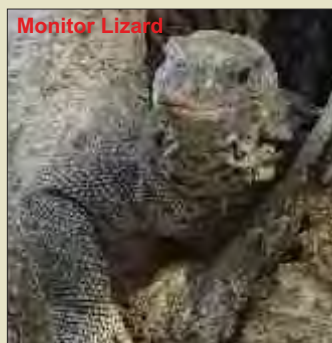
The workshop was inaugurated by Shri Amar Agarwal, Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Medical Education, Commercial Tax, and Urban Development Department. He said that wildlife is a significant part of Indian culture and if we fail to protect and respect wildlife we fail to respect our culture. He appreciated the efforts of TRAFFIC for organizing this training and helping to improve the understanding of officials in wildlife law enforcement. Senior officials of Chattisgarh government including the divisional revenue commissioner Mr KDP Rao, IAS, Mr Anup Srivastava, IFS, CCF Territorial Bilaspur, Mr Tapesh Jha, IFS, CCF and Field Director, Achanakmar Tiger Reserve and Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head, TRAFFIC in India also spoke and highlighted the importance of the training in combating wildlife crimes and thus conserving species.



Shri Amar Agarwal, Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Medical Education, Commercial Tax, and Urban Development Department, inaugurating the workshop

The key resource personnel included Dr Niraj, Dr M. K. Sarkar IFS, APCCF-Working Plan Tamil Nadu and a national expert on medicinal plants, Mr A. K. Jha, Assistant Director of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Mr Abrar Ahmed, a bird trade expert, Dr Mukesh Thakur, Wildlife DNA and Forensic Scientist at WII, Mr Mukesh Kumar Sahni Ex-Senior Superintendent of Police from the Central Bureau of Investigation and existing faculty at National Police Training Bureau, Mr Saurabh Sharma Supreme Court Advocate and a legal consultant with WWF-India. Besides providing study materials and wildlife forensic kits prepared by TRAFFIC in collaboration with WII, materials on tools and techniques for investigating wildlife crimes were given to each of the participants. A demonstration was given of a deep search metal detector by Mr Druba Jyoti of TRAFFIC and the instrument was handed over to the Tiger Reserve for use in anti-poaching activities.

## TRAFFIC urges stakeholders to focus on protection of lesser known wildlife species in India



Monitor Lizard

© Dr Rashid Raza



Peregrine Falcon

© Dr Rashid Raza



Indian Bullfrog

© Dr Abrar Ahmed



Indian Rooted Turtle

© Shailender Singh

Every year in India, hundreds of pangolins, lizards and tortoises are poached, thousands of birds are illegally trapped, and tonnes of sharks are caught, yet the levels of exploitation on these species are rarely reported.

In order to throw light on the perceived conservation crisis, TRAFFIC, WWF-India, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) jointly organized a “Consultation Meeting on Illegal Trade in Lesser Known Species”, held in New Delhi on 9 June 2014 at the WWF-India Secretariat.

Wildlife experts; policy makers; scientists; research scholars; conservationists; and senior officials from State Forest Departments, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Delhi Administration, enforcement agencies, Wildlife Institute of India (WII), WCCB, and wildlife NGOs brainstormed the steps needed to protect these lesser-known wildlife species.

“While the threat posed by illegal wildlife trade to some of India's most iconic wild animals, such as the Tiger and Indian Rhinoceros are well publicized, many of India's lesser-known species are also rapidly vanishing because of poaching, and their fate hangs in balance,” said Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India.

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“Pangolins are highly threatened because they are subject to a colossal illegal trade internationally, yet their plight is barely publicized in conservation or media circles. Others, like the monitor lizard, mongoose, Star Tortoises, Spiny-tailed Lizards, freshwater and marine turtles also need immediate attention,” said Dr Niraj, who presented a thorough data and situation analysis.

Monitor lizards, especially the Bengal Monitor, were once commonly seen across the country but appear to have declined markedly, apparently after becoming a target of poachers and illegal trade.

Little is known about the levels of illegal trade or its impact on species such as sea cucumbers, seahorses or Red Sand Boa, the “double-headed” snake, which has recently been in huge demand due to new superstitions attached to it.

“TRAFFIC has flagged its concern about these lesser known species for some time, highlighting the concerns in our newsletter—TRAFFIC Post—and also through the distribution of posters and other awareness raising materials,” said Dr Niraj.

Key speakers at the meeting included Ravi Singh from WWF-India, Kamal Dutta from WCCB, Belinda Wright from WPSI, Abrar Ahmad a noted bird trade expert, Mr R. Sundar Raju, former Chief Wildlife Warden of Tamil Nadu, and Dr Niraj from TRAFFIC.

To coincide with the meeting, TRAFFIC also released a poster on weaver birds found in illegal trade in India and a leaflet on trade in shark species in India. Both these communiqués will help enforcement agencies and other stakeholders to take the requisite enforcement and conservation actions.

The burgeoning demand for birds is currently a major conservation concern in India with indigenous birds protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 still being traded freely. A recent survey by TRAFFIC at the Sonapur Animal Fair revealed that thousands of birds of at least 20 species were being traded. The bird trade also flourishes in other parts of India, including, Kolkata, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore.



Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO of WWF-India said: “Biodiversity in India is under severe threat from a variety of sources. Increasing competition for natural resources and rising human-wildlife conflict threaten the survival of numerous species found in India’s rich wildlife habitats. In addition to these threats, the burgeoning illegal trade in wildlife species and its articles and derivatives also poses a significant threat to several key species of flora and fauna, with the potential to seriously impact the health and balance of our ecosystems. While the impact and seriousness of this is evident for iconic species such as the Tiger, Elephant and Rhino, illegal trade in other wildlife species and even in live animals also seriously impacts lesser known flora and fauna”.

Kamal Dutta, Joint Director at WCCB said: “The cardinal issue of considering what to focus our attention on is central to the concern surrounding lesser known species in trade. Systematic monitoring by the way of surveys and enhanced field initiatives like identification guides for enforcement personnel and greater sensitization efforts for media stories could be the way ahead for ensuring that wildlife in India reflects beyond the Tiger in all its glory”.

“The focus has been on the mega species, while the lesser known animals valued in the illegal wildlife trade are being quietly and systematically wiped out. In some areas professional Tiger poaching gangs are now focusing on the lucrative pangolin trade. This is a tragedy in the making and we must do something about it before it is too late,” Belinda Wright, Executive Director of WPSI presented detailed analysis of the data collected on pangolins over two decades.

## OUTPOST: Alarming rise in Black Spotted Turtle trade across Asia, finds TRAFFIC report



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The attractive spotted visage of the Black Spotted Turtle *Geoclemys hamiltonii* may well be its downfall. TRAFFIC's recent investigation into the trade of this species confirm that illegal international trade of the Black Spotted Turtle in Asia has escalated over recent years and can be attributed to the sudden rise in demand in the exotic pet trade. The species was earlier known to be traded for meat, medicine and pets.

Over 1,960 animals were seized between January 2008 and March 2014. Of these, 95 per cent were confiscated in the final 15 months of 2008-2009. A seizure of another 230 turtles on 14 May 2014 underscored the seriousness of the threat. Royal Thai Customs officers in Suvarnabhumi International Airport found the turtles packed in unclaimed bags had been transported on a flight from Kolkata, India.

Seizure information indicates that shipments of the turtles from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan transit through South-east Asian hubs such as Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, and are destined for East Asia, particularly, Hong Kong. Most of the seizures are from passengers using commercial airlines concealing animals in their baggage. Although the majority of the carriers detected were arrested, only two of the 22 registered cases actually resulted in successful prosecutions.

Dr Shekhar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India said: "In India, this turtle species is collected from Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, and Bihar and usually taken to Kolkata or the Bangladesh border for smuggling out of the country. Of late, the smugglers have also used less known airports at Gaya and Varanasi to transport the animals illegally out of the country to South-East Asia. The species is also in demand domestically as a delicacy food".

"Enforcement authorities' efforts to detect and apprehend smugglers are commendable, but a lack of follow-on investigations and prosecution is undoing their good work," said Dr Chris R Shepherd, Regional Director for TRAFFIC in South-East Asia.

The TRAFFIC report Escalating Black Spotted Turtle *Geoclemys hamiltonii* trade in Asia: a study of seizures recommends improving enforcement and prosecution through multilateral and multi-agency coordination. Timely and detailed reporting of seizures to the CITES Secretariat and in the media, together with the outcomes of successful prosecutions, are also urged.

"Wildlife enforcement networks already exist in South and South-East Asia, but given the transnational operations of the criminal networks they are up against, the challenge is to ensure a fully co-ordinated global enforcement response to their activities is delivered," said Dr Yannick Kuehl, Regional Director for TRAFFIC in East and South Asia.

TRAFFIC's findings were released on 23 May 2014, World Turtle Day, to highlight the plight of the Black Spotted Turtle and many other species of turtles worldwide, particularly those in Asia which are under threat mainly from habitat loss and over-exploitation for food, medicine and the exotic pet trade.

*Continued on page 9*

## TRAFFIC Alert



### Sri Lankan boat seized for fishing sea cucumbers, 16 men held

After a pursuit of nearly five hours, the Coast Guard captured a Sri Lankan vessel illegally fishing the endangered sea cucumber near Lakshadweep Islands in April 2014. In what is termed as one of the biggest seizures by the Coast Guard, two metric tonnes of sea cucumbers were recovered from a Sri Lankan boat illegally fishing in Indian waters. All 16 members of the crew were arrested. The Coast Guard said Colombo Marine had diving equipment, air compressors, two GPS, high-frequency communication systems, and 1637.5-kg gas cylinders used for boiling and treating the sea cucumbers.

### TRAFFIC in India adds.....

Holothurians in India are listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Harvesting and trade in these species is totally prohibited in the country. However several households in the coastal regions in south-east India and the Andamans and Nicobar Islands remain involved in illegal sea cucumber harvesting and smuggling. However, significant benefits reach only the kingpins who control this trade and the local marginalized coastal communities receive only a pittance. Moreover, these marginalized coastal community members are those caught by the enforcement officials and bear the brunt of law enforcement whereas the major players running the crimes remain, generally, evasive of laws.

Sea cucumber, when dried and processed is known as *bêche-de-mer* (literally "sea-spade") and is used in various fresh or dried cuisines and is highly popular in China and in South-East Asian countries. They are also thought to have medicinal value and are traded as a source of aquaria organisms and specimens for biomedical research.

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In India, the Black Spotted Turtle is found along the Indus River of Northern India and the Ganges River. It is protected under national laws in its range countries including India where it is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972. It is also listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) making all commercial international trade in this species illegal.

## OUTPOST: CITES releases a report on Elephant poaching and ivory smuggling



Poaching levels remain alarmingly high at over 20 000. More large ivory seizures in Africa than Asia for the first time

Over 20 000 African Elephants were poached across the continent in 2013 according to a report that was released in June 2014 in Geneva by the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Although the sharp upward trend in illegal Elephant killing was observed since the mid-2000s, poaching has peaked in 2011. Poaching levels remain alarmingly high and continue to exceed the natural Elephant population growth rates, resulting in a further decline in Elephant populations across Africa.

The report also shows a clear increase in the number of large seizures of ivory (shipments over 500 kg) made in 2013, before the ivory left the African continent. For the first time, the number of such seizures made in Africa exceeded those made in Asia. Just three African countries — Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda — accounted for 80% of those seizures. Large-scale ivory seizures are indicative of transnational organized crime being involved in the illicit ivory trade.

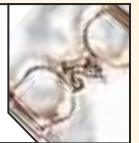
Southern Africa continues to hold the lion's share of Africa's Elephants, holding close to 55% of the known Elephants on the continent. Eastern Africa holds 28% and Central Africa 16%. In West Africa, less than 2% of the continent's known elephants are spread over 13 countries.

Poverty (measured by infant mortality rates) and weak governance (measured by law enforcement capacity and corruption levels), together with increasing demand for illegal ivory in consuming nations are three key factors linked to higher poaching levels. Overall poaching numbers were lower in 2013 than in 2012 and 2011 – but they continue to exceed 20 000. The report warns that poaching levels will lead to continuing declines in the African Elephant population.

The report containing the latest figures (2013) from the CITES Monitoring Illegal Killing in Elephants (MIKE) programme and the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS), which TRAFFIC operates on behalf of Parties to CITES, were discussed at the 65th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee that took place in Geneva from 7 to 11 July 2014.

For more information, please visit [http://cites.org/eng/elephant\\_poaching\\_and\\_ivory\\_smuggling\\_figures\\_for\\_2013\\_released](http://cites.org/eng/elephant_poaching_and_ivory_smuggling_figures_for_2013_released)

## TRAFFIC Alert



Continued from page 8

However, it is largely the demand as a luxury food item that is driving this trade. The high value of some species, the ease with which such shallow water forms can be harvested, and their vulnerable nature all contribute to their overexploitation. Sea cucumbers are slow moving marine animals found in shallow coastal waters and thus are especially susceptible to overexploitation as they do not require sophisticated fishing techniques.

Nearly 200 sea cucumber species are found in the seas around India; 75 species are present in shallow waters while nearly 50 species can be collected from the intertidal region. Nearly 20 species of sea cucumber found in Indian waters are of commercial importance of which two species, *Holothuria glabra*, *Holothuria spinifera* have been most heavily exploited globally. Foreign fishing vessels have regularly been apprehended with sea cucumber hauls in India in the past. Asia and the Pacific are the top sea cucumber producing regions, with total regional production running between 20 000 and 40 000 tonnes per year. TRAFFIC seeks more awareness on the status of this species in India and stricter enforcement measures to monitor and curb trade in sea cucumbers. Sea cucumber species found along Indian coasts are not included in CITES but efforts are underway to draw more attention to their conservation issues in international fora.

### Source:

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/lankan-boat-seized-for-fishing-sea-cucumber-16-men-held/article5894435.ece>  
[http://aquafind.com/articles/Sea\\_Cucumber.php](http://aquafind.com/articles/Sea_Cucumber.php)  
<http://www.sahilonline.org/english/newsDetails.php?cid=1&nid=235112>  
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[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/8557621.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8557621.stm)  
 Hunting of wildlife in tropical forests: implications for biodiversity and forest peoples. Biodiversity series-Impact studies, World Bank, Washington D. C., USA.

## TRAFFIC Alert



### Ivory recovered from wildlife smugglers

Delhi Police arrested two on suspicion of wildlife smuggling and seized 11 kg of ivory on 4 May 2014. Acting on a tip off, the two individuals were arrested near Red Fort allegedly for selling pieces of Elephant tusks. Several officials of Delhi Police and Wildlife Department in a joint operation caught one of the accused and recovered a piece of tusk from his possession. On being interrogated, he informed the officials that his aide, who was sitting in a car parked near the spot, was also in the possession of three ivory pieces. The officials nabbed the second accused and arrested him as well.

#### TRAFFIC in India adds.....

Asian Elephants *Elephas maximus* are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and are listed under Appendix I in CITES. Poaching of Elephants for their ivory is a major concern not just in India but across Asia and Africa, particularly in the latter where both sexes of elephants have tusks that tend to be much larger than the tusks of Asian animals. Africa has already lost thousands of African Elephants to poaching for the ivory trade. In 2011 alone, an estimated 25 000 African Elephants were poached across the continent. The situation is serious for India as scaled up poaching of African Elephants is likely to be reflected in Asia with increased poaching and illegal trade of Asian Elephants, directly affecting Indian Elephant populations. Unfortunately, in India, comprehensive Elephant poaching statistics are not publicly available, unlike the case of the Tiger, and there are hardly any official figures on Elephant mortality. Ivory may also be smuggled from Elephants mowed down by trains or electrocuted. Large numbers of captive Elephants, especially in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, also give rise to concerns over the clandestine ivory trade. TRAFFIC would like to see a strengthening of ivory control measures and systematic data collection on ivory seizures and Elephant mortality to help underpin future conservation strategies for an animal that is part of India's national heritage.

#### Source:

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/10/ivory/christy-text>  
[http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/two-wildlife-smugglers-held-11-kg-ivory-recovered-114050400570\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/two-wildlife-smugglers-held-11-kg-ivory-recovered-114050400570_1.html)  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/02/20132772531808802.html>  
<http://www.thehindu.com/today-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/kerala-has-no-heart-to-burn-its-illicit-ivory/article6035582.ece>

### Four poachers held in Manipur with venison

In April 2014, Police with the help of wildlife enthusiasts in Bishnupur district in Manipur arrested four poachers and seized cooked and uncooked venison (deer meat). Poaching of wild animals is prohibited in Manipur, but is a regular occurrence. Most markets in the hill districts openly sell meat. In some cases, rare migratory birds, mountain goats and other live animals have been on sale. Police sources said that there have been reports of professional poachers slaughtering deer in the nearby mountains of Kumbi in Bishnupur district.

#### TRAFFIC in India adds.....

Poaching of wild animals is rife in Manipur and has been an age old tradition. However the current situation is a source of concern to conservationists.

All eight deer species found in India are protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and four deer species, Musk Deer *Moschus leucogaster*, Swamp Deer *Rucervus duvauceli*, Red Deer (known as Hangul) *Cervus elaphus*, and Brown Antlered Deer *Rucervus eldii* are listed in Appendix I of CITES. Few systematic studies exist on internal or external smuggling of deer products from India, including antlers. Deer meat enters the local cuisine during floods in Kaziranga National Park. There are also cases of deer being killed in the Sunderbans for their meat.

The recent push for greater economic exchange between India and Myanmar has also provided cause for concern as porous borders may aggravate illegal wildlife trade. Given the growing threat to Hog deer *Axis porcinus*, the Indian government has recently issued a notification to upscale the species to Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. TRAFFIC is highlighting the trade in lesser known species such as deer and calls for appropriate measures to safeguard their future.

#### Source:

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## IN FOCUS:

## Alarm bells over rising pet trade in wild animals in India (Unregulated pet trade causes conservation concerns)

Shekhar K. Niraj and Shubhobroto Ghosh- TRAFFIC



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### Introduction to wild animals kept as pets in India

India reportedly has a population of over 0.75 million pets and over 0.225 million non-native wild animals, used as pets and animals of captivity. (Chamikutti, 2014) A wild animal is defined as a animal found wild in nature and is covered under Schedules I-IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and in subsequent amendments (Government of India 1972). The pet industry estimates the pet care business in India to be in the region of INR 500 crore (approximately, USD 83 million) and projects the business to rise further, perhaps manifold (Chamikutti 2014). With the globalized market economy encouraging people to indulge in expensive hobbies and consumerism, the burgeoning pet market is one that has assumed a symbol of status in modern India. It is this trend and the impact of this trade on species conservation for both indigenous and non-native species that leads to current concerns and investigations on wild animals in pet trade in India.

The most common species observed in the wild animal pet trade in India are avian species (Table 1, Page 16). BirdLife International has identified India as the third nation, behind China and Indonesia, with the highest number of bird species that are endangered due to over exploitation. With 61 bird species globally threatened, India shares this negative distinction with Brazil. Many of these are trapped for trade for pets and for consumption (Rahmani *et. al*, 2004). In India more than 7 00 000 birds are trapped every year, and the scale of the bird trade in India is a serious concern

(Ahmed, 2004). In a survey of the *Chiriya Bazaar* (birds market) in Sonapur, in the eastern State of Bihar, in 2013, TRAFFIC investigators reported approximately 10,000 birds belonging to 20 indigenous species, caged and kept on open display for trade and commerce many in violation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act (WPA) 1972. Trade in indigenous birds in India has been banned since 1991, but the scale of trade nationally and as reported at Sonapur fair, and subsequent investigations, over a period of six months is large enough to ring conservation alarm bells in India (Narayan 2013, Balaji 2014, Nath 2014). Apart from birds, wild animals, popular in the Indian pet trade markets include Rhesus Macaques *Macaca mulatta*, Langurs *Semnopithecus entellus*, Black-naped Hares *Lepus nigricollis*, snakes, Star Tortoises *Geochelone elegans*, several species of turtles, and Asian Elephants *Elephas maximus* among others. Evidences have been gathered that several individuals maintain private zoos in India and these facilities fuel the pet trade in exotic animals (Chandran 2009). Pet fairs also help encourage the practice of keeping and trading in non native exotic animals in India (Map 3).

### Dominance of birds in wild animal pet trade in India

Birds remain the most dominant species in the Indian pet trade. The highest number of native birds sold at Sonapur belonged to various species of parakeets, mynahs, including the now highly threatened Hill Mynah *Gracula religiosa* in India (protected under Schedule I of the WPA 1972) and munias (Table 1, Page 16). They were observed being sold in the thousands and as enquiry revealed, the mortality rate of captured wild birds could be as high as 80% (especially for munias). This would mean that for every bird that makes it to the market alive, many more perish en route and therefore the exact numbers of birds that are affected in this trade would be more than what meets the eye through direct observation.

The pet trade lobby also appears to be organising itself and many traders and breeders now take part in the nationwide International Pet Trade Fairs held all over the country to display their animals. These gatherings of the pet trade industry have been taking place since 2010 (and monitored by TRAFFIC since their inception). Several species of wild animals have been observed in trade including Common Marmosets *Callithrix jacchus*, Sulphur Crested Cockatoos *Cacatua galerita*, Sun Conures *Aratinga solstitialis*, Red Crested Touracos *Trichoglossus haematodus*, Scarlet Macaws *Chrysolophus pictus*, Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus* and Golden Pheasants *Chrysolophus pictus* (Map 1).



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A recent TRAFFIC survey of the wild animal pet trade in Kolkata provided some valuable insights into the trade. Enquiries with bird trade representatives from Kolkata's Bird Breeders and Lovers Association revealed that in the past, West Bengal was the leading source state in India supplying the whole country with captive-bred birds, legally or illegally. The well-known bird market at Galiff Street, continues to do a brisk trade in wild birds. A recent TRAFFIC survey found at least 150 indigenous wild birds on sale, including Rose Ringed Parakeets, Alexandrine Parakeets, Red Breasted Parakeets, Plum Headed Parakeets and Brahminy Starlings. Traders encourage potential customers to buy birds by attaching their own price tags to forest department leaflets depicting the indigenous species that are prohibited for sale.



Map 1

There is a growing network of bird markets linking Patna City, Lucknow, Merrut, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Mumbai, and Chennai. Markets are interlinked as wild birds and animals are procured from one market and supplied at the other as per the local demands. Markets in Ahmedabad are linked to those in Jaipur, Meerut, Bareilly, and Lucknow, particularly for wild birds. The railways are the most preferred means of transporting birds to different locations in the country, whereas small distances are covered by using public buses, usually loaded on the rooftops. However, public buses are frequently used for local movements of the contrabands.

Major bird keeping cities in India are Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore and Chennai and most pet fanciers now use non-native species in captivity for display but continue to harbour native species within their premises. These premises are often heavily guarded and remain inaccessible to outside inspection, including those from the forest department. India also has several private zoos that are running without any cognizance from the Central Zoo Authority. Many bird keepers have started large-scale breeding of exotic birds, some also cross breed them to bypass laws and create attractive looking birds for sale. Some of these cross-bred birds in Chennai command high market prices.

**Turtles:** With over 29 species of freshwater turtles and land tortoises, several of them endemic, India has been a focus of attention for the reptile trade both within and outside the country. Based on the number of confiscations by enforcement authorities in airports, railways and in road transportation, a conservative estimate puts the annual trade in Indian Star Tortoises and Pond Turtles at around 50,000-60,000 animals, with species such as Spotted Pond Turtle and other Pangshura species in the range of 2000-5000 (pers comm B.C.Choudhury). Many turtles are in demand as pets as ownership is believed to bring good luck. In West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Kerala, and metropolitan cities sellers offer Indian Roof Turtles *Pangshura tecta* for INR 800-1000 per individual and Indian Pond Turtles *Geoclemys hamiltonii* for INR 500-800 per individual. Indian Tent Turtles *Pangshura tentoria* are also popular pets, domestically and in international trade transactions.

### Growing range of exotic animals in pet trade

The seizure of three chimpanzees in January 2014 along with six Common Marmoset monkeys raised conservation concern in India considering that it constituted the first seizure involving Great Apes in the country (Times of India 2014, Map 2). While the United Nations led Great Ape Survival Partnership estimated 3000 Great Apes were illegally traded during the period 2005 to 2011, the chimpanzee seizure in India turned out to be part of an international trafficking network involving these primates in the pet trade. Moreover, the trader had in his custody six Common Marmosets, one Brown Capuchin Monkey *Cebus apella*, several species of Macaws (*Ara spp*) and Cockatoos (*Cacatua spp*) as well as a single Pied Hornbill *Anthraceroceros coronatus* and a Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus spp.*), the latter two bird species protected under the WPA 1972. The court case against the trader is ongoing.

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Parrots now rank among the most threatened of all bird families with 66 species directly threatened by the illegal bird trade. Huge financial incentives are used to deal in these birds illegally in this clandestine trade. The legality issue also remains vague in the importation and keeping of exotic parrot species in India.

The pet trade in India includes a number of private farms and flourishing pet shops in South India, in cities like Chennai, Bangalore and Coimbatore.



Map 2: Investigated route for illegal chimpanzee importation into India during January 2014



Map 3: Trade route for parrots and marmosets in the pet trade in India

*breviceps*, Wallabies (*Macropus* spp.), Ball Pythons *Python regius*, Bearded Dragons (*Pogona* spp.) and Green Iguanas *Iguana iguana* (Table 3). Breeders and traders in Kolkata admit there is a growing demand for these animals in India and they are eager to see this trade takes off significantly (One India News, 2008, Saha, 2009, Gupta, 2014).

The global trade in pet reptiles is huge: a mammoth 350 million live animals a year, (Honnegger 2007). Between 2005 and 2007, the EU imported about 6.7 million reptiles (BBC wildlife magazine, June 2014). There is also evidence that a few individuals maintain private zoos in India and these facilities fuel the pet trade in exotic animals (Chandran 2009).

TRAFFIC's own surveys have revealed several native bird species on sale in pet markets in these places, including Rose Ringed Parakeets and several non-native species like Scarlet Macaws, Sulphur Crested Cockatoos as well as primates such as Common Marmosets and Brown Capuchin Monkeys (Table 2).

TRAFFIC investigations show that the trade in exotic wild animals as pets, including birds, may be shifting from West Bengal to South India for reasons that still remain to be investigated. Several traders and breeders, have their private breeding farms where they breed a variety of exotic animals, including Common Marmosets, Sugar Gliders *Petaurus*

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**Unregulated aquarium trade**

A 2013 study for the first time assessed the extent, magnitude and conservation implications of the unmanaged trade in endemic and threatened freshwater fishes from India for the global aquarium pet markets (Raghavan *et al.*, 2013). According to this research, more than 1.5 million freshwater fish belonging to 30 threatened species were exported from India during 2005-



Map 4: Route for freshwater fish export from India

2012. Among these four species, *Botia striata*, *Carinotetraodon travancoricus* and Redline Torpedo Barbs *Puntius denisonii* and *P. chalakkudiensis* comprised the bulk of the exports. Some of the most important species of conservation concern exported included *Garra hughi*, *Channa aurantimaculata*, *Gonoproktopterus thomassi*, *Glyptothorax housei*.

Currently, India does not have regulations in place for monitoring the aquarium business. Add to this the trade in marine life, including Seahorses and Clown Fish, and there is potentially a significant problem when one considers that mortality rates are up to 98% for wild caught animals. (WWF Philippines, quoted in Wildlife Extra, 2013).



**Legal loopholes**

Under the WPA 1972, non-native animals are not protected as those are not listed in its Schedules. This leaves room for traders and breeders to take advantage of a non-restricted legal position to import and sometimes smuggle CITES listed non-native species for pet trade. Implementation of CITES guidelines for monitoring and controlling the non-native wild animal trade to or from India and globally has not been robust and adequate. Investigations post the Chimpanzee seizures in Kolkata revealed a possible route linking West Africa, Dubai, Singapore, Bangladesh and West Bengal, while legal loopholes in the WPA and in CITES implementation were exposed in Africa and Asia. In India, although a proposed amendment is seeking to introduce a CITES component in the WPA 1972, the nature of the new statute and its implementation currently remains unclear and ambiguous. The CITES is enforced through the Customs Act 1962, the EXIM Policies of the Government of India, and the Export Import Control Orders 1992, often these Acts or legal instruments are rendered ineffective once wildlife contraband is seized within the territories of the country. This has been reported several times when the seizure cases have been summarily dismissed by the courts of law

and trials abandoned. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 may offer little ground for prosecution of traders in exotic wild animals imported illegally in India. The Chimpanzee trader in Kolkata was prosecuted under sections 135 and 111 of the Customs Act 1962, however, it was very difficult to establish evidence of smuggling under the current laws.

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### Discussion and recommendations to control and monitor wild animal trade in India

TRAFFIC has been monitoring the wild animal pet trade in India for the past two decades and notes a perturbing rising trend in organization of pet trade fairs and wild animal and bird shows across the country, indicating a probable increase in keeping wild animals as pets in India. There have also been few raids and seizures of non-native animals used as pets. However, attempts of enforcement agencies have all ended in prosecution failures due to absence of restrictive or prohibitory provisions under the Indian laws. Pet animals include indigenous and non-native (exotic) species. Recent surveys conducted by TRAFFIC in Delhi, Sonapur and Kolkata bear testimony to this trend and can be damaging for wildlife conservation (Baker *et al.* 2013). The ongoing surveys establish the general feeling of concern over the unregulated nature of the pet trade in India and the rising recent popularity of non-native species as pets. The variety of species observed firsthand, advertised on the web and those claimed by traders and breeders lend support to the concerns voiced by conservationists that unchecked trade in wild animals as pets could seriously undermine the conservation status of these animals in the wild. Given the fact that the pet industry is showcasing the desirability and the novelty of wild animals kept as pets in India, it is necessary to deal with this trend by developing a framework of action between different agencies working on wildlife protection. The significant role of the Internet in transactions involving exotic species has been recorded by investigating agencies, which facilitates uncontrolled trade with poor standards for animal welfare.



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TRAFFIC makes the following recommendations to control the wild animal pet trade in India.

- All centres of trade in wild indigenous birds need to be geo-mapped and monitored for changes in the pattern of trade dynamics.
- The trade in wild animals including primates in Sonapur is in violation of Indian laws and should be stopped.
- A national database needs to be created for all breeders and traders of wild animals.
- CITES permits of breeders and traders in exotic wild animals need to be checked .
- There needs to be regular monitoring of all pet breeding facilities, including private pet zoos run by certain individuals and groups in India.
  - Licensed government zoos should stop employing traders and breeders as middlemen in their transactions and develop their own expertise to deal with wild animal exchange.
  - Online activities of traders and breeders in wild animals need to be continually monitored.
  - Specialised cells need to be set up to monitor the wild animal pet trade in India.
  - Specialist agencies like TRAFFIC can assist with surveys, information gathering, and analysis on current trends in the wild animal trade in India.
  - Legal initiatives have to be supported and bolstered in prosecuting traders of wild animals who fail to adhere to guidelines and legislation.
  - All CITES-listed species (native and non-native) need to be included in the amended version of the WPA 1972.
  - Bolster the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act and institute the Pet Shop Breeding Rules and Aquarium Breeding Rules with their CITES components.
  - Special mobile units need to be created for monitoring the health of animals used in the pet trade.
  - Awareness campaigns need to be conducted in the mass media to focus attention on the nature of the wild animal pet trade and its ramifications for conservation.



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TRAFFIC can help in achieving the above by providing logistical and technical support, enhanced capacity building initiatives, assistance through the CITES cell, of which TRAFFIC is a member, of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, raising awareness and proving input for legal review processes. These are already an integral part of the mandate of TRAFFIC in India.

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**Table 1: Indian bird species reported in the pet trade and their legal protection**

Common name	Scientific name	WPA 1972 schedule listing
Parakeet	<i>Psittacula spp</i>	IV
Munias	<i>Lonchura and Amandava spp</i>	IV
Hill Mynah	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>	I
Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	IV
Red-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza bruniceps</i>	IV

**Table 2: Non-native bird species reported in the pet trade in India and their legal protection**

Common name	Scientific name	CITES appendix listing
Scarlet Macaw	<i>Ara macao</i>	Appendix I
Sulphur Crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>	Appendix II
Crimson Rosella	<i>Platycercus elegans</i>	Appendix II
Golden Conure	<i>Guaruba guarouba</i>	Appendix I
Red Crested Touraco	<i>Tauraco erythrolophus</i>	Appendix II

**Table 3: Exotic animal species reported in the pet trade in India and their legal protection**

Common name	Scientific name	CITES appendix listing
Common marmoset	<i>Callithrix jacchus</i>	Appendix II
Chimpanzee	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	Appendix I
Sugar Glider	<i>Petaurus breviceps</i>	Not listed
Brown Capuchin Monkey	<i>Cebus appella</i>	Appendix II
Ball Python	<i>Python regius</i>	Appendix II



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## WILD CRY

(Illegal wildlife trade threatens the future of many species in the wild. This section highlights the plight of one such species in trade)

## Weaved in illegal wildlife trade, future for Bayas appears bleak

Abrar Ahmed, Bird Trade Expert



© Abrar Ahmed

The export and domestic trade in wild birds in India was banned in 1990-91. However, despite more than two decades of this blanket ban, a large number of wild birds are trapped and sold throughout India. In fact, the bird trade is one of the most extensive forms of wildlife trade in India, especially in terms of species diversity and volume (Ahmed 2004). According to studies conducted by TRAFFIC and WWF-India over the years, at least 450 bird species have been found in illegal trade. These birds are primarily caught and exploited for the pet, food or meat trades; merit-release; black magic; medicinal value; feather trade; lab specimens; zoos and bird sport (Ahmed 1997, 2002, 2008, 2010 and 2012).

As there is no restriction on sale of exotic/foreign bird species within India, a lot of Indian birds are often disguised and fraudulently sold as exotics (Ahmed 1999). For instance, males of native weaver birds are often dyed and sold as exotic birds (Ahmed 1999). In Indian culture, the keeping of weaver birds or bayas or their nests has been considered auspicious.

**Species found in India:** Four species of weaver birds or bayas belonging to the family Ploceidae are found in India (Ali & Ripley 1987), namely the Baya Weaver (Common Baya or Indian Weaver) *Ploceus philippinus*; Streaked Weaver *Ploceus manyar*; Black-breasted Weaver (Black-throated Weaver Bird) *Ploceus benghalensis*; and Finn's Weaver (Finn's Baya or Yellow Weaver) *Ploceus megarhynchus*.

Weaver birds are resident, highly gregarious, small sparrow sized birds ( $\geq 15$  cm), popularly known for their excellent nest-weaving skills. During the monsoon season these birds build a vertical oval nest with a side entrance (tunnels). All weaver birds have a breeding and non-breeding plumage. The males acquire a distinctive breeding plumage having a yellow crown, head and breast ornamentation. However during the non-breeding season, the males become brown and streaky, similar in appearance to females.

**Distribution:** The Baya Weaver, Streaked Weaver and Black-throated Weaver are all common Indian resident birds. Finn's Weaver is only found in India and Nepal (Ahmed 2012).

**Status:**

**Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule IV (The Act prohibits hunting, trade and any other form of exploitation of the species in India)

**CITES:** None of the species are listed

**IUCN:** Finn's Weaver – Vulnerable, the other species all Least Concern.

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**Threat:** All Indian weaver birds are found in the bird trade. A study by TRAFFIC (Ahmed 1997) found that the three species other than Finn's Weaver were among the top 10 traded wild bird species (by number of individuals) in northern India, contributing 6% of the total wild bird trade in India. Baya Weaver is the most commonly trapped, followed by the Black-throated and Streaked Weavers (Ahmed 2002).

At the time when the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 was formulated, the trade and export of all weaver birds except Finn's Baya was allowed. The amendment to this Act in 1978 restricted trade in the Black-throated Weaver allowing only trade in Baya and Streaked Weavers until the blanket ban on trade in all Indian bird species was imposed in 1990-91. According to CITES annual reports, 20 309 weaver birds belonging to three species were officially exported from India from 1983 to 1990. As per the TRAFFIC surveys between 1992 to 2001 at least 21 829 weaver birds of the four species was recorded in trade. A minimum of 1265 weaver birds of three species were seized in 21 raids contributing to nearly 2% of the seized birds between 1994 to 2001 (Ahmed 2002). In India, during the summer months, breeding males of all weaver bird species (along with females) are caught for the cage bird trade since they acquire their nuptial (breeding) plumage during these months. However the non-breeding adults and females are caught and sold for food and for bird release activities throughout the year.

As per the surveys conducted by TRAFFIC, the majority of weaver birds traded for food were recorded in Bihar, Jharkhand and Indo-Nepal border along Uttar Pradesh apart from several places in Tripura, Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Southern India. The trade in weaver birds was a common sight in some markets such as Patna's famous bird market – *Mirshikar toli*. Hawkers sold hundreds of weaver birds as "*Bagheri*", the price ranging from INR 150 to 300 for a dozen (*Bagheri* is a technical term for small bird meat in eastern India that involves meat of sparrows, pipits, larks, wagtails, buntings and similar sized birds that are primarily migratory).

The breeding males of various weaver birds are sold throughout the country, sometimes by dyeing them various colours (using vegetable dyes) to make them look exotic and attractive as coloured birds are usually preferred by buyers. They are also dyed to prevent detection as wild native birds by enforcement agencies (Ahmed 1999). Most of the weaverbirds are caught by traditional bird trapping tribes, namely by Pardi, Passi-Baheliya, Mirshikar, Jabjali and Pathami trappers. They are usually trapped using a funnel net from their roosting spots (as they roost in large congregations) in Typha grass or sugarcane fields. Between 500 to 600 weaver birds are sometimes caught in a single night. In winter weaver birds are caught by baiting or using clap-traps.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India suggests there is a need for stricter enforcement action especially at the open selling points across India. There is also a need to sharpen the identification skills of enforcement agencies so that they can distinguish between native weaver birds and dyed specimens disguised to look exotic. To assist with this, TRAFFIC has produced a poster on weaver birds in India that will help identification of males/females and dyed weaver birds in trade. "We hope that the poster is used effectively by the agencies and a crackdown on open illegal trade is undertaken immediately," said Dr Niraj.

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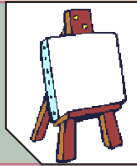


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MARCH 2015

# TRAFFIC Post

TRAFFIC Post is TRAFFIC's newsletter on wildlife trade in India. It started in September 2007 with a primary objective to create awareness about poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India.

Illegal wildlife trade is reportedly the third largest global illegal trade after arms and narcotics. It has evolved itself into an organized activity threatening the future of many wildlife species.

TRAFFIC Post was born out of the need to reach out to various stakeholders including decision makers, enforcement officials, judiciary and consumers about the extent of illegal wildlife trade in India and the damaging effect it could be having on the endangered flora and fauna.

Since its inception, TRAFFIC Post has highlighted pressing issues related to illegal wildlife trade in India and globally, flagged early trends, and illuminated wildlife policies and laws. It has also focused on the status of legal trade in various medicinal plant and timber species that need sustainable management for ensuring ecological and economic success.

TRAFFIC Post comes out three times in the year and is available both online and in print. You can subscribe to it by writing to **trafficind@wwfindia.net**

All issues of TRAFFIC Post can be viewed at **www.trafficindia.org**

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*Gloriosa superba* : **Amit Kotia**

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# From the Desk



On one hand we have good news of a 30% increase in the Tiger population in India, which is phenomenal. On the other, rhino poaching has returned with a vengeance since 2013, at least it seems that way.

**Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj,  
Head of TRAFFIC India Office**

I do not take pride in reporting that the New Year does not start on a good note as far as wildlife crime is concerned, more so globally, but also in India. What worries me the most is the state of confusion at policy levels. On one hand we have good news of a 30% increase in the Tiger population in India, which is phenomenal. On the other, rhino poaching has returned with a vengeance since 2013, at least it seems that way.

In an editorial a few issues ago, I reported that leopards are fast substituting Tigers in illegal trade and an associated elasticity was recorded in increasing demand of leopard as the demand for tiger went increasing, which was in turn associated with an increasing per capita income in countries of resource and in destination countries. This followed a sharp increase in leopard poaching, manifested by an increased frequency of seizures of leopards' parts and derivatives during recent months stand true to this prediction.

This is indeed a difficult situation. The effect of substitution may be affecting several other species we currently do not know about. If this is true, where is the opportunity to rejoice at the phenomenal growth rate achieved for Tigers since 2010?

Describing flagship species, such as Tiger and leopard, and the poaching association between them certainly does not complete the story by any means. There is a large number of species, smaller entities, whose life histories are not so well-known that are speedily being lost to the illegal trade.

There appear to be bleak chances that many of them will survive for a reasonable length of time. The list of such species is long, but to name a few that top the list, they include pangolins, Bengal, Yellow Monitor and Spiny-tailed Lizards, freshwater otters, civets, cats including Jungle, Fishing and Rusty-spotted, Slender and Slow Lorises, Jackal, the Red Sand Boa among snakes, and Hill Mynah and owls among the birds. Many of these species are taken from the wild for feeding a rising domestic trade

in bushmeat and an apparently ever rising black magic trade involving wildlife in this country.

What is paradoxical is that as the country ascends into a "new and modern India", which is also supposed to be economically better off, individual greed for making it to big and rich in the quickest possible time is taking its own heavy toll on those smaller species. Apparently, science has taken a distant back seat in many minds. Some example will exemplify the happenings.



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In Tamil Nadu State certain communities trap the endemic Slender Loris, make it bite a coin, which is then kept as a charm around the neck of the child to stave off ill omens. Well, this sounds less sordid than what certain other communities practice: extracting the eyes of a Slender Loris to sell to people who keep them near their sleeping children in the belief that this will sharpen their eyesight and make them brighter.



Nonetheless, the TRAFFIC network in India has risen to the occasion with a deeper understanding of the ground realities and has been instrumental in conducting a historic high of 119 enforcement interventions for the year 2014 at roughly 10 interventions per month, which also led to aversions of several poaching cases and seizures of several live species and

animal body parts, including ivory, skins, claws, scales and bones. Various TRAFFIC assisted raids have led to the arrest of over 100 poachers and illegal wildlife traffickers.

There are also certain communities in North India who sacrifice an owl by cutting it limb by limb, expecting in return for this sacrifice a prosperous windfall for their families. There is a belief that sacrificing a heavier owl will fetch a greater fortune, hence may traders make the birds heavier by infusing mercury or other metals into them. A phenomenal growth in the price of Red Sand Boas in illegal wildlife markets is driven by a deep belief in black magic, particularly among certain people who want to believe themselves destined to be rich or powerful. The result is that we find a distortion in the socio-economic fabric within India when young students having passed out from premier engineering, medical and other professional colleges end up indulging in trading of high priced species, such as Red Sand Boas, Star Tortoises and Tokay Geckos.

In the first six months of 2014 TRAFFIC assisted with classified information on 51 interventions, a huge rise of 700% compared to the second half of 2013. The momentum was kept up for the second half of 2014, which has recorded a 33% rise compared to the first half of 2014. TRAFFIC took a special pride in providing an outstanding contribution for protection of rhinos in Assam with significant information management and field level assistance leading to a 25% decrease in poaching of One-horned Rhinos in 2014 compared to 2013.

The emerging situation obviously calls for stronger planning and greater inputs of resources to match the upcoming challenges. The “new and modern India” is going to pose several new challenges not only for flagship species, but for several other lesser known species too. But where are we? The beginning of the financial year 2015-16 has somewhat dampened the thoughts if we look closely at the current budget statement of the Union government. There has been a cut of budget allocated to the Union Ministry for Forest, Wildlife and Climate Change of nearly 25% compared with the fiscal year of 2013-14. The government also announced a budget cut of 15% for Project Tiger, one of India's historically most prestigious umbrella conservation programmes.

The year 2015 has begun with new challenges, new paradoxes, and a strong resolve. But enhanced resource allocation is required to control a globally and locally rising illegal wildlife trade.

# 01

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## **TRAFFIC India Update**

- 1. India to double its wildlife sniffer dog brigade**
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## India to double its wildlife sniffer dog brigade

India's wildlife sniffer dog brigade will soon get a major boost with the addition of 14 new dogs and 28 handlers that will join the ranks of the Forest Department of Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Karnataka in 2015. The dogs have been procured and are being trained under TRAFFIC's sniffer dog training programme at the Dog Training Centre, 23rd Battalion of Special Armed Forces, Bhopal.

TRAFFIC's dog training programme has had many early successes. Twelve sniffer dogs – German Shepherds – attached to the forest departments of Haryana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand have become leading examples of the use of sniffer dogs in wildlife crime prevention and detection in India. Use of the dogs has led to nearly 80 wildlife seizures in recent years and several have been widely acclaimed, including Jimmy, one of TRAFFIC's sniffer dog that was accorded a Certificate of Merit by the Governor of Madhya Pradesh in 2013. Jimmy has helped bust at least 25 wildlife poaching and smuggling cases.

Even though trained for sniffing out products such as Tiger and leopard bones and skins and bear bile, these sniffer dogs are also detecting other wildlife contraband such as ivory, deer meat, live bird species, Red Sand Boa, Blackbuck, hare, python, rat snake, porcupine and even weapons. They have been playing a huge role in wildlife investigation and prosecution.



India's wildlife is under grave danger from the ever increasing illegal wildlife trade. Poachers and traders are employing new tools and technologies to expand their illicit business and this is proving to be a major challenge for the forest department and other enforcement agencies. Use of sniffer dogs for wildlife crime prevention and detection has been employed as an effective tool and TRAFFIC has had experience in handling this in many countries across the globe".

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC, India office adds "India has a huge forest cover and with only 12 trained sniffer dogs and another 14 in training, pressure for protecting India's wildlife will remain immense on these four legged creatures. It is our vision that at least four to five dogs are deployed in each State in the next few years for boosting wildlife conservation and protection efforts."

"It is our vision that at least four to five dogs are deployed in each State in the next few years for boosting wildlife conservation and protection efforts."

Dr. Shekhar Niraj

To find out more about TRAFFIC's sniffer dog training programme in India, please visit [www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org).

## TRAFFIC breaks new grounds at Coimbatore wildlife law enforcement training workshop

A wildlife law enforcement capacity building training workshop organized by TRAFFIC in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Forest Department and WWF-India on 21-22 November 2014 at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu was a roaring success and the latest in a series of workshops spanning seven years.

For the first time, enforcement officials from the three adjoining States in the south-west of the country (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala) came together to receive hands-on training in detecting wildlife poaching and controlling wildlife crime scenes. One hundred and twenty officials from the departments of Police, Forests, Customs, Railway Protection Forces, Special Task Force, and the Postal Department, participated in the training workshop clearly indicating the wide interest in wildlife protection and conservation.

"The threat from poaching for illegal trade in this region is largely due to its geographical location at the junction of three States where poachers have the opportunity to operate across provincial borders," said Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India

"This capacity building programme was organized with a specific view to strengthening protection of animals including the Tiger, Leopard, Elephants, bears plus several lesser known species that inhabit this rich yet vulnerable biodiversity hotspot of the Western Ghats. Together, the three States are home to seven Tiger Reserves," he further added.

Almost 80 participants took part in a half-day field session, during which four mock crime scenes were investigated in the forested campus of the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy where the workshop took place.

Participants also received training on the detection of crime relating to plant and timber species, learning, for example, how to detect illegal felling and how to assess plant diversity using a quadrant method, while further practical training was given on the use of modern technology such as deep search metal detectors for locating snares.

Training sessions were also conducted on the use of cyber forensics, intelligence collection and collation, species identification, DNA fingerprinting and wildlife forensics, and sessions on legislation and jurisprudence toward achieving higher conviction rate.

Experts assisting with the crime scene simulations included trained officials from the Special Task Force from Tamil Nadu, scientists from Madras Forensic laboratory and a Madras High Court lawyer.

The novel approaches introduced during the latest meeting have led to a flood of requests for similar training programmes to be conducted elsewhere in the country, including a special request from the Commissioner of Police, Coimbatore, Mr A. K. Vishwanathan, for a training programme for senior police officials from districts in the Western Ghats region. TRAFFIC also organized similar training programmes at:

**Amravati, Maharashtra** on 9-10 May 2014 for the Forest Department of Melghat Tiger Reserve, Police, Special Task Force and Intelligence Department (DRI). The total number of participants at this workshop was 75.

**Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh** on 11-12 June 2014 for the Forest Department of Achanakmar Tiger reserve, Civil administration, Territorial Forest Department, civil administration and Judiciary. The total number of participants at this workshop was 91.

## South Asia strengthens co-operation, moves a step closer to eradicating wildlife crime

The eight South Asian countries met in August 2014 at the second annual meeting of the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) in Kathmandu, Nepal to finalize the SAWEN Statute and update their collaborative roadmap for fighting wildlife crime in South Asia.

“Strengthening transboundary co-operation and collaboration for intra-country law enforcement initiatives through intelligence sharing on poaching and trade trends, along with exchanging knowledge and skill for fighting wildlife crime across South Asia” was the unequivocal concern of the representatives of the South Asian countries at the meeting that was held from 26-29 August 2014.

The meeting was particularly successful in adopting the SAWEN Statute and beginning an intense process for developing an action plan for the next six years. The Statute clearly details the vision, goal, objectives and the crucial role that SAWEN will play in combating wildlife crime in the region. The Statute, endorsed by member country delegates to the meeting, will now await the final endorsement from the Governments of the eight South Asian countries.

Delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, joined various inter-governmental organizations, international and regional organizations working on matters of wildlife trade and international policies at this important meeting. A number of international donors including the World Bank, USAID and the US Department of State also participated.



Useful inputs were provided by the global conservation communities in support of the eight member countries and the SAWEN Secretariat. This included INTERPOL, the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), The World Bank, TRAFFIC, WWF Tigers Alive Initiative and WWF-Nepal.

The meeting provided a practical platform for sharing experiences, discussing common issues, reviewing performances, and enhancing collaboration with various partners and donors for combating wildlife crime in the region. This included lessons learned by the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network and suggestions from the CITES Management Authority of China in terms of collaboration and support to SAWEN.

**“Strengthening transboundary co-operation and collaboration for intra-country law enforcement initiatives through intelligence sharing on poaching and trade trends, along with exchanging knowledge and skill for fighting wildlife crime across South Asia” was the unequivocal concern of the representatives of the South Asian countries”.**



Mr Megh Bahadur Pandey, Chief Enforcement Coordinator of SAWEN said at the meeting: “Minimizing illegal wildlife trade from South Asia is crucial to the conservation of wildlife in the region. Countries cannot fight highly organized and globalized wildlife criminals in isolation and need to collaborate and co-operate with other countries and partners”.

He further added: “We are overwhelmed to see the support that has come from all South Asian countries and international partners to strengthen the initiatives of SAWEN and help it achieve its mandate. The approved Statute will allow it to work as an independent institution working in tandem with the goals and objectives of the eight South Asian countries for fighting wildlife crime”.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC, India office also said at the meeting, “ The push from the SAWEN member countries places the region firmly in the spotlight of a growing international commitment to dealing with increasingly organized illegal wildlife trade networks as part of a broader strategic approach to combat transnational organized crime”.

He further emphasized the role that NGOs like TRAFFIC can play in collecting targeted information to assist law enforcement agencies to dismantle poaching networks, as illustrated by TRAFFIC’s assistance in breaking rhino poaching rings and to prevent poaching and trade in endangered species in India.

The Second Annual Meeting was jointly organized by the SAWEN Secretariat in collaboration with the Government of Nepal, with the support of INTERPOL (through financial support from USAID), TRAFFIC (through financial support from US Department of State), Nepal’s National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), and WWF Nepal.

# TRAFFIC rolls out social media campaign on illegal trade in lesser known non-charismatic species



The growing demand for wildlife from India has been threatening the future existence of not only the Tiger, Elephant, Rhino and various other flagship species but also of pangolins, monitor lizards, Tokay Gecko, turtles and tortoises, birds, corals, sea cucumbers and many more such species whose plight has remained largely under the radar. Credible studies have indicated that the global illegal wildlife trade is worth at least USD 19 billion per year.

In February 2015, TRAFFIC, in partnership with WWF-India and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) launched a social media campaign to create awareness and divert efforts towards curbing illegal trade in three lesser known non-charismatic wildlife species – pangolins, owls and mongoose.

The one-month campaign by TRAFFIC's India office on Facebook and Twitter, was successful in reaching out to a large audience that visit social media forums for information, networking and recreation.

The campaign was initially launched with a target to reach out to 10,000 individuals however this was successfully achieved within the first few days of the launch. On Facebook the campaign helped in reaching out to 13 00 000 individuals while on Twitter we reached over 23 000.

The campaign titled **“Preserving the future: Stop illegal wildlife trade”** carried a serious message regarding unabated poaching and smuggling in species that are lesser known and could silently become extinct one day due to their poaching and illegal trade.

On World Pangolin Day, 21 February 2014, the Indonesian National Police, WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society), and TRAFFIC shared a video of one of the largest pangolin seizures ever in Indonesia that took place in 2008 when the Indonesian National Police Criminal Investigation Bureau Police raided the warehouse of a suspected illegal wildlife trader in the city of Palembang in South Sumatra and recovered more than 14 tonnes of Malayan Pangolins *Manis javanica*.





The pangolins were later burned by the authorities in August 2008, as seen in the video.

Every year in India, hundreds of pangolins, lizards and tortoises are poached, an estimated 700,000 birds are illegally trapped, and about 70,000 tonnes of sharks are caught, yet the levels of exploitation of these species are rarely reported. This large scale exploitation along with minimal information about their population status and poaching and smuggling trends has put the future of these lesser known species in doubt.

Pangolins are highly threatened because they are subject to a colossal illegal trade internationally, yet their plight is little publicized in conservation or media circles. Others, like the monitor lizard, mongoose, Star Tortoises, Spiny-tailed Lizards, freshwater and marine turtles also need immediate attention.

Monitor lizards, especially the Bengal Monitor, were once commonly seen across the country but appear to have declined markedly, apparently after becoming a target of unabated poaching and illegal trade.

“TRAFFIC has flagged its concern about these lesser known species for some time, highlighting our concerns in our newsletter—TRAFFIC Post—and now through this social media campaign. TRAFFIC is also working toward bringing together various stakeholders including enforcement agencies and NGOs to divert attention and focus towards conservation of such species,” adds Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj.



## TRAFFIC highlights illegal shark trade at CITES workshop in Chennai

**T**RAFFIC participated at the Bay of Bengal Capacity Building Workshop on CITES Appendix II Listings of Shark and Manta Ray Species held in Chennai, India from 26- 28 August 2014 and highlighted the illegal trade in shark and ray species in India and the protection provided to these species under Indian legislation.

The workshop was hosted by the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, in co-operation with the C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre, Chennai, and Humane Society International. Government representatives from CITES and fisheries authorities from the entire Bay of Bengal region (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand), which constitutes a significant shark-fishing area, engaged in active discussions at the meeting. The representatives from a number of coastal States of India were also present to learn about the CITES measures in place and to discuss their challenges and needs in implementing the new CITES listings at the sub-national level.

Shubhobroto Ghosh from TRAFFIC's India office delivered a presentation on Overview of protections afforded to shark and ray species under Indian legislation and highlighted the existing legislation

“According to a joint study conducted by TRAFFIC and PEW, India is the world's second largest shark fishing nation”.

He stated that the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 offers protection to 10 species of sharks, rays and sawfishes. According to a joint study conducted by TRAFFIC and PEW, India is the world's second largest shark fishing nation. Further, he stated that despite these protections there is a discernible growth in shark trade.

He pointed out that the need for stronger legislation in India for sharks in the absence of adequate data on shark fisheries, absence of a comprehensive NPOA (National Plan of Action) for sharks and lack of a CITES component in India's Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

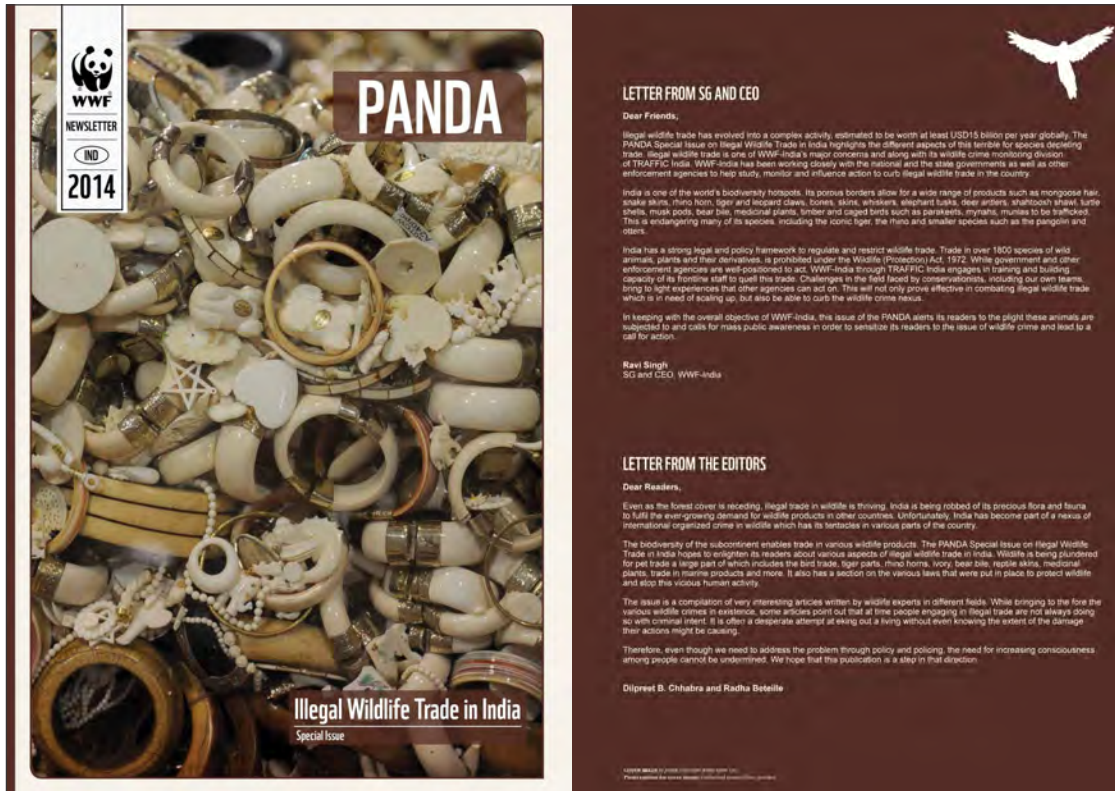
He stressed the urgent need for creation of the NPOA for all the neighbouring member countries which would take care of concerns over shark listings and their protection.

Read more at

[http://cites.org/eng/chennai\\_sharks\\_workshop](http://cites.org/eng/chennai_sharks_workshop)



# WWF-India's latest PANDA magazine illuminates illegal wildlife trade



Illegal wildlife trade has evolved into a complex activity and India being one of the world's biodiversity hotspots has emerged as a potential source country. The porous borders of India along with various gaps in wildlife law enforcement allow various protected species of wildlife and their parts to be trafficked.

In order to highlight this grave threat to endangered wildlife, WWF-India in partnership with TRAFFIC published a PANDA Special Issue on illegal wildlife trade. The publication was a composition of articles from wildlife experts across India on the various aspects of illegal wildlife trade.

The issues covered included an overview of pet trade in India, bird trade, marine trade, trade in medicinal plants, live elephant trade, hunting in north-east India, role of

forensics in curbing illegal wildlife trade, use of sniffer dogs in court of law, introduction to wildlife laws in India and TRAFFIC's initiatives to curb illegal wildlife trade in India.

The guest authors for the publication included –Manoj Sarkar – an Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest Tamil Nadu, Jose Louies from Wildlife Trust of India, Neha Sinha from Bombay Natural History Society, Mukesh Thakur from Wildlife Institute of India, Saurabh Sharma – a High Court and Supreme Court lawyer, Deepak Samuel from the United Nations Development Programme, Sonali Ghosh – Deputy Director Manas Tiger Reserve, Shekhar Kumar Niraj- Head of TRAFFIC in India, Shubhobroto Ghosh and Dilpreet B. Chhabra from TRAFFIC in India. To download the copy of the PANDA Special Issue, please visit [http://www.wwfindia.org/news\\_facts/wwf\\_publications/panda/?12101/Panda-Special-Issue#](http://www.wwfindia.org/news_facts/wwf_publications/panda/?12101/Panda-Special-Issue#)

## Meet the team: TRAFFIC's new members in the India office

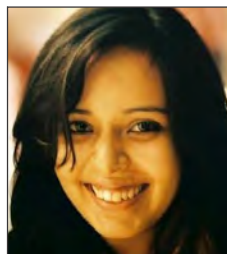


### **Mohnish Kapoor – Senior Programme Officer**

Mohnish's main role is to co-ordinate and implement TRAFFIC's programmes in India. He will also be responsible for developing new projects under TRAFFIC's strategic vision in India and will assist in identifying and

building human resource capacity for various projects and tasks. He will remain involved in technical reporting, publications and enhancing capacity building training modules.

Mohnish obtained his Masters of Science (Biodiversity and Conservation), from Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi, where he was a Gold Medalist. Subsequently, he has undertaken a short-term professional training course on Species Conservation and monitoring - "Terrestrial Mammals" at the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation, Virginia, USA. He possesses over two years of experience working with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Indian Wildlife Business Council (CII-World Bank partnership) and Cities International. Additionally, he has eight months of Masters internship experience in the Chilla and Shyampur range of Rajaji National Park with the Wildlife Institute of India. Mohnish can be reached at [mkapoor@wwfindia.net](mailto:mkapoor@wwfindia.net)



### **Shaleen Attre – Programme Officer, Research and Communications**

Shaleen's primary role will be to help TRAFFIC work on India's position in CITES as well as build a repository of CITES and policy related matters. She will also be in charge of designing and

compiling a new newsletter focused on wildlife laws and policy matters. She will also be in charge of designing and compiling a new newsletter focused on wildlife laws and policy matters. She will also be responsible for creating an online interactive repository/forum for enforcement officials as an extension of TRAFFIC's capacity building initiatives.

She will work on TRAFFIC presence on social networking sites and assist in building awareness campaigns. Liaising with the media is also part of her profile.

Having lived in different places for half her life as an army child, Shaleen finished her schooling from New Delhi – the city she was born in – and did her Bachelors and Masters in English Literature at the University of Delhi. Shaleen has volunteered and worked with various animal welfare/conservation organizations, over the past decade, along with being a copywriter and content strategist in the new media sector. Prior to joining WWF-India, she was working as a Project Officer, Awareness for Conservation (Communications) with the Wildlife Trust of India. Shaleen can be reached at [sattre@wwfindia.net](mailto:sattre@wwfindia.net)



### **Amar Nath Choudhary – Programme Officer (Data Analysis)**

Amar Nath has been working with TRAFFIC since March 2014 as a part-time consultant conducting data compilation on wildlife offences, including poaching and seizures, and conducting scientific analysis of raw

and field data collected by TRAFFIC on wildlife crime in India. He was taken on as a full time staff member in October 2014 and since then he has been responsible for conducting scientific analyses of field information using multiple software packages and also has been maintaining the database for TRAFFIC in India. He will also assist in technical reporting & publications as well as work on developing and improving the analysis component of projects.

He has obtained his BCA from IGNOU and is currently pursuing a MCA through a distance learning mode. He has an experience of 3.5 years in managing & maintaining databases and analytical & graphical reporting. Amar Nath is proficient in STATA, SQL, Oracle, MS Access databases and Visual Basic 6.0, .net, C, C++, Core Java languages, besides others. Amar Nath can be contacted at [amar@wwfindia.net](mailto:amar@wwfindia.net)

# 02

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## **Outpost**

- 1: Myanmar, a gateway for illegal trade in Tigers and other wild cats to China**
- 2: TRAFFIC's latest study sounds the alarm on Asia's ongoing widespread bear trade**

## Myanmar, a gateway for illegal trade in Tigers and other wild cats to China

All Asian big cat species are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and by national laws in their native countries.



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Latest studies conducted by TRAFFIC and Oxford Brookes University have found that the trade in Tigers and other wild cat parts from Myanmar into China has grown in recent years while the same trade into Thailand has diminished.

Trade in Tigers and other wild cats in Mong La and Tachilek, Myanmar – a tale of two border towns, published in Biological Conservation in December 2014, studied information gathered from 19 separate surveys of wild cat trade in Tachilek between 1991 and 2013 and seven surveys between 2001 and 2014 in Mong La.

Through the surveys it was found that in Tachilek on the Myanmar-Thailand border, shops selling wild cat parts including Tiger and Leopard skins and skulls, fell from 35 in 2000, to just six in 2013. However in Mong La, at the China border, such shops more than trebled from six in 2006, to 21 in 2014. Mong La caters almost entirely to customers from China.

The two markets are situated on international borders and serve as sources for illegal cross-border trade. Most of the cat parts on sale were claws, skulls, canine teeth and skins. In total, over 2,000 wild cat parts, the majority of them skins, were recorded during the surveys.

Although the dynamics of the trade in wild cat parts differed in the two border towns, in both Clouded Leopard *Neofelis nebulosi* parts were the species most often seen in trade. Clouded Leopard parts were observed in all but two of the surveys, representing at least 482 individuals. Other wild cat species commonly found in trade over the decades included Leopard Cat *Prionailurus bengalensis*, Leopard *Panthera pardus*, Tiger *Panthera tigris* and the Asiatic Golden Cat *Catopuma temmincki*.

Traders in both towns claimed that Tiger and Leopard products were mainly sourced from Myanmar and India.

Previous studies reported that large cat skins and bones on sale in Tachilek also originated from Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Smaller species were said all to be sourced from Myanmar.

Authors Dr Chris R. Shepherd Regional Director for TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia, and Dr Vincent Nijman, Professor of Anthropology at Oxford Brookes University argue that the decrease in Tachilek could be due to greater enforcement action in Thailand while the increase in Mong La may be linked to the rising buying power of China's consumers.

The authors urged more effective enforcement and prosecution of wildlife criminals in Myanmar and called on neighbouring source and consumer countries to allocate more resources to ramp up existing efforts to clamp down on illegal wildlife trade.

Read more at

<http://www.traffic.org/home/2014/12/22/myanmar-a-gateway-for-illegal-trade-in-tigers-and-other-wild.html>

# TRAFFIC's latest study sounds the alarm on Asia's ongoing widespread bear trade

2,800 bears were poached in Asia for illegal wildlife trade in a 12-year period, finds TRAFFIC



**T**RAFFIC's study on illegal trade in bears and their parts over a 12-year period has found that at least 2,800 bears were poached in Asia. The study, released in August 2014, was based on analysis of close to 700 seizures and revealed that a minimum of 2,801 individual bears would have been traded for their parts and derivatives between 2000 and 2011.

The findings have been published in *—Brought to Bear: an Analysis of Seizures across Asia (2000-2011)* which studied bear seizures made over a 12-year period in 17 countries and territories across Asia and found that a staggering illegal trade in bears and their parts persists in the region. The majority of reported seizures involved Cambodia (190), China (145), Viet Nam (102), Russia (59), Malaysia (38), Thailand (29), Lao PDR (29) and India (23).

Bears are traded for a wide range of reasons including live bears to stock bile farms and for the pet or dancing bear trade. Bears are also trafficked for their parts, meat, skins and trophies while their gall bladders and bile are used to manufacture traditional medicines.

The cross-border trade in live bears and their parts and derivatives violates national laws throughout the region as well as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Russia and China alone accounted for 69% of the trade volume equating to a minimum of 1,934 bears, primarily due to the seizure of over 6,000 bear paws. Such significant seizures in Russia and along the border with China suggest a prolific trade in bears and their parts between the two countries. Important cross border trade routes identified by the analysis

include Nepal to India, Lao PDR to Viet Nam and China, Myanmar to China and Thailand and Viet Nam to Japan and Singapore. The confiscation of live bears accounted for 15% of all seizures, making it the second most commonly seized bear parts after paws.

"The number of seizures are a credit to the enforcement agencies, but they undoubtedly only stop a fraction of the overall trafficking because bear products are still widely and easily available across Asia," said Dr Chris R. Shepherd, Regional Director of TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia.

The report recommends improved regional law enforcement efforts, the consistent submission of seizure reports to CITES and for the closure of bear farms stocked with illegally-sourced wild bears.

Read more at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2014/8/21/parts-of-2800-bears-seized-in-asia-over-a-12-year-period.html>

# 03

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## CITES Update

1: New shark fin identification tool released



## New shark fin identification tool released

The Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), has welcomed the release of a new software package for the identification of shark fins. The software application called **iSharkFin** is an innovative system that uses machine learning techniques to identify shark species from shark fin shapes.

The software has been developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the University of Vigo with financial support of the Government of Japan and the CITES Secretariat – using funds provided by the European Union.

The iSharkFin is an interactive process where users take a standard photograph, select some characteristics of a fin and choose a few points on the fin shape, iSharkFin will automatically analyse the information, and identify the shark species from which the fin originated. iSharkFin is available for the identification of 35 shark species from dorsal fins and 7 species from pectoral fins, all from species commonly seen in international trade, including some species listed in the CITES Appendices. Further species will be added to the system. You can download the software and the accompanying manual at <http://www.fao.org/fishery/ipoa-sharks/iSharkFin/en>

**New CITES rules for sharks and manta rays:** From 14 September 2014, international trade in specimens of five shark species and all manta ray species, including their meat, gills and fins, needs to be accompanied by permits and certificates confirming that they have been sourced legally. These new controls adopted by CITES will apply to the Oceanic Whitetip Shark *Carcharhinus longimanus*, Scalloped Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna lewini*, Great Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna mokarran*, Smooth Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna zygaena*, Porbeagle Shark *Lamna nasus* and Manta rays *Manta* spp. as they are now included in CITES Appendix II.





# 1

## Peacock feathers seized from a passenger in Kerala

**O**n 16 September 2014, peacock feathers weighing 29.8 kg were seized by Customs officials from a Singapore-bound passenger at Kochi airport, Kerala. The feathers were found concealed inside towels in the checked in baggage of the man hailing from Chennai, just as he was about to board the flight early that morning.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

In India, the Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. However, there is an exemption for domestic trade in peacock feathers and the animal articles or trophies made therefrom as per Sec. 43 (3)a of the Act. Export of Indian peacock feathers is prohibited under the Export Import policy of the Government of India as well as under the WPA 1972.

Tail feathers of the male Indian Peafowl are in high demand for use for religious and ornamental use in domestic markets in India and also as a decorative item / handicraft in international markets. The high visibility of peacock tail feathers in domestic markets across the country has occasionally raised questions about the possible source of such feathers. Peacock feathers are shed annually at the end of their breeding season and it is generally considered it is these feathers that enter into trade – however this assumption has been questioned at various levels. The scenario is further complicated by periodic reports of peafowls being killed, many at a time, for their meat but also possibly for their feathers.

As a result, there is a considerable debate regarding the nature of this activity and whether on-going trade has any implication for the conservation of the species. TRAFFIC is currently conducting field-based trade research on the dynamics of the peacock feather trade in India. The organization regularly provides its findings to the concerned government agencies for policy reviews.

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# 2

## Twenty two poachers arrested in two years in Mizoram

At least 22 persons have been arrested for poaching in Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram over the last two years. This includes seven people from the Bru community and six from the Chakma community. Seventeen people have been convicted and punished under the relevant sections of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Forest officials have seized 26 guns, including 11 indigenous firearms, 9 SBBL guns and two .22 rifles from the poachers. The Dampa Tiger Reserve's Field Director Lalitlanhlua Zathang said that the Chakma poachers mainly hunted pangolins for their scales, while Bru hunters hunted wild animals for food.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

TRAFFIC congratulates the efforts of the enforcement agencies including the Forest and the Police departments for cracking down on the poaching gangs in the State. Mizoram, a north eastern State of India preserves a wide variety of rare species of flora and fauna. It is unfortunate to see the involvement of the local community in illegal wildlife trade in the region. Pangolins are a protected species in India and are in great demand for their scales and meat in international markets. Reports indicate that these scaly anteaters are being smuggled out of the country through Mizoram in large numbers.

Poaching continues to be a major threat to the existence of not only big cats but also other wildlife in India. TRAFFIC has identified various gaps in the enforcement initiatives across India for effective wildlife law enforcement. For this, TRAFFIC works with enforcement agencies in and around Tiger reserves and wildlife sanctuaries to strengthen protection and prosecution. To date, more than 3,000 individuals have been trained through TRAFFIC's capacity building programmes. TRAFFIC also helps in gathering intelligence from the field and after thorough vetting, passes it on to relevant enforcement agencies for requisite action. With help from TRAFFIC there have been 119 interventions to deal with poaching cases across the country in 2014. TRAFFIC continues to push for more effective enforcement measures across the country and has helped to tackle poaching of big cats and rhinos in Kaziranga.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/training-to-detect-poachers/article6626956.ece>



# 3 Three hundred and sixty Star tortoises seized in West Bengal

The Border Security Force (BSF) has seized 360 Indian Star Tortoises from West Bengal, while they were being smuggled to Bangladesh. They were seized on 23 August 2014 from Gunrajpur border outpost in North 24 Parganas district by troopers of the BSF 40th battalion. Noticing movement of a suspicious person carrying two small haversacks and going towards Bangladesh, the troopers challenged him. While the man managed to flee by jumping into a river, the tortoises were recovered on checking the haversacks.

## TRAFFIC adds.....



The trade in Star Tortoises has been continuously monitored by TRAFFIC. At least 1,487 Star Tortoises were found in illegal wildlife trade in 2014, approximately 953 in 2013 and 483 in 2012.

In a report titled "Demand driven: The trade of Indian Star Tortoises *Geochelone elegans* in Peninsular Malaysia" published in 2004, TRAFFIC pointed out the Star Tortoise trade links between Malaysia and India.

Investigations undertaken by TRAFFIC at wildlife trade markets in Thailand and Indonesia also indicated that the Indian Star Tortoise is in the top three tortoise species traded. In India, the species is included in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and trade in it is banned. Its international trade is also restricted as the species is listed in Appendix II of CITES. Despite its legal protection, trade in the species apparently continues at a large scale.

Most of the Star Tortoises being smuggled are believed to be wild caught. However, a few reports indicate illegal captive breeding of the animals to augment the trade. TRAFFIC calls for more action in dealing with this trade, including tightening of security at smuggling points.

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<http://www.indianjungles.com/090607.htm>;  
Unpublished TRAFFIC report on Star Tortoises

# 4

## Man arrested with 10 kg of pangolin scales

The Wildlife Crime Control Unit of Kohima police arrested one person for smuggling pangolin scales on 20 February 2015 at Peducha Check Gate, Kohima. The seized pangolin scales were smuggled into Nagaland from Assam and were supposed to be delivered to a client in Manipur for export to Myanmar. Pangolin scales are used in the manufacture of traditional medicine, for which there is high demand in international markets.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Ten kilogrammes of pangolin scales account for at least six pangolins poached. Seizure reports from 2009-2013 in India have revealed that around 3,350 pangolins were poached in the country during this period. However, this may only be a conservative estimate as a large part of this trade presumably remains undetected.

In India, pangolins, are trapped not just for local trade but also to supply international markets in China and Southast Asia. Pangolin meat is considered a delicacy and as a "tonic food" because of its alleged medicinal properties. Pangolin scales are used as an ingredient in traditional Asian medicines to help breast feeding women lactate and cure ailments ranging from asthma and psoriasis to cancer, although there is a lack of evidence suggesting they are effective.

TRAFFIC is trying to raise awareness about the plight of this species in illegal wildlife trade in India. It is leading the initiative to bring together various enforcement and conservation organizations in India for diverting research and enforcement towards this lesser known wildlife species. TRAFFIC has recently run an awareness campaign that had helped in reaching out to over 13 00 000 individuals on Facebook and Twitter.

### Sources:

<http://www.morungexpress.com/local/128658.html>



# 04

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## **In Focus**

**Sonepur Fair once again on the wrong side of the wildlife law**

In  
Focus



## Sonepur Fair once again on the the wrong side of the wildlife law

**T**he world famous Sonepur Cattle Fair organized in the month of November every year in Sonepur, Bihar and believed to be the largest cattle fair of Asia, has become an open field for illicit trade in wildlife. Held on the full moon day (Kartick Poornima), the fair extends to 30 days and during this period traders from far and near come together to sell various species of endangered and legally protected birds and animals.

TRAFFIC's investigation of the Sonepur Fair in the year 2013 was published earlier in Issue 20 of this newsletter, TRAFFIC Post and was an eye opener for many agencies working in the field of wildlife conservation and protection. The findings had revealed several incidents of wildlife trade against the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India (WPA) clearly indicating that the renowned fair was on the wrong side of the law.

In the year 2014, TRAFFIC's investigation of the Sonepur Fair was further disheartening. Not only the illegal activities continued throughout the period of the Fair but the number of species recorded in trade at the Fair increased from the year 2013.

TRAFFIC investigators found 39 elephants including five tuskers and five calves in 2014, a marginal increase from 2013 when TRAFFIC observed 37 elephants including six tuskers and six calves. The capture and transportation of Asian Elephants to Sonepur appears to be a regular occurrence and a tradition that has been carrying for a while. As a Schedule I animal under Section 40 (2) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (WPA), it is prohibited to possess, acquire, dispose of or transport a captive elephant without the written permission of the Chief Wildlife Warden or the Authorized Officer under the WPA. Section 43 of the WPA restricts the sale, purchase or transfer of captive elephants from one person to another for monetary considerations or any other profitable gain (MoEF, 2010; Bist et al., 2001).

Besides the illegal trade in elephants at Sonepur Fair, there was another aspect that was in clear violation of the WPA. This was the on-going trade of indigenous birds at the bird market or Chiriya Bazaar at Sonepur Fair. In addition to the illegal trade of indigenous bird species at the bird market, many non-native (exotic) birds were also being sold.

In 2014, TRAFFIC observed trade in at least 26 species of Indian bird, which is prohibited under the WPA. In 2013 18 species of Indian bird were found in trade at Sonepur Fair.

Shubhobroto Ghosh, the principal investigator of the Sonepur Fair from TRAFFIC said, "Despite the increase in the number of species traded at the Fair in 2014, there seemed to be more awareness among the traders regarding their illicit activities. Traders of indigenous bird species were extremely hostile, covering their cages and physically obstructing views to prevent cameras from obtaining a clear view of the animals on display. We found at least 20,000 indigenous birds on display at any point of time at the Fair."

The table below presents a comparison between 2013 and 2014 for protected Indian bird species sold at the Fair-

SPECIES	Number observed in 2014	Number observed in 2013	WPA (SCHEDULE)
<b>Rose-ringed Parakeet</b> <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	7000	3000+	IV
<b>Alexandrine Parakeet</b> <i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	2500	1500+	IV
<b>Plum-headed Parakeet</b> <i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>	500+	300+	IV
<b>Red-breasted Parakeet</b> <i>Psittacula alexandri</i>	300+	50+	IV
<b>Spotted Dove</b> <i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>	150+	12	IV
<b>Hill Mynah</b> <i>Gracula religiosa</i>	200	30+	I
<b>Gold-fronted Chloropsis</b> <i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>	30	1	IV
<b>Himalayan Bulbul</b> <i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	15	5	IV
<b>Red-vented Bulbul</b> <i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	600	15	IV
<b>White-rumped Shama</b> <i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>	23	8	IV
<b>Red Munia</b> <i>Amandava amandava</i>	3000	1000+	IV
<b>Black-headed Munia</b> <i>Lonchura atricapilla</i>	6000	3000+	IV
<b>White-throated Munia</b> <i>Lonchura malabarica</i>	1000	600+	IV
<b>Spotted Munia</b> <i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	2000	1500+	IV
<b>Common Myna</b> <i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	1000	500	IV
<b>Bank Mynah</b> <i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	1000	700	IV
<b>Shikra</b> <i>Accipiter badius</i>	23	17	I
<b>Yellow-footed Green-pigeon</b> <i>Treron phoenicopterus</i>	50	25	IV
<b>Yellow-browed Bulbul</b> <i>Acritillas indica</i>	20		IV
<b>Brahminy Myna</b> <i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>	50		IV
<b>Chestnut-tailed Starling</b> <i>Sturnia malabarica</i>	50		IV
<b>Peregrine Falcon</b> <i>Falco peregrines</i>	7		I
<b>Black-shouldered Kite</b> <i>Elanus axillaris</i>	2		IV
<b>Brown Fish Owl</b> <i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>	2		IV
<b>Red-whiskered Bulbul</b> <i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	300		IV
<b>Baya Weaver</b> <i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	5		IV

Just days before the Fair, on 26 October 2014, an advertisement published in a prominent newspaper on behalf of Bihar Tourism and the tutelage of the Tourism Minister and the Chief Minister highlighted the presence of elephants and indigenous birds at the Fair. This advertisement included a photograph of indigenous birds being sold, species that are prohibited for sale under the WPA. The sale and display of indigenous bird species was also exhibited on the official Sonapur Fair website. The advertisement received a lot of criticism from enforcement agencies and conservation groups.



Later, on 10 November 2014, the organizers put up two signboards on the premises of Sonepur Fair warning about the illegal trade in 18 species of birds (those highlighted by TRAFFIC in their newsletter last year), elephants, monkeys and langurs. The signboard warned against buying prohibited species of wildlife and the legal implications of doing so. However, minimal enforcement actions were seen at the Fair to stop this blatant illegal wildlife trade.

Besides, the elephants and birds, TRAFFIC investigators also observed 25 Rhesus Macaques *Macaca mulatta* and 15 Hanuman Langurs *Semnopithecus entellus* for sale as well as a Neelgai and Indian Porcupine on display.

Reports suggested that most of the birds were sourced from Mir Shikar Toli market on Sher Shah Road in Patna, Bihar. TRAFFIC investigators also visited this place and found approximately 10,000 indigenous birds on display on 9th November 2014. Species offered for sale included Hill Mynahs, Rose Ringed Parakeets, Alexandrine Parakeets, Baya Weavers and non-native species like Cockatiels, Budgerigars, Gouldian Finches, Sun Conures, African Grey Parrots and many more. Trade in non-native bird species is allowed only if the trader has obtained the species through proper permits.

Sonepur Fair, one of the most popular fairs of Asia appears to have become a hub of illegal trade in protected wildlife species. Various investigations like the one conducted by TRAFFIC and raids by organizations have exposed the Fair but have failed to stop the dubious activities.

Advisories have gone to the Bihar Forest Department from different environment and wildlife enforcement agencies from the Wildlife Trust of India, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, People For Animals and TRAFFIC. Media agencies have also played a significant role in exposing this trade. The bird market was even shut down temporarily by the police for a few days.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India who led the Sonepur Fair investigation in 2013 said, "It is appalling to see blatant repeated violation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 at the Fair. Protected species of animals and birds are being sold openly without much fear of prosecution. It is even worse to see visitors buying such protected species clearly indicating a need to strengthen awareness efforts about illegal wildlife trade."

"Sonepur Fair seems to be a major hub for illegal wildlife trade and there is a need for enforcement agencies to crack their whip on activities at the Fair."



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# 05

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## **Wild Cry**

**Standard Certification Systems for Boosting  
Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Trade in  
Transiting Economies**



# Standard Certification Systems for Boosting Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Trade in Transiting Economies

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*Terminalia chabula* © Amit Kotia

## Introduction

**M**edicinal and aromatic plants are useful resources but like many other forms of biodiversity, many of them suffer from various degrees of threats as per IUCN threat categories because of overexploitation and unsustainable usage. Despite a prominent history of medicinal plants in India, the industry has not been able to develop an ecologically and socially responsible representation owing to growing demand of these plants and lack of systematic management plan and appropriate policy in place. The total global herbal drug market is estimated at USD62 billion and is expected to grow to USD5 trillion by 2050 (Joshi *et al.* 2004). The Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (PEPCI) estimated the export value in 2011-12 for herbals and finished dosage forms belonging to the systems of Ayurveda, Homeopathy and Siddha, stood at USD 348 million, showing a growth of 16.5%. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that approximately 70-80% of people worldwide rely on traditional herbal-based medicines to meet their primary health care needs. Approximately 25% of drugs are acquired from plants and many others are synthetic analogues built on prototype compounds isolated from plant species in modern pharmacopoeia (Rao *et al.* 2004). Approximately 25,000 plant based formulations are available in indigenous medical texts (Gupta *et al.* 2004) while around 7,500 species of plants are known to be used medicinally (Pushpangandhan 1995), some 44% of the total floral diversity within India.

Most of the medicinal plants used by the Indian industry are collected from forest ecosystems and other natural habitats that are mostly government-owned land except for a few that are privately owned. The increases in trade and resulting indiscriminate harvesting and export have put a large number of India's medicinal plants under the threat of extinction. As a result, in India around 315 of the 7500 known medicinal species are threatened with extinction (Sharrock *et al.* 2014, CBD 2014). The resource custodian has no material stake in the trade, either in terms of revenue, or in terms of surveillance of what is exported from the forest and other wild areas (Sarkar, 2012) and lack of scientific knowledge and awareness related to medicinal plant conservation leads to exploitative collection that takes place without giving any importance to the replacement rate and threshold collection quantity. In such a scenario, which also includes a dearth of scientific monitoring tools, indiscriminate collection from the wild is depleting the plant sources and threatening survival of many plant species. Due to improper storage facilities and procedures, the quality of the product deteriorates, which further leads to unsustainable economic losses. Clandestinely driven exploitative marketing has deprived Medicinal Aromatic Plant (MAP) gatherers from obtaining appropriate remuneration (Verma 1998). The majority of trade from the wild is done by collectors having meager sources of alternate income, thus without proper knowledge of the market rate of the finished product and supply chain management, the raw material is procured at a relatively low cost, which is a major challenge for attaining equitable economic benefit sharing.

## Standard and certification schemes in medicinal plants

Traditional users lay emphasis on good practices of collection, storage and maintenance for better quality of medicine prepared from plants. However, with growth of the pharmaceutical industry and mounting inclination for herbal and organic products, rapid diminution of natural MAP resources necessitates development and implementation of sustainability standards and certification procedures (Bhattacharya *et al.* 2008). In the absence of a standard system of certification, including verification and quality control, the source, trade routes and harvesting procedures are unclear. This issue is further accentuated by non-uniform transit formalities and tax structure across different States and major wholesale markets. In recent times, a number of organizations have endeavored to develop standards and good practices for MAPs. The WHO *Guidelines on Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP)* for Medicinal Plants provides a model for guiding national and regional strategies.



Other examples include guidelines developed by the Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO) for collection of wild plants to be marketed as 'organic' (Muller and Durbeck 2005, Bhattacharya *et al.* 2008). In order to strengthen stakeholder engagement and safeguard medicinal plant resources, ISSC-MAP (International Standard for Sustainable Wild Collection- Medicinal and Aromatic Plants) was developed from 2004-2007 by a joint initiative of the Bundesamt für Naturschutz (BfN) (German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation), TRAFFIC, WWF and IUCN. In October 2008, the four founding institutions of ISSC-MAP signed an agreement to endorse global implementation of the Standard through the FairWild Foundation. ISSC-MAP has become the ecological module of the FairWild Standard, which also measures social and economic components of the harvest and trade of wild plants via a framework of principles and criteria (TRAFFIC 2010). In India, applying certification to MAPs is a relatively recent phenomenon. In 2001, WWF-India studied applicability of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) principles to three medicinal plants on forest land in Himachal Pradesh (Rastogi and Pant 2004). A project sponsored by the National Medicinal Plant Board (NMPB) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in one district of Chhattisgarh developed some broad standards for good collection practices, including specific collection and harvesting standards for 10 species (Katiyar 2007). However, sustainability of these 10 species with their regeneration process needs to be ensured.

## Implementation of FairWild standards in the Western Ghat

TRAFFIC has been associated with co-partners Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF) for the assessment and preparation of resource inventory of the species and development of the resources map of the targeted medicinal plants (*Terminalia chebula*, *Terminalia bellirica* and *Tinospora cordifolia*). In 2007, AERF offered financial incentives to economically weaker farmers by the way of signing conservation agreements for not logging forests for a time period ranging between five to ten years. Through this approach, AERF secured almost 2,000 acres of forests till 2020. But in order to address socio-economic security to sustain the initiative, a revenue model was needed for promoting sustainable collection. The incentive for the study was provided by the dynamic involvement of Pukka Herbs Ltd, a UK manufacturer of herbal teas and medicinal health products, whose interest in purchasing organic and FairWild-certified primary processed fruits of *Terminalia bellirica* and *T. chebula* helped AERF to shortlist two sites for possible implementation of the FairWild certification.

After assessing the potential benefits to conservation and rural livelihoods in these areas, AERF started initial work towards FairWild certification using available resources. In June 2013, TRAFFIC and AERF collaborated on promotion of the FairWild approach in the Western Ghats with monetary support from the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) at the University of Kent, and Pukka Herbs Ltd., followed by a grant from the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF), to promote the FairWild approach. To date, several capacity building programmes involving the community have been conducted along with a situation analysis. To substantiate sustainable collection, a technological gap was filled by purchasing solar dryers for drying fresh harvested fruits and de-stoning machines. The first FairWild certification audit in India for the project is scheduled in 2015. To expand the revenue cycle, domestic engagement was made with a leading export company; PHALADA Agro Research Foundation Pvt. Ltd. which issued a letter of intent for purchase of 1 tonne of certified fruits of *Terminalia chebula* and *Terminalia bellirica* each in July 2014.

## Project impacts

The project has been significant in achieving positive economic and ecological outcomes. The people belonging to Mahadev Kohli tribe are now aware about the true potential and scale of mainstream economy associated with these plants. Capacity building programmes as well as documentation required for FairWild and organic certification has stimulated the communities to maintain official records of their lands and claims to the ownership of the trees on their land. As for the supporting industry, Pukka Herbs won the prestigious 2degrees Champions Sustainability Award in July 2014, helping build a positive brand value for the company apart from becoming a pioneering model for FairWild certification in India. The project has been beneficial for safeguarding significant nesting sites of Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus* and Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis* by promoting economic benefits associated with the collection of fruits rather than cutting down *Terminalia bellerica* trees in the study area. The project showcases the importance of certification systems in supporting and involving stakeholders throughout the supply and demand chain (Fig. 1). While the communities benefit from better remuneration and sustainable harvest, the industries gain recognition and a sustainably streamlined production chain while the consumers obtain superior quality products as well as garner knowledge about the sustainability parameters and their impact on the community, livelihoods and biodiversity.

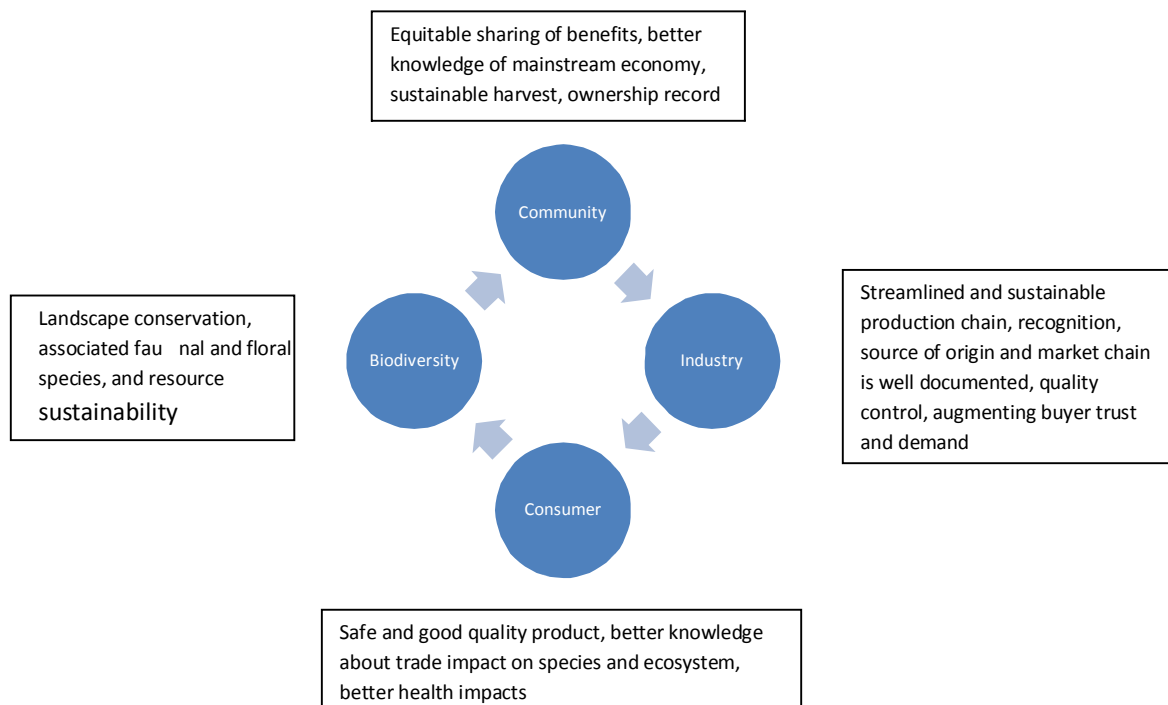


Figure 1. Stakeholder benefits arising due to standards and certification schemes for MAPs

## Management implications

The medicinal and aromatic plants industry is poised to grow locally and globally. Any enterprise that looks at a projected growth rate will have to adopt universally accepted standards, one possible way for that is through application of a standard certification system that is promoted for symbolizing ecologically safer practices. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has followed certification system (Pendry *et al.* 2006) that not only insures legality in international trade, but also promotes sustainability. Use of a globally standard certification system, promoted by the International Timber Trade Organization (ITTO), has long promised sustainability in international timber trade. While support from major global industries on promotion of standards and certificates can be beneficial for long-term conservation of medicinal plants, it is also important to involve domestic producers and pharmacies dealing with plant-based products. The State and central government agencies will have to utilize principles, criteria and guidelines enshrined in global standards, such as FairWild, in strategic planning and policy development related to MAPs. Research and monitoring organizations must evaluate success, challenges and feasibility of application of certification schemes at the regional level and prepare domestic guidelines on collection depending on species, trade dynamics, status and regional level socio-economic linkages. The existing legal and policy measures must be reviewed in detail eventually to build a multi-stakeholder consensus on development and utilization of standards and certification schemes to promote social security as well as documentation and sustenance of available MAP resources.

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# Signpost

Other significant news stories



## NOT AN EXOTIC BUSINESS

As India focused on tigers, smuggling of smaller exotic animals picked up. The challenge now is to trace the trade route which has moved to the vast online world.

**By Anubhav Vohra & Rahul Nigam**

One third and it is not just spotted and cheetahs, but also a wide variety of other animals. In such a well-flourishing trade, the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau's (WCCB) cyber wing has not been the successful in tracking down the traffickers. The trade is not limited to tigers. There is an entire ecosystem of smaller exotic animals that has been observed over the last six months, including the sale of cheetahs, leopards, and other animals.

India Today/13-11-2014

**ONLINE BAITING**

Wildlife trade is the most common illegal trade on the internet. It is a multi-billion dollar market and is growing rapidly. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has estimated that the illegal wildlife trade is worth \$1.2 billion annually. The trade is often facilitated by online marketplaces like eBay, where buyers can find tiger skins, ivory, and other wildlife products. The article discusses the challenges of tracking such trade and the impact on wildlife conservation.

Q1-10-2014

## 'World lost 52% of its wildlife in past 40 yrs'

### Humans Destroying Earth's Ability To Support Life: WWF

**Kennedy Dicks**  
@kennedydicks

Humans are destroying Earth's ability to support life. A new report from WWF shows that the world has lost 52% of its wildlife in the past 40 years. The report tracks the growth or decline of 15,000 vertebrate species. The report tracks the growth or decline of 15,000 vertebrate species. The report tracks the growth or decline of 15,000 vertebrate species.

**Dwindling Numbers**

- Worst decline in vertebrates in one decade in one Latin America: **90%**
- Loss of natural habitats, exploitation through hunting or fishing, and climate change are some of the reasons to have triggered the decline.
- In West Africa, forest felling has restricted elephants to a 6-7% range.
- Ecological Footprint: Knowledge has the biggest ecological footprint, consuming and emitting more resources per head than any other nation.

The Times of India/ 1-10-14

### THE RETURN OF THE TIGERS

A recent report released by the environment ministry says the big cat count in the country has gone up by 30% in four years. A look at how this success story unfolded, and the challenges that remain.

#### TRACKING THE BIG CAT

Year	Count
2010	1,411
2011	1,706
2012	2,226

#### HOW PERIYAR SAVED ITS BIG CAT POPULATION

Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala has seen a significant increase in tiger numbers. The sanctuary has implemented various conservation measures, including anti-poaching patrols and habitat restoration, which have helped the tiger population recover.

Hindustan Times/1-2-2015

### Lesser-known wildlife species face govt apathy

By Akash Venkatesh @akashvenkatesh

DISREGARDING their government's commitment beyond its conventional focus on tigers, elephants and rhinos, wildlife groups have asked authorities to introduce urgent measures to protect lesser-known endangered species like pangolins, ibex, and snow leopards. The article highlights the lack of government attention on these species and the need for immediate action.

Mail Today/ 3-8-14

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## TRAFFIC

the wildlife trade monitoring network





**TRAFFIC**

**NEWSLETTER**

Issue 24  
JULY 2015

# TRAFFIC POST

**NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA**

**India's  
national  
bird at risk**  
WILD CRY FEATURE.....



# TRAFFIC Post

TRAFFIC Post is TRAFFIC's newsletter on wildlife trade in India. It started in September 2007 with a primary objective to create awareness about poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India.

Illegal wildlife trade is reportedly the fourth largest global illegal trade after narcotics, counterfeiting, and human trafficking. It has evolved itself into an organized activity threatening the future of many wildlife species.

TRAFFIC Post was born out of the need to reach out to various stakeholders including decision makers, enforcement officials, judiciary and consumers about the extent of illegal wildlife trade in India and the damaging effect it could be having on the endangered flora and fauna.

Since its inception, TRAFFIC Post has highlighted pressing issues related to illegal wildlife trade in India and globally, flagged early trends, and illuminated wildlife policies and laws. It has also focused on the status of legal trade in various medicinal plant and timber species that need sustainable management for ensuring ecological and economic success.

TRAFFIC Post comes out three times in the year and is available both online and in print. You can subscribe to it by writing to [trafficind@wwfindia.net](mailto:trafficind@wwfindia.net)

All issues of TRAFFIC Post can be viewed at [www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org); [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)

Map Disclaimer: The designations of the geographical entities in this publication and the presentation of the material do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of WWF-India or TRAFFIC, concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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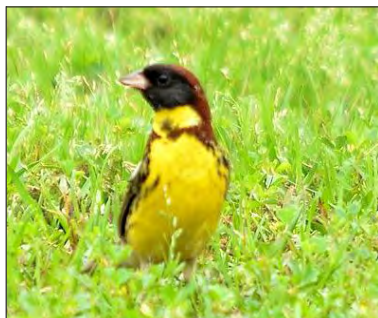
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© Rajesh Kumar Mohapatra

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© Abrar Ahmed

# From the Desk



On one hand we have good news of a 30% increase in the Tiger population in India, which is phenomenal. On the other, rhino poaching has returned with a vengeance since 2013, at least it seems that way.

**Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj,  
Head of TRAFFIC's India Office**

**O**n 20th June 2015, TRAFFIC concluded the fourth phase of the wildlife sniffer dog programme through which we trained 14 dog squads—the most in any single batch since the inception of the programme in 2008. These 14 dog squads have been deployed in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Assam, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Nine States in India now have between them 25 sniffer dog squads, which have joined the ranks of the anti-poaching and anti-trafficking personnel. States such as Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra now have multiple sniffer dog squads, some of which have performed outstandingly well.

Although trained to detect Tiger and Leopard parts and bear bile, following their deployment many dogs adapt and detect other wildlife species and their derivatives, including elephant ivory, various bird species, turtles and tortoises and snakes such as Red Sand Boas and pythons. They also detect weapons and ballistic materials and even help during the arrest and tracking of criminals.

TRAFFIC's sniffer dog programme has become a shining example for forest departments, tiger reserve officials and other wildlife law enforcement agencies to follow and deploy sniffer dog squads for patrolling and conducting search and seizure operations.

When we began the sniffer dog training programme in India, inspired by those conducted by TRAFFIC in Russia and the Europe, there was a well-founded optimism that the use of sniffer dogs would reach new heights among enforcement agencies as a modern tool to carry out wildlife investigations and crime prevention. After all, this was a tool that could easily fall into the low investment for high returns category in any anti-poaching and anti-trafficking strategy.



Six years down the line, and the programme is making only moderate progress despite TRAFFIC under-taking to bear most of the costs, at least up until deployment of the dogs. The States have to bear only the cost of dog food (barely INR8000 a month), the costs of health check ups, and the salaries of the handlers, who, in any case, are regular State government employees. These costs are not unmanageable if one considers the potential utility of fully trained sniffer dog.

Between them, following their gradual deployment since 2008, the sniffer dogs have led to detection and seizures in close to 130 wildlife cases. While this may not be a big number, there is clearly significant potential for further enhancement of wildlife crime enforcement in India through optimization of effort, resources and planning.

India is poised to become the most populous country in the world by 2022. This will add further pressure on wildlife resources and no doubt result in further illegal wildlife trade. Perhaps there will never be an adequate number of personnel engaged in protection of wildlife, largely because of the inadequacy of resources allocated to wildlife protection in India, so tools like sniffer dogs could go a long way in compensating for such inadequacies. We envision that in States in India where poaching and illegal trades are major issues, wildlife management programmes could adopt sniffer dogs as important elements of their anti-poaching and anti-trafficking strategies. However, few States have to date fully endorsed ownership of their sniffer dog programmes.

Dog detectors can cover large areas and detect wildlife products far quicker than their human counterparts. In South Africa's Kruger National Park, dogs are airlifted by helicopters to the interior of the park to detect signs of rhino poaching. They have detected several cases which have led to the arrest of poachers. Dogs can use their noses to follow an invisible scent path to find a person, while the presence of dogs helps instill a sense of fear in the minds of criminals.

Evidence obtained through the use of dogs can be significant in securing convictions, estimated to be enhanced by more than 35% through the use of trained sniffer dogs. The moot question is, given the wide range of situations in which trained dogs can be of assistance to enforcement agencies, why is this potential not fully exploited? It could simply be through a lack of documentation that could demonstrate to policy makers and law enforcers the effective use of sniffer dogs as a tool in wildlife crime investigations.

TRAFFIC has pioneered training and deployment of wildlife sniffer dogs in India since 2007. Although, a slow starter, the programme was given a great boost in 2014 after State chief wildlife officers became convinced of the efficacy and significance of trained sniffer dogs in wildlife crime investigations. Seven States joined the programme, including several who had experimented with the use of dogs and those who wish to do so. In June 2015 14 new dog squads joined seven States.

However, there is a need for the official designation of funds towards a Standard Operating Procedure, the construction of kennels and adequate veterinary care is put in place to ensure that the initiative continues to bear fruit in the long-term.

Unfortunately, kennels to house the dogs have not been constructed, which may be a reflection of the low priority attached to sniffer dogs and an unwillingness to adopt newer tools and technologies in combating wildlife crime. Undoubtedly, sniffer dogs are reliable, cost effective, and efficient tools for controlling the menace of illegal wildlife trade. Their mere presence can act as a deterrent for smugglers and traffickers. Many developed countries, such as the USA, Russia, Australia and New Zealand are utilizing the services of detector dogs to counter the illegal import and export of prohibited and restricted items, thus safeguarding the economic and environmental security of the nation.

The world has changed much more rapidly in the last few decades, and so have the modus operandi used in wildlife crimes. Older methods of crime investigation may fall short of the requirements posed by the new challenges. Fortunately, there are new developments in science and technology and thankfully they are available at an affordable cost.

TRAFFIC has promoted the use of deep search metal detectors to locate long chains of snares in heavily forested habitats. Others have promoted the use of various new technologies, such as voice loggers, drones and digital encryption to track cybercrime in wildlife. Similarly, new advances in DNA barcoding and wildlife forensics make it possible to provide indisputable evidence to prove crimes. However, few have put these technologies to use, whereas the criminals themselves have gone high-tech.

An early adoption of new technologies may prove vital to keep us ready to meet the new challenges posed by the increasingly organized international wildlife crime syndicates. But to adapt to these changes, a change of mindset will be a significant prerequisite. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

# 01

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## TRAFFIC India Update

1. TRAFFIC's sniffer dogs pass out with flying colours in Bhopal, doubling India's wildlife sniffer dog strength
2. Digital campaign reaches out to 1.4 million people on illegal trade in non-charismatic lesser-known species
3. TRAFFIC organizes police training to combat wildlife crime in Odisha
4. TRAFFIC hosts regional planning workshop to curb Tiger poaching and trade
5. Experts meet in Chennai to discuss strategy for sustainable management of medicinal plant trade in India
6. Coming Soon- Publications

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**ACT NOW:**  
**DO NOT BECOME PART**  
**OF THE PROBLEM**

© Martin Harvey / WWF



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## TRAFFIC's sniffer dogs pass out with flying colours in Bhopal, doubling India's wildlife sniffer dog strength

**F**ourteen dogs and their 28 handlers passed out on 20th June 2015 at the 23rd Battalion of Special Armed Reserve Forces, located in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, to join wildlife protection and anti-poaching dog squads across India.

The passing out ceremony, including a magnificent display of skills by the 14 sniffer dogs and their 28 handlers, was organized to celebrate this important achievement by TRAFFIC and WWF-India in the presence of the chief guest, Mr Narendra Kumar, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest and Chief Wildlife Warden, Government of Madhya Pradesh and the guest of honour, Mr K.N. Tiwari, IPS, Additional Director General of Police, Special Armed Forces, Government of Madhya Pradesh.

This ceremony was also attended by senior representatives from all the seven States—Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Karnataka—to whom the newly trained dogs and handlers had been deployed.

The 14 dogs and their handlers joined 11 dogs and 22 handlers already trained and deployed across India under this programme, taking the total strength of TRAFFIC/WWF-India's wildlife sniffer dogs to 25. This programme was initiated in 2008 by TRAFFIC, which in India functions as a programme division of WWF-India.



© TRAFFIC

The wildlife sniffer dog training programme is funded jointly by TRAFFIC and WWF and promotes the use of modern tools and technologies in fighting wildlife crimes.

Mr Narendra Kumar in his opening remarks congratulated TRAFFIC and WWF-India for their efforts in leading the sniffer dog programme in India. He emphasized the use of sniffer dogs as a highly effective tool for wildlife crime detection and prevention in India. He also congratulated the Dog Training Center in Bhopal for their continuous support for this programme. Mr Kumar has taken a keen long-term interest in the activities of sniffer dogs in detecting wildlife crimes in Madhya Pradesh.

Mr K.N. Tiwari said: "We are glad to see sniffer dogs' emerging role in curbing wildlife crime and illegal wildlife trade in India. We hope that many more State forest departments deploy sniffer dogs and use them in their wildlife law enforcement endeavours."



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Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India said: "India has a huge forest cover and with only 25 trained sniffer dogs, pressure for protecting India's wildlife remains immense on these four legged creatures. It is TRAFFIC's vision that at least four to five dogs are deployed in each State in the next few years for boosting wildlife conservation and protection efforts."

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, WWF-India, added: "India's wildlife is under grave danger from the ever increasing illegal wildlife trade. Poachers and traders are employing new tools and technologies to expand their illicit business and this is proving to be a major challenge for the forest department and other enforcement agencies".

More than 100 significant wildlife seizure cases have been cracked thanks to the deployment of TRAFFIC's sniffer dogs in recent years.

Even though the dogs are trained for sniffing out Tiger and Leopard parts and bear bile, the dogs are also detecting other wildlife contraband such as ivory, deer meat, live bird species, Red Sand Boa, Blackbuck, hare, python, rat snake, porcupine and even weapons. They have an increasingly significant role in wildlife crime investigation and prosecution.

TRAFFIC thanks the on-going partnership with the Dog Training Centre of the 23rd Battalion Special Armed Force, Madhya Pradesh Police Department based in Bhopal, for their continuous support in strengthening wildlife protection across the country. TRAFFIC is also grateful to its donors and supporters for the sniffer dog training programme from different regions of India and across the world. The long term aim is to strengthen the programme further to boost its impact on wildlife conservation in India.

#### DO YOU WANT TO BECOME A SNIFFER DOG PATRON?

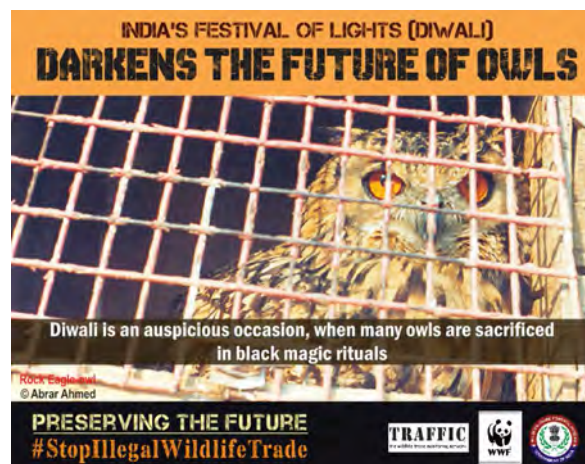
A fundraising campaign was launched in May 2015 by TRAFFIC and WWF-India to help raise funds for supporting the procurement, training and deployment of sniffer dogs in India. With a vision to train and provide at least four to five sniffer dogs to each State, the fundraising campaign was launched urging support from individuals, companies and various other organizations. To find out more about the campaign and how you can help, please visit

[http://support.wwfindia.org/super\\_sniffer/index.php?source=SD-SM](http://support.wwfindia.org/super_sniffer/index.php?source=SD-SM)

## Digital campaign reaches out to 1.4 million people on illegal trade in non-charismatic lesser-known species

A digital media campaign on illegal trade in lesser-known non-charismatic wildlife species—including pangolins, owls and mongooses—that ended in April 2015 reached out to nearly 1.4 million individuals on Facebook, Twitter and Google.

The campaign Preserving the Future: Stop Illegal Wildlife Trade was designed and jointly run by TRAFFIC, WWF-India and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and was launched in New Delhi on the social media platforms of TRAFFIC and WWF-India and as well as Google Adverts in February 2015.



The growing demand for wildlife from India that threatens the existence of the Tiger, elephant, rhino and various other flagship species has been well publicized. However, the illegal trade in non-charismatic species such as pangolins, monitor lizards, Tokay Gecko, turtles and tortoises, lorises, birds, corals, sea cucumbers and others has remained largely unreported. With little knowledge and understanding about the population status, numbers poached, illegal wildlife trade hubs and dynamics of these non-charismatic species, it is difficult to ascertain the impacts of illegal trade on their population status. TRAFFIC, WWF-India and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) recognize this gap and launched the campaign to highlight the plight of these species and support action for their conservation.

The campaign was designed using a combination of stunning images, infographics, facts and figures regarding poaching and illegal trade, the impact of trade on species conservation, and finally recommendations on how people can help. Also included was a quiz encouraging the audience to respond and win attractive prizes.

On World Pangolin Day, 21st February, the Indonesian National Police, WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society), and TRAFFIC shared a video of one of the largest pangolin seizures ever in Indonesia that took place in 2008 when the Indonesian National Police Criminal Investigation Bureau raided the warehouse of a suspected illegal wildlife trader in the city of Palembang in South Sumatra and recovered more than 14 metric tonnes of Malayan Pangolins.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India said: "Every year in India, hundreds of pangolins, monitor lizards and tortoises are poached, an estimated 700 000 birds are illegally trapped, and several metric tonnes of sea cucumbers are caught, yet the levels of exploitation of these species are rarely reported. This large-scale plundering along with minimal information about their population status and poaching and smuggling trends place the future of these lesser-known species in serious jeopardy."

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO of WWF-India commented: "The campaign is an endeavour to fight wildlife crime against non-charismatic and lesser known species. In India, we are initiating actions to bring together various stakeholders including enforcement agencies and organizations to address this issue. The burgeoning illegal trade in wildlife species has the potential to impact the health and balance of our ecosystems seriously and it is important that this trade is curbed."

Pangolins are highly threatened by illegal international trade, yet their plight is little publicized in conservation or media circles. Other species, like monitor lizard, mongoose, Star Tortoises, Spiny-tailed Lizards, freshwater and marine turtles also need immediate

attention. Monitor lizards, especially the Bengal Monitor, were once commonly seen across the country but appear to have declined markedly, apparently after becoming a target of unabated poaching and illegal trade.

Mr SB Negi, Additional Director and the former Chief of the WCCB of India, added: "We are excited to have partnered with TRAFFIC and WWF-

India for this campaign. While it is significant to undertake enforcement actions for nipping this problem in the bud, it is equally important to garner the support of the general public. Such awareness initiatives help in reaching out to a large number of audiences who can be potential buyers for wildlife products. We are confident that as demand for illegal wildlife products decreases with the help of such campaigns, smuggling and illegal trade can be contained."

TRAFFIC and WWF-India have previously flagged their concern about these lesser known non-charismatic species, highlighting their plight periodically in their respective publications, TRAFFIC Post and PANDA magazine and elsewhere.



## TRAFFIC organizes police training to combat wildlife crime in Odisha

Recognizing the importance of involving police officials for combating wildlife crimes and keeping in mind the strategic yet vulnerable geographic location and rich wildlife resources of Odisha State, TRAFFIC collaborated with the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) of Odisha Police to strengthen wildlife law enforcement in the State.

The wildlife law enforcement capacity building training workshop was organized specifically for police officials in April 2015 at the police headquarters in Cuttack in Odisha State. Over 60 police officials at various cutting edge levels from nearly 55 police stations located in the vicinity of Protected Areas in Odisha participated in the workshop.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India, provided an overview of illegal wildlife trade in India in the technical session of the workshop. He presented the latest information on wildlife crime hubs, species involved in trade, changes in demand and supply dynamics, identification of wildlife specimens in trade and various drivers of illegal wildlife trade and poaching.

He stressed the need to gear up police departments for fighting wildlife crime. He said that like many other States, Odisha is facing a severe threat from wildlife crime and it is crucial for the police to be well-versed with wildlife laws and the modern tools and techniques available to combat it, particularly in urban areas that serve as major collection and smuggling hubs for wildlife products.

Conducted by Tamil Nadu-based Special Task Force Expert trainers, participants also received an intensive field training session on identifying and dismantling traps set up for poaching. The participants learnt about identifying marine species through examining actual samples of marine and coastal wildlife. A special session using confiscated wildlife products was conducted by experts from the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) for identification of wildlife parts and derivatives commonly found in illegal wildlife trade. Field-based sessions on surveillance, seizures and interrogation and wildlife crime scene investigation were conducted by experts from the Wildlife Institute of India and Police Radio Training School, Indore.

The training workshop was inaugurated by the State's Director General of Police (DGP) Mr Sanjeev Marik, the most senior and highly experienced Indian Police Service Officer in Odisha. Mr Marik said: "Although the laws relating to wildlife and environmental crimes have been in place since the 1970s and 1980s, there is a lack of awareness and knowledge about such legislations among enforcement agencies, including the police. Further, a perception exists that the forest department is solely responsible for the implementation of wildlife laws. This needs to change." Mr Marik assured the full support of the police for fighting wildlife crime in the region.

Mr B K Sharma, Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Odisha CID branch, who has been responsible for busting several serious wildlife crime cases during his long tenure with the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) in New Delhi, spoke about the growing menace of wildlife crime. He emphasized the need to consider wildlife preservation as a matter of national prestige and dignity and that wildlife crime has to be considered on a par with other severe felonies. "Wildlife crime has become highly organized and unless matching skills are developed by police officials it will be very hard to curtail," he said.

TRAFFIC's resource team included experts from various fields of law and enforcement. Interactive sessions were conducted on the use of intelligence collection and collation by TRAFFIC's core and domain experts, including Mr Varun Kapoor, a highly skilled IPS officer. A session on wildlife laws and the application of corroborative laws was conducted by a senior Supreme Court lawyer, Mr Saurabh Sharma. Sessions on species and specimen identification, DNA fingerprinting and wildlife forensics were led by Dr S P Goyal, former senior scientist at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII). An intelligence collection and investigations session was led by a senior officer from the WCCB, Mr Nishant Verma.

Police officials in Odisha demonstrated a keen interest in learning various techniques to curb wildlife crime and keenly participated in all the workshop sessions.

## TRAFFIC hosts regional planning to curb Tiger poaching and trade

On 2nd-3rd July 2015, TRAFFIC hosted a planning workshop to formulate a trans-border strategy for combating poaching and illegal trafficking of Tiger and other species. The two-day workshop was held in New Delhi and was attended by TRAFFIC and WWF representatives from India, Nepal, China, Malaysia and Bhutan. A presentation on behalf of Bhutan was made by the Tiger Trade Programme Leader for TRAFFIC and WWF, Natalia Pervushina. A number of sessions were also attended by representatives from the WCCB, Government of India.

Poaching and trafficking of Tigers and their parts and derivatives is prohibited across all range countries. However, wild Tigers are still being killed to meet the demands for Tiger-related products in East Asia, primarily China, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan, and in western countries with large Oriental populations.

Tiger skins are used for making fur coats, jackets, handbags and also trophies in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea and the Russian Federation. Almost every part of the Tiger's body, including the flesh, fat, bones, claws, bile, eyeballs, whiskers, nose, floating ribs, testes, penis etc are highly valuable for use in traditional Chinese medicines. Tiger bone plaster and wines are highly coveted in the illegal market. Live Tigers are also sourced for the circus, entertainment trade and illegal private zoos.

Poor levels of protection, the persistence of large markets and a lack of implementation of wildlife laws have put the Tiger and a wide range of wild flora and fauna in large parts of South Asia in peril.

TRAFFIC and WWF organized the workshop to develop a well co-ordinated strategy for combating poaching and trade in Tigers. The workshop aimed to improve communication between the various enforcement teams across the regional trade chain, identifying priorities for addressing trade along the India-Nepal-China (plus Bhutan) chain, identifying gaps in current national strategies, understanding the funding requirement for the implementation of this long term strategy as well as

identifying funding sources, and developing various indices to measure the impact of the strategy. A trans-border strategy road map was developed.

Dr Shekhar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC's India Office said: "The meeting was very successful in bringing together the various partners that need to collaborate to curb poaching and illegal

trade of Tigers. The strategy developed at this important meeting is meant to support the national strategies of governments in the various Tiger range countries".

TRAFFIC and WWF offices in India, Nepal and China committed to increase information sharing and the dissemination of advanced tools and technology and to implement joint demand reduction campaigns. The regional offices understand the need for strengthening the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) which will stimulate cross border co-ordination and action between enforcement agencies in South Asia.



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# Experts meet in Chennai to discuss strategy for sustainable management of medicinal plant trade in India

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) conducted the fourth meeting of its Expert Committee on Medicinal Plants at their headquarters in Chennai on 10th July 2015. The meeting was attended by 19 medicinal plant experts from various organizations including Dr Paramjeet Singh, the Director of the Botanical Survey of India, and Dr Kinhal, Director of the Indian Institute of Forest Management. TRAFFIC was represented at the meeting by Shubhobroto Ghosh, Senior Programme Officer.

Medicinal and aromatic plants are useful resources, but like many other forms of biodiversity, they are threatened by overexploitation and unsustainable use. Despite a prominent history of medicinal plant use in India and owing to a growing demand, the industry has not been able to develop an ecological and socially responsible strategy. The Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India estimated the export value for herbals and final marketed dosage in 2011-12 belonging to the systems of Ayurveda, Homeopathy and Siddha at USD 348 million, showing an annual growth rate of 16.5%. The World Health Organization states that approximately 70–80 % of the global population relies on traditional herbal-based medicines to meet their primary health care needs.

During one such meeting in Chennai, there were extensive discussions on Section 38 of the Biological Diversity Act (2002) and Biodiversity Rules (2004) and the draft of the National Strategy for Management of Medicinal Plants. The Red Data Book of Threatened Indian Plants was also referred to in presentations to outline the listing of medicinal plants for conservation.

Participants spoke about the importance of notification of species under protection and stated that there were 44 endemic species of threatened medicinal plants in India. Several of these medicinal plants are those that fall under the purview of the Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT). The Conservation Assessment and Management Prioritisation process for listing threatened plants was also discussed.

Participants elaborated on the IUCN criteria for assessing threats to wild species of medicinal plants. Shubhobroto Ghosh from TRAFFIC mentioned that WWF, TRAFFIC and IUCN have developed the FairWild Standard for ensuring sustainability in trade in medicinal plants and this Standard has been internationally acknowledged.

A major point of debate was regarding the listing of 29 items in the negative list of the Director General of Foreign Trade since they included over 1000 species of varying taxonomic statuses. Indeed, the variance in taxonomy was a principal point of concern, since differences in taxonomy were allowing the trade in some species that have been listed for prohibition in trade. The original list was made in 1997 to 2002 and is in urgent need of review, according to the National Biodiversity Authority.

Proper documentation and use of knowledge regarding medicinal plants was cited as an important area of concern. The Zoological Survey of India and Botanical Survey of India were identified as the nodal repositories for such knowledge. Collection of information and collation of data were listed as principal components in more effective medicinal plant conservation in India. Traditional knowledge of tribal communities regarding medicinal plants was also worthy of preservation and respect, the gathering agreed.

**“There are currently around 77 species of Indian medicinal plants listed in CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna) and 27 items under the negative list of the Director General of Foreign Trade that are prohibited for export and import ”.**



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The meeting discussed the initiative of the People's Biodiversity Registrar that saved knowledge gathered by tribal communities on medicinal plants and local wildlife. Participants also pointed out that there were legal discrepancies with regard to the listing of plant species in the Biological Diversity Act and also the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 (WPA1972). This was a point of contention in the amended version of the Jammu and Kashmir Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 that witnessed a decrease in the number of protected species after alignment with the mainstream Indian WPA1972.

Patents and the attempts by some multinational companies to skirt around the law and take advantage of India's biodiversity were also debated during the meeting. The issues related to trade in Red Sanders were debated alongside the potential impact of any legal sale in abetting illegal trade in the species.

The meeting concluded with Mrs Amarjeet Ahuja, IAS officer, the Chairperson of the Expert Committee on Medicinal Plants of the National Biodiversity Authority, said the meeting had been one of the most fruitful on medicinal plants that she had ever attended.

Dr Kinhal suggested that all concerned with medicinal plants should endeavour to follow certification schemes like FairWild to ensure better conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plant species that would save our precious biodiversity, whilst ensuring a livelihood for those living off these species in trade.

The NBA was established in 2003 to implement India's Biological Diversity Act (2002). The NBA is a Statutory, Autonomous Body that performs facilitative, regulatory and advisory functions for the Government of India on issues of conservation, sustainable use of biological resources and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources.

The FairWild Foundation, established in 2008, promotes the sustainable use of wild-collected plant ingredients, with a fair deal for all those involved throughout the supply chain. In India, TRAFFIC has been working in close collaboration with the Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF) for implementing the FairWild Standard and certification for *Terminalia chebula* and *Terminalia bellirica* in the central Western Ghats.

## Coming Soon: Publications

**THE WILD CHARTER:** TRAFFIC is soon to launch the first issue of a quarterly wildlife policy and law bulletin - The Wild Charter. The bulletin will concentrate on policy and legal issues pertaining to wildlife conservation in India, which will also include special sections on domestic acts and international policies and laws including CITES. This bulletin will be circulated among lawmakers, the judiciary, government staff, as well of members of civil society including prominent conservation NGOs in the country and to others who interested in these issues. A special panel of experts has been convened to serve as advisors, which includes prominent environmental lawyers, former/serving members of the judiciary and forest department, many of whom have contributed to the first bulletin. The final version is expected for publication soon.



## RED SANDERS: AN ECOLOGICAL BOON OR AN ENFORCEMENT BANE?

This report on the illegal trade in Red Sanders *Terocarpus santalinus* in India is the first of its kind by TRAFFIC and aims to highlight the extent of the illegal trade, hotspots, major trade routes, associated legislations and policies, enforcement gaps and recommendations. The report is in the process of finalization and will be available in the public domain in the coming weeks.

Red Sanders has been exploited historically for a variety of uses in Japan and China, but is little known for its various uses elsewhere. Domestic trade of Red Sanders within India was recently revealed

when its large scale use as an ingredient in Ayurvedic (traditional) medicines was disclosed at a recent auction of confiscated wood conducted by the State of Andhra Pradesh. Nonetheless, its trade for Japanese musical instruments, as a beer colorant, and as a hardwood for making furniture and toys has long been known to the world. Several information gaps exist in India and concerning international markets, including the complete profiling of end usage, extent of demand and projection, legality frameworks in the destination countries, and smuggling modus operandi and use of transit countries.



# 02

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## Outpost

Superabundant 'Rice bird' loses ground to burgeoning appetites in East Asia



## Superabundant 'Rice bird' loses ground to burgeoning appetites in East Asia

One of Eurasia's most abundant "rice bird" species, the Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* has declined by 90% and has retracted its range by 5000 km since 1980. The sheer scale and speed of the loss has drawn comparisons with that of the Passenger Pigeon, once the commonest bird in North America, but now extinct.

Yellow-breasted Bunting has a very large breeding range stretching from Scandinavia to the Russian Far East. Yellow-breasted Buntings from across their breeding range migrate eastward to China (Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1997) and winter in Southeast Asia. Both during migration and in winter, they congregate in large flocks in wet grasslands and rice fields, including at numerous stopover sites in China (Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1997). During migration and on the wintering grounds, Yellow-breasted Buntings at the nighttime roosts are trapped with nets for food.

These findings were published in a paper "***Global population collapse in a superabundant migratory bird and illegal trapping in China***" authored by Johannes Kamp, Steffen Oppel, Alexandr A. Ananin, Yurii A. Durnev, Sergey N. Gashev, Norbert Holzel, Alexandr L. Mishchenko, Jorma Pessa, Sergey M. Smirenski, Evgenii G. Strelnikov, Sami Timonen, Kolja Wolanska, and Simba Chan in the journal, *Conservation Biology*.

Kamp's research clearly indicates that unsustainable rates of hunting, principally in China, have contributed to a catastrophic loss of numbers and also in the areas in which the buntings can now be found. The Yellow-breasted Bunting has all but disappeared from Eastern Europe, European Russia, large parts of Western and Central Siberia and Japan.

Hunting of the species was banned in China in 1997. However, millions of Yellow-breasted Buntings and other songbirds were still being killed for food and sold on the black market as late as 2013.

Consumption of these birds has increased as a result of economic growth and prosperity in East Asia, with one estimate from 2001 of one million buntings being consumed in China's Guangdong province alone.

"The magnitude and speed of the Yellow-breasted Bunting's decline is unprecedented among birds distributed over such a large area, with the exception of the Passenger Pigeon, which went extinct in 1914 due to industrial-scale hunting," said Dr Johannes Kamp from the University of Münster, the lead author of the new research published in the journal *Conservation Biology*.



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Currently, there is a lack of regulation, monitoring and enforcement efforts in bird markets, trade routes and collection sites by relevant authorities.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India added: "The Yellow-breasted Bunting is protected under Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act in India. The bird visits India during the winter and is largely restricted to Northeast India, West Bengal and regions of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. TRAFFIC suggests community awareness campaigns should be conducted in these areas in India to ensure that these beautiful songbirds are neither trapped nor disturbed".

"To reverse these declines we need to educate people better on the consequences of eating wildlife. We also need a better and more efficient reporting system for law enforcement," said Simba Chan, Senior Conservation Officer at BirdLife International.

Read more at  
<http://www.traffic.org/home/2015/6/9/superabundant-rice-bird-decline-mirrors-that-of-passenger-pi.html>

#### Sources:

<http://www.traffic.org/home/2015/6/9/superabundant-rice-bird-decline-mirrors-that-of-passenger-pi.html> ;

"***Global population collapse in a superabundant migratory bird and illegal trapping in China***" authored by Johannes Kamp, Steffen Oppel, Alexandr A. Ananin, Yurii A. Durnev, Sergey N. Gashev, Norbert Holzel, Alexandr L. Mishchenko, Jorma Pessa, Sergey M. Smirenski, Evgenii G. Strelnikov, Sami Timonen, Kolja Wolanska, and Simba Chan, published in the journal, *Conservation Biology*.

# 03

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## **CITES Update**

**CITES CoP17 to be held in South Africa in 2016**

## CITES CoP17 to be held in South Africa in 2016

The CITES Secretariat has announced that the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17) will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 24th September to 5th October 2016. Specific details about the strict deadlines for the submission of document for this meeting are given below:

1. The submission of draft resolutions and other documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties should be communicated to the Secretariat at least 150 days before the meeting, i.e. by 27th April 2016.

2. Any Party proposing an amendment to Appendix I or II for consideration at CoP17 should submit the text of the proposed amendment to the Secretariat at least 150 days before the meeting, i.e. by 27th April 2016. The amendment proposals should be based on the criteria adopted in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16).

3. However, if a Party intends to submit a proposal to amend Appendix I or II that concerns a species or a population of a species that occurs partly or totally outside of the territory under its jurisdiction, and if it does not intend to consult the other range States before the submission of its proposal, the Party, in accordance with Resolution Conf. 8.21 (Rev. CoP16) on Consultation with range States on proposals to amend Appendices I and II, should submit its proposal to the Secretariat at least 330 days before the meeting, i.e. by 30th October 2015.

The Secretariat reminds Parties that as a general rule, documents submitted for consideration should not exceed 12 pages in length and has decided that any draft resolution or decision that has budgetary or workload implications for the Secretariat or permanent committees must contain a budget for the work involved and an indication of the source of funding. Moreover, the Standing Committee has agreed that the Secretariat should ask any Party that submits a document longer than 12 pages to provide it in the three working languages of the Convention.



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In order to avoid problems of communication, the Secretariat has stressed the following in relation to the submission of documents:

a) Documents must be submitted by either: the national Management Authority of the Convention, as has been designated and authorized to communicate with other Parties and with the Secretariat (the main Management Authority if there are several); or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

b) Documents and amendment proposals submitted by any other authority will not be accepted.

c) The Secretariat will formally register documents as having been received for the meeting only when it receives an original signed letter with the documents, specifying what has been submitted, and sent by the deadlines specified above (for which the postmark serves as proof). Parties wishing to submit documents electronically are invited to contact the Secretariat.

d) In cases where two or more Parties are jointly submitting an amendment proposal or a working document, a signed letter of submission before the deadline is required from each of the Parties concerned in order for their names to be recorded as proponents. For more information, please visit

[https://cites.org/eng/news/pr/cites\\_cop17\\_venue\\_dates\\_south\\_africa\\_2016](https://cites.org/eng/news/pr/cites_cop17_venue_dates_south_africa_2016)

# 04

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## TRAFFIC Alert

**Pangolin racket busted along Indo-Nepal border**

**Ramdev biggest buyer of Red Sanders in India**

**Four arrested in Tamil Nadu for smuggling Sea Cucumbers**

**Indian airport officials seize 700 tortoises in just two months**



1

## Pangolin racket busted along Indo-Nepal border

In May 2015, Madhya Pradesh forest officials arrested a Kolkata-based businessman, who is reportedly part of a global racket involved in smuggling Indian pangolins to China and Viet Nam, where their blood, meat and scales are sold to traditional medical practitioners at a premium. The accused is believed to have masterminded the killing of hundreds of pangolins and smuggled them to Asian countries from Madhya Pradesh and other parts of the country. Nine of his local conduits were arrested in the State's Chhindwara district in September last year. At least 47 kg of pangolin scales known as '*chuan shan jia*' in Chinese were seized. The businessman was arrested by the State Forest Department's Special Task Force (STF) in Kolkata.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Pangolins, also called scaly anteaters, are toothless animals and have large keratin scales covering their skin. They are the only known mammal with this adaptation. Of the eight species found worldwide (four each in Asia and Africa), two are known from India—the Indian Pangolin *Manis crassicaudata* and the Chinese Pangolin *Manis pentadactyla*. TRAFFIC analysed seizure reports from the past five years (2009-2013) in India and found that around 3350 pangolins were poached in the country. However, this may only be a conservative estimate as a large part of this trade presumably remains undetected. With virtually no information available on their population status or current levels of illegal utilization, the conservation status of pangolins remains unclear and could be alarming.

In India, pangolins are captured for some local trade as well as to meet the demand from international markets in China and Southeast Asia. Pangolin meat is considered a delicacy among several communities and is consumed as a "tonic food" because of its alleged medicinal properties. Their scales are also used for making traditional medicines. Pangolins are also traded and smuggled alive. Pangolin scales are used as an ingredient in traditional Asian medicines that are believed to help breast feeding women lactate and cure ailments ranging from asthma and psoriasis to cancer, although there is a lack of evidence suggesting they are effective.

TRAFFIC has been focusing on these species as some of the lesser known species in illegal wildlife trade. TRAFFIC has conducted a widespread campaign on social media to raise awareness on the plight of this species in India. The campaign Preserving the Future: Stop Illegal Wildlife Trade was jointly run by TRAFFIC, WWF-India and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB). The threat has also been publicized through publications such as the TRAFFIC Bulletin and TRAFFIC Post. TRAFFIC continues to highlight the need for more data on the population status and illegal trade in pangolins and also for greater enforcement activities to protect these species in the wild in India. The Chinese Pangolin and the Indian Pangolin are listed in Appendix II of CITES and at the 11th meeting of CITES, an annotation was added for zero export quotas. TRAFFIC has been part of discussions that have proposed upscaling the status of this species to Appendix I for greater protection.

Sources: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/MP-forest-officials-crack-Indo-China-Pangolin-smuggling-racket/articleshow/47137053.cms>;  
<http://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2014/04/opinion/sutter-change-the-list-pangolin-trafficking/>;  
<http://www.traffic.org/home/2015/5/6/preserving-the-future-digital-campaign-illuminates-illegal-t.html>  
<http://www.traffic.org/bulletin/>

# 2

## Ramdev biggest buyer of Red Sanders in India

**B**aba Ramdev, a spiritual leader known for his contributions in yoga, Ayurveda, politics and agriculture, has emerged as the biggest buyer of the much-sought after Red Sanders in the country. In the recent auction in April 2015, conducted by the Andhra Pradesh government, Ramdev's Patanjali Yogpeeth in Hardwar, bought 706 tonnes of Red Sanders. In a seller's market dominated by the Chinese, Ramdev seems to be a major domestic buyer of the prized wood.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Red Sanders *Pterocarpus santalinus* is an endemic timber tree species found in the districts of Chittoor, Cuddapah, Anantpur Kurnool, Prakasam, and Nellore in the State of Andhra Pradesh and in Chegalpettu district of Tamil Nadu with sporadic occurrences in Karnataka and Kerala. Domestic trade of Red Sanders was little known until recently when its large-scale use as an ingredient of Ayurvedic (traditional) medicines was revealed after Baba Ramdev bought a significant quantity in the recent auction of confiscated wood conducted by the State of Andhra Pradesh. Nonetheless, its trade for Japanese musical instruments, as a beer colorant, and as a hardwood for making furniture and toys has been long known to the world.

In India, the trade in Red Sanders is regulated through various legal mechanisms such as the Andhra Pradesh Preservation of Private Forest Rules, 1978, the Andhra Pradesh Sandal Wood and Red Sanders Wood Transit Rules (1969), Andhra Pradesh Red Sanders wood possession rules, 1989 and Tamil Nadu Timber Transit Rules, 1968. The Supreme Court has also issued a directive to the Central Government to include Red Sanders in Schedule VI of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 that currently protects only six species of plants in India. Red Sanders is currently listed in Appendix II in CITES. Export from India was prohibited by the CITES Secretariat in June 2010, who cited irregularities in the certification of products being exported and India's failure to conduct a non-detriment finding (NDF) (a study to ascertain conservation status of the species and the impact of trade on it). Therefore, no export of unfinished Red Sanders wood is allowed. Recently, in 2014, the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) permitted the State of Andhra Pradesh to export 8584 metric tonnes of confiscated Red Sanders logs.

The fact that there are so many contours involved in this trade has led TRAFFIC to investigate the enforcement and conservation aspects of the Red Sanders trade in India. A clear and comprehensive national level policy and corresponding laws with foresight will be essential for a sound and sustainable regime for Red Sanders- a species that shed red of all kinds at this crucial juncture.

TRAFFIC has compiled a report on the illegal trade in Red Sanders that will shortly be available in the public domain.

Sources: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/20-red-sanders-smugglers-shot-dead-in-chittoor-encounter/article7076614.ece>; <http://www.firstpost.com/india/heres-why-ramdev-indias-biggest-buyer-of-red-sander-had-to-shell-out-rs-207-cr-for-endangered-wood-2200326.html>; <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/150412/nation-current-affairs/article/andhra-pradesh-auctions-hinder-red-sanders-trade>; <http://www.newindianexpress.com/thesundaystandard/Chinese-Timber-Mafia-Gets-a-New-Red-Sanders-Route/2014/01/12/article1995456.ece>  
TRAFFIC's unpublished report on illegal trade in Red Sanders titled "Red Sanders: An ecological boon or an enforcement bane?"

# 3

## Four arrested in Tamil Nadu for smuggling Sea Cucumbers

On 10th May 2015, the Coastal Security Group (marine police) arrested four people in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, on charges of smuggling Sea Cucumbers. The police seized 360 kg of endangered species from the smugglers. Investigations revealed that the gang had processed the Sea Cucumbers by boiling them in hot water and stocking them in 11 barrels and hiding them on the seashore. The gang members confessed that they were planning to transport the processed Sea Cucumbers to Rameswaram from where they were to be smuggled to Malaysia. The arrested were handed over to Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park officials for further investigation.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

This is not the first time that Sea Cucumbers *Holothurians spp.* have been seized in this region. About two metric tonnes of Sea Cucumbers were seized in Tamil Nadu in April 2014 and there have been other seizures. According to WCCB, Seahorses and Sea Cucumbers are poached by local individuals, particularly fishermen who are funded by larger groups. International networks then ferry the animals on flights to China and Southeast Asia.

In 2014, at least 5770 kg of Sea Cucumbers were seized in India and 2015 (till May), 6225 kg of Sea Cucumbers were seized. These figures have been taken from an illegal wildlife trade database that TRAFFIC maintains within its division in India.

The poaching and illegal trade of Sea Cucumbers and other marine species has risen steeply because of a high demand, primarily as a delicacy and as an ingredient of Oriental medicines in China and Southeast Asia. The extent of poaching is such that many of these species could have been wiped out in stretches of coastal waters, such as the Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshwadeep, where they previously had a good population. This clearly is a warning sign for Indian marine biodiversity. Sea cucumbers are a scavenger species in the marine ecosystem that clean up water and allow corals to thrive.

Currently, Sea Cucumbers are listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 under which poaching and trade in the species is prohibited. Further, there are ongoing deliberations to consider listing Sea Cucumber species found in the South Asian region in CITES in order to increase their levels of protection.



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Sources: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/Four-arrested-in-Tamil-Nadu-for-smuggling-sea-cucumbers/articleshow/47223786.cms>; <http://www.ndtv.com/tamil-nadu-news/600-kilograms-of-sea-cucumber-seized-in-tamil-nadu-756307>; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2613989/How-Indias-coastal-waters-fast-base-easy-poaching-illegal-trading-marine-sp>

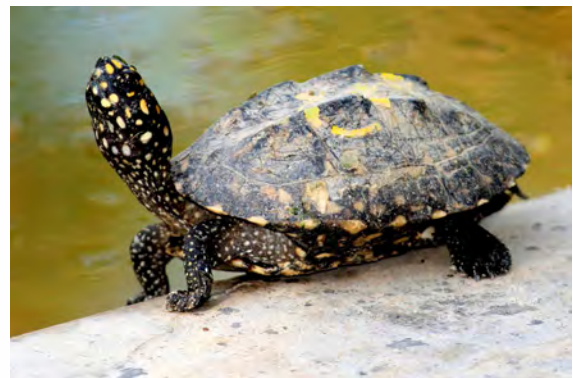
# 4

## Indian airport officials seize 700 tortoises in just two months

Smuggling of wild animals and their body parts is once again adding to the worries at airports across India. According to airport officials, recent cases have shown the smuggling of wild animals gaining pace. Passengers are being arrested for trying to smuggle wildlife and their parts to various countries, including Malaysia. In the past two months, officials at various airports across India have foiled smuggling of more than 700 tortoises. Agencies deployed at the airports, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, have been alerted regarding the increase in smuggling incidents. It is not only tortoises but also peacock parts and deer antlers that are being smuggled from India by air.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

The illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles for both food and pets has assumed enormous proportions in India. During 2014 and 2015, TRAFFIC records reveal that at least 1782 Star Tortoises were seized, including 460 hatchlings in 2014 in 10 incidents across India and in 2015 (up to April), 50 Star Tortoises were seized in two incidents. For the Black Spotted Pond Turtle in 2014 and 2015 (till June), there were nine incidents including 2100 live seizures and 14 dead. In 2015 alone, at least 1104 Black Spotted Turtles have been seized to date.



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For Soft-shelled Turtles, since 2014, 8112 animals have been seized in seven incidents, 2200 of them in a single case in 2015. TRAFFIC notes this alarming trend and is calling for greater efforts to find out more about the nature of the trade, especially that in the Black Spotted Pond Turtle. Black Spotted Pond Turtles are listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act and in Appendix I of CITES. Efforts are underway to develop a turtle identification guide in collaboration with other agencies and to develop new initiatives to stop the illegal trade in these reptiles.

Sources: [www.traffic.org/species-reports/traffic\\_species\\_reptiles36.pdf](http://www.traffic.org/species-reports/traffic_species_reptiles36.pdf);  
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[http://article.wn.com/view/2015/06/02/Turtle\\_smugglers\\_in\\_custody\\_till\\_June\\_15/](http://article.wn.com/view/2015/06/02/Turtle_smugglers_in_custody_till_June_15/)





# 05

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## In Focus

### **Hunting tribes of Tamil Nadu: A special focus on “Narikuravars”**

Balaji Seshan and Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj,  
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## Hunting tribes of Tamil Nadu: A special focus on “Narikuravars”

Covering 1 30 058 sq km of Southeast India, the State of Tamil Nadu is well-known for its rich biodiversity. The Tamils have a very close association with their natural resources and have cherished and used it for centuries. The State is also inhabited by many tribes. The livelihoods of these tribes vary considerably; some are engaged in activities such as cultivation and milk production, while others remain attached to hunting and ancient activities such as witchcraft and the occult. Kannada and Tamil are the dominant languages within the South Indian tribes.

Of the many tribes in Tamil Nadu, the Narikuravars are a nomadic tribal hunting community found throughout Tamil Nadu. *Nari* in Tamil means Jackal or Fox and *Kuravar* means hunters. In Tamil Nadu, they are also called “Kuruvikkarar” meaning bird catchers.

The Narikuravars are thought to have migrated around 400 years ago from northern India to the south and their language indicates a Gujarati origin. Their language is a unique mixture of Tamil, Telugu and Marathi and is known as Vagriboli.

In former times, the community was known for its hunting skills, especially of smaller mammals and birds. However, restrictions on hunting and the sale of forest produce forced the Narikuravars to take up other means of livelihood such as selling beads, baskets, herbs, medicines and fortune-telling. However, reports have indicated that the community has not completely weaned off its hunting past.

TRAFFIC, during its on-going illegal wildlife trade surveys in India, including Tamil Nadu, found that the Narikuravar still hunted many smaller and lesser known wildlife species. During surveys of nearly 900 Narikuravar in 100 settlements in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry over the past year, it was found that most of the mammals and birds hunted were protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972. The trapping or hunting was largely for food and money.

Species commonly targeted by the Narikuravar included: Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis*, monitor lizards (*Varanus* sp.), Slender Loris (*Loris tardigradus* and *Loris lydekkerianus*), Indian Jackal *Canis aureus* indicus, civets (Viverridae), mongoose (Herpestidae), porcupines (Hystricidae), bats (Order Chiroptera), domestic cats, partridges and quails (Phasianidae), Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*, parrots (Psittacoidea), sparrow (Passeridae), munias (Estrildidae), junglefowls (Phasianidae) and many migratory birds.

Monitor lizards are trapped in large numbers and are sold for their meat, especially in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. In one instance, at least 60 monitor lizards were observed dumped in a dry well with their legs tied ready for sale. The average price per kg for monitor lizard meat was reportedly around INR 500. Monitor lizard meat, along with the meat of the Black-naped Hare, was observed being sold to various highway motels and restaurants for sale and consumption as a delicacy.

Narikuravars are also extremely adept at hunting lorises, Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus*, Giant Grizzled Squirrel *Ratufa macroura*, Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*, civets, foxes and Black-napped Hares. They have precise and extraordinary knowledge of animals' habitats, movements and life history. In Srirangam in a 6 km<sup>2</sup> forest area, Narikuravars hunt Crested Serpent Eagles *Spilornis cheela*, whose meat is considered a delicacy. They use *gulel*\* (undikol) for hunting Crested Serpent Eagles. Rusty Spotted Cats, foxes, jackals and jungle cats are also hunted for their meat, also considered a delicacy.

The Narikuravars use many hunting techniques but are commonly seen carrying single bore home-made rifles to hunt birds and animals, including endangered ones in Forests Reserves.

Interestingly, some of the Narikuravars said they are willing to give up hunting and poaching if they are able to get a suitable alternative livelihood.

Furthermore, the Narikuravars in some settlements often proclaim themselves as *Siddha*\* doctors or country physicians, prescribing oils and medicines made out of the fat and other body parts of monitor lizards, peacock fat, lorises and other protected wildlife. Their main selling point is the false claim that such body parts have aphrodisiac properties.

Narikuravar men and women also travel to festivals in Tamil Nadu and neighbouring States to sell oils made from endangered wildlife, Peacock feathers and jewelry made of beads. Narikuravars from Tamil Nadu were encountered in Thrishur Pooram and Sabarimala. Some Narikuravars were also found to be selling fake animal products such as fake Tiger skin and claws to tourists.

Younger Narikuravars appear to be abandoning hunting as a livelihood, partly owing to pressure from the forest department. Instead they are working as drivers or bead and necklace makers and sellers, or in Chennai as garbage collectors. Many interviewed Narikuravars want their children to be educated and follow a higher quality lifestyle.

**Table: Body parts of various animals and birds traded and their uses, according to interviewed Narikuravars**

Animal/Plant part and their uses		
Animal/bird	Body Part	Uses
Monitor lizard	Blood and flesh	Improving potency and body strength
Black-naped Hare	Blood	For hair growth
Black-naped Hare	Flesh	For improving body stamina
Loris	Live	For achieving what you desire
Jackal	Head, tail and paws	Hung at the entrance of the house to ward off evil spirits
Jackal	Teeth	Falsely sold as Tiger teeth. They are also worn on a string around the neck to bestow strength and potency
Peacock	Fat, dried and powdered legs	Oil for joint and muscle pain
Owl	Eyes	Black magic
Sparrow, Black-headed Munia and Scaly-breasted Munia	Flesh	Called "Sittukuruvilehiyam" and used for cure for impotence
Civet	Flesh	Eaten as a delicacy
Junglefowl	Feather and bones	Used for sport fishing and making hooks

TRAFFIC'S recommends the following actions:

1. Studies are needed to gain further insights into the Narikuruvar community to understand their demography, socioeconomic status and usage of natural resources. Alternatives to hunting protected wildlife also need to be explored, and the willingness to follow alternative livelihoods.

2. The government should encourage communities to desist from breaking the law by hunting protected wildlife and develop alternative livelihood options.

3. Develop new awareness campaigns for spreading awareness on conservation and social prohibition of hunting

4. Enforcement actions should be taken against persistent hunting and illegal wildlife trade offenders.

5. Regular monitoring of poaching levels should be undertaken.

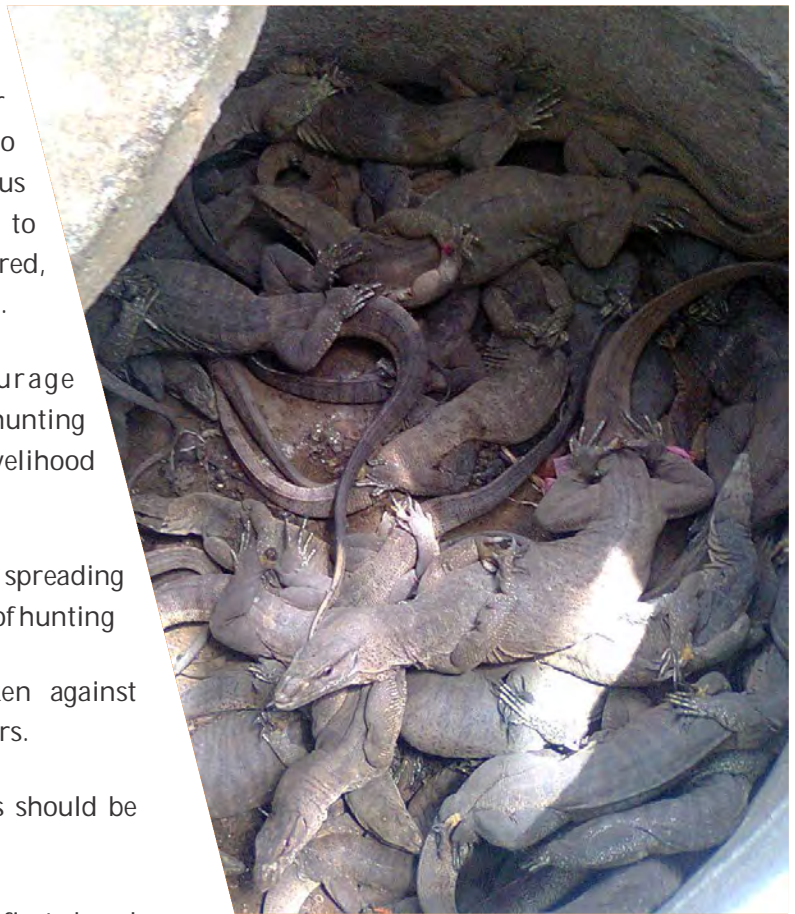
The information stated above is based on first hand observation during the on-going illegal wildlife trade surveys conducted periodically by TRAFFIC investigators in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

\* *Gulel* in English means a slingshot

\*Siddha refers to a system of traditional medicine originating in Tamil Nadu. Siddhars were spiritual bodies who possessed the eight supernatural powers.

**Sources: Based on TRAFFIC's on-going and unpublished study of the Narikuruvar in Tamil Nadu**

[http://www.kalpavriksh.org/images/CCA/Directory/TN\\_StateChapter.pdf](http://www.kalpavriksh.org/images/CCA/Directory/TN_StateChapter.pdf)



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# 006

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## **Wild Cry**

**'Tale' of peacock train feathers: India's national bird at risk**

## 'Tale' of peacock train feathers: India's national bird at risk

The Indian Peafowl *Pavocristatus*, commonly referred to as the Peacock, is not just revered as India's national bird, it also holds a deeper significance in Hindu mythology. The Indian Peacock is considered a vahan (vehicle) of the God Kartikeya, son of Lord Shiva and Parvati and brother of the God Ganesha, and thus considered sacred (Ahmed 2008).

Peafowl are most notable for the male's extravagant display feathers, which are enormously long with an "eye" at the end (Ahmed 2008). Even though the Indian Peafowl is protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 of India, domestic trade in its naturally shed train (tail) feathers is allowed although all international trade is prohibited. Peacock tail feathers and handicrafts made from them are commonly seen in the markets in India and also on many websites. However, there have been growing concerns regarding the sourcing of peacock tail feathers, with some suspicion that all those available in markets are not naturally shed and that the current demand for peacock feathers may actually be leading to poaching of the species in the wild.

### Distribution

The Indian Peafowl is a resident of India and is found across the country up to the elevations of 1800 m (rarely to 2000 m) including in the outer Himalayas and other hilly regions. It also occurs in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

### Legal Status

**Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972- Schedule I**

**CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora):** Not listed

**IUCN Red List:** Least Concern

Hunting, killing, poisoning, trapping or trading of a species protected under the Wildlife (Protection Act), 1972 is punishable in India. However, there is an exemption for domestic trade in peacock tail feathers and the articles made from them, as stated in Sec. 43 (3) a and Sec. 44 (1) of the Act. The exemption was made on the basis of the fact that the feathers used were naturally shed. Export of feathers or artifacts made from them have been banned under the Foreign Trade Policy since 1st October 1999.



© Abrar Ahmed

## Population Status

There are limited data on the population status of the Indian Peafowl aside from a few surveys carried out in several protected areas in India.

## Threats

Habitat loss and death by pesticide poisoning or to prevent crop depredation have been the main threats to the wild population of the Indian Peacock to date. However there are growing reports of poaching of Peacocks for their feathers and meat.

TRAFFIC, on behalf of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India, conducted a short-term survey between October 2007 and January 2008, to study poaching and trade in the Indian Peafowl. The prime objective of the study was to assess the nature and volume of the trade in peacock feathers in Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat and the Agra region of Uttar Pradesh; to identify key players and drivers of the trade and the communities involved; to carry out market surveys to assess the potential source of peacock feathers (natural shedding or killed birds) entering into trade and to document available forensic techniques for distinguishing shed feathers from those of killed birds.

Agra was found to be the centre of trade in Peacock tail feathers in India and even had an entire locality given over to the trade, although Peacock feathers were found on sale in every location surveyed. The study found little evidence regarding poaching as a source of Peacock tail feathers, although it had reportedly been carried out to supply the trade in peacock meat and live birds.

With no estimated information on the population of the Indian Peafowl in India and with growing reports regarding poaching of the species for its train feathers, TRAFFIC with support from the Ministry of Environment and Forest decided to undertake a further all-India study on the peacock feather trade. The survey included 18 States covering 150 cities and 150 villages. The study found that Peacock feathers were largely collected from three States—Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

The start of the moult season begins towards the end of August and lasts for an average of eight weeks, ending in late October or early November. However in Tamil Nadu feather moult and collection was largely observed during November-December.



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© Shaleen Attre/TRAFFIC

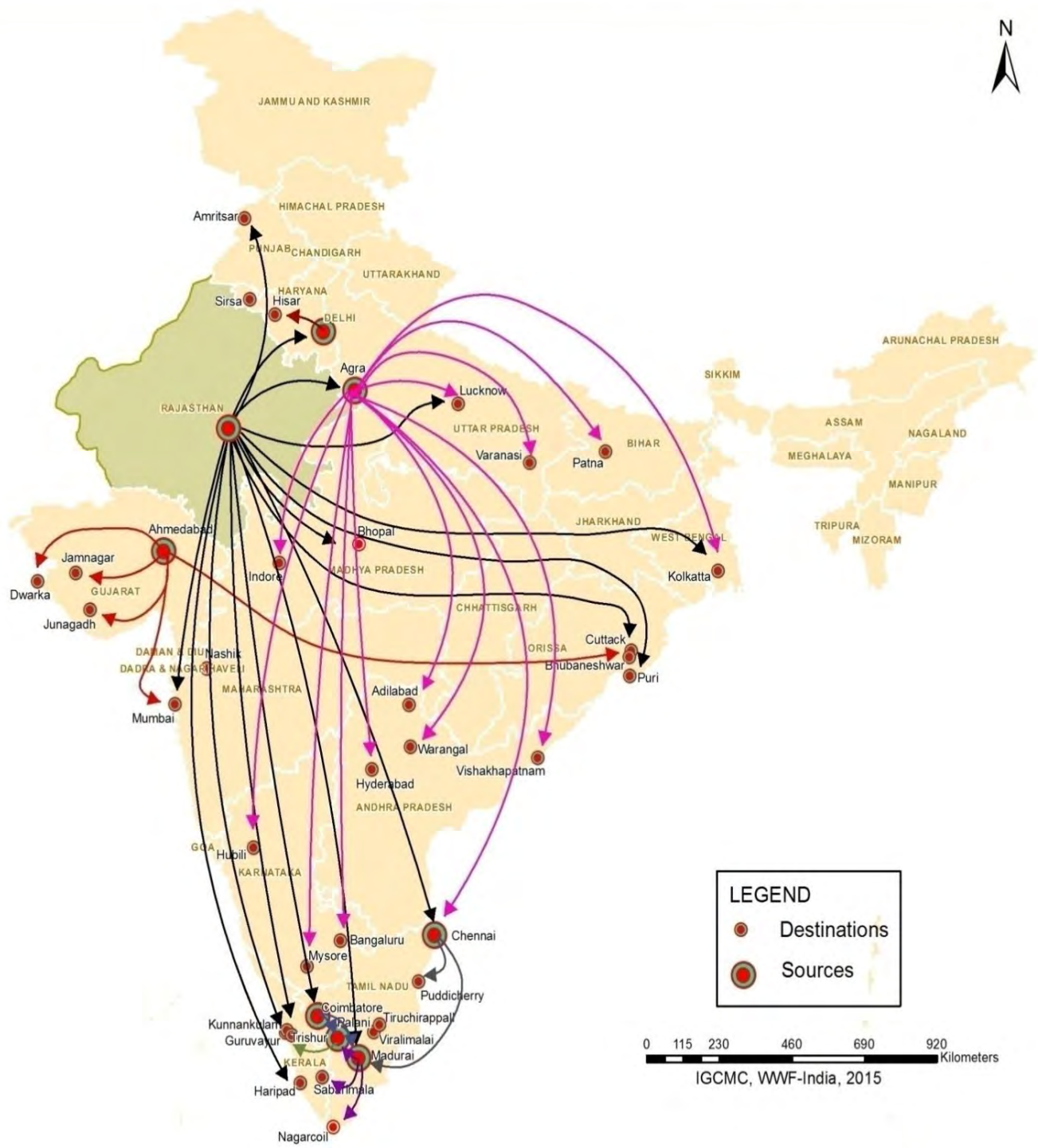
The study found that Peacock feathers are mostly used at festivals throughout India. Religious uses are one of the main drivers of the trade as shown in the table below.

State	Festival	Usage	Demand during the months
Andhra Pradesh	Ghusadi	Hats <i>3000 feathers are used to make a hat</i>	September
Andhra Pradesh	Janmashtami	Temple <i>puja</i> & household functions, fancy dress for children	August-September
Andhra Pradesh	Muharram	Blessing	October-November
Gujarat	Jain and Hindu temples	As a <i>jhadu</i> or broom for cleaning deities and the floor of the temple	Year-round
Gujarat	Kavant <i>Mela</i>	Dancing headgear for Rathwa tribe	February
Karnataka	Thai Pusam and Panguniuthiram	Kavadi <i>300 feathers per Kavadi: there are 3000 Kavadi</i>	January-February
Karnataka	Janmashtami	Temple <i>puja</i> & household function, fancy dress for children	August-September
Karnataka	Muharram	Blessing	October-November
Kerala	Thai Pusam and Panguniuthiram	Kavadi <i>300 feathers per Kavadi: there are approximately 17,000 Kavadi</i>	January-February
Kerala	Pooram	Alavattam <i>550 feathers per Alavattam: two Alavattam are used per elephant. 550 elephants are used</i>	April
Kerala	All festivals	Ambala Kavadi <i>For dancing during the festivals</i>	Festival time
Kerala	Janmashtami	Procession, temple <i>puja</i> & household function	August - September



State	Festival	Usage	Demand during the months
Kerala	Bhagavathy temples	Arjunan Nritham or Mayil Peeli Thookkam <i>Ritual art performed by men of Ezhava community</i>	Festival time
Odisha	Janmashtami	Procession, home use, <i>puja</i>	August - September
Rajasthan	Jain and Hindu Temples	<i>As a jhadu or broom for cleaning deities and the floor of the temple</i>	year-round
Rajasthan, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi	Dargah	Broom used for blessing the devotees	year-round
Tamil Nadu	Janmashtami	Procession, temple <i>puja</i> & household function, fancy dress for children	August-September
Tamil Nadu	Thai Pusam	Kavadi <i>300 feathers per Kavadi; approximately 20 000 Kavadi</i>	January-February
Tamil Nadu	Panguniuthiram	Kavadi <i>300 feathers per Kavadi and there are 25 000 Kavadi</i>	March - April
Tamil Nadu and Kerala	Folk dance	Mayilattam <i>Folk dance, school functions, corporate functions</i>	Festival time
Uttar Pradesh	Janmashtami in Mathura and Vrindavan	Procession, temple <i>puja</i> & household function <i>Used for Krishna temples and as clothes for deities world-wide.</i>	August-September
Uttar Pradesh	Mayur Nritya	Dance where women wear wings made of peacock feathers and dance like a peacock	Festivals
Uttar Pradesh	Govardhan Puja	Brooms of peacock feathers used by devotees	November
West Bengal	Janmashtami	Procession, temple <i>puja</i> & household function	August-September

# Peacock Feather Trade Route in India



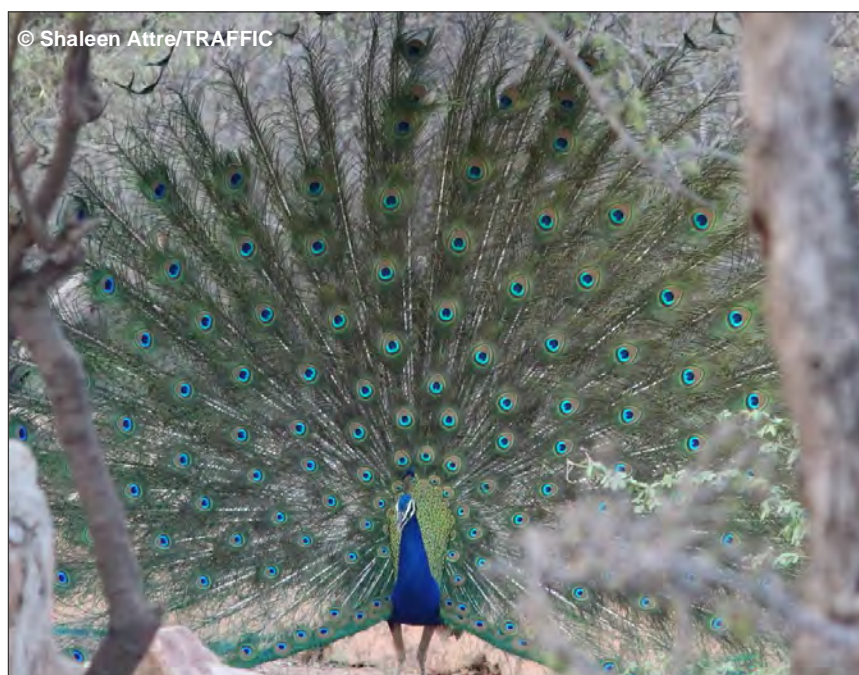
Besides the use of Peacock feathers for festivals and religious purposes, they are also used as medicine. Mayur Piccha Bhasma (Peacock feather ash) is commonly available throughout India (T. L. Devaraj 2004) and Mayileragathi Churnam / Nasika Choorna (Peacock feather ash) is available in Tamil Nadu and Kerala respectively (B. V. Subbarayappa 2001). These are different names for the same peacock feather medicine which are prescribed under Siddha, Ayurvedic and Unani to cure hiccups, vomiting and morning sickness (S. B. Vohora, S. Y. Khan 1979). Peacock feathers and other body parts have 22 applications mostly related to stomach complaints, body aches, small-pox, chicken-pox and whooping cough (Rajiv Kumar Sinha, Shweta Sinha 2001).

There is a significant demand for peafowl feathers in international markets. For example, in Malaysia and Singapore the feathers are carried as Kavadis by devotees at Thai Pusam and Panguniuthiram festivals. All such Peacock feathers are believed to be sourced from India (Chris Shepherd, *TRAFFIC in litt.*, 2007) (Ahmed 2008). Likewise, Peacock feathers have also been seized en route to Singapore, Dubai and Myanmar since 2005.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India, the lead author of the forthcoming report on trade in Peacock feathers in India said: "The data gathered by TRAFFIC indicate a lucrative market for Peacock tail feathers in India, but with limited information on the population status of the Indian Peafowl and the non-availability of robust information about the sourcing of Peacock feathers, the findings are currently inconclusive about the long term sustainability of the Peacock feather trade and its impact on the conservation of the species in the wild. However, the study has successfully identified the major trade hotspots and trade routes and given an insight into the dynamics of the trade, all of which is crucial to forming any future strategy for conservation of the species."

Watch out for the full report on [www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org) and [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)

**Acknowledgement- A number of people have lent great support and help in conducting this study in different parts of India. We owe our gratefulness to each one of them. We thank Mr Prabhakaran, IFS and Mr Nihar Ranjan, IFS of Tamil Nadu Forest department for providing crucial guidance in conducting this research. We thank Balaji Seshan, Abhinav Srihan, Mohnish Kapoor, Shaleen Attre, Disha Ramanan, Priyankar Chakrabarty, Kingshuk Mondal, Shubhobroto Ghosh and Amar Nath Choudhary from the TRAFFIC team in India for their extensive field work and extremely useful contribution in preparing the manuscript of this brief report. We thank the National Tiger Conservation Authority, New Delhi which funded the study.**



# Signpost

Other significant news stories

## Smugglers get wild ideas at airports

### They prefer Kolkata for business'

**By Anshu Sharma in New Delhi**

SMUGGLING of wild animals and their body parts has rapidly gained adding to the number of officials from various agencies as reports across India.

According to a reference report of the government, the number of wild animals has been steadily increasing over the years. The number of wild animals has been steadily increasing over the years. The number of wild animals has been steadily increasing over the years.



Officials at various airports across India have found smuggling of over 100 animals in the past few months. They are also finding a large number of wild animals and their body parts.

Officials at various airports across India have found smuggling of over 100 animals in the past few months. They are also finding a large number of wild animals and their body parts.

Mail Today/12-05-2015



## For poachers, a gecko rules over one-horned rhino in grey market

**Rahul Karmakar**

When three poachers were arrested in Assam's Karbi Anglong district three years ago, it was found that they had been an open secret for years: the state's green rhino and rhinoceros was in severe danger because of rampant smuggling of its horns in traditional medicine hubs in Southeast Asia and China.

But what wildlife experts didn't realize then was that the small million-dollar rhino poaching business was just the tip of the iceberg. The arrest of a top rhino trader in November 2011 revealed that more than 100 rhino horns were being smuggled out of the region, such as ivory gages, bullfrogs, musk, pangolin, civet oil, and panda, silver foxes and macaques.

Most of these animals are highly sought in the clandestine international market for their use as traditional medicine for people with chronic and degenerative diseases.

Alarms bells rang when Dilip Narayan, chief of national group Dima Halam Garo, was caught with two ivory tusks that fetch 15-20 crore each in the international grey market, the reportedly held in the southern islands—believed to possess medicinal qualities to cure cancer, AIDS and even impotence—the king to negotiate the right price.

"Smuggling of lesser animals, especially if not more important than the bigger ones in the grey market," said Narayan.

A 2013 study by wildlife NGO's said 200,000 trade skins are smuggled out via Bangladesh every year—some 100,000 per kg in value and at least 1,500 birds per kg.

The illegal trade in amphibians was uncovered when 14 bags of bullfrogs were seized near Kaziranga National Park in 2007. The final destination for these frogs was France, which legally imports up to 4,000 tonnes of frogs for leg-organically.

A rhino horn fetches up to \$80,000 per kg in the grey market. An rhino horn is worth \$2,000 kg, tiger's bones, skin and nose \$10,000 while bears are killed for their paws, a delicacy that comes for \$15 to each and their tail for \$200,000 a pound.

The volume of trade in smaller animals is believed to be much higher. A polecat skin, for instance, goes for an average \$2,300 while musk fetches \$21,000 a kilo. Apart from Bangladesh, much of the illegal trade in wildlife is Myanmar and beyond in Guangxi, Daxing in Thailand.

Kaziranga suffers the most for its poached rhinos. "Kaziranga is the prime target for poachers, but in the rate of poaching has decreased from 94% in 1982 to 2.1% in 2014. That said, better protection has seen many poachers being killed or arrested in recent times," the park's director S.K. Yadav said.

Hindustan Times/05-06-2015

## 30 rhino poachers shot in N-E last year

### WILDLIFE MONITORING Other animals still bear the brunt, 32 tigers, 116 leopards poached in 2014 across country

**Chota Chakrabarti**

**NEW DELHI:** The government has been dealing with wildlife poachers with an iron fist for the past year with 30 poachers being gunned down in the Northeast. The number has risen in the state released by the central government in the highest ever in the country's history. The kill took place in the Kaziranga National Park, Assam.

"The number shows our determination to eliminate wildlife traffickers and poachers. It is a back-up of the Modi government's environment minister Prakash Javadekar and ministry. Highly sophisticated animals were recovered from the poachers in South East Asia through police Myanmar. Hunting down of poachers in Karbi Anglong of Assam was undertaken by the Congress led Assam government in the past few years. The number of rhinos in Kaziranga and Assam area.

**BIG CATS AT RISK:** Wildlife is under attack in the country. An estimated 25 tigers are being killed in illegal wildlife trade in India.

Most of the poachers were gunned down at Assam's Kaziranga National Park, where rhinos are killed for horns which are then smuggled out of the country.

and 116 leopards were poached in 2014 across India, with states in Uttarakhand, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh reporting a large number of cases.

"Those who are the poachers, but the whole animal, without having their teeth, is being reported to dead with a large number of rhinos in the Wildlife Protection Society of India. Traffic is a non-governmental group monitoring vehicle trade, says that there has been no let down in illegal wildlife trade in India. It says the government is trying to manage these poachers. The number of rhinos in Kaziranga National Park, Assam, is being reported to dead with a large number of rhinos in the Wildlife Protection Society of India. Traffic is a non-governmental group monitoring vehicle trade, says that there has been no let down in illegal wildlife trade in India. It says the government is trying to manage these poachers.

Hindustan Times/12-06-2015

## TECH TO TRAP POACHERS

**Smartphones and mobile apps**

Launched in Vietnam, Wildis is an app to help law enforcement officers identify, handle and report illegally trafficked wildlife. It provides photos and information on critically endangered species that are often trafficked through Asia. In India, the forest department launched an app, Heje, for rangers to use smartphones to track tiger movements, as well as to note through instant photo messaging important landscape features such as water levels, forest fires and suspicious human activity. US, Canada, and Kenya have developed a similar tool for African elephants.

**Acoustic traps**

Using networks of recycled cell phones fitted with solar panels and antennas that act as sensors, Rainforest Connection is tracking illegal logging in Borneo. The phones, mounted in waterproof cases, record and transmit sounds associated with illegal activity, such as plane or truck engines, chainsaws, explosions, and gunfire, to a cloud-based server for analysis. The devices make it possible to catch illegal loggers in the act of cutting trees.

**Software kits**

A free spatial monitoring and reporting tool (SMART) is used in 120 conservation areas in 27 countries. It integrates data from ranger patrols, analyzes local poaching trends, and measures progress in law enforcement to help rangers improve their effectiveness in combating wildlife crime. It captures knowledge of indigenous trackers and incorporates it to better understand local ecologies.

Sunday Times of India/12-07-2015

## STF nabs notorious tiger poacher in Bijnore

### CAUGHT FINALLY The accused is also involved in sandalwood smuggling in Uttarakhand. Besides he was in touch with poachers, smugglers in South India

**IT Correspondent**

**LUCKNOW:** The Special Task Force (STF) on Sunday nabbed notorious tiger poacher Samed in Bijore district.

AN STF, Arvind Chaturvedi, said the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) was trying to nab Samed for the last two years, but he managed to get away the night and continue poaching tigers in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The lead contact with the local forest department personnel and they used to start him about any operation, officials alleged.

The WCCB had lodged an FIR against Samed in Dehradun police station on September 7, 2013. Later, the WCCB team arrested Samed in Bihar and Narsinh alias Lala, close associates of Samed.

The duo had the WCCB officials that they and Samed in Bihar; one of Bijore in September 2014.

The duo was given a commission of honor, said Samed was involved in tiger poaching and was also in contact with the smugglers based in Delhi, Haridwar and other states.

On the basis of this information, the WCCB constituted a team to nab Samed led by its officials. The team nabbed Samed in Bijore, a close associate of the fugitive.

That catch gave the STF valuable information on the basis of which the team finally arrested Samed at Chitral village near Dairi river in Bijore district. During interrogation, Samed told the STF that he was in contact with the tigers in Uttarakhand and Bihar as he was experts in killing them.

Usually, the poachers dump animal meat laced with poison in the forest area to kill tigers. He revealed that poaching was continuing in the Khabarhat area in UP-Uttarakhand border and it was also rampant in the northern part of Jim Corbett National Park.

Samed was also involved in sandalwood smuggling in Khabarhat area of Uttarakhand. During electronic surveillance, the STF found that Samed was in touch with poachers and smugglers in south India as well.

The Bijore police and the WCCB will produce Samed in the district court for trial on Monday. He will be taken to Delhi for further investigation.

"We hope to collect information about the network of poachers in UP and neighboring states from Samed," A STF officer said.

**SEQUENCE OF EVENTS**

- The nabbed poacher told ASP (STF) Arvind Chaturvedi that Samed was involved in tiger poaching and was also in contact with the smugglers in Bihar district.
- The police team nabbed forest guard Samed, a close associate of the fugitive.
- That catch gave the STF valuable information on the basis of which the team finally arrested Samed at Chitral village in Bijore district.
- We hope to collect information about the network of poachers in UP and neighboring states from Samed," A STF officer said.

Hindustan Times/01-06-2015

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the wildlife trade monitoring network

is a strategic alliance of



**TRAFFIC**

**NEWSLETTER**

Issue 25 & 26  
March 2016

# TRAFFIC **POST**

**NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA**



**Calcutta Snake Park, a  
breeding ground for wildlife  
trafficking in India**

# TRAFFIC Post

TRAFFIC Post is TRAFFIC's newsletter on wildlife trade in India. It started in September 2007 with a primary objective of creating awareness about poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India.

Illegal wildlife trade is reportedly the fourth largest global illegal trade after narcotics, counterfeiting, and human trafficking. It has evolved itself into an organised activity threatening the future of many wildlife species.

TRAFFIC Post was born out of the need to reach out to various stakeholders including decision makers, enforcement officials, judiciary and consumers about the extent of illegal wildlife trade in India and the damaging effect it could be having on the endangered flora and fauna.

Since its inception, TRAFFIC Post has highlighted pressing issues related to illegal wildlife trade in India and globally, flagged early trends, and illuminated wildlife policies and laws. It has also focused on the status of legal trade in various medicinal plant and timber species that need sustainable management for ensuring ecological and economic success.

TRAFFIC Post comes out three times in the year and is available both online and in print. You can subscribe to it by writing to [trafficind@wwfindia.net](mailto:trafficind@wwfindia.net)

All issues of TRAFFIC Post can be viewed at [www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org); [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)

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# From the Desk



## Tigers in trouble again

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj,  
Country Head of TRAFFIC's India Office

**T**igers *Panthera tigris* are the religious and cultural icons of Asia, adorned as the national animal in some countries, and figuring prominently on the flags of others. Their charismatic appeal is used to sell everything from gasoline to sporting goods and confectionery. Yet, paradoxically, wild Tigers are on the brink of extinction.

Tigers are an umbrella species and symbolize the plight of wildlife across Asia. Poised as they are at the top of the ecosystem, loss of Tigers indicates ecosystems under stress. Within a century wild Tiger numbers have plummeted from over 1 00 000 to below 4 000 animals. The existing wild populations inhabit fragmented and isolated patches of land constituting a meagre seven percent of their historic range. If current trends persist, Tigers are likely to be the first species of large predator to vanish in modern times. Tiger subspecies and populations have already disappeared from Java, Bali, and Central Asia and throughout much of China. The only region in which populations have recovered is the Russian Far East, where habitats are secure and poaching pressures are modest. The challenge of saving wild Tigers has become a global one and calls for a global solution and commitment.

The successful conservation of wild Tigers and the natural capital that sustains them are among the key indicators of sustainable development and require greater global resources and attention. Among many factors as I have stated above, poaching for illegal trade has taken precedence over the others, if we carefully consider a certain rise in the number of illegal takes from the wild in the last two years. Most notably, the loss of cubs-which certainly indicates a growth factor in a population, and the breeding males, brings up a serious question of survivorship of the Tiger.

Paradoxically, in India, population estimates in 2015, project a sharp increase in the Tiger population to a magical figure of above thirty percent. Parallel to this, the budget year 2016-17 also witnessed a phenomenal rise in budget allocation for Tiger conservation in India. On the other hand, there has been the shocking news of the seizure of five Tiger skins near Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand State, known to be better protected than most other regions in India, the loss of more than six Tigers in Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar, and, most shocking of all, the poisoning of four cubs and their mother in Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra State. If poaching takes such a course, conservation efforts are thwarted, local communities are robbed of economic resources, and biodiversity is reduced when species are taken from the wild. The loss in ecosystem resilience affects fresh water supplies and food production.

Organised crime is attracted to wildlife trafficking owing to its profitability and small risk of prosecution, as well as the light fines and imprisonment even if caught. Criminals, deliberately cross international borders and violate national laws with relative impunity, and attempt to corrupt government officials, and become a serious threat to the stability, economy, and natural resources of a country.

Wildlife crime does not exist in isolation and is interlinked with various other severe and large scale global crimes. In Cameroon, for example, the proceeds from poached ivory will likely finance the purchase of weapons and ammunition, further exacerbating conflict in the region.

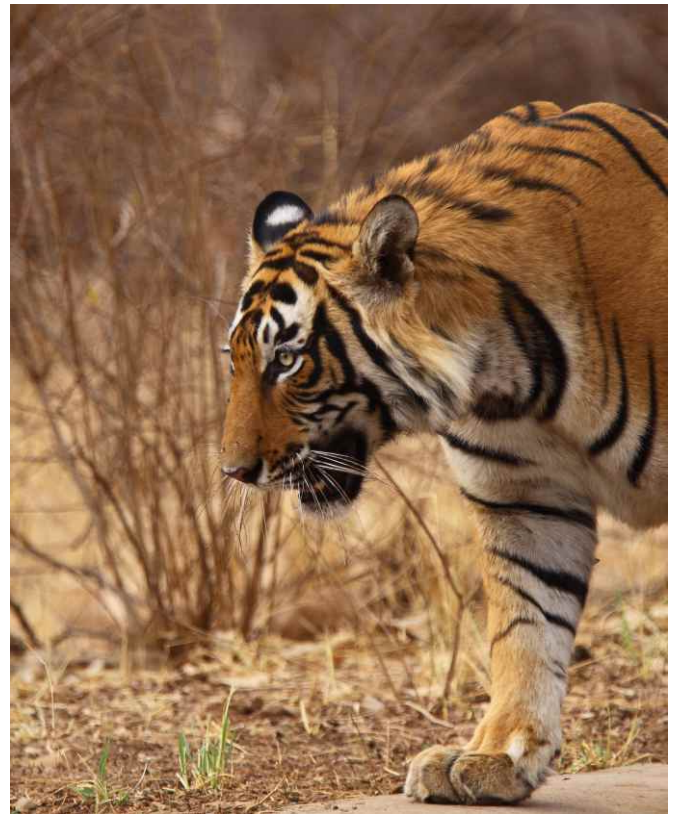
The economy of a country is always associated with demand for poaching and this is not a new phenomenon.



Similarly for India, demand has led to poaching before and after independence in 1947. For example, by the 1930s, the horn of the Greater One-horned Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* was expensive enough to induce poaching in Kaziranga, an area set aside for protection in 1908. In mid-1992, poaching had occurred on a large scale in Ranthambhore National Park. Poaching had been supplying a known source of demand for Indian poachers: oriental Tiger-based medicine. The situation seems exacerbated now with two striking adverse developments- apparent rise of a domestic demand for Tigers, and a dangerous nexus creation of various trade syndicated dealing in different species and different products. Such nexus gives a new access to a bigger syndicate and a bigger market- a force multiplier in illegal business.

India has lost 43 Tigers including cubs- many of them to poaching and others to suspected poaching, in a six month period from October 2015 until March 2016. There are not enough Tigers to supply to such a large market demand. When there is not enough to supply to market demand, a look alike species will often substitute the product. Does then the common Indian Leopard *Panthera pardus* or the Snow Leopard *Panthera uncia* substitute Tiger parts and derivatives in illegal trade? And this might explain why we are witnessing a constant rise in Leopard poaching. Snow Leopard also falls on a similar loop; however, its specialised habitat saves the species to some extent.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) could have a direct, adverse effect on wildlife. Internal GDP that is the GDP of the country in which the wildlife exists, could have direct effects on the habitat of Tiger and the density of the species in its habitat. The growth of GDP leads to a fall in the abundance of Tiger and the GDP can also increase the demand for poached wildlife. An increase in the demand for poached wildlife species will increase the price of poached Tiger. This leads to an increase in expected profit from poaching Tiger, and encourages greater poaching of Tiger. Greater poaching of Tiger leads to a decrease in the abundance of Tiger, and this increases the demand for Tiger. Thus, an increase in the demand for poached wildlife species can be self-reinforcing. Increases in external and internal GDP can increase incomes and the demand for poached Tiger. Increased financial resources from taxes in a growing economy can enhance poaching control, and reduce illegal wildlife trade.



© Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj

The wildlife protection mechanisms in India for Tiger or any other economic wildlife species does not have adequate capacity to combat the emergent situation at the current investment and management level. The most challenging, and often an ignored aspect is poor human resource development, may even be non-existent, in forest and wildlife departments across India. There is a serious lack of planning and strategies in fighting poaching in India. As a result most Tiger reserves or the national parks close to the borders perhaps witness the most negligence, be it Buxa or Valmiki- each of them with above sixty percent vacancies in frontline enforcement staff.

Analysis suggests that the border region protected areas are the most vulnerable ones due to the impact of the international borders. In the present scenario, an alternative answer could be joint combative missions with the paramilitary forces guarding the borders and other enforcement agencies that have presence and often more combative capacities. However, any such strategies will require sustained efforts on their capacity building for wildlife law enforcement as much as an effort of mainstreaming control of poaching and illegal wildlife trade in their own mandates.

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## TRAFFIC India Update

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- 3. New batch of TRAFFIC's Super Sniffers begin training at Tekanpur, Madhya Pradesh**
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- 5. TRAFFIC's latest poster campaign highlights the plight of lesser known wildlife species**
- 6. Celebrating Wildlife Week 2015: TRAFFIC reaches out on poaching and illegal wildlife trade**



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# SUPER SNIFFERS

A film on TRAFFIC's pioneering initiative on sniffer dog training programme for combating wildlife crime in India.



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**HELP STOP ILLEGAL TRADE OF TURTLES AND TORTOISES**

Poaching and illegal trade of Indian turtles and tortoises species has escalated, driven mainly by the demand for their meat, use in medicine and for the pet trade. The future of these long-lived animals has been shortened by the ever burgeoning domestic and international illegal wildlife trade.

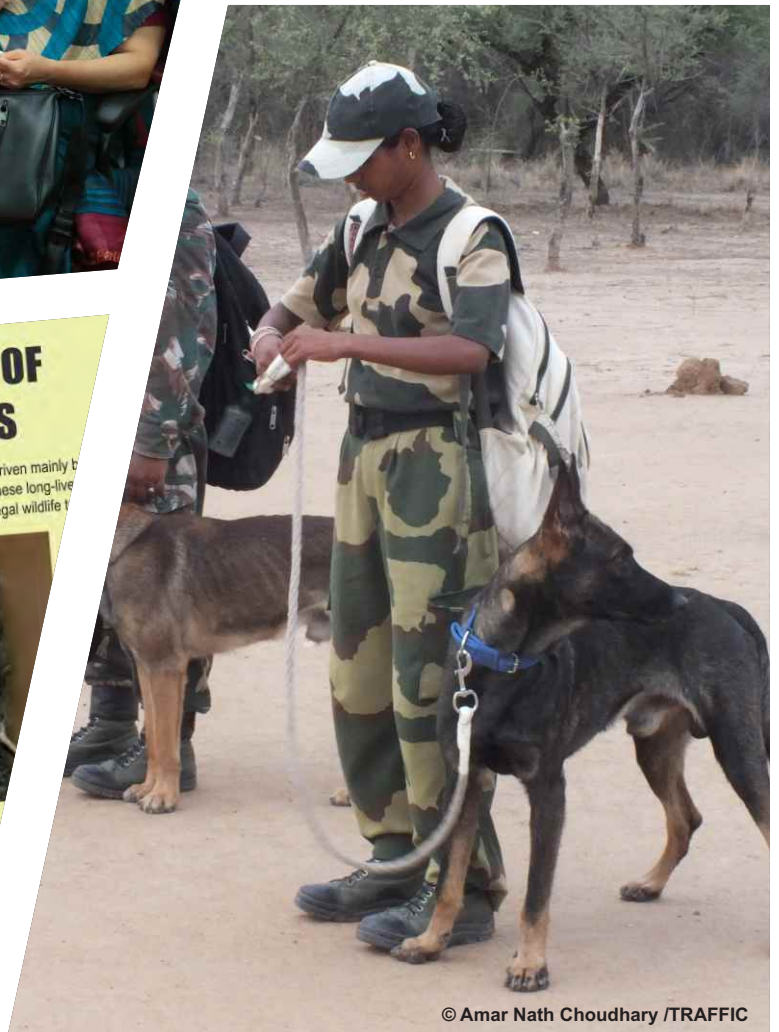


**IT'S ILLEGAL:** Hunting, trapping and trade is a punishable offence under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. International trade is restricted and liable for prosecution.

**SUPPORT:** Your support is crucial for the protection of wildlife. Report illegal trade to the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (www.wccb.gov.in); local Forest Guard.

**#StopIllegalWildlifeTrade**

<http://support.wwfindia.org/iks/pangolin.html>  
[www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org); [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org); [www.wwfindia.org](http://www.wwfindia.org)



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# India's first national workshop on capacity building for effective wildlife law enforcement organised in Tamil Nadu

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**Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC India, addressing the participants**

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**Dr V. K. Melkani, IFS, PCCF (Wildlife) and CWLW, Government of Tamil Nadu (left); Dr N. Krishnakumar, PCCF and Head of Department, Tamil Nadu; Ms Tilotama Varma, Additional Director of the WCCB (right)**

India's first National Workshop on Capacity Building for Combating Wildlife Crime was organised in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu by TRAFFIC in partnership with Tamil Nadu Forest Department, Tamil Nadu Forest Academy (TNFA), Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), and WWF-India. It was held from 4 to 6 February 2016 at the TNFA in Coimbatore, a heritage building and seat of forestry learning, in Tamil Nadu state in Southern India

It was for the first time that representatives from wildlife law enforcement agencies from across the country came together to undergo training to enhance their knowledge and skills for curbing poaching and illegal wildlife trade - an increasingly significant factor affecting biodiversity conservation. The workshop was also an important forum for discussions with a potential for developing a national level strategy and protocol for combating wildlife crime.

Attended by 150 senior level officials representing 20 States and Union Territories that included nine wildlife

law enforcement agencies such as the State Forest Departments, WCCB, Border Security Force (BSF), Police, Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Customs, Indian Coast Guard, and Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), the training workshop was successful in bringing together enforcement officials from across India to a common forum. Several reputed media personnel and representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) also attended various sessions to consider how they could be effective stakeholders in the mission of combating wildlife crimes across India and especially in the trans-border regions.

Honourable Forest Minister, Government of Tamil Nadu, Shri M.S.M. Anandan, in a message to all the participants during the inaugural said "Poaching and illegal wildlife trade are grave threats that endanger India's wildlife. Tiger, elephants, rhinos, and many lesser known species such as monitor lizards, pangolins, turtle and tortoise species, bird species such as parakeets, munias and many others are poached from the wild and

smuggled across borders to international markets. Unfortunately, India's rich wildlife is always a target for poachers, wildlife smugglers and international traders and this threat needs to be curbed in order to secure the future of Indian wildlife.”

The Honourable Minister was pleased that the Government of Tamil Nadu hosted India's first National Workshop on Capacity Building for Combating Wildlife Crime and congratulated TRAFFIC and its partners WCCB, TNFA, Tamil Nadu Forest Department and WWF-India for taking the initiative and co-ordinating efforts for this important step towards curbing wildlife crime.

Dr N. Krishnakumar, Indian Forest Service (IFS), Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Head of Department, Tamil Nadu had taken keen interest in organising the National Workshop and provided his full support. He said, “Wildlife crime cannot be dealt with in isolation and requires involvement of various stakeholders and enforcement agencies. Local communities living around the forest areas have a strong potential of becoming the game changers in our efforts to stop wildlife crime. It is important that they are sensitised and involved with strong incentives for combating poaching and smuggling of wildlife”.

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**Release of TRAFFIC India's Wildlife Law Enforcement Training Manual**

Another important aspect stressed by Dr Krishnakumar during the workshop was the involvement of the judiciary at various levels. He stated that effective and timely prosecution of wildlife cases can prove to be an important deterrent in curbing wildlife. The conviction rate for wildlife cases in India is extremely low, placing the efforts of the enforcement agencies in vain. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the judicial system of the country.

Dr V. K. Melkani, IFS, PCCF (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW), Government of Tamil Nadu further added, “Wildlife crime has grown to become one of the largest well organised crimes in the world and therefore needs an organised response. Therefore, it is important for law enforcement officers to learn and use the latest tools and techniques available to fight wildlife crime. We are hopeful that the participants will take back from this workshop, knowledge and skills that are needed to curb this growing menace.”

Ms Tilotama Varma, Indian Police Service (IPS), Additional Director of the WCCB, New Delhi, said: “WCCB is a nodal agency for fighting wildlife crime in India. However, it is important to secure co-operation and participation of other law enforcement agencies such as the Police, Railway Protection Force, Customs, and BSF among others. This workshop provided a significant platform for WCCB to share its experience and learning on techniques which have proved effective in nabbing poachers, conducting wildlife seizures and other aspects of wildlife law enforcement.”

Mr Rajeev Srivastava, Director - TNFA while welcoming the participants to the Academy spoke about the important role played by the Academy in training forest officials for combating wildlife crime. He shared his experience as a senior forest officer about dealing with wildlife crime issues across India. He spoke about the need to highlight

more on poaching of lesser known species such as monitor lizards, pangolins, turtles, tortoises and many others and implementing robust conservation and protection plans to safeguard the future of such species.

identifying core strengths and weaknesses of wildlife crime prosecution in India and addressing them; improving investigation in wildlife cases; India's role in South Asia's fight against wildlife crimes, and many other related topics.



TRAFFIC's capacity building training workshop also included, for the first time, a media panel discussion with the personnel from various media agencies across the country. The purpose of the panel discussion was to reinforce the important role media can play in curbing wildlife crime and the need to undertake ethical media reporting on wildlife crime issues.

For the first time ever, a wildlife law enforcement training and capacity building workshop had a live demonstration by sniffer and detector dog squads exhibiting their special skills in conducting illegal wildlife seizures as well as in nabbing poachers. The dog squads have been trained under TRAFFIC's pioneering programme to deploy sniffer dog squads in and around Tiger reserves and other Protected Areas across the country. The workshop also provided

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Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India said “Keeping in view the global crisis of wildlife trade that has also engulfed India, the national workshop in Tamil Nadu is an appropriate initiative to provide much needed co-ordination among key law enforcement agencies. At this crucial juncture, improvised skills and protocols need to be provided to all the relevant officers so that they employ best practices to combat wildlife crime and contribute to the global effort to save rare and endangered species from the threats of poaching, trafficking and illegal consumption.”

The National Workshop was conducted by Dr Niraj along with a team of highly skilled resource personnel who were experts in their respective fields related to wildlife protection, conservation strategies, and crime prevention. The overall sessions during the workshop included identification of species in trade and strategies in combating crime; application of forensics and DNA techniques in wildlife crime investigations; standardising wildlife forensic-based protocols for investigating wildlife crimes; intelligence collection and collation and methodologies for cyber tracking; techniques for investigation and prosecution to combat illegal wildlife trade; significance of various wildlife laws for improving prosecution in wildlife crimes; SMART patrolling methods in the field for better surveillance;



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an opportunity for TRAFFIC to launch its latest film on the sniffer dog training programme in India titled “TRAFFIC's Super Sniffers”. The film showcases how dogs and their handlers are trained to make them sniffer dog teams. The film covered the nature of training provided and the process of deployment of trained dogs in the field and was produced in partnership with a well known wildlife filmmaker, Mr Himanshu Malhotra.

Dr Kumar said: “The feedback received from representatives of different enforcement agencies and participants has been unending and overwhelming, clearly indicating that the workshop made a substantially positive impact on them. Some participants said that their perception about wildlife crime had changed after attending the three-day workshop sessions and their agencies would be keen in joining hands with others to combat wildlife crime and illegal wildlife trade. This sentiment was endorsed by several others who pledged their support to these initiatives”.



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## Enforcement officers in the States of West Bengal and Kerala undergo rigorous hands-on training to combat wildlife crime

The TRAFFIC organised National Workshop on Capacity Building for Combating Wildlife Crime in Coimbatore, was preceded by similar workshops in West Bengal and Kerala.

**West Bengal:** A two-day capacity building workshop was organised on 2-3 December 2015 jointly by TRAFFIC and WWF-India at Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary in Sukhna, West Bengal in partnership with the Directorate of Forests, West Bengal. Eighty officials from the Departments of Forest and Wildlife, Police, Customs and Central Excise, SSB, Railway Protection Force, BSF and Indian Army attended.

This workshop was inaugurated by Mr Manoj Verma, IPS, Commissioner of Police, Siliguri, and Dr P.T. Bhutia IFS, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Addl. PCCF), North Bengal and like other TRAFFIC's capacity building workshops it aimed to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the enforcement officials and build partnership and co-operation among agencies to curb wildlife crime in the State.

TRAFFIC's team of highly skilled and knowledgeable resource personnel included Mr Varun Kapoor, IPS officer; Dr M.S. Kachhawa, a senior lawyer; Dr S.P. Goyal, Scientist Emeritus at the renowned Wildlife Institute of India (WII) located at Dehradun; and Mr Nishant Verma, Regional Deputy Director of WCCB, northern region.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India, stressed the importance of West Bengal's forest landscape, its strategic location, its rich biodiversity and propensity for activities involving poaching and illegal wildlife trade due to its proximity to international and interstate borders. He gave an overview of illegal wildlife trade in India with a focus on the trans-border regions and presented the latest information on trade trends and drivers, species in trade and related domestic and international demands. To find out more, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2015/12/28/west-bengal-enforcement-officials-learn-about-latest-technol.html>

**Kerala:** A workshop on capacity building on wildlife law enforcement was organised by TRAFFIC and WWF-India at Parambikulam Tiger Reserve (PTR), Kerala, in partnership with the Parambikulam Tiger Conservation Foundation (PTCF) and WCCB on 20-21 August 2015.

Mr Anjan Kumar, Deputy Director and Chairperson of PTCF inaugurated the workshop at this Tiger Reserve that is located in the interior of the Western Ghats and home to about 50 Tigers.

Fifty five enforcement officials, including those from 13 forest divisions in Kerala, the Police Department and Customs and Central Excise Department in the State of Kerala completed the two-days of intensive wildlife law enforcement training where they received a hands-on field training session on surveillance, seizure and interrogation, wildlife crime scene investigation, identifying and dismantling poaching traps, suspect interrogation, sample collection and packaging, and utilization of deep search metal detectors from Tamil Nadu-based Special Task Force trainers. TRAFFIC presented a deep search metal detector to the staff of PTR.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India, spoke about the rich biodiversity and high endemism of wildlife found in the Anaimalai-Parambikulam landscape of the southern Western Ghats and its susceptibility to poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

He gave an overview of illegal wildlife trade in India and presented the latest information on the trends in this field, the various drivers of the trade and poaching, the species involved and what lies behind the domestic and international demand for wildlife. To find out more, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2015/8/25/kerala-enforcement-agencies-ready-to-tackle-wildlife-crime.html>

## TRAFFIC issues warning of illegal wildlife trade at Sonepur

**S**onepur Fair is reportedly the largest cattle fair in Asia and has immense cultural and sacred significance. However, the Fair is also seen as an opportunity by illegal wildlife traders openly to sell protected species of wildlife.

Last year, TRAFFIC issued an Advisory to various enforcement agencies in Bihar and other neighbouring States asking them to take immediate action to curb nefarious and illegal wildlife trade activities at Sonepur Fair that was to begin on 25th November at Sonepur in Bihar.

Although TRAFFIC has previously highlighted rampant and illegal trade in various protected species of wildlife at

the popular Sonepur Fair, including in the pages of this newsletter, this may be the first time any organisation has issued an advisory to enforcement agencies prior the onset of the Fair, calling for action to curb wildlife crime.

Parakeets, Hill Mynahs, bulbuls, doves, munias, shikras and many other protected species of Indian birds have been found on display at the Fair, highlighting its role a major hub for illegal trade in bird species. In 2013, TRAFFIC observed at least 18 protected Indian bird species and about 26 such bird species in 2014 for sale at the Chiriyā Bazaar located at the fair.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* has been the most commonly seen bird species at the Fair followed by





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Black-headed Munia *Lonchura atricapilla*, Red Munia *Amandava amandava*, and Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* with numbers ranging from 2500 to 7000 birds on display at any given time. Since non-native birds are not as strictly protected due to lacunas in legislation and policies, their trade is used as a cover to further the trade of indigenous birds.

TRAFFIC's investigation over the years has revealed a continuance of wildlife trade in violation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972.

TRAFFIC observed the presence of 37 Asian Elephants *Elephas maximus* at the Fair in 2013, including six tuskers and six calves and 39 Elephants including five tuskers and five calves in 2014. Capture of elephants and their transportation to Sonapur is a regular occurrence substantiated by reports that many of these animals are transported from Assam for sale at the Fair in contravention of the law.

Other species such as Rhesus Macaques *Macaca mulatta* and Hanuman Langurs *Semnopithecus entellus* were also found on sale at the Fair along with other mammals such as Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis*, Nilgai *Boselaphus tragocamelus* and Indian Porcupine *Hystrix indica*.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC India said, "It's concerning to witness open violation of wildlife laws at Sonapur Fair year after year despite several reports. There is no doubt that the Fair has evolved into a hub for illegal wildlife trade especially in indigenous bird species. TRAFFIC recommends co-ordination among various enforcement agencies such as the Forest Department and Police in Bihar and other States for appropriate action to end the illegal wildlife trade that threatens the future of many endangered and protected wildlife species".

TRAFFIC's Advisory recommends prohibiting the presence of elephants on the fairground premises through a gradual phasing out of the elephant display at the Fair. Importantly, agencies need to maintain adequate checks on the animal and bird inventory at the Fair, to ensure that no protected species are being sold. Efforts should be made to collect more data on wild animals traded and displayed at Sonapur. The continuous presence of effective wildlife law enforcement staff at the Fair during the period would be significant in achieving this goal. The Advisory also recommends publicity campaigns in and around the premises of the Fair to educate participants about the illegality of the trade and its legal implication for both sellers and buyers.

**Observations from 2015:** This was the third year in succession that TRAFFIC conducted surveys at the Fair after random surveys had indicated that the wild animal trade is deeply rooted in its traditions. Despite campaigns by several organisations and the advisory issued, the 2015 survey found that wild animal sales continued. On average, 8000-10000 birds were on display for sale any time at various shops at the Chiriya Bazaar while the sale of macaques, Common Langurs, and mongooses was also observed. Monkeys were crammed into tiny cages while birds such as ducks and cranes were often kept without water in open cemented troughs. The field investigators also noted sale of many non-native birds including conures, macaws and other parrots. The fact that the managers of the Chiriya Bazaar collected 'sales tax' just before the exit gate on all purchases made at the bazaar, and that there was a list of 'tax rate' displayed up on the wall before the exit gate testifies that the activities were blatantly illegal. The tax collectors did not allow photography of the rate list, nor were they keen on talking about it. The field investigators also found that although trade of protected species may have been scaled down at Chiriya Bazaar it appears to have been scaled up in nearby locations, which the field investigators collected some information on.

## New batch of TRAFFIC's Super Sniffers begin training at Tekanpur, Madhya Pradesh

On 20th January 2016, TRAFFIC's sniffer dog training programme successfully entered its fifth phase in India. The current rigorous nine month long training programme with 16 new dog squads (16 dogs and 32 handlers) commenced at the National Training Center for Dogs (NTCD) managed by the Border Security Force at Tekanpur near Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh State.

The 16 dogs currently under training are between the ages of 6-9 months and will be deployed in the States of Andhra Pradesh (2 dog squads), Chhattisgarh (2 dog squads), Kerala (2 dog squads), Madhya Pradesh (3 dog squads), Karnataka (3 dog squads), West Bengal (1 dog squad), and Tamil Nadu (3 dog squads) by the end of this year.

Started in 2008, TRAFFIC's sniffer dog programme has assisted the training and deployment of 27 professionally trained dogs and their handlers in nine States across India. The programme, conducted by TRAFFIC jointly with the States and with support from WWF-India, is a significant part of TRAFFIC's long term strategy to fight wildlife crime in India.

The last batch of 14 wildlife sniffer dogs and their handlers passed out in June 2015 from the 23rd Battalion of Special Armed Reserve Police to join the wildlife sniffer dog brigade, thereby doubling India's strength in wildlife sniffer dog squads. The squads have been instrumental in at least 16 seizures and arrests, by tracing consignments of bones and their derivatives of species such as Leopard, Tiger, Wild Boar, Sloth Bear, Sambar and Spotted Deer among others. Since its inception, the sniffer dogs have been successfully deployed in over 100 seizures and arrests.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India said,



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“India has a huge forest cover and with only 27 trained sniffer dogs, pressure for protecting India's wildlife remains intense on these four legged creatures. It is TRAFFIC's vision that at least four to five dog squads are deployed in each State in the next few years for boosting wildlife enforcement and protection efforts.”

Even though the dogs are trained for sniffing out products such as Tiger and Leopard body parts, elephant ivory and bear bile, they have detected other wildlife contraband such as deer meat, live bird species, Red Sand Boa, Blackbuck, hare, python, Rat Snake, porcupine, turtle carapaces and even the presence of weapons. Their role has become critical in the field of wildlife investigation and prosecution.

TRAFFIC acknowledges its new partnership with the NTCD for its proactive support in strengthening wildlife protection across the country. Taking this opportunity, the organisation also thanks the donors and supporters from different regions of India and the world for their contribution to the sniffer dog training programme.

## Super Sniffers: A film on TRAFFIC's sniffer dog training programme in India

**T**RAFFIC has recently produced a film on its pioneering sniffer dog training programme for combating wildlife crime in India. The 8.5 minute long film was written and directed by well known wildlife filmmaker Mr Himanshu Malhotra and captures the journey of a young dog from the day it is enrolled into training until it is deployed as a trained detector and sniffer dog.

The film gives an overview of illegal wildlife trade in India and the threat it poses to our wildlife. It also highlights the important role that these detector and sniffer dogs play in combating wildlife crime and the need to use the dog squads effectively for surveillance and in wildlife crime investigations, and in the seizure and arrest of criminals.

The film was launched at the National Workshop on

Capacity Building for Combating Wildlife Crime in India in Coimbatore on 4th February 2016 and encapsulates the experiences of dog trainers and handlers who have been involved in the sniffer dog training programme and have been part of the dog squads in the field.

Through the film, TRAFFIC hopes to raise support for the sniffer dog training programme so that more dog squads can be trained and deployed. The support and association of State governments, which TRAFFIC is currently pursuing, is vital to enhance the programme.



To watch the film, please visit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22OYAG7tvvE&feature=youtu.be>

## TRAFFIC's latest poster campaign highlights the plight of lesser-known wildlife species

**O**n the eve of World Pangolin Day on 20th February 2016, TRAFFIC released a poster, "Scaly future for the Indian Pangolin", highlighting the extreme impact of extensive poaching and illegal trade in pangolins and asking for support and action to secure the animals' future in India.

As part of the campaign, a second poster was produced

highlighting poaching and illegal trade in turtles and tortoises in India titled "Illegal trade shrinking the future of the longest living animals".

TRAFFIC has previously stressed the need to publicise and initiate immediate actions to curb illegal trade in non-charismatic, lesser-known wildlife species that has largely remained unreported. With little knowledge and

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understanding about population status, numbers poached, illegal wildlife trade hubs and trade dynamics of these non-charismatic species, it is difficult to ascertain the impacts of illegal trade on their populations.

Pangolins in India are poached in large numbers mainly for their scales that are smuggled across international borders for use in traditional Asian medicines. Their meat is consumed locally and is also considered a delicacy in many Asian countries. On the other hand, various turtle and tortoise species are plundered from the wild for

sale in pet trade markets, for meat as well as for use in traditional Asian medicines. They are consumed locally as well as smuggled in large numbers abroad.

Reports have indicated that trade in pangolins, turtles and tortoises is underhand and extensive. While, it is important to strengthen wildlife law enforcement initiatives to curb poaching and trade, it is equally important to sensitise general masses to gain their support. TRAFFIC's latest posters are a step in this direction.

**SCALY FUTURE FOR INDIA'S PANGOLINS**

Netted, trapped, shot or snared, pangolins in India are poached for their scales and other body parts that are smuggled in large numbers to other countries for use in traditional medicines.

**WILL YOU LEND YOUR HAND?**  
**Help Stop Pangolin Poaching And Trade**

Report poaching, smuggling or illegal trade to the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau ([www.wccb.gov.in](http://www.wccb.gov.in)), local Forest and Police Departments.

Hunting, trapping and trade in pangolins is a punishable offence under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Their international trade is restricted and liable for prosecution.

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Email: [traffindia@wwfindia.net](mailto:traffindia@wwfindia.net)

**#StopIllegalWildlifeTrade**  
<http://support.wwfindia.org/rics/pangolin.html>  
[www.traffindia.org](http://www.traffindia.org), [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org), [www.wwfindia.org](http://www.wwfindia.org)

The posters were jointly produced by TRAFFIC, WWF-India and WCCB as an extension of a digital media campaign highlighting the plight of lesser known but highly traded species in illegal wildlife trade including pangolins, mongoose and owls, amongst others that was launched and executed by the same organisations in February 2015. The digital campaign was successful in reaching out to nearly 1.4 million individuals on Facebook, Twitter and Google.

For a copy of the poster, please send an email to [dilpreet.chhabra@traffic.org](mailto:dilpreet.chhabra@traffic.org) or download at [http://www.wwfindia.org/about\\_wwf/enablers/traffic/publications/posters/](http://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/enablers/traffic/publications/posters/)

**HELP STOP ILLEGAL TRADE OF TURTLES AND TORTOISES**

Poaching and illegal trade of Indian turtles and tortoises species has escalated, driven mainly by the demand for their meat, use in medicine and for the pet trade. The future of these long-lived animals has been shortened by the ever burgeoning domestic and international illegal wildlife trade.

**ILLEGAL TRADE SHRINKING THE FUTURE OF THE LONGEST LIVING ANIMALS**

**IT'S ILLEGAL:** Hunting, trapping and trade is a punishable offence under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. International trade is restricted and liable for prosecution.

**SUPPORT:** Your support is critical for conservation and protection of wildlife. Report poaching, smuggling or illegal trade to the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau ([www.wccb.gov.in](http://www.wccb.gov.in)), local Forest and Police Departments.

**TRAFFIC** the wildlife trade monitoring network

**WWF**

**#StopIllegalWildlifeTrade**  
<http://support.wwfindia.org/rics/pangolin.html>  
[www.traffindia.org](http://www.traffindia.org), [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org), [www.wwfindia.org](http://www.wwfindia.org)

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## Celebrating Wildlife Week 2015: TRAFFIC reaches out on poaching and illegal wildlife trade

Every year in India, Wildlife Week is celebrated in the first week of October to highlight issues related to wildlife conservation. Wildlife Week is an opportunity to draw attention to the threats that wildlife faces today, celebrate various milestones achieved in wildlife conservation and garner further support for protection and conservation of wildlife.

In 2015, TRAFFIC participated in a Wildlife Week Celebration organised by the Government of Tamil Nadu and the Forest Department at Tirupur on 2 October 2015. The programme was inaugurated by Shri M S M Anandan, Honourable Minister of Forests, Government of Tamil Nadu and was presided over by Mr Hans Raj Varma, Indian Administrative Service, Principal Secretary, Environment and Forests, Government of Tamil Nadu.

A TRAFFIC exhibit displayed important communiqués on illegal trade in various wildlife species including trade in lesser-known species and encouraged visitors to take some of the reading material for better understanding of this issue. The exhibitors also showed various films highlighting trade in threatened species including TRAFFIC's 'Don't Buy Trouble (a film on illegal wildlife trade in India)' and 'Closing the Deadly Gateway (a film



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on poaching and illegal trade in Tigers across Tiger range countries)'. TRAFFIC representatives at the exhibition interacted with visitors who showed a keen interest in understanding the threats from poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

At least 20 different organisations including TRAFFIC, WWF-India, Nilgiri Natural History Society, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Keystone Foundation, Wildlife and Nature Conservation Trust among others participated in the exhibition, which was visited by over 15 000 enthusiastic individuals. Cultural programmes highlighting the importance of wildlife conservation were also organised during the exhibition.

Subsequent to the wildlife exhibition, and also as part of the Wildlife Week celebration activities, TRAFFIC organised a seminar and an interactive session with nearly 500 students of Gyan Bharati School in New Delhi on 6th October. An audio-visual presentation for the Students on the nature and extent of poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India was followed by a short quiz. The students, largely belonging to senior classes, displayed a high level of enthusiasm and understanding about wildlife issues and interacted actively with the TRAFFIC speakers.



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# 02

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## Outpost

- 1. Unseen harvest: Southeast Asia's illegal orchid trade**
- 2. Chinese TCM industry says NO to illegal wildlife trade**

# Unseen harvest: Southeast Asia's illegal orchid trade

**A** thriving and illegal wildlife trade in Southeast Asia which threatens rare orchid species is going largely unnoticed in Thailand and across its borders. This was found during a joint study undertaken by TRAFFIC and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), findings of which were released in November 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand.



Conservative trade figures documented during the study suggest that tens of thousands of orchids are illegally traded across Thailand's borders every year without either domestic harvest permits or CITES permits, violating range, State and international restrictions on wild orchid harvest.

Surveys carried out during 2011–2012 in four of the largest wild plant markets in Thailand, at the country's borders with Myanmar and Lao PDR, recorded 348 species of orchid for sale, representing 13 to 22 percent of the target countries' known orchid flora. The survey even found species from genus *Paphiopedilum*, which are listed in Appendix I of CITES, which bans the international trade of wild-collected specimens.

At least 16 percent of orchid species observed could be classified under some category of threat or were rare species found in small or specific areas. TRAFFIC's study **A Blooming Trade: Illegal trade of ornamental orchids in mainland Southeast Asia** identifies Bangkok's

Chatuchak market as a regional centre of botanical trade, hosting a large and unique richness of wild plant species, many of them illegally harvested.

“The Chatuchak market has long been notorious as a major hub for the illegal trade in a wide variety of plants and animals—everything from orchids to tortoises, from ivory to eagles,” said Dr Chris R. Shepherd, Regional Director TRAFFIC Southeast Asia. “We strongly urge the authorities in Thailand to shut down the illegal trade in this market for good.”

Interviews with plant harvesters, traders and middlemen identified significant illegal international trade in orchids from Lao PDR and Myanmar into Thailand, confirming the country's demand for wild ornamental plants from local and regional sources.

“Despite being amongst the most protected group of plants in the world, we found clear evidence of an open illegal trade. It is time to take

trade and conservation of plants seriously - alongside efforts to reduce the illegal trades in elephant ivory, rhinoceros horn and pangolin scales as this is no different,” said Dr Jacob Phelps, author of the report and lecturer in Tropical Environmental Change and Policy at Lancaster Environment Centre.

The report also revealed complex trade chains involving highly organised middlemen specialised in orchid and ornamental plant trade. Growing internet-based trade and laundering of wild plants via registered commercial greenhouses was observed, including trade in orchids for medicinal purposes in Viet Nam and China. The report calls on Thai government agencies, CITES parties, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations- Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) and conservation organisations formally to recognize this phenomenon and urgently improve monitoring of not only the trade in charismatic animals species, but also in wild plants.

Given considerable implications of illegal wildlife trade, the author of the report further appeals for greater attention from Thailand's CITES Management Authority for plants, as well as the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation and the Royal Forest Department. To download a copy of the report, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2015/11/24/unseen-harvest-southeast-asias-illegal-orchid-trade.html>.

## Chinese TCM industry says NO to illegal wildlife trade



On 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015, representatives of leading Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) companies affirmed their commitment not to use endangered plants and animals protected by national legislation and CITES in their medicinal products.

The pledge was made at an event in Beijing initiated by TRAFFIC in collaboration with the China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine and China Wildlife Conservation Association. Some of the

most famous TCM companies in China and worldwide were present including Tongrentang, Leiyunshang, Pianzaihuang, Yunnanbaiyao, Lerentang and China TCM Co. The reaffirmation by these leading companies follows earlier commitments made by the TCM sector in 2010 and 2013.

The use of products such as the Tiger bone, rhino horn, musk and Saiga horn was formerly widespread in the making of TCM medicines such as Tiger bone wine, Angon Niuhuang

Wan (for detoxification and as an antipyretic), Liushen Wan (as an anti-inflammatory), Lingyang Qingfei San (for nourishing lungs and relieving sore-throat). However, in May 1993, the State Council of the People's Republic of China banned trade in rhinoceros horn, Tiger bone and their medicinal derivatives in order to support international conservation efforts to address the threat posed by commercial trade in parts of rhinos and Tigers. The ban was imposed through the removal of these items from the official pharmacopeia of China, and the

cessation of all formal manufacture and commercial trade within China.

At the October event, speaking on behalf of the TCM companies present, Tongrentang, the world's leading TCM Company, confirmed that they would never purchase or sell TCM products using derivatives from illegal sources of wildlife and that any TCM company contravening the national legislation or international convention, would be seriously punished.

According to China's Criminal Law, those who are engaged in the purchase, transportation or trading of Tiger products would be sentenced to five years or more in jail.

"We are delighted to hear leading Chinese TCM companies pledge zero tolerance towards illegal wildlife trade," said Zhou Fei, Head of TRAFFIC in China.

"TCM has played and continues to play a very important role in protecting the health of Chinese citizens. Today's pledge sends a strong message that TCM companies are conscious of and serious about the conservation of endangered species."

Zhang Shanning, Director of China's CITES Management Authority, said "Today's pledge is firm evidence of the TCM industry's commitment towards the Chinese government's efforts to protect endangered species."



# 03

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## **CITES Update**

**New tool launched to showcase the important role of local communities in sustainable management of CITES-listed species**

# New tool launched to showcase the important role of local communities in sustainable management of CITES-listed species

A new handbook on CITES and Livelihoods has been launched to support the effective implementation of the Convention by enabling countries to assess impacts of the CITES listings on livelihoods of poor rural communities that live alongside wild plants and animals. It is jointly produced by CITES and the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS).

The Handbook targets CITES Management and Scientific Authorities, as well as local and municipal officials responsible for the implementation of national biodiversity-related regulatory frameworks, regional/international organisations, civil society organisations, and researchers that work on linkages between people and the environment. This handbook is the result of a collaborative effort involving experts, communities and institutions.

In welcoming the launch of the new handbook, CITES Secretary General John Scanlon said “Resolution 16.6 on CITES and Livelihoods adopted by CITES Parties in Bangkok in 2013 is a powerful expression of the Parties' commitment to sustainable livelihoods for rural communities through the

implementation of the Convention. The handbook is an important tool that guides commitment into practice and has links to the Sustainable Development Goals.”

The new handbook, which is currently available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), is being deployed to enable rapid assessment of the impact of CITES-listings on local communities and develop case studies that consider how to maximize positive impacts and mitigate negative ones. It is based on the existing toolkit and guidelines, and in line with Resolution Conf.8.3 (Rev.CoP13) on the recognition of the benefits of trade in wildlife, and Resolution Conf. 16.6 on CITES and livelihoods, as well as Decision 16.16 to 6.25 on CITES and Livelihoods.

The French version of the handbook is under preparation and will be available soon.



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# 04

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## **TRAFFIC Alert**

- 1. Two hundred Indian Star Tortoise seized at Chennai airport**
- 2. Ivory weighing 200 kg seized in Delhi**
- 3. Red corals weighing more than 15 000 kg seized in Delhi**

TRAFFIC  
ALERT

1

## Two hundred Indian Star Tortoises seized at Chennai airport

In October 2015, security personnel at Chennai airport in Tamil Nadu seized 200 Indian Star Tortoises while they were being smuggled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, detaining two people for interrogation. Both the accused were to board two separate flights to Kuala Lumpur and the final destination for the tortoises was believed to be Jakarta in Indonesia.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Indian Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans*, is listed in Schedule IV of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and in Appendix II of CITES. Domestic trade in the Indian Star Tortoise is prohibited while international trade in the species is regulated under CITES. Despite this, the trade in tortoises has been blatant and ongoing for many years now.

World Animal Protection has reported illegal trade in at least 55 000 tortoises from just one site in Southeast India each year. The study also put forth evidence of a thriving international criminal operation, with tortoises being smuggled in boxes hidden under food items like vegetables or fish. Many don't survive the long journey in confined spaces. Often they die from malnutrition, suffocation or the stress of confinement.

Given the high levels of trade, reports have indicated that some traders are breeding Indian Star Tortoises illegally in captivity to cater to the demand for wild-caught animals. Over the past two years, several large seizures of Indian Star Tortoises have been made from different parts of India, especially in Tamil Nadu. TRAFFIC calls for more stringent enforcement initiatives especially at the transit points and collection centres to end this ongoing conservation crisis.



Sources: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/200-star-tortoises-seized-at-Chennai-airport-two-carriers-detained/articleshow/49275676.cms>

<http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2015/12/17/over-1400-tortoises-seized-in-last-quarter-smuggled-wildlife-mostly-from-india-were-en-route-to-mala/>

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/legal-loopholes-driving-indian-star-tortoise-to-extinction/article7871328.ece>

# 2

## Ivory weighing 200 kg seized in Delhi

A raid on a Delhi artifact salesman's house on 11 October 2015 led to the seizure of 487 kg of ivory, believed to be one of the largest in recent years. This amounts to the poaching of at least 40 Elephants. The accused, dubbed the Sansar Chand of ivory trade, was arrested after a raid at his residence in Delhi following the interception of call records of his middlemen arrested in Kerala in June.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Although the origin of the ivory in this case has not yet been established, it is likely to have originated from poached Asian Elephants *Elephas maximus*. In India, the Asian Elephant was once widely distributed throughout the country, including in States like Punjab and Gujarat. Currently, they are found only in four fragmented populations, in South, North, Central and Northeast India in 14 States. The Asian Elephant has been accorded the highest possible protection through its listing under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 of India. This means that hunting/trading this species can attract rigorous imprisonment of up to seven years and a minimum fine of INR 25000. CITES has listed the Asian Elephant in Appendix I, which prohibits all commercial international trade of the species.

This legal protection has not deterred poachers and smugglers as domestic demand is one of the drivers for elephant ivory trade in India, with a few communities in India using it for bangles and other decorative ornamental purposes. Poaching for meat and other products like tail hair also pose threats to populations, especially in Northeast India. Ivory is also smuggled out to countries like Japan and China via Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines. Usages vary from Japanese hanko, artifacts, wedding bangles, trophies and medicines.

TRAFFIC finds that the current poaching hotspots are similar to what they were about two decades ago, in the elephant rich habitat of the Western Ghats, spanning the States of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, as well as Orissa and Assam. There is clear evidence of increased poaching of elephants in the last few years although, it is early to comment on the ongoing investigations, it is being speculated that some of the ivory entering the market could be from privately owned or 'captive' elephants, which is equally illegal. In the case of captive elephants, the ivory is generally trimmed at the tip of the tusk, which takes about a year to re-grow, making it a steady source. Lack of effective intelligence could be a stumbling block in stopping elephant poaching. Price of ivory products has catapulted to new heights thus becoming a very strong driver for poaching.

The poignant message of 2016's World Wildlife Day was that the future of elephants (and of all wildlife) is in our hands.

Sources: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/kerala-cops-seize-ivory-of-40-tuskers-from-delhi-smuggler/story-U1xmodGSUr2vxTMhVuK4rJ.html>

[http://www.wwf.org/news\\_facts/?15201/Indias-mammoth-problem-Elephants-threatened-by-poaching-and-illegal-wildlife-trade](http://www.wwf.org/news_facts/?15201/Indias-mammoth-problem-Elephants-threatened-by-poaching-and-illegal-wildlife-trade)



# 3

## Red corals weighing more than 15 000 kg seized in Delhi

In February 2016, the Customs Department seized more than 15 000 kg of red corals at the Inland Container Depot in Tughlaqabad, Delhi. The items were found hidden inside a container, which was being smuggled into the country from China. A Delhi-based importer was arrested in connection with the seizure.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

TRAFFIC is highly concerned by such large scale exploitation and smuggling of red corals in the South Asian region. The seized corals were reported to be Organ Pipe Corals *Tubipora musica* that are mostly found in the waters of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This is a soft coral but has a hard skeleton of calcium carbonate that contains organ pipe like tubes. The skeleton is bright red in colour and is typically obscured by numerous polyps that can be grey or green in colour.

Trade in Organ Pipe Corals is illegal in India as they are protected under Schedule I of India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Their international trade is further regulated under CITES where they are listed in Appendix II. Due to the domestic restrictions on their trade, experts believe that corals are often collected from Indian waters, smuggled to other countries and later imported back into the country for sale or re-export. Importing into the country also requires adequate permits from CITES, which in the above case were found to be missing.

There are between 800 to 1000 known species of corals in the world and possibly many more in unexplored deepwater territories. Two hundred and six species are known from the Indian coral reef with a large number found in the waters of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Of these, the Organ Pipe Coral is one of the 15 most traded coral species and is under considerable pressure from overharvesting.

Organ Pipe Corals are largely used for making artifacts and jewelry. They are also crushed and sold in spice shops in countries like Yemen, and are a popular species in aquariums as they are easy to maintain and fairly tolerant of aquarium conditions. Some nature based medicine systems use corals in large amounts.

TRAFFIC strongly recommends further research into the illegal collection and trade in various marine species including corals. Coral reefs protect our shorelines from damage and erosion and act as breeding grounds and shelter for many marine organisms, making them a marine biodiversity hotspot. Coral reefs make habitats for several other marine species for their spawning and nursery activities in their life cycles.

#### Sources:

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Smuggled-from-China-red-corals-worth-1-8-crore-seized-1-nabbed/articleshow/50978824.cms>

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# 05

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## **In Focus**

**Calcutta Snake Park, a breeding ground for wildlife trafficking in India**



## Calcutta Snake Park, a breeding ground for wildlife trafficking in India

**T**alk about a snake park and an image of a well maintained reptile sanctuary with the purpose of aiding research and conservation of reptile species comes instantly to our minds. Unfortunately, the experience with the Calcutta Snake Park located at Badu in Madhyamgram, Kolkata, has been just the contrary and worrisome since its inception by Mr Deepak Mitra on 2 October 1977.

Calcutta Snake Park had housed various reptiles' species including snakes, monitor lizards, crocodiles and many bird and mammals species contrary to the permits of the park. Investigations by various NGOs, government agencies as well as TRAFFIC clearly reported on the inability of the park to maintain or display captive collection of reptiles for promoting knowledge about species or create empathy among the public about their conservation status. The Park had also established for itself a dubious reputation of being an important holding

and breeding facility for various protected wildlife species supplied in illegal wildlife trade and TRAFFIC had been alerted to this over many years.

Based on field reports, emanating from various quarters, on regular illegal wildlife trade being carried out at Calcutta Snake Park, TRAFFIC conducted a survey of the park on 30 October 2014. The findings and photographs were submitted to the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), the federal agency that regulates and monitors zoos and captive wild animal facilities in India.

The information provided by TRAFFIC gave valuable leads on how illegal wildlife trade was being carried at the facilities, along with photographic evidence of animals that were captured from the wild. The CZA conducted their own inspections of these facilities with experts on 20 November 2014 and found gross violations of both animal welfare and husbandry standards and an absence and lack of maintenance of proper stock registers at both these places indicating violations of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The Forest Department of West Bengal conducted their own investigations and even raided the residence of the Calcutta Snake Park owner on 29 January 2015.

Broad observation indicating that the Park was acting as a holding and probable breeding facility for illegal wildlife species that were further supplied to illegal markets are as below-

1. Lack of record of inventories for the protected wildlife species at the Park- There were no records of monkeys that were displayed at the park, a clear violation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 as no Schedule I or II species can be acquired or transferred without the permission of the CZA. The records for various species on display at the Park did not tally with the records maintained by the Park.

2. There were numerous species of snakes and crocodiles acquired by the Park without any knowledge of the CZA. This included 20 Monocellate Cobra *Naja kaouthia*, three King Cobra *Ophiophagus hannah*, four Indian Rat Snake *Ptyas mucosa*, two Common Krait *Bungarus caeruleus*, one Burmese Python *Python bivattatus*, two Indian Rock Python *Python molurus*, and



one Indian Marsh Crocodile *Crocodylus palustris*. Besides, there were many other species that were also taken in from time to time without requisite permissions including Red Sand Boa *Gongylophis colubrinus*, Spotted Deer *Axis axis*, Rhesus Monkey *Macaca mulata mulata*, and Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans*.

3. According to the inventory 2013-2014, there were 35 Monocellate Cobras, 34 Checkered Keelback *Xenochro pispiscator*, 10 March Crocodiles *Crocodylus palustris*, 30 Monitor Lizard *Varanus bengalensis* and 17 Water Monitors *Varanus salvator*. Keeping such large numbers in cramped dingy environment was neither necessary for education nor for planned breeding purpose. Furthermore, this inventory did not match up with the physical verification done at the park by the investigating agencies simply implying that many individuals disappeared from the Park without any records.

4. There were no signage present at the exhibit about the species displayed clearly indicating that the Park did not promote any knowledge or education about the species displayed.

5. The Park was managed by the owner himself who was also involved with various other activities related to wildlife trade. Mr Deepak Mitra was the President of the Bird Breeders and Lovers Association in Kolkata and had displayed native species of birds like Rose-Ringed Parakeets under the guise of non native species at the Snake Park.

6. No scientific or veterinary staff was employed at the Park, mandatory if the Park was run on the pretext of aiding and assisting research on reptiles.

7. There were many welfare issues related to the upkeep of the animals at the park including dingy, tiny and littered cages. There was no enrichment in the enclosures clearly implying that the welfare of the housed animals was not a priority for the Park.

The whole investigative process after the initial TRAFFIC investigation led to paving the path that eventually saw the CZA directing the Forest Department

of West Bengal to seize all animals and relocate them to the Deer Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre and Alipore Zoo in Kolkata. Calcutta Snake Park refused to accept any of CZA or Forest Department notices or directives. The Calcutta Snake Park was then raided by Forest Department on 5 December 2015 and 51 animals were recovered and sent to Alipore Zoo in Kolkata putting an end to a 37 year old long saga of clandestine wildlife trade.

The adjacent West Bengal Snake Park in Badu, Madhyamgram, had raised similar concerns that were conveyed to several governmental and non governmental agencies including TRAFFIC. This Park was closed down on 2 December 2015.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC India adds, "The findings of the investigation at the Calcutta Snake Park clearly indicates how so called Snake Parks and other captive facilities running on the grounds of promoting wildlife education or research facilities in India unless monitored properly can become a haven for wildlife trafficking- breeding and supplying protected species of wildlife to various illegal markets in India and across the border. We are hopeful that the authorities will take this case of the Calcutta Snake Park as an eye opener and work on better monitoring of such facilities in India".

Mr Shubhobroto Ghosh from TRAFFIC India, the prime investigator of the Calcutta Snake Park, who had lead the case till the closure of the Park in 2015 further states, "This case clearly brings to the forefront a new and an important dimension of illegal wildlife trade in India. It questions the involvement of various captive wildlife breeding facilities including zoos, in trafficking of protected and endangered wildlife. TRAFFIC strongly recommends closer monitoring and evaluation of zoos and other captive breeding facilities in India to ensure that all records are maintained and that all wildlife species are accounted for at these facilities".

Note: The article is based on information provided by Shubhobroto Ghosh from TRAFFIC India. Photographs of the Park are on the next page, and are courtesy Shubhobroto Ghosh.



# Signpost

Other significant news stories

## DRONES TO EYE POACHING

THE NATIONAL TIGER CONSERVATION Authority (NTCA) is awaiting a final nod from the Ministry of Defence to start its ambitious drone monitoring project for combating wildlife poaching and man-animal conflict.



**HOW WILL IT WORK?** FITTED WITH GPS device and hi-resolution cameras, the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) also known as drones, are fast becoming a necessary hi-tech tool in wildlife management all over the world..

**MOU SIGNED** NTCA HAD LAST week signed an MoU with WII to start monitoring by drones in five tiger reserves of Panna, Jim Corbett National Park, Kaziranga, Sundarbans and the Sathyamangalam forest of Tamil Nadu. ₹3.5 crore earmarked.

Deccan Chronicles/03-02-2016

## ORPHANS IN THE WILD

Never heard of the pangolin, the dugong, or the slender loris? That's because discrimination persists within the world of endangered species. A look at why that's a bad news for you and your world



### RED LINE TONGUE BARR

Red line tongue barr is a species of fish found in the Western Ghats of India. It is a small, slender fish with a distinctive red line running along its body.

### PANDOLIN

Pandolin is a species of fish found in the Western Ghats of India. It is a small, slender fish with a distinctive red line running along its body.

### SEA CUCUMBER

Sea cucumber is a species of marine invertebrate. It is a long, cylindrical animal with a leathery skin and many tentacles.

### SEA HORSE

Sea horse is a species of fish found in the Western Ghats of India. It is a small, slender fish with a distinctive red line running along its body.

### SLENDER LORIS

Slender loris is a species of primate found in the Western Ghats of India. It is a small, slender primate with a distinctive red line running along its body.

### ALL AT SEA

All at sea is a species of fish found in the Western Ghats of India. It is a small, slender fish with a distinctive red line running along its body.

### FOREST OWLET

Forest owlet is a species of owl found in the Western Ghats of India. It is a small, slender owl with a distinctive red line running along its body.

### THE PROBLEMS WITH THIS

The problems with this is a species of fish found in the Western Ghats of India. It is a small, slender fish with a distinctive red line running along its body.

INDIAN WILDLIFE



ORPHANS IN THE WILD

Hindustan Times/13-03-2016

## Forest guards get GPS-enabled digital assistants



**TECH SUPPORT** After detection of offence, a guard can geo-tag location and upload a photo on central server; it will then be tracked by seniors

**Dhanraj Kulkarni** dhanraj.kulkarni@hindustantimes.com

For better monitoring of offences such as poaching and tree-felling, tracking forest fires, and plantation and protection of Maharashtra's green cover, the state government has begun distributing GPS-enabled personal digital assistants (PDAs) to forest guards.

The project will ensure that senior officials get the location of forest on a real-time basis and also direct resources and efforts, in case of a spike in such cases in a particular area.

"The basic idea is that the forest guards should move around. We will get to know about the registration of offences on a real-time basis. The software in these PDAs will enable forest guards to lodge their complaints to us.

**Maha's wild wealth**

Forest can accord largest portion of land after agriculture in Maharashtra. The state's recorded forest areas constitute 20.0% of the geographical area. The National Forest Policy, 1988, has set a target of 33%. It has six national parks, 4 wildlife sanctuaries and two conservation reserves with a tiger population of around 190 in 2014, up from 169 in 2010.

Once an offence is registered, we can track its progress," noted a senior forest department official involved with the exercise.

Once a guard detects any fire on his beat, he will geo-tag the location on the PDA - which is like a mobile phone - click a photo and upload it on the central server, after which it will be tracked by those in the chain of command. This is faster than the manual system, wherein paper work could take days to reach senior officials.

He added that they planned to cover all 7,000 forest guards, in addition to range forest officers (RFOs) and foresters at a later stage. The officer said they were also trying to link digital maps on GPS to satellite maps to know real-time changes in forest areas. A similar PDA-based system was also being used by the Maharashtra forest department.

"This is useful to record illegal felling and encroachments," noted a forest service officer, posted in one of the thickly forested districts in Maharashtra, adding that it also helped them ensure that the beat guards kept their focus on the ground.

"If there are frequent offences in a particular area, we can direct protection activities there. Moreover, the presence of a forest guard on the beat and his foot patrolling is important. His movement in the area also ensures protection. We can monitor the presence of the guards on their beats," the official added.

The case and subsequent developments, such as lodging an FIR, arrests and the progress of the case till it reaches the court can be tracked and monitored on the system," said a forest department official. Moreover, the PDA can be used to track the status and measure the extent of plantation, something that could not be done earlier, and also record crop losses due to wild animals.

Daily News & Analysis/26-03-2016

## CITES expresses concern over rhino poaching



**RHINO HORNS ARE IN VERY HIGH DEMAND FOR PREPARING TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE. EVEN ITS OTHER BODY PARTS AS NAILS AND SKIN ARE SOUGHT AFTER IN THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE.**

**PRA** IN NEW DELHI:

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has expressed concern over increasing rhino poaching in the country, asking it to remain vigilant in its efforts to combat rhino poaching. The issue came up for discussion in the recently concluded 66th CITES Standing Committee meeting in Geneva.

This particularly concerns rhino poaching in the three countries: Nepal, India and Sumatra. Rhino poaching is a major threat to rhino, which is a major population of about 3,500 individuals, nearly three-fourth rhinos are found in Assam alone.

A report prepared by the new Task Force of the National Tiger Conservation Authority that was discussed in the CITES session pointed out that rhinos are being targeted by transnational criminal groups and rhino poaching in the country is driven by demand outside the country.

While rhino horns are in very high demand for preparing traditional Chinese medicine, even its other body parts as nails and skin are sought after in the illegal wildlife trade.

The report pointed out that rhino poaching is an organised crime, involving national and international groups, who work in close coordination. It has complicated areas involving money-lending, cross-border smuggling, terrorism and international illegal wildlife trade.

The rhino trade, as revealed during interrogation of arrested poachers, is multi-layered and trans-national. It would be wrong to deny that rhino poaching has international connections and there are long chains crossing many borders of Asian and continents.

Action would, the park authorities may result in only partially eliminating the menace by felling poachers, instead of eradicating poachers.

The efforts made the national task force therefore be supplemented by equally strong action outside its boundaries. It is recommended that the CII and Wildlife Crime Control Network must work in close coordination with cross-border wildlife crime-solving investigating agencies such as Nepal, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, Taiwan, Australia and South Africa.

According to Wildlife Rehabilitation, China, Asian Rhino Specialist Group (CITES) management authorities need to work closely with Nepal and Myanmar through which rhino poachers are able to break the network. This should be a priority in Asian Rhino trade.

As per official data, total 97 rhinos were poached between 2013-2014 from the national parks of Assam, Manipur, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Odisha and West Bengal. The highest number of rhino poaching cases have been reported from Karnataka, with 16 cases reported in 2015.

Meanwhile, CITES is an international agreement between governments of 181 nations across the world. The issue of rhino poaching and rhino trade was discussed in the 66th CITES Standing Committee meeting in Geneva in South Africa in November 2015.

The Pioneer/01-02-2016

## The dark side of Diwali: Death for owls

**Oliver Fredrik** oliver.fredrik@hindustantimes.com

**LUCKNOW:** If owls could bow, they would have certainly done so on the Diwali night. Like every year, many of these birds will fall prey to human greed on the festival of lights that is held on the year's darkest night considered the best for occult practices.

These birds will be sacrificed in the belief among those wedded to superstition that snuffing out the winged creature's life will fetch human and fortune. Owls are believed to be the carriers of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.

"It's an illegal practice but unfortunately it's on the rise," says Hasan Tantrik, an occultist. "Shamans use the owl's skull, bones, feathers and blood in practising rituals that are believed to bring prosperity and wealth to the person (for whom the birds are killed)," adds Hasan. The practice originated in Rajasthan but has spread fast to Uttar Pradesh, he says.

"Tortoise are also used for the purpose," he adds.

City-based bird-sellers say the sale of owls starts about three weeks before the festival of lights.

"The city market witnesses a sudden rise in the demand for owls after Dussehra," says Rashtarpati, a bird seller in Chowk.

He discloses that the owls are sold at high prices as the buyers are ready to shell out any amount. "The price depends on the weight of the bird," he adds.

The price starts from ₹2,000 and goes up to lakhs, he says, while at the same time making it clear that he is not involved in the owl trade. For

their part, the zoo authorities in the state capital have sounded a high alert and increased vigil.

"It's indeed a tough time for owls. We have made arrangements near their cage to ensure complete security," zoo veterinarian Dr Vikas Singh said. Singh says the administration and the forest department should set in complete coordination to counter the practice that is endangering the owls.

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the wildlife trade monitoring network

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NEWSLETTER

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March 2017

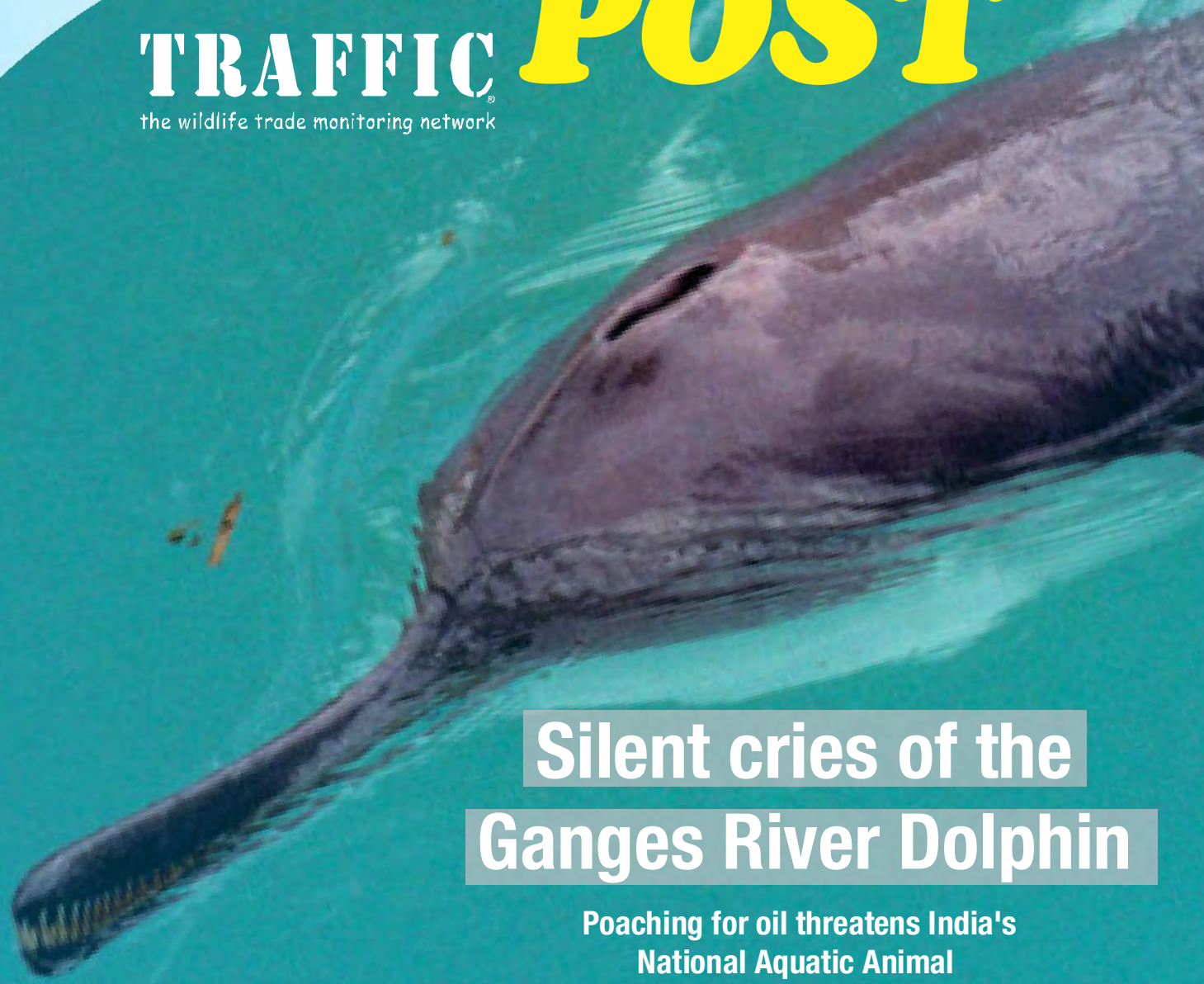
NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA

**TRAFFIC**  
the wildlife trade monitoring network

**POST**

**Silent cries of the  
Ganges River Dolphin**

Poaching for oil threatens India's  
National Aquatic Animal



# TRAFFIC Post

TRAFFIC Post is TRAFFIC's newsletter on wildlife trade in India. It started in September 2007 with a primary objective to create awareness about poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India.

Illegal wildlife trade is reportedly the fourth largest global illegal trade after narcotics, counterfeiting, and human trafficking. It has evolved itself into an organized activity threatening the future of many wildlife species.

TRAFFIC Post was born out of the need to reach out to various stakeholders including decision makers, enforcement officials, judiciary and consumers about the extent of illegal wildlife trade in India and the damaging effect it could be having on the endangered flora and fauna.

Since its inception, TRAFFIC Post has highlighted pressing issues related to illegal wildlife trade in India and globally, flagged early trends, and illuminated wildlife policies and laws. It has also focused on the status of legal trade in various medicinal plant and timber species that need sustainable management for ensuring ecological and economic success.

TRAFFIC Post comes out three times in the year and is available both online and in print. You can subscribe to it by writing to [trafficind@wwfindia.net](mailto:trafficind@wwfindia.net)

All issues of TRAFFIC Post can be viewed at [www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org); [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)

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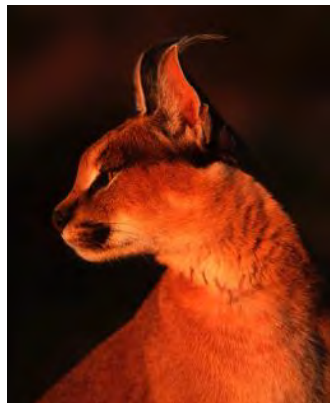
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# 01

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## TRAFFIC Update-India

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# TRAFFIC releases new report on illegal Tiger trade in Asia; at least two Tigers a week entered illegal wildlife trade over 16 year study period

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A comprehensive analysis of 16 years of Tiger seizures was released by TRAFFIC on the eve of the international conference on illegal wildlife trade that took place in Ha Noi in November 2016. The purpose of the study was to summarize the current trade dynamics for Tigers at a global level, in addition to assessing trade characteristics for each country.

The report titled *Reduced to Skin and Bones Re-Examined* showed Asia's failure to ramp up enforcement, close Tiger farms, strengthen laws and reduce demand – all to blame for the persistent illegal trade in Tiger parts. These issues existed to varying degrees across all the 13 Tiger range countries (TRCs) scrutinized, evidenced by the minimum of 1755 Tigers seized from 2000–2015, an average of more than two animals per week.

With at least 758 seized, whole skins represented the most common commodity type in trade. Other items seized included bones and Tiger bone wine, claws, canines, paws, gall bladders as well as dead and live Tigers.

India during the 16-year period under review recorded the greatest number of seizures among all TRCs, accounting for up to 44% of the total. It reported seizures of a minimum of 540 Tigers and a maximum of 622 Tigers, the minimum accounting for 30% of the total.

Location information demonstrated that while the southern region of India remained a hotspot, there also appeared to have been a greater number of seizures reported in the central zone in and around the State of Madhya Pradesh. A smaller cluster of seizures was also observed along the border of Nepal in the State of Uttar Pradesh. Research found that there was a greater probability that Tiger seizures will occur in areas where Tigers exist, underlining the need for site-based enforcement efforts. Furthermore, study also found that the national rail network in India was the preferred method for transporting Tigers and their parts, largely because many rail routes traverse protected areas across India, in contrast to national bus routes for example.

Despite the highest number of seizures being recorded in India, in contrast to all other TRCs, the overall trend line indicates a statistically significant decrease in the number of seizures being reported, particularly since 2010.

In terms of the number of Tigers seized, India was followed by Thailand, Nepal, China and Viet Nam.

The report found there was a growing proportion of Tiger parts seized suspected to be from captive breeding facilities—from just 2% in the 2000–2003 period to at least 30% in 2012–2015. Such seizures were most pronounced in Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam, where captive breeding facilities were found to be poorly regulated by existing laws.

“The rising number of Tigers suspected to be from captive breeding operations is a sure indication that leakage from Tiger farms is occurring and there is no denying the role these facilities play in worsening illegal trade: these countries have clearly made little meaningful progress in controlling this source of supply,” said Kanitha Krishnasamy, Senior Programme Manager for TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia and a co-author of the report.

The report also established that countries such as India with a majority of wild Tiger populations having the best chance of saving wild Tigers need to tackle the persistent problem of Tigers being poached from the wild. “This comprehensive analysis provides important insights for targeting interventions at critical points in the trafficking chain,” said James Compton, TRAFFIC’s Senior Director for Asia. “Specific recommendations to Tiger Range Countries at national level are complementary to the need for international law enforcement co-operation to disrupt and dismantle criminal activity involving Tigers and Tiger parts.”

The authors of the report said that the persistently high number of seizures was rooted in the lack of intelligence-led law enforcement efforts that could lead to successful convictions, a problem made worse by weak penalties and a lack of successful prosecution of offenders, and a lack of information sharing and bilateral co-operation.

Efforts to strengthen Tiger conservation efforts and cripple the syndicates bent on emptying the forests of



© P. Tansom / TRAFFIC

Tigers, especially in their strongholds in India, Nepal, Russia, Malaysia and Indonesia, could only be saved if these problems were addressed, said the report.

Demand, too, has not been quelled according to the report, which cites the clamour for taxidermy specimens of Tigers as a luxury item from the Indonesian elite as an example of additional pressure on the declining Sumatran Tiger population.

The report recommends wild Tiger range countries step up their game to beat the odds of extinction.

Read more at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2016/11/16/average-of-110-tigers-a-year-entering-the-illegal-trade-chain.html>

## Sixteen new wildlife sniffer dog squads to help combat wildlife crime in India

On 5 October 2016, 16 new highly trained wildlife sniffer and tracker dog squads joined the ranks of India’s dog squad forces deployed for fighting wildlife crime and curbing illegal wildlife trade in India. The dogs are the fifth batch of sniffer dogs trained under TRAFFIC’s sniffer dog training programme in India and

have joined their 25 illustrious counterparts already deployed across the country. A wildlife sniffer dog squad includes a dog and its two handlers.

The latest phase of TRAFFIC’s wildlife sniffer dog training programme in India began in January 2016 at the

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National Training Centre for Dogs (NTCD), BSF Academy, Tekanpur Gwalior, with 16 young dogs and 32 handlers from the seven participating States of West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.

During the first phase of the training programme the dogs (aged between 6-9 months) were allotted to their handlers and their primary exercise was to bond and build a trusting relationship. Strategic exercises taught the dogs only to accept food from their handlers and to follow their handlers' instructions in the most savage and intense situations. As the dogs neared the end of the first stage of training, they had all mastered these disciplines that would become the root of their careers as wildlife sniffer and tracker dogs.

During the crucial second stage of the training regime, the dogs began to learn and develop skills to detect wildlife contraband, to conduct wildlife seizures and how to nab poachers. They were rigorously trained for scent detection, tracking, searching and sniffing wildlife products or animal body parts especially of Tiger, Leopard, and Elephant, hidden in the ground, in vehicles, or in premises. The dogs were also trained to detect timber species such as Red Sanders.

The third and final stage of the training took the dogs out into the field. A set up was made for the dog squads to detect and

seize illegal wildlife products from almost real time situations. The training was strictly based on conditional learning where a dog was rewarded/appreciated when the task was undertaken with success. For example, after a dog located or dug out the animal skins or bones, it was given immediate affirmation and reward from its handlers.

After the nine-month training programme, the dogs graduated at a passing out ceremony organized at the NTCD. The ceremony was attended by senior officials of the BSF Academy, TRAFFIC and WWF-India from New Delhi.

Shri R A Khan, DIG (TPT), BSF Academy, Tekanpur, speaking to the audience at the passing out ceremony, said, "The NTCD at Gwalior is a nodal and established sniffer dog training centre for combating various crimes in India. Since wildlife crime is severe in India and globally, it is important that the sniffer dogs are trained specifically for this purpose. Dogs have profound sniffing and tracking ability which makes them useful in conducting wildlife seizures as well as in nabbing poachers. This is the first batch of wildlife sniffer dogs to have been trained from our centre and we take pride in partnering in this important mission".



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### SUPPORT THE PROGRAMME

The wildlife sniffer dog training programme needs your support. In 2008, TRAFFIC pioneered the first wildlife sniffer dog training programme in India. Since then, the trained sniffer dogs have been successful in at least 175 wildlife seizures cases and have assisted in arresting about 125 wildlife offenders. However, wildlife crime remains a persistent threat and TRAFFIC needs your support to enable more dogs to be trained to apprehend and deter wildlife criminals. Visit [http://support.wwfindia.org/super\\_sniffer/](http://support.wwfindia.org/super_sniffer/) to learn how you can help.

## India and Nepal to strengthen wildlife law enforcement at border regions

In response to a need to strengthen wildlife law enforcement at the India-Nepal border and restrict the movement of wildlife contraband, TRAFFIC, in partnership with Valmiki Tiger Reserve and with support from WWF-India, organized a trans-border wildlife law enforcement and capacity building workshop in Bihar from 5-7 December 2016.

The workshop, held at the Valmiki Tiger Reserve, was attended by 62 enforcement officials representing India's departments of Forest, Police and Revenue, officials of the Para Military forces, the Sashstra Suraksha Bal (SSB), and 10 officers from Nepal representing the departments of Wildlife and Parks, Army, Attorney, and Armed Police. Field staff from TRAFFIC and WWF-India were also present.

The three day workshop disseminated information on the latest trends in illegal wildlife trade, trends in changing demand for wildlife products and in their supply. Other topics included identification skills for specimens in illegal wildlife trade; trade of reptiles, birds, turtles and tortoises; new tools and techniques useful in combating wildlife crime; legislation governing domestic and international wildlife trade; techniques for intelligence collection and collation; digital intelligence; tackling online wildlife crime including through social media; standard techniques used in search, seizure and interrogation of wildlife criminals; and forensics and DNA tools available for collecting and establishing evidence. Best practices in the deployment of trained wildlife sniffer dogs were also covered: a few years ago, two such dogs had been deployed at Valmiki Tiger Reserve trained under TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dog training programme in India. Participants also received instruction on use of deep search metal detectors (DSMDs), used to locate metal snares, traps and ballistic materials used in wildlife poaching, and in applying their newly acquired knowledge at simulated crime scenes.

TRAFFIC donated 16 wildlife forensic kits to Valmiki Tiger Reserve and six to the delegates from Nepal, while four advanced DSMDs were given to Valmiki Tiger Reserve's Field Director.

Participants spoke about how useful the workshop had been for enhancing cross-border co-ordination to address wildlife crimes.

A similar training event involving officers from Nepal and India was also held at Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in July 2016. Both events were part of a strategic approach to combating wildlife crime, with TRAFFIC helping enhance wildlife law enforcement skills and capacity building in vulnerable Tiger Reserves and Protected Areas located close to international borders and traditional wildlife trafficking routes.

Valmiki Tiger Reserve was one of the first Tiger reserves gazetted in India and is particularly vulnerable owing to its critical location along the borders of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in India and Nepal in the terai region. The Reserve has lost several Tigers in recent years to poaching, perpetrated by gangs operating across the borders of India and Nepal and linked to international Tiger trafficking syndicates.



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# Hundreds pledge support for curbing illegal wildlife trade on World Environment Day 2016



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A “wildlife pledge” to combat wildlife crime was also taken by participants, led by Mr A.N. Jha, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India while more than 700 individuals used a “pledge wall” to say “NO” to buying illegal wildlife products.

Ms Tilotama Varma, Additional Director - WCCB said, “World Environment Day has given us an opportunity to highlight the on-going wildlife crime that has endangered the future of many wildlife species in India. While enforcement agencies like ours are continuously strengthening and evolving ourselves to control this growing menace, it is important that we have support of the end consumers of these wildlife products.”

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC's India office said, “Poaching is driven by consumer demand and if this can be curbed, poaching will stop. Illegal wildlife trade has emerged as one of the most significant threats to wildlife and engaging public support is crucial to eradicating this threat.”

Individuals from all walks of life pledged their support for fighting wildlife crime during an event organized at “Raahgiri”, Connaught Place, New Delhi, during the early hours by the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), TRAFFIC, WWF-India, United Nations Development Programme, ENVIS Centers, PETA and Maashakti to mark World Environment Day.

Celebrated globally on 5 June every year, World Environment Day highlights various conservation and environmental issues, with the theme changing each year. In 2016, the theme was “Go Wild for Life - Zero Tolerance for Illegal Wildlife Trade.”

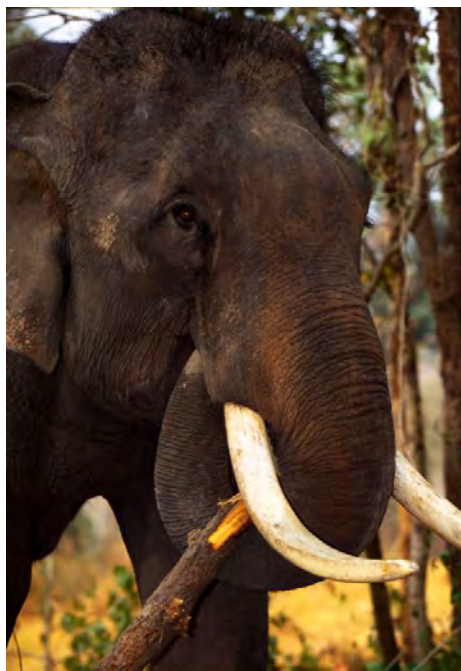
TRAFFIC, WWF-India and partner organizations engaged participants at Raahgiri through wildlife films, wildlife quizzes, skits performed by law students, painting competitions, slogan writing competitions, a cultural programme and other activities. The event highlight was a march around the inner circle of Connaught Place with volunteers and supporters holding placards with messages related to wildlife conservation and environmental protection. Another popular activity was “selfie corner” where participants could take selfies with cut outs of various protected species, helping drive home the message that wildlife is ours to protect and not ours to consume.



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# India adopts “World Elephant Day”: Children pledge to protect and conserve Elephants

© Martin Harvey / WWF



On 12 August 2016, India formally adopted “World Elephant Day” to help conserve and protect Elephants in India and improve their welfare. Shri Anil Madhav Dave, Honourable Minister of State (I/C) Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, pledged his support for Elephant conservation and urged the country to co-operate and support the mission of the occasion.

He said: “On the occasion of World Elephant Day, 2016, I pledge to protect the Indian Elephant, declared as a National Heritage Animal, to the best of my ability. The Indian Elephant has been a victim of severe habitat loss, cruelty in private custody and poaching for its tusks. It is important that its habitat is secured to minimize its conflict with people. Strict enforcement of laws to stop poaching as well as co-operation with other countries is sought to reduce the demand for ivory in national and international markets. Elephant conservation in India needs the support

of all stakeholders”.

During the day an awareness programme was organized at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti Bhawan in New Delhi by Project Elephant, TRAFFIC, Centre for Media Studies- Vatavaran and WWF-India.

Nearly 400 schoolchildren from across Delhi National Capital Region witnessed the ceremony and took the pledge along with the Honourable Minister. They also participated in a conservation march and formed a human chain in support of Elephant conservation with the children holding placards with messages about the immediate threats to Elephants today. The programme also included a painting and slogan writing competition, and a quiz on the theme of Elephant conservation in India.

Various films about illegal trade in Elephants, human-wildlife conflict and other topics were screened during the programme, together with a panel discussion involving experts in the field of Elephant conservation on “Poaching of Elephants and illegal trade in ivory and its products.”

TRAFFIC’s latest poster on Elephant poaching and illegal ivory trade, part of its long running campaign “Don’t Buy Trouble” was released at the event.

Mr Rajeev Kumar Srivastava, Inspector General & Director, Project Elephant, Government of India said, “The Project Elephant Division in the Ministry was established in 1992 to promote conservation and welfare of Elephants in the country. Since then it has been dealing with four major issues: destruction, fragmentation and degradation of Elephant habitats; poaching for tusks to meet demand for ivory in national and international markets; human-elephant conflicts; and issues relating to captive Elephants. The Project Elephant Division is working in co-operation with the Chief Wildlife Wardens



of Elephant range States to help conservation of Elephants and their habitat. However, it is very important to raise awareness among the general public, particularly student communities, about the problems faced by pachyderms in India. World Elephant Day is an occasion to highlight these issues among the general public and policy makers and this day is being celebrated in the country for the first time. Participation of Honourable Minister, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, in World Elephant Day 2016 will promote the cause of Elephants in India. We are thankful to organizations such as TRAFFIC, Centre for Media Studies- Vatavaran, and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau for assisting us in organizing World Elephant Day 2016.”

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC's India office highlighted various threats to the Elephant from poaching and illegal trade and spoke about how international demand is one of the main drivers for Elephant ivory in

India, with usages varying from Japanese hanko, artifacts, wedding bangles, trophies and medicines. Reports have also indicated a domestic demand for ivory with a few communities in western India using it for bangles and others for decorative and ornamental purposes. Poaching for meat and other products such as Elephant tail hair also pose threats to populations, especially in Northeast India. A lack of effective intelligence could be a stumbling block in stopping Elephant poaching in India.

World Elephant Day was launched worldwide on 12 August 2012 to mobilize attention and support for conservation of Asian and African Elephants.

The Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* was once widely distributed throughout the country, including in States such as Punjab and Gujarat. Currently, they are found in only 14 States, in four fragmented populations in South, North, Central and North-east India. The Asian Elephant has been accorded the highest level of protection under Indian wildlife law through its listing under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 of India. This means that hunting/trading of this species would be punishable by imprisonment of up to seven years and a minimum fine of INR25000. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has listed the Asian Elephant in Appendix I, which prohibits all commercial international trade in this species or parts of it.

## Bidding farewell to Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj

**D**r Shekhar Kumar Niraj, IFS, joined TRAFFIC as Head of the India office in 2013 as an Indian Forest Service officer on deputation from the Government of Tamil Nadu. Dr Niraj's extensive experience stemmed from his work in Protected Areas as an official in the Indian Forest Service, contributing to combating wildlife trade and poaching. Before joining TRAFFIC, he was responsible for the management of different terrestrial and marine protected areas, including the Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Reserve. He was awarded the International Wildlife Foundation Award at the University of Arizona, USA, in 2007, where he undertook his PhD research on the impacts of sustainable development on illegal wildlife trade and poaching.

On completion of his tenure with TRAFFIC in January 2017, Dr Niraj returned to his parent organisation, Government of Tamil Nadu. TRAFFIC and WWF-India appreciate his contribution towards curbing wildlife crime and illegal wildlife trade in India and wishes him the very best in his future endeavours. Dr Niraj can be contacted at [shekhar.niraj@gmail.com](mailto:shekhar.niraj@gmail.com)

# 02

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## Outpost

1. Gall Bladder, the main draw for bear poachers in Myanmar
2. China to ban all domestic ivory trade by the end of 2017



## Gall Bladder, the main draw for bear poachers in Myanmar

**F**orty bear poachers across Myanmar have revealed that they primarily poach bears to supply the illegal trade in gall bladders. The findings were published in a TRAFFIC study where data derived from interviews with self-declared bear poachers from 23 separate villages across nine States in Myanmar was analysed. Most of the poachers (38 of the 40) stated they largely hunted bears to obtain gall bladder, and to a lesser extent paws and cubs.

The study *“Assessing the illegal bear trade in Myanmar through conversations with poachers: Topology, perceptions and trade links to China”* was published in the journal *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* in January 2017.

Demand for bear parts, like the gall bladder and paws, is driven primarily by China. It also found that bears are poached mostly using snares. While the meat of the bears killed tends to be consumed by the poachers, the more commercially valuable parts like the gall bladder and paws are traded. Bear cubs are coveted too, considered a valuable commodity for commercial trade, often to stock bear bile farms.

“Understanding the intricacies and economics of the international wildlife trade is paramount if we want to curb the illegal trade,” said Vincent Nijman, Professor in Anthropology at Oxford Brookes University and co-author of the study.

Indeed a worrying sign is that most of the poachers interviewed agreed that populations of bears appeared to be declining with fewer bears now in the area where they were living compared to five years ago. “The illegal trade in bears and their parts in Myanmar requires more focused efforts from the Myanmar authorities. Increased law enforcement and effective prosecution is essential if trade networks and markets are to be shut down,” said Dr Chris R. Shepherd, Regional Director of TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia.

For more information, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2017/1/26/new-study-finds-gall-bladder-the-main-draw-for-myanmar-bear.html>

## China to ban all domestic ivory trade by the end of 2017

**I**n an historic announcement, China declared that it will close down its domestic ivory trade by the end of 2017, signaling an end to the world's primary legal ivory market.

The General Office of the State Council of China announced that China will “cease part of ivory processing and sales by 31 March 2017 and cease all ivory processing and sales by 31 December 2017.

Lo Sze Ping, CEO of WWF China said : “WWF applauds China's decision to ban its domestic ivory trade so swiftly, underlining the government's

determination and strong leadership to reduce demand for ivory and help save elephants. Closing the world's largest legal ivory market will deter people in China and beyond from buying ivory while making it harder for ivory traffickers to sell their illegal stocks”

At the meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) held in South Africa in October 2016, delegates adopted a Resolution calling for all countries with a legal domestic market for ivory that is contributing to poaching or illegal trade to take measures to close their

domestic ivory markets. “Now that three of the world's largest domestic ivory markets—China, Hong Kong SAR and the USA—are being phased out, we hope that other countries will follow suit,” said Lo Sze Ping.

In August 2016, WWF and TRAFFIC released key recommendations that found a ban could be implemented within two years and that it would raise people's awareness of Elephant conservation and help law enforcement tackle the illegal trade. Read more at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2016/12/31/china-to-ban-domestic-ivory-trade-by-end-of-2017-in-huge-boo.html>

# 03

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## **CITES Update**

**New CITES trade rules came into effect at the start of 2017**

## New CITES trade rules came into effect at the start of 2017

If you are crossing a Customs checkpoint at the airport or an international port be aware that new trade regulations for over 500 species of animals and plants entered into force on 3 January 2017. They were adopted in Johannesburg, South Africa, at the 17th meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP17). As the New Year began, the overwhelming majority of the 183 Parties to CITES—the international treaty that regulates global trade in endangered wildlife species—applied the newly agreed controls with the aim of protecting irreplaceable wild fauna and flora from over exploitation for international trade. As well as providing instructions for government agencies on how to regulate trade in particular species and on a large range of issues—everything from misdeclaration of captive breeding, corruption to online trafficking and more—thousands of species are also given different levels of protection through their listings in one of three appendices within CITES. Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction: trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances. Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival. Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.

### Highlights of some of the new species listings:

**High value marine species:** Continuing a trend from the previous CoP, Parties at CoP17 voted for a higher level of protection for several marine species of high commercial value, most notably through the inclusion of the Silky Shark, all thresher sharks and all devil rays in Appendix II. This will mean that future trade in these species can only happen subject to science-backed evidence that the trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild. The entry into force of the new listings will be delayed for 12 months for the shark species and 6 months for the devil rays, namely to 4 October 2017 and 4 April 2017 respectively.

**Timber species:** The success of CITES in supporting legal, sustainable timber trade and addressing illegal trade saw a

further 300+ timber species, including all *Dalbergia* rosewood and palisander species found across the world, being brought under CITES trade controls. Legal international trade in timber is worth hundreds of billions of dollars every year. CITES Management Authorities establish the veracity of the legal origins of rosewood and palisander species before they enter international trade, and CITES Scientific Authorities advise on the sustainable nature of the harvest and exports. Customs officials at border crossings across the globe will verify CITES permits for all such international shipments.

**Pangolins:** At CoP17 pangolins, the previously little-known ant-eating species found in Africa and Asia, were under the international spotlight. All eight pangolin species were afforded the highest level of protection under CITES through an Appendix I listing which prohibits all commercial international trade of wild taken specimens. The Appendix-I listing will also serve as incentive for the world's governments to step up law enforcement and demand reduction efforts to better protect the species.

**New species that did not make headlines:** Some lesser known but equally important species brought under CITES trade regulations include the Nautilus, the Granddier's Baobab Tree, and many amphibians and reptiles, such as alligator lizards, the Psychedelic Rock Gecko, the Chinese Crocodile Lizard, the Titicaca Water Frog, and the Tomato Frog – species often seen in the pet trade, and that need control to ensure the sustainability and legality of supplies.

CITES Secretary-General, John E. Scanlon said “CITES CoP17 was a game changer for the world's wildlife, with international trade in 500 more species brought under CITES controls, including high value marine and timber species. CITES also adopted a vast array of bold and powerful decisions addressing critical areas of work, such as curbing corruption and cyber-crime, and developing well-targeted strategies to reduce demand for illegal wildlife. We are all now focused on the implementation of these decisions for which we need equally bold concrete actions.” Read more at

[https://cites.org/eng/new\\_CITES\\_trade\\_rules\\_come\\_into\\_effect\\_as\\_2017\\_starts\\_02012017](https://cites.org/eng/new_CITES_trade_rules_come_into_effect_as_2017_starts_02012017)

# 04

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## TRAFFIC Alert

1. In a record haul, Police seize over 6000 turtles in Uttar Pradesh
2. Over 70 snakes seized from a residence in Pune, two arrested
3. Five caracals and a wild cat seized in Uttar Pradesh



1

## In a record haul, Police seize over 6000 turtles in Uttar Pradesh

In January 2017, Police seized more than 6000 freshwater turtles from poachers who had planned to smuggle them out of the country. Live Indian Flapshell Turtles were found stuffed in sacks near Amethi in Uttar Pradesh State, bound for Kolkata. A person suspected of being the kingpin behind the smuggling operation, has been arrested over the 4 t haul, thought to be the largest in India's history.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Indian Flapshell Turtle *Lissemys punctata* is a freshwater turtle largely found in calm and stagnant waters along the Indus and Ganges River drainages. It is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972, which affords it complete protection against hunting, trade and any other forms of utilisation in India. It is further listed in Appendix II of CITES, which restricts its international trade. However, the legal status of the species has failed to stop its exploitation by poachers and wildlife traders across its range.



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The trade in Indian Flapshell Turtle is driven mainly by demand for its meat, calipee (a fatty gelatinous light-yellow substance found immediately over the lower shell of a turtle and esteemed as a delicacy) and for sale as pets. Calipee once extracted and processed is smuggled across porous Indian borders to China where it is used in traditional medicines.

The meat is considered by some to be an aphrodisiac, while the bones are powdered for use in traditional medicines.

Freshwater turtles from various north Indian rivers are also brought into West Bengal where the meat is consumed locally. Kolkata is considered to be notorious for turtle trade. In 2016, the West Bengal Police collaborated with TRAFFIC and placed over 2500 posters on poaching and illegal trade of tortoises and freshwater turtles at strategic locations across the State of West Bengal. Between December 2016 and January 2017, the Police seized over 3000 of these turtles in the State.

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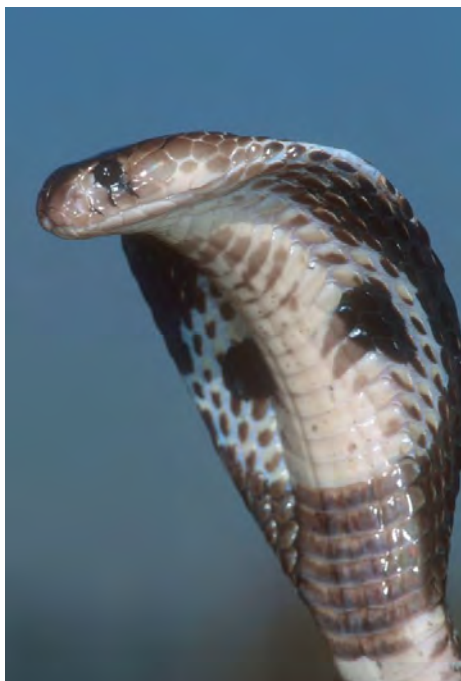
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# 2

## Over 70 snakes seized from a residence in Pune, two arrested

In December 2016, 41 Russell's Vipers and 31 cobras kept in wooden boxes and gunny bags were seized from a residential apartment in Pune. The police found the snakes from an apartment where a man, who was arrested, was living with his wife and children. Investigations revealed that the suspect caught the snakes in the wild or procured them from snake catchers. He then allegedly extracted venom from the reptiles for sale or onwards smuggling. Police also found some venom stored in small bottles in the apartment. All the seized snakes were handed over to forest officials.



© Martin Harvey / WWF

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Russell's Viper *Daboia russelii* is one of the four most venomous snakes in India. It is found throughout the country, up to Assam. Russell's Viper is a nocturnal snake and inhabits scrub forests, grasslands and even cultivated fields in urban and rural India. It is listed in Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972 and under this Act hunting, trade or any other form of exploitation of the species or its body parts and derivatives is banned. International trade is further regulated under CITES where the species is listed in Appendix III, which contains species that are protected in at least one country that has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.

There are five species of cobra found in India: King Cobra *Ophiophagus Hannah*, Spectacled Cobra *Naja naja*, Monocled Cobra *Naja kaouthia*, Andaman Cobra *Naja sagittifera* and Central Asian Cobra *Naja oxiana*. All of them are listed in Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Appendix III of CITES.

The above snake seizure provides some insight into the illegal venom trade in India. Snake venom is used by pharmaceutical companies to make antidotes. News reports have indicated that some companies procure snake venom through illegal sources. There is also a growing demand for snake venom for intoxication purposes, commonly marketed to youth as a party drug while there are also reports pointing towards international smuggling of venom. TRAFFIC believes that concerted action is needed to address the threats posed by illegal trade in snake venom.

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# 3

## Five caracals and a wild cat seized in Uttar Pradesh

In January 2017, Uttar Pradesh Police seized five caracals and a wild cat species, allegedly being smuggled from Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh to Hyderabad. According to the police who intercepted the car in which these animals were being transported in iron cages, it is extremely rare to find live wild cats being smuggled. The arrested suspect said that the animals were brought from Bihar and were on their way to Hyderabad. Reportedly, wild cat species are popular in illegal private zoos located on the outskirts of Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

TRAFFIC is concerned about the seizure of Caracals *Caracal caracal*. These are secretive and elusive wild animals, rarely seen in the wild or surfacing on camera traps. Caracals were once found across the arid and semi arid regions of India but are now found only in pockets of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The species is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and in Appendix I of CITES, meaning all international commercial trade is prohibited. The main threats to Caracals are habitat loss and alteration and these pressures from human development have taken a severe toll on wild populations. Conservationists fear the Caracal may become extinct in India before much is known about the species in the wild. Poaching and illegal wildlife trade may also be a significant threat: the police consider the above seizure may only represent the tip of iceberg of what could be a highly organised and sophisticated illegal trade in the species.

In recent years, TRAFFIC has been encouraging enforcement agencies to address the poaching and illegal trade of some of the lesser known wildlife species such as pangolins, monitor lizards, bird, snakes, Tokay Geckos and lorises. TRAFFIC considers the trade threat against some of these species may be significant and having a conservation impact. TRAFFIC therefore urges investigation and follow up action in the above case.



© Martin Harvey / WWF

### Sources:

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# 05

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## **In Focus**

**Snow Leopards: a species living on the edge**





## Snow Leopards: a species living on the edge

The Snow Leopard *Panthera uncia* is found in the mountain ranges of Central and Southern Asia across 12 countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The species is threatened, intrinsically rare and although it inhabits a large geographical range (1.8 million km<sup>2</sup>), its global population is estimated at 3920–6390 animals (GSLEP, 2013). It is classified as Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The Snow Leopard has been listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) since 1975, and hence all international trade in the species, its parts and derivatives is prohibited. Each Snow Leopard range State has its own national legislation to protect the species against exploitation. In India, the Snow Leopard is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the highest level of protection accorded to a wildlife species in the country.

Threats to the Snow Leopard include illegal killing and the loss of its natural prey owing to competition from livestock, hunting by people, and partly due to habitat alteration. With less natural prey available and with more domestic animals grazing in their hunting territories, Snow Leopards have taken to preying on livestock. This has brought it into continuous conflict with local people, often leading to retaliatory killings.

According to research published in October 2016 by TRAFFIC in the report *An Ounce of Prevention: Snow leopard crime revisited*, an estimated 221-450 Snow Leopards have been poached annually since 2008—a minimum of four animals per week although this number could be substantially higher since many killings in remote areas go undetected.

Using a combination of methods, including seizure records, market surveys and expert interviews to provide the first quantitative estimates of the scale of snow leopard poaching and trafficking since 2003, the report found that the majority of Snow Leopards are killed in retaliation for attacks on livestock (55%) or by non-targeted methods, such as snares (18%).

According to the report, over 90 percent of the reported Snow Leopard poaching occurred in five range countries: China, Mongolia, Pakistan, India and Tajikistan. Nepal was also flagged for having relatively high poaching levels considering its relatively small population of Snow Leopards. China and Russia were most frequently identified as destinations for animals poached in other countries. Afghanistan has also been a major illegal market for Snow Leopard furs over the past decade.



© S. Michel

Only 21% of Snow Leopards were poached specifically for the illegal trade in their pelts and products. However, the report found that over half the retaliatory and non-targeted poaching incidents result in opportunistic attempts to sell, contributing to the estimated 108-219 Snow Leopards that are illegally traded each year.

Interestingly, the report also found a steep decline in the number of Snow Leopards observed in trade and in markets, particularly in China, which suggests that demand could be falling—perhaps due to increased enforcement. However, the report found there was a need to strengthen both national and transboundary law enforcement, especially as less than a quarter of known cases of Snow Leopard poaching were investigated and just 14 percent were prosecuted.

To secure the future of the Snow Leopard, it is clearly critical that efforts are made to ensure that people and Snow Leopards can co-exist. These include the

introduction of compensation schemes and innovative predator-proof corrals: such schemes are currently not widespread in Snow Leopard range States.

The report also recommends that TRAFFIC maintains the Snow Leopard crime database that was developed as part of the research. The database contains records of seizures and observations of Snow Leopard killing, capture and trade dating back to 1989. Future analysis of the database will help to target interventions at key points across the Snow Leopard's range.

TRAFFIC thanks the WWF Conservation and Adaptation in Asia's High Mountain Landscapes and Communities Project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for financial support for the research and publication of *An Ounce of Prevention: Snow leopard crime revisited*.





## Silent cries of the Ganges River Dolphin: Poaching for oil threatens India's National Aquatic Animal

*The Ganges River Dolphin is an ancient species among the whales and dolphins, having evolved around 30 million years ago. The growing threat from drastic habitat changes, targeted hunting and illegal trade may be too much for it to swim through.*

© François Xavier Pelletier / WWF



**R**iver dolphins in India occur as two subspecies: the Ganges River Dolphin *Platanista gangetica gangetica* and the Indus River Dolphin *P. g. minor*. They are also sometimes referred to as Blind River Dolphins. It is one of the few dolphin species found in freshwater: the others include three species found in South American rivers, the Baiji *Lipotes vexillifer*, which once lived in the Yangtze River in China but may now be extinct, while the Irrawaddy River Dolphin *Orcaella brevirostris* of South and South-East Asia can exist in both fresh and saline water.

The Ganges River Dolphin has a long thin snout, a stocky body (which can grow up to 2–2.6 m in length and weigh up to 150kg when fully mature) and large flippers. This dolphin lacks a crystalline lens and therefore is commonly referred to as the blind dolphin. It uses echolocation to navigate and hunt. Ganges River Dolphins give birth to a single calf after a gestation period of 9–11 months every 2–3 years.

The dolphin has a peculiar style of swimming, unique to this species, that is on one side so that its flipper trails the muddy bottom and it is able to find food easily. Being a mammal it cannot breathe under water and surfaces every 30–120 seconds. Due to the sound it produces while breathing, the animal is popularly referred to as “Susu”.

## Distribution and Habitat

Ganges River Dolphins inhabit the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu River systems of Nepal, India and Bangladesh. The species prefers slow moving water with deep pools, eddies and counter water currents which attracts their fish prey.

## Population Status

According to IUCN, surveys of portions of the range of the Ganges subspecies have collectively accounted for 1200–1800 animals, but the true population is believed to be larger because some potentially important areas have yet to be surveyed (e.g., the Indian Sundarbans) and at least some of the counts and estimates are debateable. The greatest densities of Ganges River Dolphins have been observed in the Ganga mainstream in India between Maniharighat and Buxar (particularly the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary) and just downstream of there between Kahalgaon and Manihari Ghat, and in the lower Sangu River of Bangladesh.



© Smith, B.D. & Braulik, G.T. 2012. *Platanista gangetica*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2012: e.T41758A17355810.

## Legal Status

The Ganges River Dolphin is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 giving it the highest level of protection against poaching, illegal trade and any other form of exploitation. It is further listed in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), prohibiting all international trade in the species or its body parts. IUCN lists the species as “Endangered”.

The species has also been granted non-human personhood status by the Government of India, making India the first nation in the world to recognize in law their unique intelligence and self-awareness. They have also been adopted as the National Aquatic Animal of India.

## Threats

The Ganges River Dolphin inhabits the most densely populated areas of India and its habitat has been severely altered by the construction of more than 50 dams and other irrigation-related projects. Removal of river water, siltation arising from deforestation, pollution and entanglement in fisheries nets (accidental killing) have been the main threats to the Ganges River Dolphin in the wild. The range of the species in the Ganges is now fragmented due to the presence of barrages. In addition, plans to increase cargo shipping in the rivers and dredging of rivers to maintain navigable depth is also likely to negatively impact the dolphins.

Poaching is also a serious threat to the Ganges River Dolphin. In the past, hunting of dolphins was largely as a result of by-catch. Dolphins were caught in gillnets and line hooks and this was a major source of mortality for this subspecies.

The Ganges River Dolphin is also targeted for its meat and oil, which are both used medicinally. The oil is also used to attract catfish, particularly two commercially important species: *Eutropichthys vacha* and *Clupiso magarua*, both of

which are also declining in the wild. The dolphin oil is rubbed on the fish bait or is used to make a special bait mixed with poultry and fish.

Due to an illegal yet lucrative market for dolphin oil there is little incentive for fishermen to release any net-entangled animals back into the water, although many are already dead by the time the nets are hauled.

TRAFFIC considers there is a strong need to understand the extent of hunting and illegal trade in the Ganges River Dolphin and the threat these pose to the survival of the species. TRAFFIC recommends development and adoption of affordable dolphin oil substitutes by the fishing community, together with education and awareness among the community about the illegality of this trade and its conservation impacts, together with management of catfish stocks to ensure any offtake is at sustainable levels.

#### Source

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© François Xavier Pelletier / WWF



# Signpost

Other significant news stories

## U'khand new hub of leopard poaching, reveal figures

**Nishi Sharma**  
@nishisharma@hindustantimes.com

**DEHRADUN:** Uttarakhand has emerged as a hub of leopard skin trade within eight months of this year, leaving behind Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, according to the records of Delhi-based non-governmental organisation Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI).

Two leopard skins were seized from Dehradun on August 26. Before this, seven skins were seized from Kotdwar and one from Dehradun on January 26. On June 6, three skins were seized from Chamoli and on

**THE STATE LOST 68 LEOPARDS THIS YEAR DUE TO POACHING, ACCIDENTS, NATURAL CAUSES AND KILLINGS BY PEOPLE**

April 29, three more skins were recovered in Pithoragarh. The hill state has reported seizure of 22 leopard skins and bones this year.

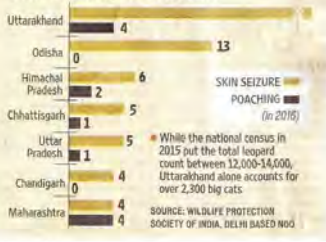
It also lost 68 leopards this year due to skin seizure, poaching, accidents, natural causes and killings by people and the forest department.

WPSI statistics say nearly 35% leopard deaths reported were due to seizure and poaching. "Lack of strategic planning towards leopard conservation is a big reason behind poaching," Tito Joseph, project manager of WPSI, said.

While the national census in 2015 has put the total leopard count between 12,000-14,000, Uttarakhand alone accounts for over 2,300 big cats.

"Leopard population in our state is growing because of which human-animal conflict is high and crimes against the animal are on the rise," Digvijay Singh Khatri, chief wildlife warden of Uttarakhand, said.

### THE BIG CAT IN DANGER



Hindustan Times/28-8-2016

## Turtle egg poaching hits conservation bid

KARAL MARZ @kmarz

IT is hell in the market for every environmentalist. Hundreds of turtle egg poachers are in the business of selling their wares to Mirzapur in the district, with prices of digging in search for the eggs seen on the local market.

Poachers have been targeting each and every turtle, mostly the ones of environmental activists, who have voiced concerns over the rampant poaching of turtle eggs.

These eggs are sold in black markets across the country and the demand has been soaring ever since the past few years as they are used to cure erectile dysfunction among men.

Traces of digging can be found on shores stretching from Tharsharwati Rajpura to Khatwa, Varanasi and Kanpur. A fisherman, Nand Lal, said he has seen poachers in the area.

The activists said, warning about the imminent ecological threat to the aquatic ecosystem.

Speaking to Express, senior Octopus fisherman in Mirzapur, who is also a researcher and Tamil writer,



Richard a similar view. Another researcher, S. Srinivas Kumar, who has been spearheading the campaign to protect turtle nests on the shores of Mirzapur, said, "The threat is rampant. Use of machetes and tools by the fishermen kill pregnant turtles head-on to retrieve their eggs, while illegal shelling forces three-day release sustained from just the sea, in turn, harm them. Real estate developers are not stopping their drilling and mining in the area, leaving a great challenge to turtles to find a secure spot for their eggs."

A recent survey revealed that hundreds of turtles were killed by the release of industrial wastes into the sea, and thousands of nests were poached every year. It is alleged that many north Indian workers at the nearby shrimp farms as well as local fishermen raise in boats by helping poachers to discover nests.

Apart from intensive patrolling on the shores, the authorities should classify turtle nesting spots as secured zones, Kumar said.

District Forest Officer S Anandh said, "The challenge thrown by the poachers,

The New Indian Express/02-03-2017

## Golden gecko: New catch in poachers' net

With No Data On Its Population, Stopping Poaching Activities An Uphill Task

### WILD WHEREABOUTS

Certain body parts of the golden gecko are used to enhance potency.

Golden gecko (Gobiodon aureus) is the only lizard categorized under Schedule I (part II) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

This means it is treated like an elephant, tiger or leopard. Those poached golden geckos can face imprisonment and penalties.

The lizard, active both during day and night, inhabits rocky crevices and boulders.

The gecko's range is wide, extending from the Western Ghats to the Eastern Ghats.



Opik, P/Imagop.com

The reptile was discovered in 1979 by Richard Henry Goodson. Twenty years later, it was rediscovered again by George Albert Boulenger in the Eastern Ghats.

It feeds on insects like crickets, cockroaches and wasps.

It breeds on moist, low-lying rocks, which it climbed down on the poachers. Shekhar said.

In India, golden gecko is found only in the Eastern Ghats, spread across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, he said.

The study highlighted the absence of data on the population of the lizard and indiscriminate poaching of this species as there is no proof of any of the poachers.

Interestingly, among the lizards in the IUCN, only the golden gecko is included under the Schedule I (part II) of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Eastern Ghats, although there are several sub-species, threat to the species' habitat.

One of the studies conducted in Anaimalai, An-

Southwest Asia created the Philippines government following which it climbed down on the poachers. Shekhar said.

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One of the studies conducted in Anaimalai, An-

The Times of India/28/08/2016

## Contraband of 1,790 antlers seized

The major breakthrough will also check if the illegally-possessed animal parts originate from poaching

Dhawal Kulkarni @dhawal\_kulkarni

In one of the largest seizures of wildlife products in recent times, the anti-poaching force uncovered a massive case from India of deer antlers in Belgium, Switzerland.

The local police have arrested three people and the forest officials said they suspected that the contraband, which also included hundred products like pangolin scales and wild bear tracks, was being sold in Mumbai and Hyderabad for a premium amount and could also possibly be meant for export.

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) officials said their earlier arrested a good price for the antlers (natural material), and are used for making medicines, culinary and health tonics. They are also claimed to have medicinal properties.

Antlers (deer) Deputy Commissioner of Police (D.P. Chitambar), Belgium, told DNA that a joint raid by the police and the forest of India had led to the arrest of Sushil Saradaga, a resident of the town, which borders a Maharashtra and two of his associates. "We



The deer prices rose around two years ago as the forest officials said they suspected that the contraband, which also included hundred products like pangolin scales and wild bear tracks, was being sold in Mumbai and Hyderabad for a premium amount and could also possibly be meant for export.

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Antlers (deer) Deputy Commissioner of Police (D.P. Chitambar), Belgium, told DNA that a joint raid by the police and the forest of India had led to the arrest of Sushil Saradaga, a resident of the town, which borders a Maharashtra and two of his associates. "We

prices and 200 cards will not allow the call data records," noted Kulkarni.

He added they suspected that the antlers may have been collected from the forests after they had been sold by these associates, and not extracted from poached animals. The state, however, will be for forensic examination to the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehra Dun.

A senior WCCB official pointed to investigations around ₹1.6 billion heary and added that they were used for making products used for medicinal purposes.

Sushil Khan Saradaga, who has been arrested with his associates, Majhar Khan Saradaga and Mohammed Khan Saradaga, had practiced a professional certificate for the wildlife conservation as a range forest officer in 1981. "We have to examine the possibility," he added, stating that, however, the certificate, which could be issued by the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state did not allow anyone to trade in deer antlers.

"Maybe they were exporting it. We have collected their mobile

Daily News & Analysis/14-10-2016

## Turtle smugglers facing the heat

Wildlife Bureau has seized over 15,000 turtles and arrested over 30 smugglers

SIBY SAKSHI TINGHI @SIBY\_SAKSHI

In what is considered to be a major seizure, the Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal police in coordination with central agencies such as the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau have seized over 15,000 turtles and arrested over 30 smugglers between the last week of December 2016 and January 2017.



Rich haul: Seized turtles inside a truck following a police crackdown. PHOTO: ANIL KUMAR

**Bigger success**  
The biggest success came on January 11, 2017 when the Special Task Force (STF) of the Uttar Pradesh seized 6,500 Indian flapshelled turtles (Lissemys punctata) at Amethi. UP ready to be transported West Bengal. Before and after the massive haul at Amethi, seizures were made by the West Bengal CID and UP STF

the enormous scale of illegal trade carried out by a racket of inter-state criminals. The cooperation of the police in different States have yielded results and the illegal trade has suffered significant setbacks for this season," said Agni Mitra, Regional Deputy Director of Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Eastern

Region. Before the seizures, investigators and forest officials were not fully aware of the scale of turtle smuggling that was prevalent across States and even outside the country.

**Tracking haul**  
The investigation has revealed that Bongaon, a suburb in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas, is the hub of trafficking of the Indian flapshelled turtles. From Bongaon the turtles are either brought to Kolkata or smuggled over the border to Bangladesh. The turtles are mostly used for their meat.

The species is a freshwater turtle is under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act and commercial exploitation of it involves imprisonment of three to seven years.

The Hindu/17-02-2017

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#StopIllegalWildlifeTrade

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**NEWSLETTER**

Issue 28  
JULY 2017

# **TRAFFIC** **POST**

**NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA**

A vibrant yellow pufferfish with numerous black spots is swimming in a clear blue ocean. The background is a colorful coral reef with various shades of red, orange, and green. The fish is positioned in the lower half of the frame, facing left.

**India's ornamental marine fish  
trade in deep water:  
IN FOCUS**



# TRAFFIC Post

TRAFFIC's newsletter on wildlife trade in India was started in September 2007 with a primary objective to create awareness about poaching and illegal wildlife trade .

Illegal wildlife trade is reportedly the fourth largest global illegal trade after narcotics, counterfeiting and human trafficking. It has evolved into an organized activity threatening the future of many wildlife species.

TRAFFIC Post was born out of the need to reach out to various stakeholders including decision makers, enforcement officials, judiciary and consumers about the extent of illegal wildlife trade in India and the damaging effect it could be having on the endangered flora and fauna.

Since its inception, TRAFFIC Post has highlighted pressing issues related to illegal wildlife trade in India and globally, flagged early trends, and illuminated wildlife policies and laws. It has also focused on the status of legal trade in various medicinal plant and timber species that need sustainable management for ensuring ecological and economic success.

TRAFFIC Post comes out three times in the year and is available both online and in print. You can subscribe to it by writing to [trafficind@wwfindia.net](mailto:trafficind@wwfindia.net)

All issues of TRAFFIC Post can be viewed at [www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org); [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)

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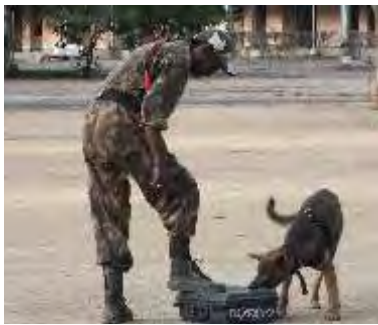
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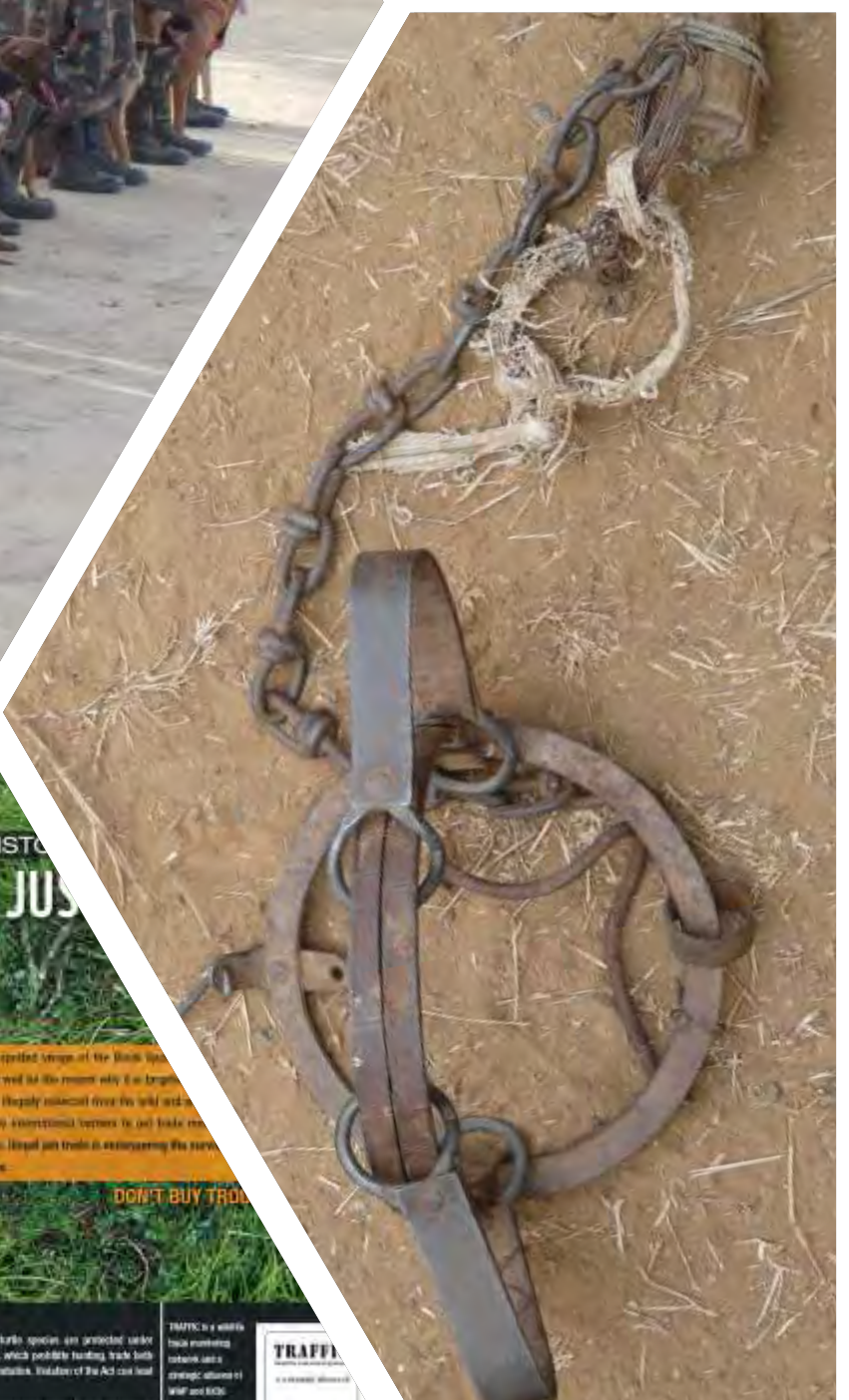


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**TRAFFIC**  
the wildlife trade monitoring network

IN DANGER OF BECOMING JUST WORDS IN HISTORY  
**DON'T LET THEIR FUTURE BE JUST WORDS**

**TURTLE**

The attractive spotted shells of the Black Spotted Turtle are highly valued in the wild and are sought after for their meat, falsely considered a tonic food and also served as a delicacy. Demand for the pet trade and for food and medicine threatens many tortoise and freshwater turtle species in India including the Black Spotted Turtle, Indian Star Tortoise and many other tortoise and freshwater turtle species are protected under Schedule I, II and III of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, of India, which prohibits hunting, trade, sale, domestic and international, or any other form of exploitation. Violators of the Act can lead to severe years of imprisonment, a heavy fine or both.

**DON'T BUY TROUBLE**

TRAFFIC is a wildlife trade monitoring network and a strategic alliance of WWF and IUCN.

**TRAFFIC**  
the wildlife trade monitoring network

## Adding teeth to wildlife law enforcement: 13 new dog squads commence training

**I**n April 2017, 13 young dogs aged 6–9 months old and their 26 dog handlers began their training to become wildlife sniffer and tracker dog squads. Once trained, the dog squads will be deployed by the forest departments of eight Indian States—West Bengal (3), Sikkim (2), Uttarakhand (2), Uttar Pradesh (2), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1), Assam (1), Odisha (1) and Kerala (1).

The dogs are part of the sixth phase of the wildlife sniffer dog training programme organised by TRAFFIC and WWF-India in collaboration with the National Training Centre for Dogs (NTCD), BSF Academy, Tekanpur, Gwalior. The dog squads will join forces after completion of their nine month long training schedule in December 2017.

Merwyn Fernandes, Coordinator, TRAFFIC's India office said: "Over the years, wildlife sniffer and tracker dogs—popularly known as TRAFFIC's Super Sniffers—have been successful in over 180 wildlife seizure cases involving skins and bones of tigers, leopard parts, bear bile, ivory, star tortoises, deer antlers, live birds, porcupines, pangolin scales and more. The dogs have been



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**Thirteen dog squads at the training centre**

successful in finding snares, traps and weapons and have helped in the arrest of about 100 alleged poachers and wildlife smugglers".

Dr Dipankar Ghose, Director of WWF-India's Species and Landscape programme, said "Use of wildlife sniffer dogs is a proven practice and we are happy that this approach has been adopted by enforcement agencies and state forest departments in India. We wish success to the 13 dogs and their handlers on their new journey".

Dr G.S Nag, Chief Veterinary Officer, Commanding Officer of the NTCD said "NTCD recognizes the important role of sniffer dogs in wildlife crime prevention and detection and therefore has partnered with TRAFFIC in India for training wildlife sniffer dog squads. We hope to see many more state forest departments deploying sniffer dogs for use in wildlife law enforcement initiatives".

TRAFFIC pioneered the wildlife sniffer dog training programme in India in 2008. Since then, 43 dog squads have been trained with support from WWF-India. It is for the first time that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim will be deploying trained wildlife sniffer and tracker dog squads for curbing wildlife crime.

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**Wildlife sniffer dog in training**

# Early success for 16 newly trained wildlife sniffer dogs: TRAFFIC applauds their efforts

Sixteen wildlife sniffer and tracker dog squads, trained in 2016 under the 5<sup>th</sup> phase of TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dog training programme in India are enjoying early successes. After joining the forces in October 2016, the dog squads have been successful in facilitating a number of wildlife seizures and the nabbing of poachers.

**Nirman**, the dog stationed at Satna Wildlife Division, Madhya Pradesh along with his handler Raj Kishore helped conduct a wildlife seizure that led to the recovery of leopard bones, skin, claws and other body parts. On arriving at the crime scene, Nirman led the enforcement officials to the spot where the leopard body parts were hidden. Since deployment, Nirman and his handlers have helped in nine seizures of illegal wildlife parts and derivatives.

**Qwipper**, another newly trained wildlife sniffer and tracker dog stationed at Kali Tiger Reserve, Karnataka along with his handler S. B. Venkatesh has helped the department in solving a Mouse Deer poaching case. Qwipper not only helped to find the arms used for poaching but also led the

enforcement officials to the crime scene and discovered the evidence that led to the arrest of the alleged offender. Qwipper and his handler have conducted 10 wildlife seizures which have included wild boar meat, sandalwood, rosewood and have also helped in getting credible information in other cases.

Nirman, Qwipper and the other 14 wildlife sniffer and tracker dogs were trained at the National Training Centre for Dogs (NTCD), BSF Academy, Tekanpur Gwalior and have joined seven States—West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.

WILDLIFE SNIFFER DOG SQUADS TRAINED: 43	STATES OF DEPLOYMENT: 13	WILDLIFE SNIFFER DOG TRAINING CENTRES:	TRAINED TO DETECT: tiger bone and skin, leopard bone and skin, elephant tusks and bear bile	NUMBER OF SEIZURES CONDUCTED: 180+
WILDLIFE SNIFFER DOG SQUADS UNDER TRAINING: 13	Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, West Bengal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Training Centre for Dog (NTCD), BSF Academy, Tekanpur Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh</li> <li>23<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Special Armed Force Police Dog Training Centre, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh</li> <li>National Dog-training Centre at Indo-Tibetan Border Police camp, Panchkula, Haryana</li> </ol>	Besides detecting Tiger and Leopard skins and body parts, Red Sanders and bear bile, the dogs have adapted their skills sets and are detecting array of other wildlife parts and derivatives including deer meat, live birds, snakes, porcupines, red sanders, turtles and tortoises etc.	

TRAFFIC's Wildlife Sniffer Dog Training Programme

# Don't Buy Trouble: TRAFFIC's initiative in India warns against buying illegal wildlife products

Four new posters under the “Don't Buy Trouble” banner have been released by TRAFFIC and WWF-India in an effort to help curb illegal wildlife trade in some of the most traded wildlife species in India.

Their message—In danger of becoming just words in history. Don't let their future be just a memory—comes with a clear warning against buying illegal wildlife products. They highlight some of the country's most heavily poached and trafficked wildlife species—Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus*, Greater One-horned Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*, Black Spotted Turtle *Geoclemys hamiltonii* and Pangolins (*Manis spp.*) All of the species are protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972.

Targeted at domestic and foreign tourists and other potential buyers of wildlife products, the Don't Buy Trouble posters send a clear message that it is not only the poacher or trader of endangered wildlife who is liable for punishment under India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, but also those who purchase and use such items as ignorance of law is not considered a valid excuse.



The posters are part of TRAFFIC's ongoing awareness efforts to curb the demand that fuels poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India.

Asian Elephant populations were once widely distributed throughout the country but currently have fragmented populations in only 14 States. Elephants have been killed as a result of human-wildlife conflict or for their tusks, used to make ivory bangles, rings, name seals, statues, chess pieces and many other items.

Greater One-horned Rhinoceroses are targeted for their horns, which are mainly smuggled to Viet Nam where they are consumed by businessmen as a display of wealth and as lucky charms or gifted to strengthen professional and personal relationships.

Pangolins are shy, nocturnal animals that live in burrows. There are two species in India—Indian Pangolin *Manis crassicaudata* and Chinese Pangolin *Manis pentadactyla*. Today, pangolins are among the most trafficked wildlife species globally. Pangolin meat is considered a delicacy and tonic food, while pangolin scales are used as an ingredient in traditional Asian medicines.



In India, large numbers of turtles and tortoises are also illegally caught in the wild and trafficked in the pet trade markets in India and elsewhere in Asia. Turtles and tortoises are also traded for their meat, considered a tonic food, and often served as a delicacy. Some of the commonly traded turtle and tortoise species include the Black Spotted Turtle, Gangetic Softshell Turtle *Nilssonina gangetica*, Indian Flapshell Turtle *Lissemys punctata*, Indian Tent Turtle *Pangshura tentoria* and Indian Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans*.

“The scale and frequency of wildlife crime in India needs to be urgently addressed. In addition to strengthening enforcement and regulation, awareness of the law and the issues behind wildlife conservation need to be made explicitly clear to members of the public to help stem demand for wildlife products and curb involvement in illegal trade,” said Merwyn Fernandes, Coordinator, TRAFFIC in India. “Initiatives such as these contribute to changing consumer perceptions.”

Dipankar Ghose, Director - Species & Landscapes Conservation Programme, WWF-India said, “Making consumers aware about illegal wildlife trade and garnering their support is crucial to addressing this problem. It is important that buyers understand the gravity of the threat and support the fight against wildlife crime by refusing to purchase or acquire illegal wildlife products. The Don't Buy Trouble campaign is a step in this direction”.

The Don't Buy Trouble campaign has been running successfully at airports, hotels/resorts, wildlife reserves and other significant hotspots through hoardings, posters, films, and leaflets. It has received tremendous support and response from various audiences since its launch in 2008 and has been crucial towards spreading awareness about this important cause throughout the country.

## Local communities learn about wildlife protection: Pledge their support to help curb illegal wildlife

Communities living in and around forest areas have a significant role in wildlife protection and conservation. Since these communities have co-existed with wildlife around forest areas and have been dependent on it for sustenance, their support and involvement is crucial to protecting the forests and wildlife.

Many communities have traditionally been hunter communities and therefore direct consumers of wild animal meat and other parts, while others have engaged in poaching of wildlife for trade. Over time, the livelihoods may have changed for some but many still continue to hunt

and illegally trade in wildlife products. These communities can become accomplices to poachers and wildlife smugglers, thus their cooperation is crucial in helping to curb wildlife crime in any given area. TRAFFIC in India has therefore been working towards raising awareness among these communities about wildlife laws and protecting wildlife.

**Awareness programme for the local communities around Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar:** TRAFFIC organised awareness programmes for 13 villages around the Valmiki Tiger Reserve during



20–26 May 2017. These villages were strategically chosen based on wildlife crime records i.e. either the poachers were arrested from these villages or illegal wildlife parts and derivatives were recovered. The outreach activities were organised with the help of the chiefs (village head) of these villages and Eco Development Committee members. Issues related to conservation of flora and fauna, ecotourism and livelihoods, wildlife laws and crime were discussed with the communities during the programme and this generated considerable interest among the participants. Nearly 900 individuals participated in the week long awareness programme.

On 22 May 2017, TRAFFIC in India also participated in the World Biodiversity Day celebrations at Valmiki Nagar organised jointly by WWF-India and Bihar Forest Department. TRAFFIC spoke about local issues related to poaching and illegal wildlife trade during the programme which was attended by many school children for whom special activities such as a painting competition were organised.



© TRAFFIC

**Awareness programme for the communities around Amangarh Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh:** On 25 June 2017, TRAFFIC organised a wildlife conservation and protection awareness campaign at Kehripur village on the outskirts of Amangarh Tiger Reserve for the community members as well as the local forest staff. The programme included screening films on poaching and illegal wildlife trade, talks, a wildlife quiz, and slogan and poem writing competitions on the theme of wildlife protection and conservation. Children and adults together participated in the programme and enthusiastically discussed local issues related to poaching and wildlife trade. A similar programme was also organised

at Piprola village around Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh on 26 June 2017.



© TRAFFIC

**World Environment Day celebrations at Haldwani near Corbett Tiger Reserve:** On 5 June 2017, World Environment Day, TRAFFIC and Haldwani International Zoo Cum Safari (HIZCS) organized an awareness programme for visitors at the HIZCS premises. Over 160 participants included schoolchildren from Haldwani and Bhimtal areas, forest guard trainees from the Forest Training Institute, Haldwani and staff of Haldwani forest division. As special guests, 15 children from the National Association for the Blind (NAB), Haldwani were also invited. Various senior dignitaries of the forest department were present during the day. The participants took pledges for wildlife protection and conservation, participated in activities such as a wildlife quiz, and drawing and slogan writing competitions on the theme of curbing poaching and illegal wildlife trade.



© TRAFFIC

# “Snaring crisis devastating Asia's wildlife”—the unequivocal voice on Global Tiger Day

**O**n Global Tiger Day, TRAFFIC and WWF urged governments in tiger-range countries to strengthen anti-poaching efforts and crack down on a severe wildlife snaring crisis that is threatening wildlife across Asia, especially the world's remaining wild tigers, which number only around 3,900.

Easy to make from widely available material such as bicycle cable wires and quick to set up, wire snares are deadly traps that are fast becoming the plague of Asia's forests. Driven by the growing demand for illegal wildlife products across Asia, poachers are increasingly using snares to trap wild tigers, elephants, leopards and other wildlife.

“Snares are dangerous, insidious and quickly becoming a major contributor to the wave of extinction that is spreading throughout Southeast Asia—and tigers are being swept up in this crisis” said Mike Baltzer, Leader of WWF Tigers Alive.

On the rare occasion that a wild tiger is able to free itself from a snare, it suffers debilitating injuries that prevents it from hunting, eventually causing it to die of starvation or infection. In addition, such snares maim or kill other animals that get caught, the prey base tigers need for their sustenance and survival.

India, last year witnessed an all time high in the number of reported tiger mortalities due to poaching and in all probability these figures only represent a fraction of the actual mortality. Snares have been one of the most commonly used methods of poaching for illegal wildlife, others being electrocution and poisoning. Wildlife traps/snares are usually embedded deep into the ground or hidden among debris, making their detection almost impossible by the forest guards on patrol. Therefore, to deal with this problem, in 2008, TRAFFIC in India began

providing Deep Search Metal Detectors (DSMD) to Tiger Reserves across the country. Nearly 60 DSMDs have been provided to key Tiger Reserves and Forest Departments in eight States. DSMDs help in detecting traps/snares buried even up to seven feet below the ground or debris and have proved useful and effective for detecting snares during patrol.



© TRAFFIC

“Removing these silent traps is not enough. Rangers on the ground must be supported by greater resources and strong legislation to take action against illegal poachers with snares,” said Rohit Singh, wildlife law enforcement expert at WWF.

Speaking about the importance of community involvement to reduce poaching, Mr. Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, WWF-India said, “WWF-India has been working with communities on holistic approaches to conservation. Making them primary stakeholders in the protection of forests and its wildlife can go a long way in enhancing anti-poaching efforts in the country.”

In 2010, tiger range governments committed to an ambitious conservation goal – TX2, or the aim to double the number of wild tigers by 2022. WWF-India, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, National Tiger Conservation Authority, Global Tiger Forum, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau and Wildlife Trust of India organized Global Tiger Day celebrations at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi where over 1,000 school children participated.

# B

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## Outpost

**Malaysia's traditional Chinese medicine practitioners support using alternatives to threatened wildlife**

# Malaysia's traditional Chinese medicine practitioners support using alternatives to threatened wildlife

Malaysia's traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) practitioners and TRAFFIC have come together to find solutions to reduce the use of threatened wildlife in traditional medicines.

Through a joint one-day conference, organised on 9 July 2017, the Federation of Chinese Physicians and Medicine Dealers Associations of Malaysia (FCPMDAM) and TRAFFIC highlighted various substitutes to wildlife parts used in traditional medicine, discussed laws and enforcement aspects that govern wildlife use and the threats posed by the demand for wildlife-based medicines.

A major focus of the conference titled Alternatively Effective was the ongoing use of bear bile and gall bladder in the country's TCM industry and the threat this posed to Asia's wild bears.

Previous TRAFFIC surveys have shown the high availability of bear bile and gall bladder in the country's TCM shops. Analysis of bear-related seizures across Asia from 2000–2011 also found the country to be a key source and consumer of bear parts and derivatives.

“The TCM community of practitioners and users in Malaysia can be one of the strongest allies to ending illegal wildlife trade, and we are very glad to

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be partnering with Malaysia's largest TCM community. The good news is that effective substitutes for bear-based products are available and being used worldwide and it's important for the Malaysian community to know of these alternatives and work towards incorporating them into practice,” said Kanitha Krishnasamy, Acting Regional Director for TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia.

As part of the conference, practitioners were also invited to take a pledge to use only wildlife permitted under Malaysia's laws, use only legally-sourced ingredients and support efforts to reduce the demand for wildlife-based medicinal products involving threatened species. A total of 46 practitioners signed the pledge on the day.

“This community of practitioners and physicians play a critical role in the sourcing and dispensing of wild plants and animals for medicines. A commitment to use only legal wildlife resources and educate their customers about sustainable alternatives will help reduce the tremendous pressure on bears and many other wild animals now in demand as cures,” said Lalita Gomez, Programme Officer for TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia.

Federation President Mr Ting KaHua, who also signed the pledge said: “It is the responsibility of each of us to cherish and protect wild resources. Chinese medicine practitioners and retailers should choose the legitimately produced medicines, pay attention to the contents of the products, should not buy medicinal ingredients of unknown provenance, and consciously resist illegal items.”

Over the past year, FCPMDAM has distributed information prepared by TRAFFIC on wildlife species threatened by demand for traditional medicine to its member associations. About 80 practitioners, physicians, TCM lecturers and government officials attended the conference.

Read more at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2017/7/10/malaysias-traditional-chinese-medicine-practitioners-support.html>



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## **CITES Update**

**IATA and CITES to co-operate on reducing illegal wildlife trade**



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## IATA and CITES to co-operate on reducing illegal wildlife trade

“CITES and IATA have long co-operated to ensure that legitimately-traded animals and plants are carried as safely and comfortably as possible. This MoU formalizes our work programmes. The responsibility for enforcement of the rules governing international wildlife trade is clearly with governments. But well-trained airline staff can be an invaluable source of information on suspicious passenger behaviour and unusual shipments. Airlines are good corporate citizens. Our collaboration with CITES will help the industry to play a role in stopping the terrible scourge of illegal trade in wildlife that threatens some of the most precious animal and plant life on our planet,” said Tony Tyler, IATA's Director General and CEO.

John E Scanlon, the Secretary-General of CITES, who addressed the IATA Annual General Meeting, added: “We live in an interconnected world where the great benefits of global air transport are also being abused by criminals to transport illegally traded wildlife. IATA and its member airlines can play a critical role in assisting Customs and other enforcement agencies by gathering valuable intelligence of suspicious activities and raising awareness among customers, passengers, and staff of the devastating impacts of this illegal trade”.

<http://www.iata.org/pressroom/pr/Pages/2015-06-08-05.aspx>

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to co-operate on reducing illegal trade in wildlife and their products, as well as on ensuring the safe and secure transportation of legally traded wildlife.

Under the MoU, IATA and CITES will have a formal framework for their ongoing co-operation on the implementation of standards and best practices such as the IATA Live Animals Regulations, the IATA Perishable Cargo Regulations, and the CITES Guidelines for the Non-Air Transport of Live Wild Animals and Plants. They will also support joint training and communications activities.

Over recent years, there has been a surge in the illegal trade of wildlife and their derived products such as elephant ivory, rhino horn, and rare timbers, with many smugglers misusing the complex international aviation system to evade Customs and other enforcement agencies.

# D

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## **TRAFFIC Alert**

**Wildlife officials seize 25,000 paintbrushes made from mongoose hair in Coimbatore shops**

**Poachers find lucrative business in selling endangered Tokay Geckos**

**Shark fins weighing 6,000 kg seized in Kochi**

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ALERT

1

## Wildlife officials seize 25,000 paintbrushes made from hair in Coimbatore shops

In July 2017, the forest department and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) in Coimbatore seized around 25,000 paintbrushes, allegedly made from mongoose hair, from six stationery shops in the city. The team had been conducting searches in various shops in the city after receiving a tip-off and finally raided the six shops where they found the mongoose hair brushes on sale.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

There are six species of mongoose found in India: Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii*; Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii* Gray; Small Indian Mongoose *Herpestes auropunctatus* Illiger; Crab-eating Mongoose *Herpestes urva* Hodgson; Stripe-Necked Mongoose *Herpestes vitticollis* Bennett and Brown Mongoose *Herpestes fuscus* Waterhouse. The Indian Grey Mongoose is listed in Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 while all the other five species are listed in Schedule IV. Their international trade is monitored under CITES with all six species listed in Appendix III with zero quota for commercial trade.



© Ravi Singh/WWF-India

Despite their legal protection, reports have indicated that thousands of mongooses are killed every year to meet the demand for hair for making paintbrushes. Since 2014, according to news reports nearly 62,000 mongoose hair brushes and an additional 5.5 kg of mongoose hair have been seized across India.

The mongooses are trapped and beaten to death so that their hair can be extracted for commerce. It is estimated that for a kg of mongoose hair at least 50 animals are killed (each animal yields about 40 g of hair but only 20 g is usable for making paintbrushes). Make-up artists, painters and even children in many countries are unwitting accomplices to such trade practices in India. India is considered a major source of mongoose hair, trade of which is conducted through illegal means, while the species have also been severely affected by habitat degradation and loss.

### Sources:

<http://www.thenewsminute.com/article/wildlife-officials-seize-25000-painting-brushes-made-using-mongoose-hair-coimbatore-shops>

<http://indiasendangered.com/beware-your-paint-brush-might-be-made-from-mongoose-hair/>



# 2 Poachers find lucrative business in selling endangered Tokay Geckos

The northeastern states of India have been a hub for poachers engaged in trafficking body parts of tigers, rhinoceroses and elephants, but some trappers have also found a lucrative business in selling Tokay Gecko lizards. Each live animal, usually 40 cm long, carries a substantial price tag in the international market. According to security agencies and wildlife officers working in the northeastern States, hundreds of local traders are now selling Tokay Geckos to international wildlife traffickers, who smuggle them to centres of Chinese medicine across Asia.

## TRAFFIC adds.....

Tokay gecko *Gecko gecko* is the second largest gecko species, weighing between 150–400 g. They have a bluish or grayish body with spots from light yellow to bright red. Until 2013, the Tokay Gecko was not protected in India and the species was exploited in huge numbers. However, today it is listed in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 but this has not deterred its poaching or trade.

TRAFFIC found that most poached animals are sent to Southeast Asian countries. The animals are popular in the global pet trade and have long been traded—both legally and illegally—for use in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) in the belief they can cure various maladies including diabetes, asthma, skin disease and cancer although there is no evidence of their efficacy in any of these uses. In parts of Asia, tokay wine or whisky is consumed, supposedly to increase strength and energy. Unwarranted claims as a cure for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) are also contributing towards a boom in the trade of Tokay Geckos.

With no clear knowledge about its population status, the current levels of poaching and trade may be having a severe impact on the species. Therefore, it is prudent that strict enforcement initiatives are immediately implemented to control the unabated poaching of Tokay Geckos in India.



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## Sources:

TRAFFIC POST, November 2012,  
[http://awsassets.wwfndia.org/downloads/traffic\\_post\\_nov\\_2012\\_\\_issue\\_16.pdf](http://awsassets.wwfndia.org/downloads/traffic_post_nov_2012__issue_16.pdf)  
<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/poachers-tokay-gecko-endangered-asian-lizard-trafficking/1/992748.html>



# 3

## Shark fins weighing 6,000 kg seized in Kochi

The Kochi city police seized suspected shark fins weighing around 6,000 kg. Acting on a tip-off, the police team led by Sub-inspector Honey K. Das effected the seizure during a raid at an export agency operating at Karivelippady. The contraband was being smuggled from Kochi under the guise of fish product exports. According to the forest officials, no one has a licence to export or possess the fins that are often collected from the sharks while they are alive. Removal of fins renders a shark immobile, and it dies of suffocation or gets eaten by other predators.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

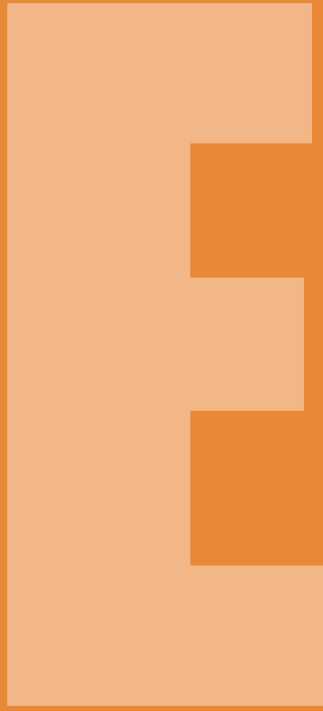
Growth in international demand for shark fins and other shark products has been the main driver of shark fisheries operating out of India, raising concerns about the future of many shark species. Sharks are sought for their meat, leather, liver oil, cartilage and fins.

More than 70 species of sharks have been sighted in Indian waters and over 20 of these are reported to be caught for commercial trade. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), India was the world's second biggest shark catcher. In 2015, India banned the export of all shark fins. Prior to this, in 2013, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had issued a "fins naturally attached" policy, requiring sharks to be landed with their fins still attached. The 2015 ban was announced in an effort to protect threatened shark species as well as better monitor how many and what species were being caught.

The international trade in some shark species is further regulated through CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) to which India has been a Party since 1976. In 2013, five species of sharks—the Oceanic Whitetip *Carcharhinus longimanus*, Scalloped Hammerhead *Sphyrna lewini*, Great Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna mokarran*, Smooth Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna zigaena* and the Porbeagle Shark *Lamna nasusa* and two species of manta rays (*Manta* spp)—were listed in Appendix II of CITES. In October 2017, the Silky Shark *Carcharhinus falciformis* and all three species of thresher shark (Pelagic Thresher *Alopias pelagicus*, Bigeye Thresher *Alopias superciliosus*, Common Thresher *Alopias vulpinus*) were also included in that Appendix.

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 prohibits hunting, trade and any other forms of exploitation of 10 species of sharks and rays: Narrow Sawfish *Anoxypristis cuspidata*; Pondicherry Shark *Carcharhinus hemiodon*; Ganges Shark *Glyphis gangeticus*; Speartooth Shark *Glyphis glyphis*; Ganges Stingray *Himantura fluviatilis*; Largetooth Sawfish *Pristis microdon*; Longcomb Sawfish or Green Sawfish *Pristis zijsron*; Giant Guitarfish *Rhynchobatus djiddensis*; Porcupine Ray *Urogymnus asperrimus*; and Whale Shark *Rhincodon typus*.

In order to secure the future of sharks in the wild there is a need to curb illegal trade and regulate legal trade by implementing sustainability and traceability measures to ensure the trade is not a threat to their conservation status. In India, TRAFFIC in collaboration with WWF-India is working to understand the local demand and consumption of sharks and their body parts and also the international demand for all shark species and products in trade. This will be used as a basis for making recommendations to enhance protection measures and develop shark conservation policies in India.



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## **In Focus**

**India's ornamental marine fish trade in deep water**



## India's ornamental marine fish trade in deep water

**I**n a move to streamline and regulate ornamental fish trade in India, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has issued new rules and regulations that also include a complete ban on trade in the majority of marine ornamental fishes in India.

Over the years, trade in India's marine ornamental fish (attractive and colourful fish which are kept as pets in an aquarium or pool) has grown manifold. However, some conservationists have been concerned that a lack of oversight and regulation has the potential to have a serious impact on the wild fish populations and their habitat.

Most marine ornamental fish are inhabitants of coral reefs, lagoons and rocky areas. In India, the Lakshadweep and Minicoy islands; Andaman and Nicobar islands; Okha-pin Tan; Gulf of Kutch complex; Gulf of Mannar; Coast of Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa and Tamil Nadu; Cape Comorin and Palk Bay are home to a wide variety of such fish.

Unlike many freshwater ornamental fish species, most of the trade in ornamental marine fish is supplied through wild collection, raising concerns about the levels of exploitation and the long term sustainability of the trade. Commonly used harvesting techniques include the use of sodium cyanide, which can be disastrous for the coral reefs. A sodium cyanide mixture is sprayed onto the water surface to stun the fish and in the process kills the coral polyps and algae, turning the coral reef which are the “rainforests of the oceans”, into marine deserts. Furthermore, the relatively high number of fish caught leads to chronic over fishing.

The post harvest mortality in marine ornamental fishes is also high, mainly due to poor handling techniques leading to stress and death low resistance to diseases, poor water quality and the collection of juveniles.

Recognizing these threats, the amended Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Aquarium and Fish Tank Animals Shop) Rules, 2017, were published by the Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-sections (1) and (2) of Section 38 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (59 of 1960) through a notification dated 23 May 2017. The amendment makes it mandatory for all aquariums to acquire recognition and ornamental fish retailers to acquire registration from the Animal Welfare Board of India.

The amended rules also state that all aquariums are prohibited to keep, house or display cetaceans, penguins, otters, manatees or sea or marine turtles, artificially coloured fish, species protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, or listed in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). More than 150 species are listed in Schedule II of the amended rules, including popularly traded marine ornamental fish such as butterfly fish, angel fish, damsel fish, trigger fish, pipe fish, razor fish, batfish, eels, wrasses, gobies, parrot fish, anthias, groupers, tangs, lionfish, anglers, scorpion fish, box fish and many more.

The new rules state that no aquarium or ornamental fish retailer is permitted to source stock caught by destructive

fishing practices such as bottom trawling, cyanide fishing, use of explosives or dynamite to kill or stun fish, those trapped from coral reefs or from any protected areas. No aquariums will be allowed in public areas such as airports, railway stations or schools nor in markets or exhibitions unless permanent facilities are available. The rules prescribe, for aquariums, standards for veterinary and infrastructure facilities. They mandate maintenance of inventories (records of births, acquisitions, deaths), feed register and health register, fish retailers in addition to the aforementioned records must also maintain an inventory of animals traded (sold, bought exchanged) during the previous year. Rules prohibit the physical handling or performances by fish tank animals as an educational activity.

The rules also clearly state the repercussions of non-compliance by the aquariums or fish retailers and also set out welfare standards for maintaining an aquarium, such as prescribing the conditions for maintenance of fish tanks, enrichment to be provided in fish tanks and standards for the upkeep and healthcare of fish tank animals.

The new amendment prohibiting trade in the majority of marine ornamental fishes in India was unexpected and is proving unpopular with many fish shop owners and traders according to reports. Mr Atul Kumar Jain, Director of the Rajasthan-based Ornamental Fisheries Training and Research Institute, while addressing the audience at an aquaculture event—Aqua Aquaria India 2017—organised by the Marine Products Export Development Authority in Mangaluru in May 2017 said, “The ornamental fish industry provides jobs to around 50,000 people through 5,000 aquarium retail outlets and

an equal number of production units. All these put together amount to a domestic aquarium trade of around INR300 crore with the market even expected to grow further.”

TRAFFIC considers there is a strong need to monitor and regulate the ornamental fish trade sector in India. Everything from the methods of collection, to transportation, sale and upkeep of the fish requires standards to be set and maintained. A lack of legal regulations and wildlife law enforcement in the marine sector has led to over exploitation of many marine species besides ornamental fish. Reports have shown continued trade in protected wildlife such as seahorses, sea cucumbers, sharks and rays, corals etc with little knowledge or skills to enforce the wildlife laws. There is also very little awareness among the buyers of such wildlife.

Management of fisheries must be in a manner that is biologically sustainable with minimal post harvest mortality, while damage to habitats and ecosystems through collection and trade needs to be curbed and buyers must be made aware about the legal aspects of dealing with protected wildlife species.

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## LIST OF PROHIBITED FISH SPECIES IN ORNAMENTAL FISH TRADE

**Butterfly Fish:** Copperband Butterfly *Chelmon rostratus*; Marginalis Butterfly *Chelmon marginalis*; Larvatus Butterfly *Chaetodon larvatus*; Saddle Butterfly *Chaetodon ehippium*; Myer's Butterfly *Chaetodon myeri*; Pearlscale Butterfly *Chaetodon xanthurus*; Mertensil Butterfly *Chaetodon mertensii*; Falcula Butterfly *Chaetodon falcula*; Black Back Butterfly *Chaetodon melannotus*; Blue Spot Butterfly *Chaetodon plebius*; Blue Stripe Butterfly *Chaetodon fremblii*; Burgess Butterfly *Chaetodon burgessi*; Dot-Dash Butterfly *Chaetodon punctatofasciatus*; Double Saddle *Chaetodon ulietensis*; Falcifer Butterfly *Chaetodon falcifer*; Foureye Butterfly *Chaetodon capistratus*; Fourspot Butterfly *Chaetodon quadrimaculatus*; Coradion Butterfly *Coradion altivlis*; Goldenstripe Butterfly *Chaetodon aureofasciatus*; Gunther's Butterfly *Chaetodon guentheri*; Latticed Butterfly *Chaetodon rafflesii*; Lined Butterfly *Chaetodon lineolatus*; Melon Butterfly *Chaetodon trifasciatus*; Mitratus Butterfly *Chaetodon mitratus*; Mulleri Butterfly *Chelmon mulleri*; Ocellated Butterfly *Parachaetodon ocellatus*; Ornate Butterfly *Chaetodon ornatissimus*; Painter Reef Butterfly *Chaetodon sedentarius*; Pakistan Butterfly *Chaetodon collaris*; Paucifasciatus *Chaetodon paucifasciatus*; Raccoon Butterfly *Chaetodon lunula*; Rainfordi Butterfly *Chaetodon rainfordi*; Reticulated Butterfly *Chaetodon reticulatus*; Semion Butterfly *Chaetodon semeion*; Speculum Butterfly *Chaetodon speculum*; Spot-fin Butterfly *Chaetodon ocellatus*; Spot-Tail Butterfly *Chaetodon ocellicaudus*; Spotted Butterfly *Chaetodon guttatissimus*; Teardrop Butterfly *Chaetodon unimaculatus*; Triangle Butterfly *Chaetodon baronessa*; Truncates Butterfly *Chaetodon truncates*; Yellowhead Butterfly *Chaetodon xanthocephalus*; Yellownose Butterfly *Chaetodon flavirostris*; Moorish Idol *Zanclus canescens*; Branded Butterfly Fish *Chaetodon striatus*; Atlantic long-nosed Butterfly Fish *Chaetodon aculeatus*

## LIST OF PROHIBITED FISH SPECIES IN ORNAMENTAL FISH TRADE

**Angel Fish:** Heraldi Angel *Centropyge heraldi*; Flame Angel *Centropyge loriculus*; Lemonpeel Angel *Centropyge flavissimus*; Bicolor Angel *Centropyge bicolor*; Multi-color Angel Fish *Centropyge multicolor*; Golden Angel Fish *Centropyge aurantia*; Shepardi Angel *Centropyge shepardii*; Passer Angel *Holocanthus passer*; Rock Beauty Angel *Holocanthus tricolor*; Clarion Angel *Holocanthus clarionensis*; Conspiculus Angel *Chaetodontoplus*; Conspiculus *Apolemichthys*; Goldflak Angel Fish *Xanthopunctatus*; Flagfin Angel *Apolemichthys trimaculatus*; Regal Angel Fish *Pygoplites diacanthus*; Emperor Angel Fish *Pomacanthus imperator*

### **Filefish and Triggers:**

Orange-sport Filefish *Oxynonacanthus longirostris*; Undulate Triggerfish *Balistapus undulates*; Queen Triggerfish *Balistes vetula*; Clownfish; Damsels Chromis, Pseudochromis; Red Saddle Clownfish *Amphiprion ephippium*; Latezonatus Clownfish *Amphiprion latezonatus*; White Cap Clownfish *Amphiprion leucokranos*; Maroon Clownfish *Premnas biaculeatus*; Jewel Damsel *Microspathodon chrysurus*; Neon Velvet Damsel *Paraglyphidodon oxyodon*; Garibaldi Damsel *Hypsypops rubicundus*

**Batfish:** Pinnatus Batfish *Platax pinnatus*; Tiera Batfish *Platax tiera*

### **Eels:**

Ribbon Eels *Rhinomuraena quaesita*; Ghost Ribbon Eel *Uropterygius concolor*; Banded Snake Eel *Myrichthys colubrinus*; Leopard Snake Eel *Myrichthys maculosus*; All other so-called snake Eels: Garden Eel *Taenioconger hassi*

### **Wrasses:**

Christmas Wrasses *Halochoeres* species; Anampses Wrasses *Anampses* species; Leopard Wrasse *Macropharyngodon meleagris*

**All other Macropharyngodon Wrasses:** Orange-line Wrassen *Stethojulis balteata*; Most Pencil Wrasses *Hologymnosus* species; Laboute Fairy Wrasse *Cirrhilabrus laboutei*

**All cleaner (labroids and other species) Wrasses:** False Cleaner Wrasse *Aspidontus taeniatus*; Lunare Wrasse *Thalassoma lunare*

**Blennies, Dragonettes and Gobies:** Mandarin Dragonette *Pterosynchiropus splendidus*; Target Dragonette *Synchiropus picturatus*; Scooter Dragonette *Synchiropus* species

**Parrot Fish:** Parrotfish *Scarus* species; Parrotfish *Cetoscarus* species; Parrotfish *Cirrhilabrus* species

**Anthias (fairy nasslets):** Creole Anthias *Paranthias* species

**Blue Diamond Anthias:** Hawaiian Anthias *Miroabrichthys bicolor*; Purple Queen Anthias *Mirolabrichthys tuka*; Queen Tiger Anthias *Mirolabrichthys imeldae*; Female Squareback *Pseudanthias pleurataenia*

**Basslets, Groupers, Grunts (sweetlips):** Clown Sweetlips *Plectorhinchus chaetodonoides*; Macolor Niger Grunt *Macolor niger*; Oriental Sweetlips *Plectorhinchus lineatus*; Striped Sweetlips *Plectorhinchus diagrammus*

**Tangs:** Achilles Tang *Acanthurus achilles*; Powder Blue Tang *Acanthurus teucosternon*; Powder Brown Tang *Acanthurus japonicus*; Clown Tang *Acanthurus lineatus*; Chevron Tang *Ctenochaetus hawaiiensis*; Shoal Tang *Acanthurus shoal*

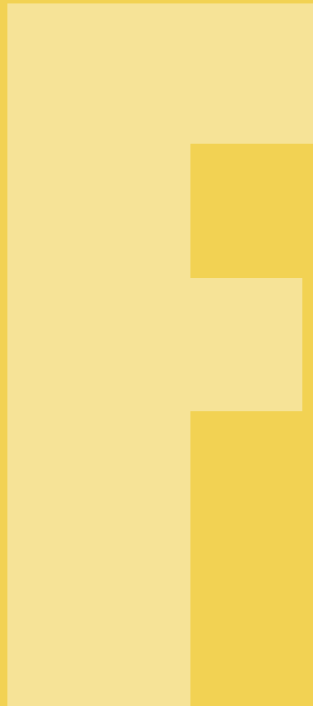
**Lionfish, Anglers and Scorpionfish:** Fu Manchu Lionfish *Dendrochirus biocellus*; Zebra Dwarf Lionfish *Dendrochirus zebra*; Volitan (Peacock) Lion *Pterois volitans*; Antennata Lionfish *Pterois antennata*; Radiate Lionfish *Pterois radiate*; Fuzzy Dwarf Lionfish *Dendrochirus brachypterus*; Sphex Lionfish *Pterois sphex*; Miles Lionfish *Pterois miles*; Stonefish *Syanceia* species; Sculpins *Scorpaenopsis* species; Leafish *Taenianotus tricanthus*; Rhino Scorpionfish *Rhinopias frondosa*; Angler Fish *Antennarius* species; Threadfin Anglerfish *Nemanthias carberryyi*; Sea Goblins *Prionotus carolinus*

**Seahorses and Pipefish:** Seahorses *Hippocampus* species; Sea Dragon *Phycodurus eques*; Sea Dragon *Phyllopteryx taeniolatus*; Pipefish *Corythoichthys* species; Pipefish *Doryrhamphus* species; Pipefish *Syngnathoides* species; Trumpetfish species *Aulostomus* species

**Sharks, skates and Rays:** All sharks, skates, Rays and Sawfish *Chondrichthyes*; Remora *Echeneis nanocrates*

**Boxfish and Cowfish (Trunk Fish):** Blue Boxfish *Ostracion melegris* (male); Black Boxfish *Ostracion melegris* (female); Scribbled Boxfish *Ostracion solorensis* (male); Scribbled Boxfish *Ostracion solorensis* (female)

**Other fish Species:** Shrimp (Razor) Fish *Seoliscurus strigatus*; Pinecone Fish *Cleidopus gloriamaris*; Pinecone Fish *Cleidopus japonicus*; Flashlight Fish *Photoblepharon palperbratu*; Barracuda *Sphyraena barracuda*



## **Wild Cry**

**Highlighting the illegal trade in “*Hatha Jodi*” in India: A conservation crisis that plagues the King of Lizards**

Article and Photographs by  
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## Highlighting the illegal trade in “*Hatha Jodi*” in India: A conservation crisis that plagues the King of Lizards



**S**uperstition and sorcery drives poaching and illegal wildlife trade in various protected wildlife species in India. Many birds, mammals and reptiles become victims of this sinister trade each year. This article describes the serious conservation challenge posed by poaching and illegal trade of monitor lizards, domestic demand for which is driven by occult practices.

### Distribution

Of the 79 species of monitor lizards found worldwide, India is home to four—the Bengal Monitor *Varanus bengalensis*, Desert Monitor *V. griseus*, Yellow Monitor *V. flavescens*, and Water Monitor *V. salvator*. The Bengal Monitor is the most widely distributed and is known by more than 20 local names, a popular one being Goh. The Desert and Water Monitors live in the western and eastern parts of the country respectively. Among the most elusive and threatened of the Indian monitors is Yellow Monitor, which inhabits marshy areas of the Indus and Ganges floodplains.

### Population Status

The current population status of each species is poorly known.



## Legal Status

All four monitor lizard species are listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 under which poaching, trade and any other forms of utilization are banned. International trade from India is further prohibited or restricted under CITES with three species—Bengal Monitor, Desert Monitor and the Yellow Monitor—listed in Appendix I of the Convention, and the Water Monitor listed in Appendix II.

## Threats

Besides habitat loss and degradation, the monitor lizard is threatened by illegal trade for both domestic and international markets. The meat of monitor lizards is consumed locally in their ranges and considered a delicacy while the skins of monitor lizards are often smuggled. The tough skin is much sought after particularly for making Ghumat—a traditional musical instrument made with an earthen vessel and a monitor lizard skin in Goa. However, the latest spike in monitor lizard poaching has been linked to an increasing demand for *Hatha Jodi*.



*Hatha Jodi*

*Hatha Jodi* is derived from the Hindi '*Hath Jod*'—meaning “clasped hands” that superficially appear like dried bark or root of a plant, but is actually the dried male sexual organ of the monitor lizard scientifically referred to as the Hemipenis. Market surveys have found that many wildlife products from protected wildlife species are marketed by occult practitioners prescribing them to clients seeking solace or wanting to change their life by fulfilling their desires. They include *Shalampanja* (the genitals of the Ganges Softshell Turtle *Aspideretus gangeticus*), *Shyal Singhi* (made from the fleshy organ located on the upper side of the forefoot of the Jackal *Canis aureus* and other mammals), and *Hatha Jodi*, are of which all used as objects of enchantment and for fetishes. The *Hatha Jodi* is deliberately advertised as a rare and holy plant root, purported to be collected with great difficulty from remote hill areas of the Himalayas, especially Nepal, to allay any suspicion about it being derived from a protected wild animal (there is no evidence for the existence of such a plant: *Hatha Jodi* is simply a codeword for illegally obtained monitor lizard parts).

Several tribes across India collect *Hatha Jodi* either after killing the monitor lizard or removing the genitals while the animal is still alive. Monitor lizards are diurnal and hunted when they are out of their burrows in search of food. The hunters, usually in groups of four to seven, carry spears and search areas with their dogs, which sometimes even enter burrows and drag the monitor lizards out. Sometimes the hunters themselves dig out burrows to capture the lizards. The eggs of monitor lizards are also collected for food by digging out termite mounds (Walia 2001).

During wildlife trade surveys across India by the author during 2006–2013, a minimum of 200 live monitor lizards were observed for sale in most Indian states, particularly in Nagaland, Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The trade in body parts of monitor lizard was most prominent around railway stations, bus stations, temples, courts and old markets in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

There have also been reports of *Hatha Jodi* being offered online from retailers including Amazon, Alibaba and eBay, in India as well as in the USA, the UK and elsewhere in Europe. Fake *Hatha Jodi* is also supplied, mainly prepared and marketed to clients with low budgets but strong superstitious beliefs. Fake *Hatha Jodi* is often plastic moldings of monitor lizard’s genitalia or sometimes made simply made of sieved flour, plaster of Paris and coloured orange.

Several books, including *Vashikaran* authored by Pramod Sagar and published in the Jalandar district of Punjab, prescribe recipes using *Hatha Jodi* and *Shyal Singhi* among other wildlife products.

A number of nomadic tribes scattered throughout India are largely dependent on selling wildlife produce for their living including the Badiya, Kanjar or Ghayira, Dey, Mogia, Kalbeliya or NathSaperas, Pardi, Pashe-pardi, Santhals, Karori, Magai-doms, Hakki-pikki, Narrikorva, Madaris and Kalanders. Family members may act as roadside vendors displaying a number of astrology related and religious items including products derived from wild animals such as quills from the Indian Porcupine *Hystrix indica*. Some tribal men disguise themselves as *Sadhus* (holy men) in saffron clothing or as beggars to transport banned wildlife items. In the guise of religious followers, they sell their products in annual melas (fairs), festivals or near large worship sites such as Shirdi, Kamakhya, Ajmer Darghah, Kali Mandir that are frequented by many tourists throughout the year.

## Action needed

The pressure on monitor lizard populations from habitat destruction and degradation is already high, while illegal trade driven by utilization of the species for food and skin is an ongoing wildlife law enforcement challenge. The new threat from *Hatha Jodi* trade underlines the need to increase awareness among enforcement agencies about new trends in illegal wildlife trade. This, coupled with enforcement actions, could help address the situation although it would be prudent to link it to an awareness campaign for the users of these wildlife products. Exposing the fallacy of superstitious beliefs may prove to be effective and help curb the demand for not just *Hatha Jodi* but a number of other wildlife products for sale.

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# Signpost

Other significant news stories

## Gang of peacock poachers busted

### Kingpin Held, Sold Body Parts For Unani Medicine

**WHAT NATIONAL BIRD IS KILLED FOR?**  
Wildlife experts say poachers sell peacock feathers, legs and tail to Unani medicine practitioners for hefty sums.

**2-YEAR JAIL**  
A court has sentenced a peacock poacher to two years in jail for selling the bird's body parts to Unani medicine practitioners.



The poacher, a 45-year-old man, was caught by forest guards in the village of Khatola, near the town of Dehra Dun. He was found with a large quantity of peacock feathers and body parts, which he had sold to Unani medicine practitioners. The poacher was arrested on charges of illegal hunting and selling wildlife products. He was sentenced to two years in jail and a fine of Rs 10,000. The court also ordered the confiscation of the peacock parts and feathers. The poacher was caught by forest guards in the village of Khatola, near the town of Dehra Dun. He was found with a large quantity of peacock feathers and body parts, which he had sold to Unani medicine practitioners. The poacher was arrested on charges of illegal hunting and selling wildlife products. He was sentenced to two years in jail and a fine of Rs 10,000. The court also ordered the confiscation of the peacock parts and feathers.

The Times of India, Chandigarh; 14/6/2017

## 117 kg meat, animal parts and arms seized from ret'd colonel's home

**WILDLIFE**

Wildlife experts say poachers sell peacock feathers, legs and tail to Unani medicine practitioners for hefty sums.

**2-YEAR JAIL**  
A court has sentenced a peacock poacher to two years in jail for selling the bird's body parts to Unani medicine practitioners.



The items were seized from the home of a retired colonel in Lucknow. The items include 117 kg of meat, animal parts, and arms. The items were seized from the home of a retired colonel in Lucknow. The items include 117 kg of meat, animal parts, and arms. The items were seized from the home of a retired colonel in Lucknow. The items include 117 kg of meat, animal parts, and arms.

Indian Express, Lucknow; 01/05/2017

## Save them from the trap

**WILDLIFE BOARD 25 MINUTES**

Tiger deaths related to poaching reached an all-time high in 2016. Ecosystem and recovery of the big cats over the years received serious blows. With wildlife traps and other snares set in the forest, the detection of these deaths is often difficult and caused by forest guards who usually hunt for poachers to ensure protection of our wildlife. Experts seek a way out with TRAFFIC.



The article discusses the impact of poaching on tiger populations and the role of TRAFFIC in addressing these issues. It highlights the need for better detection and protection of tigers in the wild.

Pioneer, New Delhi; 29/07/2017

## Two arrests that expose poachers' look-east policy

**WILDLIFE**

Wildlife experts say poachers sell peacock feathers, legs and tail to Unani medicine practitioners for hefty sums.

**2-YEAR JAIL**  
A court has sentenced a peacock poacher to two years in jail for selling the bird's body parts to Unani medicine practitioners.



The article reports on two arrests of poachers in the region, highlighting their 'look-east' policy. The poachers were caught with large quantities of wildlife products, including tiger bones and other animal parts. The arrests were a significant blow to the poaching network in the area.

Mail Today, New Delhi; 11/05/2017

## WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IS WORLD'S FOURTH LARGEST ILLEGAL TRADE

**WILDLIFE**

Wildlife experts say poachers sell peacock feathers, legs and tail to Unani medicine practitioners for hefty sums.

**2-YEAR JAIL**  
A court has sentenced a peacock poacher to two years in jail for selling the bird's body parts to Unani medicine practitioners.



The article discusses the global scale of wildlife trafficking, which is the world's fourth largest illegal trade. It highlights the impact of poaching on biodiversity and the need for international cooperation to combat this crime.

Absolute India, Mumbai; 30/07/2017

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#StopIllegalWildlifeTrade

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**TRAFFIC**

NEWSLETTER

Issue 29  
MAY 2018

NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA

**SPECIAL ISSUE ON BIRDS**



**TRAFFIC** ***POST***

**Galliformes in illegal wildlife trade in India:**

**A bird's eye view**

**IN FOCUS**

# TRAFFIC Post

TRAFFIC's newsletter on wildlife trade in India was started in September 2007 with a primary objective to create awareness about poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

Illegal wildlife trade is reportedly the fourth largest global illegal trade after narcotics, counterfeiting and human trafficking. It has evolved into an organized activity threatening the future of many wildlife species.

TRAFFIC Post was born out of the need to reach out to various stakeholders including decision makers, enforcement officials, judiciary and consumers about the extent of illegal wildlife trade in India and the damaging effect it could be having on the endangered flora and fauna.

Since its inception, TRAFFIC Post has highlighted pressing issues related to illegal wildlife trade in India and globally, flagged early trends, and illuminated wildlife policies and laws. It has also focused on the status of legal trade in various medicinal plant and timber species that need sustainable management for ensuring ecological and economic success.

TRAFFIC Post comes out three times in the year and is available both online and in print. You can subscribe to it by writing to [trafficind@wwfindia.net](mailto:trafficind@wwfindia.net)

All issues of TRAFFIC Post can be viewed at [www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org); [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)

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# From the Desk



Since sale of native wild bird species is prohibited under our national laws, traders display non-native bird species more openly while the trade in Indian birds species continues in the clandestine markets.

Dr Saket Badola, IFS  
Head of TRAFFIC's India Office

Dear Readers

Pet bird market is a lucrative business spread across the country. It is however believed that a significant number of the birds which are traded in these markets are sourced illegally; either collected unauthorizedly from wild or illegally smuggled into the country. This trade takes place openly in front of our eyes, but is rarely ever discussed because of involved complexities, both legal as well as practical. I take this opportunity to introduce this special and important issue of TRAFFIC Post focusing on poaching and illegal trade of birds in India, a serious conservation challenge today.



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India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 protects nearly 1200 species of birds found in India, covering most of the wild bird species found in the country. Further to this, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an international agreement between governments to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival, prohibits international trade in many Indian wild bird species.

However, a single visit to any of these neighborhood bird markets is enough to convince that all is not well here. While, many non-native species such as budgerigar, lovebirds, Zebra Finch etc. are legally sold here, certain protected Indian species such as parakeets, mynas and munias are also traded in these markets. Frequently over stuffed cages with poor welfare standards for these birds are a sight of blatant violation of the laws that prevent cruelty on animals in our country.

Since, sale of native wild bird species is prohibited under our national laws, traders usually display these non-native species openly while the trade in Indian bird species also continues in the clandestine markets. However, at places where enforcement checks are lax and where there is lack of awareness about the wildlife laws, the traders openly display and sell the native bird species as well.

Unfortunately, there are no provisions in the current Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for regulating trade and breeding of the non-native bird species that come into India for sale. Import of non-native species require clearances from the CITES

# From the Desk

Continued

management authorities and the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, India. However, seizure data show that not all birds that come into India follow the required protocol and are believed to be smuggled through illegal channels. We also lack a robust legal framework to regulate trade of non-native species once they have crossed the border points and entered the country.

Pet trade is the main driver of illegal bird trapping in India, followed by birds such as owls which are trapped for superstitious beliefs in the name of religion, black magic and others. Many a times bird parts and derivatives are used in local medicines and prescribed as cure for various ailments.

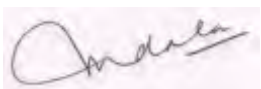
The bird trade markets in India have been flourishing for some time now. TRAFFIC is trying to map these markets and is in the process of putting together important information that will help enforcement agencies to take necessary actions. At least 70 bird markets have been identified by TRAFFIC as hubs for bird trade in India. These include: Galiff Street, Kolkata; Hill Cart Road, Siliguri; Crawford Market, Mumbai; Chiriya Bazar, Jama Masjid, New Delhi; Chirimar Mohala, Ambala; Nakhas Market, Lucknow; Lal Kurte, Meerut; Kabootar bazar, Bareilly; Lathiya Mohalla, Kanpur; Bhoor Choraya, Moradabad; Baheliya Toli, Varanasi; Nai Ki Mandi, Agra; Nakhas Kona, Allahabad; Mir Shikar Toli, Patna; Soneour Mela, Vaishali; Kozhi Market, Chennai; Sunday Market, Madurai; Murgi Chowk, Hyderabad; Russel market, Bangalore; Shikaribasti, Ramganj Jaipur; Dilli Darwaza, Ahmedabad; and Jehangirabad/Bhairagarh, Bhopal.

Of late, illegal wildlife trade has extended its wings to virtual market. Various social media forums have become important platforms for sellers and buyers to connect for their nefarious activities. Slowly this difficult to regulate virtual space is overtaking the physical markets making enforcement actions even more challenging.

The threat to the bird species from poaching and illegal wildlife trade is so grave that many species may be pushed towards extinction, from which there is little chance of return. Therefore, TRAFFIC decided to dedicate this issue of TRAFFIC Post to highlight the plight of birds in illegal wildlife trade in India and address related concerns. We hope that through this Issue we are able to bring to the forefront important aspects of illegal bird trade in India and actions needed to combat it.

Also available at the end of the newsletter is a snapshot of two important identification posters on Munias and Weaver Birds in India. These posters have been used extensively by enforcement agencies for identification of the species in illegal wildlife trade. Educationist have also used these during their awareness programmes on birds organized for children and youth. TRAFFIC has also produced a poster on parrots of India. All of these are available for distribution at TRAFFIC free of cost. Please write to us in case printed copies are required.

Happy Reading!



Dr Saket Badola, IFS  
Head- TRAFFIC, India Office

*About Dr Saket Badola: Dr Saket Badola is an Indian Forest Service Officer from the Uttarakhand cadre, who joined TRAFFIC as the Head of TRAFFIC's India Office on 1 September 2017 on long term central deputation. He holds a Master's Degree in Veterinary Sciences from the Indian Veterinary Research Institute as well as an Advance Post Graduate Diploma in Wildlife Management from Wildlife Institute of India. He is also a Certified 'Master Trainer / National Level Resource Person' in the field of Forestry as notified by Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India. He can be contacted at 011-41504786 or you can email him at [sbadola@wwfindia.net](mailto:sbadola@wwfindia.net).*





## TRAFFIC Updates (India)

1. TRAFFIC and WWF-India to co-host India's 2<sup>nd</sup> Zoonackathon in September 2018
2. TRAFFIC's Super Sniffer Squad in India crosses half century mark; 13 more join the brigade and 12 new dog squads begin their training
3. EARLY SUCCESS: Quarmy cracks her first wildlife case within a week of deployment
4. Nearly 6,000 pangolins in illegal wildlife trade in India since 2009, finds TRAFFIC's latest study released on World Pangolin Day 2018
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## TRAFFIC and WWF-India to co-host India's 2<sup>nd</sup> Zoohackathon in September 2018

**Z**oohackathon, a tech challenge to find technology driven solutions for fighting wildlife crime, will once again be organised by the U.S. Embassy, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), TRAFFIC and WWF-India, at the WWF-India Secretariat in New Delhi in September 2018.

Zoohackathon brings together young developers, designers, project managers, and subject matter experts to create applications, systems, and tools to help reduce demand for illegal wildlife products. The participants are given two days to hack their way towards solutions to challenge statements solicited from conservation experts around the world. At the end of the hackathon, teams present their ideas and a panel of judges select a winner.

Illicit wildlife trade is an ever-evolving global crime that is increasingly getting more sophisticated and organised. Considered to be high profit and low risk, it is attracting organised criminals, who in turn pose a threat to national and global security, besides endangering the future of our wildlife. In light of this, Zoohackathon was conceptualised and organised to challenge participants to develop solutions that will help stop wildlife trafficking.

India's first Zoohackathon was held at the WWF-India Secretariat in New Delhi on 7–8 October 2017, coinciding with the Wildlife Week celebrations. The team "Geeksforgreen" won with their idea for a quantification tool (web application) that can be used to monitor social media for trafficking of wildlife articles on online platforms. The runners up team, "Zoodesign", developed the concept of "Eagle Eye"—a tool to filter and analyse infra-red motion images from camera traps set up in protected forest areas to send an alert whenever there is any unauthorised human activity (by poachers).

Dr Saket Badola, Head of TRAFFIC in India; Ishita Anand, CEO- BitGiving; Sanjay Pathak, DIG- National Tiger Conservation Authority; and Isabella Detwiler, Deputy Minister Counselor for Economic, Environment, Science and Technology Affairs U.S. Embassy had judged the



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competition that witnessed 11 teams with nearly 70 participants working tirelessly for two days.

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General & CEO, WWF-India, had congratulated the US Embassy for leading on this initiative and said that awareness among consumers would be crucial to curbing illegal wildlife trade. He also said that the solutions developed would go a long way in helping to curb wildlife crime in India.

Dr Saket Badola, Head of TRAFFIC's India office said, "Zoohackathon is an interesting competition and we have had the privilege to be part of this initiative which brings together intelligent minds to develop new technology to curb wildlife trafficking. Smugglers and wildlife dealers are buying and selling illegal wildlife products and derivatives online and eluding the enforcement agencies with their ever changing *modus operandi*. TRAFFIC is confident that the tech driven ideas created through Zoohackathon will be adapted and further developed into solutions that will help end the wildlife trafficking of organised criminals in India and beyond".

Mr Robert Garverick, the new Minister Counsellor, Economic, Environment, Science and Technology, U.S. Embassy said: "At the Zoohackathon we are embracing the idea of 'civic hacking.' We are doing this by soliciting your help in finding creative solutions to tackle the complex problem of how to combat illegal wildlife trafficking."

# TRAFFIC's Super Sniffer Squad in India crosses half century mark; 13 more join the brigade and 12 new dog squads begin their training

**T**hirteen wildlife sniffer dog squads completed their training in December 2017 and joined India's 43 Super Sniffer dog squads already deployed to curb illegal wildlife trade, taking the total number of India's wildlife sniffer dog force to 56. Following hot on their heels are the 12 new dogs and their handlers that began their training in April 2018. On completion of their nine-month long training, these 12 dog squads will join their 56 counterparts deployed across the country, taking the total strength of India's wildlife sniffer dog squads to 68 in 2018.

The training of the 13 wildlife sniffer dogs that passed out in December 2017 was organised by TRAFFIC with support from WWF-India at the National Training Centre for Dogs (NTCD), BSF Academy, Tekanpur Gwalior. The 13 German Shepherd and Belgian Malinois dogs were between 6–9 months old when they and their handlers began their nine-month long training in April 2017. They passed out during a ceremony organised on 15 December 2017 at the NTCD where the dog squads showcased their learnt skills.

Of the 13 wildlife sniffer dog squads, West Bengal has deployed three; Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh have deployed two each and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Assam, Odisha and Kerala have deployed one each. It was the first time the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim had deployed wildlife sniffer dogs for curbing wildlife crime.

TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dogs popularly known as 'Super Sniffers' have been trained to sniff out Tiger and Leopard skins, bones and other body parts; bear bile and Red Sanders. However, special training was provided to the sniffer dog deployed in the state of Sikkim for tracking Yarsa Gumba *Cordyceps sinensis*, a heavily traded wildlife contraband in the region.



© Amar Nath Chaudhary/TRAFFIC

The latest 12 dogs and their handlers that began their training at the NTCD Gwalior in April 2018 are the seventh batch from TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dog training programme that was launched in 2008 with support from WWF-India. The young dogs, mainly German Shepherds and Labradors, will go through a rigorous training schedule that will instill focus, discipline and obedience much required to become a wildlife sniffer dog.

Of the new batch of 12 dogs, two dog squads each will be deployed by the Forest Departments of West Bengal, Telangana and Maharashtra; one each will be deployed by the Forest Departments of Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh and the Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru and by Customs Department at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi.

In Uttarakhand, the wildlife sniffer dog squad will be deployed at Pithoragarh, reported to be one of the most vulnerable locations for illegal wildlife trade. Wildlife

contraband passes through Pithoragarh *en route* to Nepal and may include Leopard skins, medicinal plants, *Cordyceps sinensis* among other wildlife. In Himachal Pradesh, the wildlife sniffer dog squad will be deployed in the Great Himalayan National Park, Kullu: the first time in such a high-altitude region. It will also be the first time for Telangana and the airports in Bengaluru and Delhi. Also beginning in April 2018 was the refresher course for seven previously trained and deployed wildlife sniffer dog squads that were chosen based on their years of deployment, physical fitness and capabilities. The squads belong to the states of Uttarakhand (3), Madhya Pradesh (3) and Maharashtra (1) and will go through a rigorous training schedule for a period of 45 days at NTCD.

Dr G.S Nag, CVO, Officer Commanding, NTCD said, “NTCD recognises wildlife crime as a major threat to

India's wildlife and considers deployment of wildlife sniffer dog squads as an adequate response. Therefore, NTCD has partnered with TRAFFIC to help train wildlife sniffer dogs for the country. The training of these wildlife sniffer dogs was designed after thorough deliberations with officials from TRAFFIC and from the various wildlife sanctuaries and tiger reserves, besides incorporating findings from field studies on the modus operandi of wildlife criminals”.

TRAFFIC's Super Sniffers have been successful in over 200 wildlife cases in India involving seizures, arrests of suspects and recovery of body parts including skins and bones of Tiger, Leopard, bear bile, ivory, Indian Star Tortoises, deer antlers, skins and meat, live birds, porcupines, pangolin scales, snares, traps and weapons.

## EARLY SUCCESS: Quarmy cracks her first wildlife case within a week of deployment

Quarmy was one of the 13 newly trained wildlife sniffer dogs, and, along with her handlers, cracked her first wildlife poaching case on 27 December 2017, merely a week after her deployment. She had been deployed by the Forest Department of Kaziranga National Park, Assam and was the first in her batch of dogs to have helped with a wildlife case.

Late one evening, after receiving information about an alleged wildlife poacher and a cache of hidden arms that were possibly meant for poaching, officials from the northern range of Kaziranga National Park along with Quarmy and her handler Laxmi Nandan Baruah set out to investigate. The team reached the house of the alleged poacher which was uninhabited at that time. The dog was given the scent of a shirt found inside the accused's house. Quarmy followed the scent and led the team for 2 km along a dark path through the forest to a pond. The officials searched the area around the pond but found nothing, while the dog kept indicating towards the pond. Finally, a team member went inside the water and recovered

weapons including—a .303 rifle and a silencer—from the bottom of the pond.

In parallel, the co-ordinating wing of the Forest Department had arrested the alleged poacher at another location and the dog squad was sent to confirm his identification. The dog immediately identified the accused from the scent of his shirt. Quarmy thus helped the forest officials in cracking this case, setting high standards for the use of wildlife sniffer dogs.



# Nearly 6,000 pangolins in illegal wildlife trade in India since 2009, finds TRAFFIC's latest study released on World Pangolin Day 2018



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On World Pangolin Day 2018, TRAFFIC revealed that at least 5,772 pangolins were found in illegal wildlife trade in India during the period 2009–2017; close to 650 pangolins every year since 2009. However, this is a conservative estimate and as only a fraction of illegal wildlife trade is detected, the actual number is likely to be far higher.

TRAFFIC's findings were released in the form of a factsheet – [The Scale of Pangolin Trade in India: Nearly 6000 Pangolins poached between 2009-2017](#) – on 17 February, World Pangolin Day, celebrated on the third Saturday in February every year to raise awareness and garner support for pangolins globally.

Pangolins today are considered the most trafficked mammal species globally and are targeted mainly for their meat and scales. Pangolin meat is considered a delicacy and as a “tonic food” because of its unproven yet alleged medicinal properties. Pangolin scales are used as an

ingredient in traditional medicines as they are believed to cure various ailments. Most of the poaching and smuggling is believed to be targeted for international markets in China and Southeast Asia.

TRAFFIC's study recorded 90 cases of pangolin seizures involving India during the nine-year study period, of which the majority (83) were of pangolin scales, clearly indicating that scales are the main pangolin product trafficked in India. Manipur and Tamil Nadu emerged as the hotspots for pangolin smuggling, where the majority of seizures took place.

Between 2009 to 2013, most of the 46 seizures were in eastern or north-eastern parts of India, including Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, and West Bengal. While between 2014–2017, the majority of 44 seizures were from southern and central parts of India including Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu. This could indicate a regional shift in the poaching and smuggling of pangolins in India.

Hunting and trade in both the pangolin species—Indian Pangolin *Manis crassicaudata* and the Chinese Pangolin *Manis pentadactyla*—found in India is banned under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WPA 1972) while international trade is prohibited under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora). The Indian Pangolin is found across almost all of the country while the distribution of the Chinese Pangolin in India is restricted to the north-east.

Dr Saket Badola, Head of TRAFFIC's India office said that the number of pangolins in illegal wildlife trade in India is

of concern and without proper population estimates, the impact of such trade is unclear and could pose a significant threat to the species.

“There is no better time than World Pangolin Day to take urgent action for pangolins: enforcement agencies should redouble their efforts to curtail poaching and illegal trade in pangolins through improved inter agency co-operation and co-ordination, and collaborate with their colleagues in transit and destination market countries to secure an international crackdown on the criminal elements orchestrating wildlife trafficking,” said Dr Badola.

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General & CEO, WWF-India added: “The large number of pangolins in illegal wildlife trade is alarming, as a population decline of pangolins could lead to serious ecological imbalance. Pangolins, often called scaly anteaters, are considered farmer's friends as they help to keep a check on populations of ants and termites and help improve soil quality. Therefore, it is important that efforts are directed to stop poaching and smuggling of pangolins in India. More efforts to understand their status are necessary, simultaneously to plan future strategies for conservation of pangolins in the wild.”

Nearly 20 media agencies across India covered the various aspects of poaching and illegal wildlife in pangolins clearly signaling their interest in these poorly-known mammals.



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Through the social media outreach of TRAFFIC and WWF-India nearly 80,000 individuals were sensitised about World Pangolin Day 2018.

Download the factsheet at <https://www.wfindia.org/?17061/Nearly-6000-pangolins-in-illegal-wildlife-trade-in-India>.

Follow us on FACEBOOK at <https://www.facebook.com/TRAFFIC-India-Office-342774705910518/> and TWITTER: [https://twitter.com/TRAFFIC\\_India](https://twitter.com/TRAFFIC_India) to know more and support initiatives to curb illegal wildlife trade.

**SCALY FUTURE FOR INDIA'S PANGOLINS**

Hunted, trapped, electrocuted, pangolins in India are poached for their scales and other body parts that are smuggled in large numbers to other countries for use in traditional medicines.

**WILL YOU LEND YOUR HAND?**

**Help Stop Pangolin Poaching And Trade**

Report poaching, smuggling, or illegal trade to the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau ([www.wccb.gov.in](http://www.wccb.gov.in)), Forest and Police Departments.

Hunting, trapping and trade in pangolins is a punishable offence under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The international trade is restricted and illegal for conservation.

**TRAFFIC** **WWF** **#StopIllegalWildlifeTrade**

TRAFFIC is a global network of 12 national offices working to end the illegal wildlife trade. WWF is a global conservation organization working to protect the world's most endangered species and their habitats.

**AT LEAST 650 PANGOLINS POACHED IN INDIA EVERY YEAR**  
and this represents only a fraction of actual illegal wildlife trade

**Pangolins: the world's most trafficked mammals**  
Poached for scales, body parts and meat



**Indian Pangolin** *Manis crassicaudata*  
**Chinese Pangolin** *Manis pentadactyla*  
are found in India.



© WWF-INDIA

**Pangolin poaching and trade is prohibited**

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:  
Schedule I

CITES: Appendix I

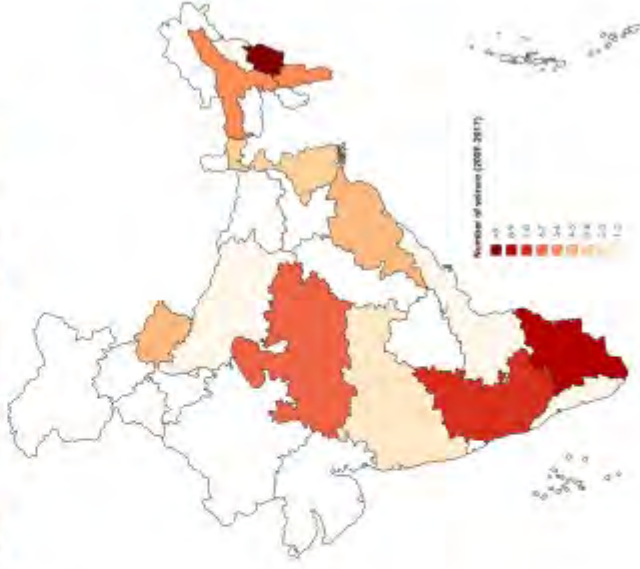


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5765 kg of pangolin scales seized in India (2009- 2017) =

**5765\* pangolins in illegal wildlife trade**

\*Weight of pangolin scales per animal= 1kg





# TRAFFIC's wildlife law enforcement trainings focus on strengthening cyber surveillance and legal prosecution for curbing wildlife crime

TRAFFIC's latest two training programmes in India have focused on significant components of wildlife law enforcement in India, in particular strengthening cyber surveillance to monitor wildlife crime on digital platforms and strengthening the legal capacity needed for effective wildlife crime prosecution and conviction. TRAFFIC plays a crucial role in identifying any gaps in wildlife law enforcement in India and works with the State and National Governments to bridge such gaps. TRAFFIC has regularly conducted training programmes on various other relevant aspects, such as forensics, legal procedures, species identification and more.

## Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve:

TRAFFIC, along with the Maharashtra Forest Department, organised a two-day wildlife law enforcement training at Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), Chandrapur, Maharashtra on 30 November–1 December 2017 where strengthening cyber surveillance to monitor wildlife crime on digital platforms and use of forensics for wildlife crime scene investigation dominated the discussions.

The workshop was attended by 40 enforcement officials from both the Forest and Police Departments. Besides cyber surveillance and use of forensics, other important aspects of wildlife law enforcement in India including the latest trends in illegal wildlife trade, implementation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and the latest tools and techniques available to curb wildlife crime were highlighted by experts from the field of law enforcement through classroom sessions as well as through hands-on and field exercises.



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Shri Vijay Shirke, IFS, Chief Conservator of Forest (Territorial) Chandrapur in his workshop address emphasised the need to enhance protection measures not just in the Tiger Reserve but also in external periphery forest areas as these buffer zones are frequently inhabited by wildlife and thus attract poachers. He said that the training would help in enhancing the skills of the staff to counter wildlife crime in an efficient manner.

Considering the fast-changing profile of wildlife crime, TRAFFIC regularly works with state Forest Departments to enhance the knowledge and skills of field foresters towards species identification, wildlife law, crime investigation

procedures and other related aspects of wildlife law enforcement. One of the recent areas of concern has been the growing markets in cyber space for trading in prohibited wildlife. TRAFFIC aimed to expose participants to the latest developments in the field of cyber surveillance.

TRAFFIC distributed 30 wildlife forensic kits to the TATR, Maharashtra. These kits will aid the forest officials to follow the required protocol for collection of wildlife samples for forensic analysis, crucial for effective wildlife crime conviction. TRAFFIC is hopeful that the skills gained during the workshop will be used efficiently to combat wildlife crime and curb illegal wildlife trade in endangered wildlife. TATR is Maharashtra's oldest and largest national park, home to significant numbers of Tigers and other wildlife.

### Chunakhan Ecotourism Centre in Ramnagar, Uttarakhand:



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The frontline staff of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh (UP) Forest Department including the range officers and forest guards underwent two days of inter state rigorous training to strengthen their legal capacity much needed for effective wildlife crime prosecution and conviction. The training workshop was organised by TRAFFIC in collaboration with the Uttarakhand Forest Department, WWF-India and LIFE (Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment) on 9–10 April 2017 at Chunakhan Ecotourism Centre in Ramnagar, Uttarakhand.

Forty-two participants from Corbett Tiger Reserve, Kalagarh Tiger Reserve, Terai West Forest Division, Ramnagar Forest Division, Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (UP) and Amangarh Tiger Reserve (UP) attended the workshop to understand the nuances of illegal wildlife trade and the implementation of wildlife laws for curbing it including



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the legal procedures to investigate and prosecute wildlife crime cases.

In India, extremely low conviction rates in wildlife crime cases are seen as a major gap in wildlife law enforcement. TRAFFIC's workshop focused on improving understanding of wildlife law, its implementation, filing of cases and other related legal issues. Many important and on-going wildlife cases were discussed and analysed to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the participants.

The training was conducted by Shri R K Singh from LIFE, who discussed the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, through group discussions, case laws and by referring to various case studies.

Mr Kapil Joshi, Chief Conservator of Forests, Kumaon Forest Division, Uttarakhand Forest Department said "The terai region of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh holds a very rich diversity of wildlife, because of which, these areas are often targeted by wildlife criminals. A strong mechanism for nabbing them and ensuring they receive an adequate quantum of punishment will prove to be a strong deterrent."

Shri Amit Verma, Deputy Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve and Smt. Neha Verma, Deputy Forest Officer, Ramnagar, thanked TRAFFIC and WWF-India for organising the unique and important workshop. They were hopeful that the enhancement of their staff's skills would lead to better wildlife conviction rates in future.

## TRAFFIC highlights the need to combat wildlife crime at Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) seminar

**S**ashastra Seema Bal (SSB) organised a seminar on the Role of Security Forces in Combating Wildlife Crime that took place on 22 September 2017 at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi. Dr Harsh Vardhan, Hon'ble Union Minister of Science and Technology, Earth Science, Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India, was the chief guest of the seminar that had been organised to sensitise Central Armed Police Forces and other stakeholders about the magnitude and impact of wildlife poaching and illegal wildlife trade, and to highlight the inevitable need for interagency co-operation for eradicating this threat to wildlife.

TRAFFIC participated in this important event by outlining the role of SSB and other agencies in curbing wildlife crime in India; showcasing TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dog training programme and its impact; and participating in a panel discussion on poaching and wildlife trade related issues.

Dr Harsh Vardhan, Hon'ble Union Minister, said the SSB had been assigned a challenging task of guarding and managing the open Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders but was discharging its duties very efficiently. He also congratulated the Director General of SSB for organising the seminar, which, together with other partners, marked a significant step towards the protection and preservation of wildlife. He requested the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) to organise frequent co-ordination



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meetings to increase co-operation and co-ordination among enforcement agencies.

Sm t Ar ch a n a Ramasundaram, Director General, SSB spoke about SSB's efforts to curb illegal In 2016, SSB arrested 62 suspects in 60 wildlife crime cases and saved a number of Tokay Geckos and Sand-boa snakes. In 2017, up to September 85 wildlife cases had been registered and 95

suspects arrested by SSB. SSB confiscations had included large quantities of body parts of endangered species including deer, turtles, and elephant tusks.

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General & CEO of WWF-India participated in the panel discussion on the Role of Law Enforcement agencies in Combating Wildlife Crime and spoke about using the latest technology to detect wildlife crime. He also spoke about the wildlife sniffer dog training programme run by TRAFFIC and WWF-India and how more dogs need to be deployed for wildlife crime detection and prevention by enforcement agencies other than the forest departments. He spoke about the need to strengthen wildlife forensic capacity in the country and suggested that mobile forensic labs could be used to identify wildlife contraband in transit.

Key outcomes of the seminar that was attended by over 300 law enforcement officials from multiple agencies included: increasing awareness among the enforcement officials to prevent wildlife crime; extending the powers under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Indian Forest Act, 1927 to border

security agencies; collaboration between SSB and WCCB to set up an X ray facility and manuals for detecting wildlife contraband in transit; strengthening co-ordination between enforcement agencies to gather and share intelligence in order to prevent, detect and combat crime; creation of a common database of criminals to be shared among agencies; and conduct specialised training of the personnel manning border regions for wildlife crime detection and prevention.

TRAFFIC is thankful to SSB for acknowledging the grievous impact of wildlife crime and considering it a mainstream crime in India. TRAFFIC has previously

conducted specialised wildlife law enforcement training for SSB officials and will be happy to extend our knowledge and support for future collaborations too. TRAFFIC strongly recommends the use of wildlife sniffer dogs by border security agencies for detecting illegal wildlife contraband in transit.

Smt. Tilotma Verma, IPS, Additional Director General, WCCB and other dignitaries also attended the seminar and shared their expertise and experience in handling wildlife crime.

## MEET THE TEAM: Pramod K. Yadav joins TRAFFIC's India Office



**P**ramod K Yadav joined TRAFFIC's India office in New Delhi in April this year as Senior Project Officer to assist TRAFFIC programmes and research work especially with reference to trade in floral species.

Before joining TRAFFIC, Pramod was responsible for team management and co-ordination with project stakeholders and fundraisers to implement a project to integrate conservation, governance and livelihoods for caterpillar fungus collectors in the Himalayas.

Pramod was honoured to receive the Future Conservationist Award - 2015 under the Conservation Leadership Programme (partnership programme of BirdLife International, Fauna & Flora International and Wildlife Conservation Society) to implement a project "Conserving *Ophiocordyceps sinensis* in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, India". In order to implement these assignments, Pramod led a team to monitor the harvest of the species, understand the market dynamics, and analyse the sustainability of trans-boundary trade for caterpillar fungus in the Himalayas.

He has diverse experience in the field of biodiversity conservation including environmental impact assessment, climate change and wildlife trade assessment. Pramod has a master's degree in Biodiversity and Conservation from Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi, with expertise in geospatial technology; mapping and modelling landscapes and habitats. He has also undertaken a professional certificate course on Governance of Landscape, Forest and People from Wageningen University, the Netherlands.

Pramod can be contacted at 011-41504786 or you can email him at [pyadav@wwfindia.net](mailto:pyadav@wwfindia.net)

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## Outpost

1. Leading tech companies unite to stop wildlife traffickers
2. World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) joins fight against illegal wildlife trade
3. Songbird trade is the straw breaking the Straw-headed Bulbul's back, says new paper

## Leading tech companies unite to stop wildlife traffickers

The world's leading e-commerce and social media companies are joining forces with Tencent, TRAFFIC, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) to render online platforms and apps inoperable for wildlife traffickers to trade in endangered and threatened species.

On 7 March 2018, 21 tech companies from North America, Asia, Europe, and Africa came together as the first-ever Global Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online. The founding members of the Global Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online are Alibaba, Baidu, Baixing, eBay, Etsy, Facebook, Google, Huaxia Collection, Instagram, Kuaishou, Mall for Africa, Microsoft, Pinterest, Qyer, Ruby Lane, Shengshi Collection, Tencent, Wen Wan Tian Xia, Zhongyikupai, Zhuanzhuan and 58 Group, convened by TRAFFIC, WWF and IFAW.

As members of this coalition, tech companies pledge to work together to reduce wildlife trafficking across platforms by 80% by 2020. In collaboration with WWF, TRAFFIC, and IFAW, each company will develop and implement policies to help end wildlife trafficking online.

“Bringing these industry giants together is the best shot at systematically closing the open web to wildlife traffickers,” said Crawford Allan, Senior Director, Wildlife Crime



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at TRAFFIC. “These sites are unwittingly being abused by criminals that are making a killing from selling rare species and products made from their parts. These companies see the problem and are uniting to ensure an internet where traffickers have nowhere left to turn.”

It takes just minutes to find dubious wildlife for sale online, including everything from trinkets like elephant ivory carvings to live animals like tiger or cheetah cubs. These sales are generally illegal and in breach of a site's rules. However, the Internet's global connectivity and relative anonymity of sellers, combined with rapid transport, enable wildlife traffickers to buy, sell, and ship animals and wildlife products with just a few clicks. As more traders and consumers move

online globally and traditional physical markets for wildlife trade become more obsolete, it is a critical time to ensure that social media and e-commerce platforms cannot be exploited by the loopholes to detection created by wildlife traffickers.

“Tencent has always adopted a zero tolerance towards illegal wildlife trade on its platform and a direct portal enables users to report suspected wildlife trafficking on Tencent's WeChat platform under our 'Tencent for Planet' project,” said Shu Mengying, Manager of Tencent Security Management Department.

TRAFFIC's facilitation of the establishment of the global internet companies' coalition was supported by the UK Government through the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund.

## World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) joins fight against illegal wildlife trade

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has launched a new initiative for the Travel & Tourism sector to join the global fight against illegal wildlife trade. The “Buenos Aires Declaration on Travel & Tourism and Illegal Wildlife Trade” sets out specific actions that the sector can take to address this challenge.

Speaking at WTTC’s Global Summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Gloria Guevara, WTTC President & CEO said “WTTC is proud to be undertaking this new initiative which aims to ensure that our sector is fully engaged in the fight against illegal wildlife trade. This challenge has been identified by our Members as a priority for our sector. Wildlife tourism is a significant generator of income for communities around the world, particularly in least developed countries (LDCs) and the illegal wildlife trade puts at risk not only the biodiversity of our world, but also the livelihoods of these communities. The Buenos Aires Declaration provides a framework for the Travel & Tourism sector to co-ordinate and consolidate actions to address it.”

The Declaration consists of four pillars: 1. Expression and demonstration of agreement to tackle the illegal wildlife trade 2. Promotion of responsible wildlife-based tourism 3. Awareness raising among customers, staff and trade networks 4. Engaging with local communities and investing locally.

Specific activities within the pillars include selling only wildlife products that are legal and sustainably sourced, and that meet CITES requirements; promoting only responsible wildlife-based tourism; training staff to detect, identify and report suspected illegal trade in wildlife; and educating consumers as to how they can tackle the problem, including by not buying illegal or unsustainably sourced wildlife products.

Fundamental to the declaration is the role Travel & Tourism can play in providing sustainable livelihoods for those who live and work alongside endangered flora and fauna, and at risk of being illegally traded. This includes promoting the benefits of wild-life tourism and ensuring that wildlife-based tourism positively impacts its local communities, while identifying and encouraging opportunities for investment in local infrastructure, human capital and community development.

Gerald Lawless, immediate past chair of WTTC said: “As a long-term member and former Chair of WTTC I am delighted that this initiative is underway. I would like to thank those more than 40 Members who have signed the Declaration so far. WTTC research shows that Travel & Tourism accounts for over 9% of GDP in countries such as Kenya and Tanzania, generating jobs for 1 in 11 people. As global Travel & Tourism

companies, we can play a substantial and active role to tackle illegal wildlife trade. However, we cannot do this alone and I call on other organisations, both public and private sector, and NGOs already engaged in this fight, to join us by signing the Declaration as we work together to grow wildlife-tourism sustainably and use our reach to stem both the supply and demand for illegal wildlife products around the world.”

Signatories to the Declaration at its launch include: WTTC, Abercrombie & Kent, AIG, American Express, Amex GBT, Best Day Travel Group, BTG, Ctrip, Dallas Fort Worth Airport, DUFY, Emaar Hospitality, Emirates, Europamundo, Eurotur, Exo Travel, Google, Grupo Security, Hilton, Hogg Robinson, Hyatt, IC Bellagio, Intrepid, JLL, Journey Mexico, JTB, Mandarin Oriental, Marriott, Mystic Invest, National Geographic, Rajah Travel Corporation, RCCL, Silversea Cruises, Swain Destinations, Tauck Inc, Thomas Cook, Travel Corporation, TripAdvisor, TUI, Value Retail, Virtuoso, V&A Waterfront, City Sightseeing, Airbnb, Grupo Puntacana, Amadeus.

Read more at:

<https://www.wttc.org/about/media-centre/press-releases/press-releases/2018/wttc-members-join-fight-against-illegal-wildlife-trade/>

## Songbird trade is the straw breaking the Straw-headed Bulbul's back, says the new paper



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Straw-headed Bulbul

The beautiful, melodious song of the Straw-headed Bulbul may very well be the reason for its downfall, as trapping for the Indonesian songbird trade is driving populations to critically low levels.

A newly-published paper in Bird Conservation International “[The final straw? An overview of Straw-headed Bulbul \*Pycnonotus zeylanicus\* trade in Indonesia](#)” shows that the species is still very much in demand for the songbird trade.

Market inventories in Kalimantan and Java between July 2014 and June 2015 recorded a total of 71 individuals in 11 markets in eight cities; this includes five birds that were kept as pets and were not for sale. Comparing this against historical literature, researchers found that as numbers in markets decreased, prices soared to over 20 times those recorded in 1987. This availability-to-price relationship

suggests that the inflation in prices is linked directly to the rarity of the birds in the wild.

The Straw-headed Bulbul's IUCN Red List conservation status was revised from Vulnerable to Endangered in 2015, but the authors believe that a Critically Endangered status more accurately reflects the situation.

“Just 71 animals over a year seems miniscule when compared to tens of thousands of birds traded in the Indonesian market. However, each animal taken is one too many for a rare species that has disappeared from most of its original range, and whose survival is now hanging by a thread,” said Kanitha Krishnasamy, TRAFFIC's Acting Regional Director for Southeast Asia.

The species has most likely vanished from Myanmar, Thailand and Java, but small pockets remain in Sumatra, where there has been only one recent reported sighting since 2009. Populations in Borneo and Peninsular Malaysia have also greatly declined.

While most of the birds observed were said to be sourced from within Indonesia (Kalimantan and Sumatra), traders also openly

admitted to importing birds from neighbouring countries. Although the species has been listed in CITES Appendix II since 1997, no imports into Indonesia have been reported since 1999. This indicates that if birds were imported, they were done so illegally.

“The Straw-headed Bulbul is currently not listed on the protected species list in Indonesia, one of the countries where it is most heavily traded,” said Serene Chng, co-author of the paper and TRAFFIC's Programme Officer in Southeast Asia. “According to its protected species status in the new national wildlife legislation could enable stronger action against traders illegally selling this species.”

Although some of the birds are said to be captive-bred or ranched, traders indicated that wild-caught individuals were considered superior because of their song quality. There was therefore an incentive to stock wild-caught birds over captive-bred individuals if traders could acquire them. The paper also recommends listing the species in CITES Appendix I to protect it further from illegal international trade.

Read more at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2017/11/21/trade-is-the-straw-breaking-the-straw-headed-bulbuls-back-sa.html>





## CITES Update

1. Sri Lanka to host the next CITES CoP18 in May 2019
2. CITES latest initiative to improve regulation of trade in captive-raised animals

# Sri Lanka to host the next CITES CoP18

## May 2019



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**Black-necked Stork**

The next meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 23 May to 3 June 2019. The offer from Sri Lanka was accepted at CoP17 held in October 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

CITES Secretary-General, Mr. John E. Scanlon said: "The next World Wildlife Conference will be hosted by an island country, the first time since CoP8 in Japan in 1992, and it is only the second time a CITES CoP is being held in South Asia, with the last occasion being 36 years ago in India. Sri Lanka is a beautiful country with diverse and truly unique wildlife both on land and at sea. It has a blossoming wildlife-based tourism industry and can boast some 'Top 7' wildlife species—Asian Elephant, Sloth Bear, Leopard, Black-necked Stork, Saltwater Crocodile, Leatherback Turtle and Blue Whale, six of which are listed under CITES. As one can see, Sri Lanka is an ideal location for a

World Wildlife Conference and it will be a wonderful host of CoP18".

Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, said: "As a country with rich biological diversity, Sri Lanka is fully committed to the implementation of the CITES provisions to ensure sustainable trade that takes into account the conservation of wild fauna and flora essential for a healthy and prosperous economy. Recent actions taken by Sri Lanka in fulfilling its commitment under the Convention include the seizure of illegally traded blood ivory, which was publicly destroyed in 2016, as well as the initiatives taken to list the genus *Alopias* namely all the three thresher shark species under CITES Appendix II as a protected species. The offer to host the Conference was made as Sri Lanka is mindful of the challenges that remain to be overcome at national and international levels".

Parties to CITES are reminded that any draft resolution and any document submitted for consideration at CoP18 and any proposed amendment to Appendix I or II, i.e. the CITES species listings must be communicated to the Secretariat at least 150 days before the meeting, i.e. by 24 December 2018.

However, if a Party intends to submit a proposal to amend Appendix I or II that concerns a species or a population of a species that occurs partly or totally outside of the territory under its jurisdiction, and if it does not intend to consult the other range States before the submission of its proposal, the Party, will have to submit its proposal to the Secretariat by 27 June 2018.

[https://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/CITES\\_CoP18\\_will\\_be\\_held\\_in\\_Colombo\\_Sri\\_Lanka\\_in\\_May\\_2019\\_14122017](https://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/CITES_CoP18_will_be_held_in_Colombo_Sri_Lanka_in_May_2019_14122017)

## CITES initiative to improve regulation of trade in captive-raised animals



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The CITES Secretariat is making strides in improving the regulation of trade in captive-raised animals and artificially propagated plants with the publications of two guides for inspecting facilities producing such animals and plants, as well as guidance on the use of source codes.

The two guides, namely the *Guidelines for inspection of captive-breeding and ranching facilities* and the *Guide to the application of CITES source codes* can be found on the CITES website and have been translated into several Asian languages (Chinese, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Malay, Thai and Vietnamese) to assist CITES officials in their work.

The Secretariat will use these two guides in a training workshop it is organising in May 2018 in Indonesia, the first of a series around the world aimed at improving the implementation of the Convention for captive-raised animals and artificially propagated plants.

Read more at [https://cites.org/eng/news/cites-initiative-to-improve-regulation-of-trade-in-captive-raised-animals-and-artificially-propagated-plants\\_23032018](https://cites.org/eng/news/cites-initiative-to-improve-regulation-of-trade-in-captive-raised-animals-and-artificially-propagated-plants_23032018)

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## TRAFFIC Alert

1. Diwali, festival of lights, sparks trade in owls in Uttar Pradesh

2. Poacher held with dead migratory birds near Chilika lake in Odisha

3. 1,782 Rose-ringed and Plum-headed Parakeets, 80 Hill Mynas and 892 munias seized in West Bengal



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## Diwali, festival of lights, sparks trade in owls in Uttar Pradesh

Last year, as Diwali approached, bird markets in Uttar Pradesh saw a seasonal trade in owls. The superstitious belief that if an owl is sacrificed in a house during Lakshmi puja, the goddess is forced to “stay” with the family has been fuelling illegal owl trade in the region. A lot of the trade is routed through Agra, according to wildlife activists. In the city, the birds have been home delivered and sometimes, the trader sacrifices it for the buyers. Places like Korai-Karavili village, near Fatehpuri Sikri, and Kosi Kalan in Mathura are also infamous for owl trade.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

TRAFFIC has been warning of an increase in illegal owl trade and sacrifices around Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights, for many years. TRAFFIC's report “**Imperilled Custodians of the Night**” released in November 2010 was an investigation into the illegal trade, trapping and utilisation of owls in India. The report found the use of owls in black magic and sorcery driven by superstition, totems and taboos as prime drivers of the covert trade.

The Indian subcontinent is home to 35 species of owls, 32 of them are recorded from India. Forest Owlet *Heteroglaux blewitti* is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 of India while all the other owl species in India are listed under Schedule IV of the Act, under the family names Tytonidae and Strigidae. The Act prohibits hunting and domestic trade in the species. The international trade in owls is further regulated by CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). Forest Owlet is placed in Appendix I of CITES while all other owl species found in India are listed in Appendix II, restricting the international trade in owls from India.

Owls are sacrificed on auspicious occasions such as Diwali and their body parts are used in ceremonial pujas and rituals, when Shaman or black magic practitioners, also referred to as *tantriks*, prescribe various uses for owls and their body parts, including the skull, feathers, ear-tuffs, claws, heart, liver, kidney, blood, eyes, fat, beak, tears, eggshells, meat and bones. While the exact number of owls traded each year countrywide is unknown, it certainly runs into thousands of individuals and there are anecdotal reports of owls becoming rare throughout India due to loss of suitable habitat especially old growth forests.

Of the total number of owl species recorded from India, 15 were recorded by TRAFFIC in the domestic live bird trade. Owl species most highly sought after by traders are large species, especially those with false “ear-tufts” (actually feather extensions on the head), believed to have greater magical properties. However, trade includes both large (e.g. Rock Eagle-Owl *Bubo bengalensis*) & small (e.g. Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*) owl species inhabiting areas as varied as urban settings and forest or riverine tracts with the main centres for the illicit trade located in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bihar.

TRAFFIC has been advocating for strong enforcement action—such as regular raids and taking legal action against the perpetrators—by forest departments, railway staff, customs and police to monitor and control the illegal bird trade. There is also a need for establishment of rescue and rehabilitation centres for seized owls and strong adherence to proper release protocols once the seized owl is deemed fit for release.

### Sources:

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/agra/Diwali-sparks-brutal-trade-in-owls-in-UP/articleshow/55124482.cms>  
[https://www.wwf.org/about\\_wwf/enablers/traffic/media/?uNewsID=8060](https://www.wwf.org/about_wwf/enablers/traffic/media/?uNewsID=8060)



# 2

## Poacher held with dead migratory birds near Chilika lake in Odisha

In December 2017, wildlife officials arrested a poacher and seized 10 dead migratory birds from his possession near Chilika lake in Odisha. The poacher was caught in Ujad Gopinathpur while trying to flee after hunting 10 Purple Swamphens *Porphyrio porphyrio*. This was the second incident of poaching near the lake during the migratory season that winter. Poachers hunt migratory birds for their meat after the winged guests arrive at the lagoon to spend the winter. The meat is in high demand in Balugaon, Bhubaneswar and Berhampur

### TRAFFIC adds.....

This is not an isolated case of poaching of migratory birds and many others have been reported across the country. For example, in October 2017, forest officials caught a person with 38 migratory and local birds poached from a local village pond situated on the outskirts of Nalsarovar, the only Ramsar site in Gujarat. In November 2017, 35 migratory birds were poached for smuggling meat in Jhajjar. The district of Jhajjar in Haryana hosts thousands of migratory birds every year due to several water bodies present in the area.

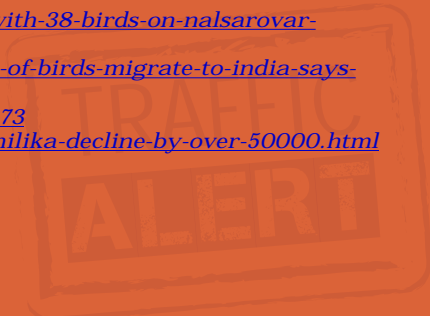
As the winter season sets in each year, large numbers of migratory birds visit all kinds of wetlands, including man-made and natural area, across India. During this period, they may become victims of poaching for meat.

In order to protect the migratory birds that visit India, the government of India has notified some of the wetlands frequently visited by these birds as wildlife sanctuaries under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. Rare and endangered birds, including some migratory species, are listed in the Act, to accord them protection against hunting, trade and others forms of exploitation. Stringent punishments have been provided for under the Act for violation of its provisions. Important habitats, including those for migratory birds, have been notified as Protected Areas under the Act, to improve the conservation and protection measures for birds. India is a contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention (Convention on Wetlands) and 26 wetlands in the country have been notified as Ramsar sites. India is also a contracting party to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (also known as CMS or Bonn Convention) which aims to conserve terrestrial and aquatic migratory species. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, has notified the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010, for better protection of wetlands in the country.

Despite the protection, migratory birds continue to be poached for their meat for sale in local and neighbouring markets. TRAFFIC recommends enhanced enforcement actions on the ground, including patrolling of wetlands on a regular basis. Educating villagers living around wetland areas is also crucial to protect migratory birds in India.

### Sources:

- <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/poacher-held-with-10-dead-migratory-birds-near-chilika-lake-in-odisha-4985705/>
- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/poacher-caught-with-38-birds-on-nalsarovar-periphery/articleshow/61027512.cms>
- <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/over-350-species-of-birds-migrate-to-india-says-govt/article8521113.ece>
- [http://tignet.net.in/Alluser/Parliament\\_Detail.aspx?Parliament\\_Id=673](http://tignet.net.in/Alluser/Parliament_Detail.aspx?Parliament_Id=673)
- <http://www.asianage.com/india/all-india/050118/migratory-birds-in-chilika-decline-by-over-50000.html>
- <https://www.ramsar.org/wetland/india>



3

## 1,782 Rose-ringed and Plum-headed Parakeets, 80 Hill Mynas and 892 munias seized in West Bengal

In mid-January 2018, hundreds of brightly coloured wild birds flew out of their iron cages in a burst of colours into the freedom of the sky. The release followed the biggest ever seizure of wild birds in West Bengal in the preceding week. The birds were set free in the forest of Nayagram in Pashchim Medinipur district, where it was anticipated the additional bird population could be sustained. The seizure included 1,782 Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* and Plum-headed Parakeets *Psittacula cyanocephala*, 80 Hill Mynas *Gracula religiosa* and 892 munias species. They were stuffed into cages and were being transported to a local fair in two vehicles when they were intercepted by forest officials. According to investigators, the birds were trapped along Uttar Pradesh's border with Nepal. They were transported by short train journeys to ensure that the maximum number could be kept alive. The forest officials tracked the birds from the time they arrived in West Bengal's Bardhaman Station, following a tip-off.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Despite the blanket ban on trade in all Indian bird species since 1990–91, parakeets, Hill Mynahs, munias and others are collected from the wild and traded in large numbers every year.

Parrots have been the most visible sign of illegal bird trade in India. They are taken from the wild and smuggled to various parts of the country and beyond and the bulk of the trade is in three- to four-week old chicks. Adult parrots are traded throughout the year, with chicks arriving in trade between December and June. For every bird that reaches the market place, several are believed to die en route. Of the 12 native species, eight are regularly found in illegal trade including the Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Plum-headed Parakeet, Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*, Malabar Parakeet *Psittacula columboides*, Himalayan Parakeet *Psittacula himalayana*, Grey-headed Parakeet *Psittacula finschii* and Vernal Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus vernalis*.

For centuries, parrots have been kept as pets as they are easy to keep and easy to replace because of the large numbers in trade. This has in turn created demand that has led to an organised illegal trade in parrots in India. While parrots are believed to be the most popular pets in terms of their prevalence in trade in India, munias rank number one in terms of their sheer volume (Ahmed 2001).

India is home to eight species of munias—Green Avadavat *Amandava formosa*, Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*, White-throated Munia or Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica*, Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti*, White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*, Tricoloured Munia *Lonchura malacca*, Spotted Munia *Lonchura punctulata* and Chestnut Munia *Lonchura atricapilla*.

Munias are commonly dyed to pass them off as a more preferred species in illegal wildlife trade. For example, the Red Avadavat is often dyed light green and pale yellow and sold as the endangered and endemic Green Avadavat. The White throated Munia or Indian Silverbill is dyed with a vegetable-based orangish-red coloured dye and sold as the Red Avadavat and is sometimes declared as a juvenile Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata*.

Traders stand to benefit in two ways—one by selling the otherwise drab coloured birds at a higher price; and second by avoiding prosecution for trading in a rare and protected species.







## In Focus

Galliformes in illegal wildlife trade in India:  
A bird's eye view

**By Merwyn Fernandes, Co-ordinator: TRAFFIC, India Office  
IUCN - Species Survival Commission: Galliformes**



## Galliformes in illegal wildlife trade in India: A bird's eye view

**G**alliformes, commonly referred to as “Gamebirds”, are ground feeding, heavy bodied birds that have had the closest relationship with humans of any bird species. For example, the domestic chicken originating from Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus* found in India has been long in demand for its meat and other products. Similarly, all over the world, Galliformes like turkeys *Meleagris* sp., Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*, pheasants Phasianidae and quails *Coturnix* sp. are unrivaled among other birds for their use by humans. The birds and their eggs are a protein rich meal for which the birds are domesticated or wild birds snared, shot or otherwise caught. Some species, such as pheasants, are also popular ornamental birds due to their spectacular colours.

The order Galliformes is represented by 85 genera and 290 species (Madge *et al* 2002) and are found worldwide. In India, there are only two families namely Megapodiidae represented by only one species endemic to the islands of Nicobar, the Nicobar Megapode *Megapodius*

*nicobariensis*, and Phasianidae represented by 22 genera and 46 species, of which seven are endemic while the global status of 12 species is threatened. They include the “Critically Endangered” Himalayan Quail *Ophrysia superciliosa*. This family is represented by partridges, francolin, quails and snowcocks accounting for 27 species and pheasants accounting for 18 species (Madge *et al.*, 2002).

### Distribution:

In India, Galliformes occur from coastal areas to high altitudes, including mangrove forests in West Bengal and Odisha to the alpine forests of the Himalayas. Some are highly localised to a particular habitat, such as the Manipur Bush-quail *Perdica manipurensis* while a few species have the margins of their geographical distribution in India, such as the Tibetan Eared-pheasant *Crossoptilon harmani*, White Eared-pheasant *C. crossoptilon*, Sclater's Monal *Lophophorus sclateri*, Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus*, Buff-throated Partridge *Tetraophasis szechenyii* and Chinese Francolin *Francolinus pintadeanus* (Ali and Ripley 1983, Rasmussen and Anderton 2005).

### Legal Status:

All Galliformes species in India are listed under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, including 18 pheasant species listed in Schedule I of the Act, one species Grey Junglefowl *Gallus sonneratii* listed in Schedule II and all the remaining species listed in Schedule IV. The Act provides protection against hunting, trade and other forms of exploitation including destruction of nest sites.

In the case of bird species listed in various schedules of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972., trade of live birds, meat, eggs and even destroying their habitat is punishable with a maximum punishment of 3–7 years rigorous imprisonment.

### Threats:

India has a rich diversity of francolins, partridges, pheasants and quails found throughout the country. However, habitat degradation and loss, combined with poaching for illegal wildlife trade, has pushed 11 species into a threatened category of the IUCN Red list. India was one of the largest exporters of wild birds in the world from

S.No	Common Name	Scientific Name	WPA, 1972	CITES	IUCN
1	Blood Pheasant	<i>Ithaginis cruentus</i>	I	II	Least Concern
2	Blyth's Tragopan	<i>Trogon blythii</i>	I	I	Vulnerable
3	Cheer Pheasant	<i>Catreus wallichii</i>	I	I	Vulnerable
4	Grey Peacock-Pheasant	<i>Polyplectron bicalcaratum</i>	I	II	Least Concern
5	Himalayan Monal	<i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>	I	I	Least Concern
6	Himalayan Quail	<i>Ophrysia superciliosa</i>	I		Critically Endangered
7	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	I	III	Least Concern
8	Kalij Pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	I	III	Least Concern
9	Mountain Bamboo Partridge	<i>Bambusicola fytchii</i>	I		Least Concern
10	Mrs Hume's Pheasant	<i>Syrmaticus humiae</i>	I	I	Near Threatened
11	Nicobar Megapode	<i>Megapodius nicobariensis</i>	I		Vulnerable
12	Satyr Tragopan	<i>Trogon satyra</i>	I	III	Near Threatened
13	Sclater's Monal	<i>Lophophorus sclateri</i>	I	I	Vulnerable
14	Temminck's Tragopan	<i>Trogon temminckii</i>	I	I	Least Concern
15	Tibetan Eared-pheasant	<i>Crossoptilon harmani</i>	I		Near Threatened
16	Tibetan Snowcock	<i>Tetraogallus tibetanus</i>	I	I	Least Concern
17	Western Tragopan	<i>Tragopan melanocephalus</i>	I	I	Vulnerable
18	White Eared-pheasant	<i>Crossoptilon crossoptilon</i>	I	I	Near Threatened
19	Grey Junglefowl	<i>Gallus sonneratii</i>	II	II	Least Concern
20	Black Francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	IV		Vulnerable
21	Blue-breasted Quail	<i>Synoicus chinensis</i>	IV		Least Concern
22	Buff-throated Partridge	<i>Tetraophasis szechenyii</i>	IV		Least Concern
23	Chestnut-breasted Partridge	<i>Arborophila mandellii</i>	IV		Vulnerable
24	Chinese Francolin	<i>Francolinus pintadeanus</i>	IV		Least Concern
25	Chukar	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	IV		Least Concern
26	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	IV		Least Concern
27	Green Peafowl	<i>Pavo muticus</i>	IV	II	Endangered
28	Grey Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	IV		Least Concern
29	Hill Partridge	<i>Arborophila torqueola</i>	IV		Least Concern
30	Himalayan Snowcock	<i>Tetraogallus himalayensis</i>	IV		Least Concern
31	Japanese Quail	<i>Coturnix japonica</i>	IV		Near Threatened
32	Jungle Bush Quail	<i>Perdica asiatica</i>	IV		Least Concern
33	Koklas Pheasant	<i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>	IV		Least Concern
34	Manipur Bush-quail	<i>Perdica manipurensis</i>	IV		Endangered
35	Painted Bush Quail	<i>Perdica erythrorhyncha</i>	IV		Least Concern
36	Painted Francolin	<i>Franco linuspictus</i>	IV		Least Concern
37	Painted Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix lunulata</i>	IV		Least Concern
38	Rain Quail	<i>Coturnix coromandelica</i>	IV		Least Concern
39	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	IV		Least Concern
40	Red Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix spadicea</i>	IV		Least Concern
41	Rock Bush Quail	<i>Perdica argoondah</i>	IV		Least Concern
42	Rufous-throated Partridge	<i>Arborophila rufogularis</i>	IV		Least Concern
43	Snow Partridge	<i>Lerwa lerwa</i>	IV		Least Concern

1970–1980, with nearly 14.8 million birds exported prior to an export ban, including nine species of Galliformes (Inskipp 1983).

Land-use changes for large infrastructure projects and agriculture, including shifting cultivation or *jhum* cultivation in forested areas, are some of the major drivers affecting habitats for Galliformes species. Accompanied by these changes are forest management practices (Datta 2000, Fernandes 2015), anthropogenic pressures on habitat such as livestock grazing and fuel and fodder collection, which are known negatively to affect Galliforme populations (Khaling *et al.*, 1998; Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2009; Kidwai 2013).

Every year a large number of Galliformes enter illegal trade in India. For many years they have been trapped for food, the pet trade, sport (cock-fights), their feathers, taxidermic reasons, medicinal purposes and for aviculture across the country. Sometimes the eggs of smaller quails and francolins are collected from the wild, either for consumption or to raise chicks that are then hatched under domestic hens/domestic pigeons (Ahmed 2004). It is a common practice among many tribes of central and northeast India to trap wild male junglefowls to enhance the vigor of the local domestic breeds (*Pers. Obs.*).

Decoy call birds (birds trained to lure other birds into a snare by repeated calling), drive nets, a variety of nooses and bamboo-traps are all used for capturing Galliformes for the organised bird trade. Furthermore, many local people in hill states capture, hunt and snare Galliformes for their local consumption and for sale in village markets (Aiyadurai 2011; Bhupatiet *et al.*, 2013; Chutia and Solanki 2013; Longchar *et al.*, 2013; Velho and Laurance 2013).

The effects of direct exploitation of Galliformes are high and common across India although few authors have detailed its intensity (Hilaluddin *et al.*, 2005; Aiyadurai 2011; Gubbi and Linke 2012). Field surveys and secondary information suggest that hunting and snaring of Galliformes are common practices across India (Kaul *et al.*, 2004; Velho *et al.*, 2012).

Galliformes in zoos and other captive breeding facilities also face issues. One of the areas of concern has been the non-maintenance of stud-books for Galliformes despite

them being used for captive breeding purposes and the keeping of hybrid junglefowls in enclosures used in breeding programmes (Mukesh *et al.*, 2013). Aside from native Galliformes, a number of exotic (non-native) pheasants, such as Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*, Lady Amherst's Pheasant *C. amherstiae* and Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera*, are bred in captivity and traded for aviculture collections in India. This reflects traders becoming more aware about the legal implications of engaging in trade and displaying protected India bird species. Other farm bred non-native galliformes such as Helmeted Guineafowls and turkeys are also traded as poultry by bird and meat sellers in several Indian bird markets.

Despite 18 Galliformes species being given the highest status of protection (Schedule I) in India, there have been few seizures of quails, partridges and francolins, while most Indian Peafowl seizures and cases are related to the feather trade. This has been an area of contention due to a provision within the Act whereby domestic trade is permitted for naturally shed tail feathers of this species. It is widely believed that many wild birds are killed for extraction of their tail feathers taking advantage of this clause. The protection level of Grey Junglefowl was raised due to excessive trade in their hackle feathers. Previously, trapping for meat was considered sustainable for self-consumption and as a means to meet protein requirements, while there was no commercial trade of the species. In the recent past there has been a gradual shift whereby illegally captured birds are being sold in a clandestine manner in local markets and villages.

Little emphasis has been given to illegal trade in Galliformes, with few offenders apprehended and prosecuted: most attention has been given to more charismatic species.

In light of this, there a strong need to understand and highlight the extent of illegal trade in Galliformes species in India. Enforcement agencies and the judiciary need to be sensitised about this issue while parallel efforts need to be made with local communities especially in the hilly areas where poaching is considered widespread.

UTILISATION PATTERN OF GALLIFORMES IN INDIA

Utilisation pattern	Group	States
Pet trade	Quails, Partridges, Pheasants, francolins	Haryana, Punjab, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
Meat	Quails, Partridges, Pheasants, Francolins	All states in India; highly prevalent in all northeastern states, Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Bihar
Sport (bird fights)	Partridges, Francolins, Pheasants	Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Assam
Feathers	Pheasants	Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Sikkim

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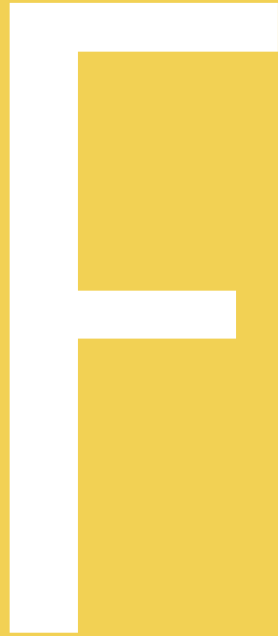
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## Wild Cry

**Exotic birds in wildlife trade in India:  
An overview of the growing phenomenon**

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## Exotic birds in wildlife trade in India: An overview of the growing phenomenon



African Grey Parrots

### Background

The exotic pet trade in India has grown with the main demand for birds, particularly those belonging to the parrot family including macaws and cockatoos. Since there is a complete ban on trade in all wild Indian bird species, interest has shifted to exotic birds, which has led to some serious conservation concerns.

India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WPA), is only applicable to wild Indian bird species and nearly 1,200 species are included in Schedules I to IV of the Act. The Act does not include any foreign or exotic (non-native) bird species. Since trade in non-native species does not come under the ambit of the WPA, it allows traders and breeders to own, breed and trade in rare exotic bird species with ease in India.

This article highlights some worrying aspects concerning the exotic bird trade in India and stresses the need to formulate policies to manage and regulate the exotic bird trade so it doesn't impact on wild populations in their native countries.

## Legal Status: Indian bird species

India's Wildlife (Protection) Act (WPA), 1972, prohibits the hunting, trapping, trade or any other forms of exploitation of all wild Indian bird species, excluding the House Crow *Corvus splendens* which is listed as "Vermin" under the Act and an exception for domestic trade in naturally shed tail feathers of the Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*. In 1990, India banned the export of all live native birds and a year later, in 1991, the ban was further imposed on domestic trade in wild Indian birds (Ahmed 1997). Therefore today, except for the House Crow and naturally shed tail feathers of the Indian Peafowl, no other native wild bird species can be trapped or exploited in any form including utilisation of eggs or feathers. This protection is further extended under the WPA to migratory bird species that visit India every year.

## Legal Status: Exotic bird species

Exotic or non-native bird species refers to any avian species that is not found in the wild within the geographical limits of India and therefore is not recognised as part of the country's avifauna.

The import or export of any exotic bird or any other wild animal may be subject to CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) regulations if the species concerned is listed within the Convention's Appendices. Import of species listed in Appendix I is generally not allowed, but an individual, organisation or zoo is permitted to import other CITES species listed when there is an import licence along with a recommendation letter and a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Chief Wildlife Warden of the concerned State Government fulfilling the provisions of CITES and the EXIM policy enforced through the DGFT (Director General of Foreign Trade). In addition to Indian rules governing import of birds, a CITES certificate from the country of origin of the consignment along with a Veterinary and Legal Procurement Certificate (LPC) is also required. In the case of non-CITES listed species, only export clearance from the country of origin is required. These checks are only at international entry points i.e. at airports and land customs and very rarely is any documentation examined once the exotic species enters the Indian market.

However, analysis of published CITES reports showed that less than 110 exotic bird species were recorded as being imported to India over a whole decade. (Ahmed 2004)

## Understanding the origin of exotic bird species in India

Exotic bird species found in India can be assigned to three broad categories:

1. Exotic species that have been breeding within the country from the time before India became a party to CITES: This includes those species that may have been bred in captivity for several generations in countries other than those in their native range. These may have been selectively bred for colour mutations, varieties and hybrids that may or may not be found in the wild elsewhere in the world.

This category may further be extended to include those bird species which have now been listed under CITES protection and continue to be bred in captivity. For example, Eclectus *Eclectus roratus* and Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* in trade are both from captive bred and wild caught sources.

Some of the commonly found bird species under this category are Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*; Lovebirds *Agapornis* (barring a few species, which are not present in Indian aviculture); Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus*; Zebra Finches *Taeniopygia guttata*; Java Sparrow *Lonchura oryzivora*; White Dove (Barbary Doves) *Streptopelia risoria*; and Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata*.



2. Species brought into the country with adequate clearances and documentation through legal channels: This category involves birds that have entered India after the importer obtained a CITES permit along with a no-objection certificate from the Chief Wildlife Warden of the concerned state, in accordance with the Wildlife (Protection) Act and EXIM policy. The birds may be domesticated, captive bred or wild caught.

3. Species that are brought into the country through illegal channels and without adequate permits: This category includes species that are largely wild caught in their country of origin and have been smuggled into India. For example, the Pesquet's Parrot *Psittichas fulgidus*, despite being a prohibited species for international trade under CITES, is smuggled directly from the country of origin due to its extreme rarity in the wild and difficulty in breeding in captivity. Other examples include various Turacos Musophagidae; Toucans Ramphastidae; Cockatoos Cacatuidae; Macaws Psittacidae; Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*; Lories and lorikeets Loriinae; Whydah Finches Viduidae; Cardinals Cardinalidae and several African finches.

## Exotic bird trade in India: The Current Scenario

Ever since the blanket ban on trade in all wild Indian bird species, the scenario of bird trade in India has slowly shifted focus. For instance, there was negligible export of domesticated exotic birds from India as exporters were trading in wild Indian birds that fetched higher prices in international markets, following the ban, not only has interest revived in the exotic bird species trade and traders have also started displaying exotic birds to cover up illegal trade in Indian bird species.

As per the personal observation of the author, based on surveys since 1992, the total trade in exotic birds in India is not more than an estimated 50–60% of all bird trade taking place (excluding the poultry trade). The majority of the exotic bird trade is in (Category 1) domesticated birds and the remaining trade is in wild caught or captive-bred exotic birds.

The main hubs of the exotic bird trade are Kolkata, Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad. These are supported by several breeding farms all over the country which supply exotic species. Unlike the illegal trade in Indian birds, which is primarily handled by local and traditional communities specialising in hunting and trapping of indigenous bird species, the exotic bird trade is handled by those who have the finances, space and access to captive breeding farms.

During surveys undertaken from 1992, the author visited more than 150 bird dealers, breeders, hobbyists and bird keepers involved in exotic bird trade and breeding. They included at least 10 private farms with collections exceeding 50 exotic species holding up to 100 or more breeding pairs. The birds bred at such establishments form the backbone of the exotic bird trade in India. The author found negligible trade from zoo-bred exotic birds and most exotic birds in Indian zoos were apparently mostly derived following seizures from illegal trade.

The following six exotic bird species dominate the exotic bird trade in India:

1. Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*: The most popular cage bird in the world, the Budgerigar is a parrot from Australia. This species is traded commonly and is



Budgerigar and cockatiels on sale in Kolkata

easily available throughout India in several colours. According to the author's surveys around 300,000 Budgerigars are sold each year within the country, all bred in India. They cost as little as INR100–150 a bird, a clear indicator of their abundant availability. On any given Sunday at the “*chiriya haat*” (bird market) in Kolkata more than 5,000 Budgerigars can be found for sale.

2. Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata*: A common finch from Australia that is bred in good numbers in India and available in several colour varieties. The author estimates an average 20,000–30,000 Zebra Finches are traded each year within India.

3. Lovebirds *Agapornis* sp: Three species of lovebirds, namely Rosy-faced lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis*, Fischer's Lovebird *A.fischeri* and Masked Lovebirds *A. personata*, are available in 60 different colour varieties/types. Although these birds are originally from Africa, all the birds recorded during the author's surveys were bred in India, with an estimated captive population of more than 150,000 lovebirds within the country.

4. Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus*: These parakeet-sized Australian parrots occur in several colour morphs and breed prolifically. New bird fanciers who may not be able to afford a cockatoo often buy this species instead as it also has a beautiful crest. An estimated average of 10,000 to 15,000 Cockatiels are bred and sold each year in India and their population there is estimated to be more than 100,000. Occasionally, some new colour type or variety is imported, otherwise all birds of this species are bred within India.

5. Java Sparrow *Lonchura oryzivora* (*Padda oryzivora*): A small finch originating from the islands of Java and Bali in Indonesia, where it is threatened in the wild, this is a popular cage bird in India and elsewhere. Ali & Ripley (1983) report that the bird was introduced into the wild in South India, however, there have been no recent sightings. It is bred in captivity in fair numbers in India and is also in CITES Appendix II, although there are no import records. The species is available in various colour morphs and costs more than a Budgerigar or other finches mainly because the species is a slow breeder and usually breeds seasonally according to climatic conditions. Current study estimates indicate a captive-population of at least 100,000 Java Sparrows in India with an annual production of between 8,000 to 10,000 chicks.

Apart from the species above, the Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata*, Barbary Dove *Streptopelia risoria*, Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* and Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera* are also bred in increasing numbers. There are very few Island Canaries *Serinus canaria* in India, despite this being a popular pet bird in other parts of the world.

In recent years, there has been an apparent increase in smuggling of wild-caught exotic bird species, especially large parrots. Traders find it more lucrative to smuggle certain wild species into the country than breed them in captive conditions that may need a specialised set up and several individuals to establish a breeding population.

The lifespan of some species may be extremely low in captivity (e.g. Cordon-bleu, Whydah Finches and toucans) or many may only breed occasionally (e.g. macaws, lorries, large parrots and cockatoos). The wild counterparts are much cheaper compared to the captive bred individuals in trade. For some species difficult to breed in captivity, including Amazon parrots, cockatoos, macaws, Grey and Eclectus Parrots, high demand for chicks means some traders collect and trade in wild sourced chicks smuggled into India.



Domesticated Barbary Doves

The author's investigations suggest that many birds are smuggled into India through Patna in Bihar by traders operating from neighbouring Nepal. Consignments reach Nepal by air and are then sent by road to Bihar via the Raxaul border. Similarly, traders from Kolkata, West Bengal, use the same *modus operandi* to operate via Bangladesh. A new route via Myanmar may have emerged in recent years as can be seen from the latest seizure reports.

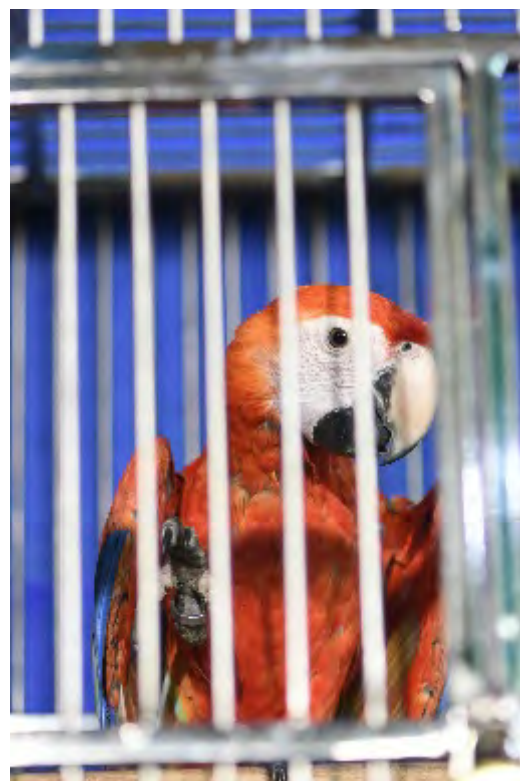
## Conservation Concerns

1. Smuggling of prohibited wild Indian birds under the garb of the exotic bird trade: It is not uncommon to find traders passing off cleverly disguised Indian bird species or look-alikes as exotics in the illegal bird trade in India. For example, the juveniles of all munias are very similar to juveniles of Zebra and Bengalese Finch also called Society Finch making their identification difficult and sometimes native birds are falsely declared as being (legal) exotics (Ahmed 1999).

2. Increased smuggling of wild caught exotic birds into India raising conservation concerns in the country of origin: The author rarely found instances of captive breeding of macaws, cockatoos, and lorries in India and it is believed the majority of these species in circulation are smuggled wild caught birds. The smuggling of exotic species from Bangladesh to Kolkata in West Bengal, India and from Nepal to Patna in Bihar, India has flourished since the 1990s with shipments said to arrive from Dubai, Bahrain via Pakistan or from Southeast Asia. Shipments of Grey Parrots from Africa were seized at Mumbai airport in the late 1990s. In 2011, exotic bird consignments were seized *en route* to West Bengal from Bangladesh.

The exotic pet trade can pose a conservation threat to species in the wild in their country of origin. Birds, often juveniles, are often taken from the wild, and are smuggled, stuffed in constricting spaces, with only a few reaching the eventual destination. Furthermore, indiscriminate hunting and capture of targeted species can diminish populations and sometimes lead to a skewed male:female ratio.

Many traders also falsely claim their animals have been sourced from captive breeding facilities when actually they are from the wild. This is a serious issue since wild animals often carry zoonotic diseases which could potentially be transmitted to humans and other animals.



Scarlet Macaw

In some cases, species are released by owners into habitats without understanding the impact of their actions on the ecology of the area. Species may become problematic invasives or transmit diseases to wild populations.

According to a study by Bush *et al.*, 2014 : *"International trade in exotic pets is an important and increasing driver of biodiversity loss and often compromises the standards required for good animal welfare; one-fifth of recent wildlife trade reports were driven by demand for pets or animals for use in entertainment; unsustainable harvest of wild animals for the pet trade has already led to population decline and collapse for many species; animal welfare is compromised to some extent at all stages of the exotic pet trade; legality of trade does not guarantee its sustainability; many of the species traded as pets are threatened."*

Important seizures of exotic birds in India and on the borders with Bangladesh:

DATE	SPECIES SEIZED (Number in bracket)	LOCATION	SOURCE
27 August 2017	Turquoise Parrots <i>Neophema pulchella</i> (43 individuals)	Nadia, West Bengal	<a href="http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/aug/27/43-australian-turquoise-parakeets-worth-rs-1462-lakh-seized-in-west-bengal-1648898.html">http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/aug/27/43-australian-turquoise-parakeets-worth-rs-1462-lakh-seized-in-west-bengal-1648898.html</a>
1 April 2017	Several species (75)	Putkhali, West Bengal	<a href="http://en.prothomalo.com/environment/news/144001/75-birds-of-various-species-seized-at-Benapole">http://en.prothomalo.com/environment/news/144001/75-birds-of-various-species-seized-at-Benapole</a>
16 January 2017	“Australian Cockatoos” (10)	Nadia, West Bengal	<a href="http://sb.bsf.gov.in/pressrelease/201701/003-2017.pdf">http://sb.bsf.gov.in/pressrelease/201701/003-2017.pdf</a>
23 March 2015	African Grey (30) and Amazon parrots	Kolkata, West Bengal	<a href="https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/BSF-seizes-exotic-birds-from-Indo-Bangla-border/articleshow/46667254.cms">https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/BSF-seizes-exotic-birds-from-Indo-Bangla-border/articleshow/46667254.cms</a>
28 February 2011	Macaws (4)	West Bengal	<a href="https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/The-North-24-Parganas-police-seized-four-Macaws-from-Amdob-village-under-Badgah-police-staion-neat-the-Bengal-Bangladesh-border-The-birds-will-be-handed-over-to-the-forest-department/articleshow/7594863.cms">https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/The-North-24-Parganas-police-seized-four-Macaws-from-Amdob-village-under-Badgah-police-staion-neat-the-Bengal-Bangladesh-border-The-birds-will-be-handed-over-to-the-forest-department/articleshow/7594863.cms</a>
15 April 2006	500 exotic birds	Kolkata, West Bengal	<a href="https://www.telegraphindia.com/1060416/asp/bengal/story_6104968.asp">https://www.telegraphindia.com/1060416/asp/bengal/story_6104968.asp</a>
8 January 2004	Macaws (2), various other parrots including cockatoos (43)	Kolkata, West Bengal	<a href="https://www.telegraphindia.com/1040109/asp/bengal/story_2767951.asp">https://www.telegraphindia.com/1040109/asp/bengal/story_2767951.asp</a>



Red-lored Amazon



Blue and Gold Macaw

## CITES-listed exotic bird species recorded in Indian bird trade

S.No	Common Name	Scientific Name	Origin	CITES
1	Yellow-headed Amazon	<i>Amazona oratrix</i>	Middle America	I
2	Hyacinth Macaw	<i>Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus</i>	South America	I
3	Scarlet Macaw*	<i>Ara macao</i>	South America	I
4	Military Macaw*	<i>Ara militaris</i>	South America	I
5	Moluccan or Salmon-crested Cockatoo*	<i>Cacatua moluccensis</i>	Moluccas and Indonesia	I
6	Goffin or Tanimbar Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua goffiniana</i>	Moluccas and Indonesia	I
7	Yellow-crested Cockatoo or Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo*	<i>Cacatua sulphurea</i>	Sulawesi and Indonesia	I
8	Red-and-blue Lory*	<i>Eos histrio</i>	Indonesia	I
9	Blue-headed Macaw*	<i>Primolius couloni</i>	South America	I
10	Blue-winged Macaw or Illiger's Macaw	<i>Primolius maracana</i>	South America	I
11	Palm Cockatoo	<i>Probosciger aterrimus</i>	New Guinea and Australia	I
12	African Grey Parrot*	<i>Psittacus erithacus</i>	Africa	I
13	Timneh Grey parrot	<i>Psittacus erithacus timneh</i>	Africa	I
14	Kakapo (only one stuffed specimen)	<i>Strigops habroptilus</i>	New Zealand	I
15	Fischer's Lovebird*	<i>Agapornis fischeri</i>	Africa	II
16	Yellow-collared or Masked Lovebird*	<i>Agapornis personatus</i>	Africa	II
17	Australian King Parakeet*	<i>Alisterus scapularis</i>	Australia	II
18	Orange-winged Amazon*	<i>Amazona amazonica</i>	South America	II
19	Yellow -crowned Amazon parrot	<i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>	South America	II
20	Red-winged Parakeet*	<i>Aprosmictus erythropterus</i>	Australia, Irian Jaya to Papua New Guinea	II
21	Blue-and-yellow Macaw*	<i>Ara ararauna</i>	South America	II
22	Red-and-green or Green-winged Macaw*	<i>Ara chloropterus</i>	South America	II
23	Peach-fronted Parakeet*	<i>Aratinga aurea</i>	South America	II
24	Jandaya Conure*	<i>Aratinga jandaya</i>	Brazil	II
25	Nanday Parakeet*	<i>Aratinga nenday</i>	South America	II
26	Sun Conure*	<i>Aratinga solstitialis</i>	South America	II
27	Mallee Ringneck or Barnard's Parakeet*	<i>Barnardius barnardi</i>	Australia	II
28	Port Lincoln Parrot*	<i>Barnardius zonarius</i>	Australia	II
29	Umbrella or White-crested Cockatoo*	<i>Cacatua alba</i>	Moluccas and Indonesia	II
30	Greater Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>	Australia and Indonesia	II
31	Pink or Major Mitchell's Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua leadbeateri</i>	Australia	II
32	Blue-eyed Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua ophthalmica</i>	Papua New Guinea	II
33	Little Corella	<i>Cacatua sanguinea</i>	Australia	II
34	Gang-gang Cockatoo	<i>Callocephalon fimbriatum</i>	Australia	II
35	Black Lory	<i>Chalcopsitta atra</i>	New Guinea	II
36	Duivenbode's Lory or Brown Lory*	<i>Chalcopsitta duivenbodei</i>	New Guinea and Irian Jaya	II
37	Patagonian Conure or Burrowing Parrot*	<i>Cyanoliseus patagonus</i>	South America	II

## CITES-listed exotic bird species recorded in Indian bird trade

38	Blacknecked Swan*	<i>Cygnus melanocorypha</i>	Australia	II
39	Red-shouldered Macaw or Noble Macaw	<i>Diopsittaca nobilis</i>	South America	II
40	Eclectus Parrot*	<i>Eclectus roratus</i>	Australia, New Guinea and Indonesia	II
41	Galah or Rose-breasted Cockatoo*	<i>Eolophus roseicapilla</i>	Australia	II
42	Red Lory*	<i>Eos bornea</i>	Indonesia	II
43	Violet-necked Lory*	<i>Eos squamata</i>	Indonesia	II
44	Pacific Parrotlet*	<i>Forpus coelestis</i>	South America	II
45	Luzon Bleeding Heart Pigeon*	<i>Gallicolumbaluzonica</i>	Philippines	II
46	Western Crowned- pigeon	<i>Goura cristata</i>	Papua, Indonesia and New Guinea	II
47	Yellow-bibbed Lory	<i>Lorius chlorocercus</i>	Solomon Islands	II
48	Purple-naped Lory*	<i>Lorius domicella</i>	Moluccas	II
49	Chattering Lory*	<i>Lorius garrulus</i>	Indonesia	II
50	Black-capped Lory*	<i>Lorius lory</i>	New Guinea	II
51	Violet Touraco	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>	West Africa	II
52	Monk Parakeet*	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>	South America	II
53	Elegant Parrot*	<i>Neophema elegans</i>	Australia	II
54	Turquoise Parrot*	<i>Neophema pulchella</i>	Australia	II
55	Scarlet-chested Parrot*	<i>Neophema splendida</i>	Australia	II
56	Bourke's Parrot*	<i>Neopsephotus bourkii</i>	Australia	II
57	Blue-bonnet Parakeet*	<i>Northiella haematogaster</i>	Australia	II
58	Red-bellied Macaw*	<i>Orthopsittaca manilata</i>	South America	II
59	Java's Sparrow*	<i>Padda oryzivora</i>	Indonesia	II
60	Adelaide Rosella*	<i>Platycercus adalaidae</i>	Australia	II
61	Mealy or Pale-headed Rosella*	<i>Platycercus adscitus</i>	Australia	II
62	Green Rosella	<i>Platycercus caledonicus</i>	Tasmania	II
63	Crimson Rosella*	<i>Platycercus elegans</i>	Australia	II
64	Eastern or Gold-mantled Rosella*	<i>Platycercus eximius</i>	Australia	II
65	Yellow Rosella	<i>Platycercus flaveolus</i>	Australia	II
66	Western or Stanley Rosella*	<i>Platycercus icterotis</i>	Australia	II
67	Brown's or Northern Rosella	<i>Platycercus venustus</i>	Australia	II
68	Long-tailed Finch*	<i>Poephila acuticauda</i>	North Australia	II
69	Black-throated Finch*	<i>Poephila cincta</i>	Australia	II
70	Meyer's Parrot*	<i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>	Africa	II
71	Senegal Parrot*	<i>Poicephalus senegalus</i>	West Africa	II
72	Princess of Wales Parakeet*	<i>Polytelis alexandrae</i>	Australia	II
73	Regent Parrot *	<i>Polytelis anthopeplus</i>	Australia	II
74	Barraband's Parakeet (Superb Parrot)*	<i>Polytelis swainsonii</i>	Australia	II
75	Yellow or Golden-collared Macaw*	<i>Primolius auricollis</i>	South America	II
76	Red-rumped Parrot*	<i>Psephotus haematonotus</i>	Australia	II
77	Mugla Parrot or Many-coloured Parrot*	<i>Psephotus varius</i>	Australia	II
78	Dusky Lory*	<i>Pseudeos fuscata</i>	New Guinea	II
79	Goldie's Lorikeet or Red-capped Streaked Lorikeet	<i>Psitteuteles goldiei</i>	New Guinea	II
80	Pesquet's Parrot	<i>Psittichas fulgidus</i>	New Guinea	II
81	Maroon-bellied Parakeet*	<i>Pyrrhura frontalis</i>	South America	II
82	Maroon-faced Parakeet*	<i>Pyrrhura leucotis</i>	South America	II
83	Green-cheeked Parakeet*	<i>Pyrrhura molinae</i>	South America	II

## CITES-listed exotic bird species recorded in Indian bird trade

84	Toco Toucan	<i>Ramphastos toco</i>	South America	II
85	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus</i>	Australia	II
86	Rainbow Lorikeet*	<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>	Indonesia and Australia	II
87	Ornate Lorikeet*	<i>Trichoglossus ornatus</i>	Indonesian and New Guinea	II
88	Black-throated Finch*	<i>Poephila cincta</i>	Australia	II
89	Cut-throat Finch*	<i>Amadina fasciata</i>	Africa	III
90	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	Africa	III
91	Lavender Waxbill*	<i>Estrilda caerulescens</i>	West Africa	III
92	Orange-cheeked waxbill	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>	West Africa	III
93	Red-billed Fire finch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	Africa	III
94	Green-backed Twin-spot	<i>Mandingoanitidula</i>	Africa	III
95	Melba finch or Green-winged Pytilia*	<i>Pytilia melba</i>	Africa	III
96	Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu*	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>	Central Africa	III
97	Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	Africa	III
98	Long-tailed Paradise Whydah	<i>Vidua paradisaea</i>	Central Africa	III

Note: Species marked with (\*) were recorded breeding in captivity in India during surveys.

## Recommendations

Since trade in non-native species does not come under the ambit of the WPA, it leaves room for traders and breeders to introduce non-native species into the pet trade. Many of these include CITES-listed species but implementing CITES provisions for trade in wild animal species involving India has not been robust and adequate, although a proposed amendment is seeking to introduce a CITES component into the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The nature of the new statute and its implementation currently remains unclear and ambiguous. CITES is enforced through the Customs Act 1962, the EXIM Policies of the Government of India, and the Export Import Control Orders 1992, often these Acts or legal instruments are rendered ineffective once wildlife contraband is seized within the territories of the country. Such loopholes need to be closed so as to monitor and regulate the exotic bird trade in India.

Better awareness among buyers of birds concerning the legal status of native and exotic species is also crucial. Bird identification posters like those published by TRAFFIC on munias, parakeets and weavers birds also aid enforcement agencies to identify Indian species in illegal bird trade and to differentiate them from exotic species.

Welfare standards at breeding farms, during transportation and also while on display at shops/exhibitions need better enforcement. Checking birds for zoonotic diseases is also important to control the spread of such diseases from wild caught birds.

Overall the exotic bird trade in India is a huge sector that needs conservation oversight.

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Blue and Gold Macaw



# Munias of India in the illegal bird-trade

India is home to eight species of munia, belonging to the family Estrildidae. All are protected in the wild in India. Their small size ( $\leq 10$  cms), beautiful colouration, melodious calls and easy upkeep make them highly sought after cage birds, often resulting in their illegal capture for the pet trade in India.



Concept & Photographs by: Abrar Ahmad  
Technical Support | Design & Logistics:  
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Munias and avadavats are listed in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Hunting, trapping or trade in these species is prohibited and is a punishable offence. Often these species are dyed in various colours by traders to make them look attractive and exotic and to prevent detection by enforcement agencies. The Green Avadavat *Amundava formosa* is a globally threatened species listed as 'Vulnerable' in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and also included in Appendix II of CITES which strictly regulates their international trade.

TRAFFIC India carries out research and provides analysis, support and encouragement to efforts aimed at ensuring that wildlife trade is not a threat to the conservation of nature in India.

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♂ Female ♀

Weaver birds are highly gregarious, small, sparrow-sized birds (15 cm), popularly known for their excellent nest-weaving skills. During the monsoon season these birds build a vertical oval nest with a side entrance (tunnel). All weaver birds have a breeding and non-breeding plumage. The males acquire a distinctive breeding plumage with a yellow crown, head and breast ornamentation. However, non-breeding males are brown and streaky similar to females and juveniles.

India is home to four species of weaver birds, belonging to the family Ploceidae. However in India, the Baya Weaver is represented by two sub species.

1. a. 'Indian' Baya Weaver (Common Baya or Indian Weaver) *Ploceus philippinus philippinus*  
b. 'Eastern' Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus burmaricus*
2. Streaked Weaver *Ploceus manyar*
3. Black-breasted Weaver (Black-throated Weaver Bird) *Ploceus berrhghalensis*
4. Finn's Weaver (Finn's Baya or Yellow Weaver) *Ploceus megarhynchus* (Endemic to India & Nepal)

**Threat:** Although protected as native species, weaver birds are illegally traded in India - breeding males are caught for the cage bird trade during summer, while the females and non-breeding males are sold for food and also as release birds throughout the year. Often, the breeding male birds are dyed in various colours by traders to make them look attractive and exotic and for deceiving the enforcement agencies.

**Legal Status:** Hunting, trapping or trade of weaver birds is prohibited in India and is a punishable offence.

**Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972:** Schedule IV

**CITES:** None of the species are listed

**IUCN:** Finn's Weaver-Vulnerable

Other three species/sub-species-Least Concern

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**TRAFFIC**  
The wildlife trade monitoring network

is a strategic alliance of



TRAFFIC is a strategic alliance of WWF and IUCN and is a leading specialist on wildlife trade issues. In India, TRAFFIC operates as a programme division of WWF-India. TRAFFIC carries out research and provides analysis, support and encouragement to efforts aimed to ensure that wildlife trade is not a threat to the conservation of nature.

Concept & Images by Abrar Ahmed  
Layout & Design by Shivam Sundaram



**TRAFFIC**

NEWSLETTER

Issue 30

JANUARY 2019

NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA

**SPECIAL ISSUE ON MARINE TRADE**

# **TRAFFIC** **POST**

**STATUS OF MARINE MOLLUSCS IN ILLEGAL**

**WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA:**

**Wild Cry**

# TRAFFIC Post

TRAFFIC's newsletter on wildlife trade in India was started in September 2007 with a primary objective to create awareness about poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

Illegal wildlife trade is reportedly the fourth largest global illegal trade after narcotics, counterfeiting and human trafficking. It has evolved into an organized activity threatening the future of many wildlife species.

TRAFFIC Post was born out of the need to reach out to various stakeholders including decision makers, enforcement officials, judiciary and consumers about the extent of illegal wildlife trade in India and the damaging effect it could be having on the endangered flora and fauna.

Since its inception, TRAFFIC Post has highlighted pressing issues related to illegal wildlife trade in India and globally, flagged early trends, and illuminated wildlife policies and laws. It has also focused on the status of legal trade in various medicinal plant and timber species that need sustainable management for ensuring ecological and economic success.

TRAFFIC Post comes out three times in the year and is available both online and in print. You can subscribe to it by writing to [trafficind@wwfindia.net](mailto:trafficind@wwfindia.net)

All issues of TRAFFIC Post can be viewed at [www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org); [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)

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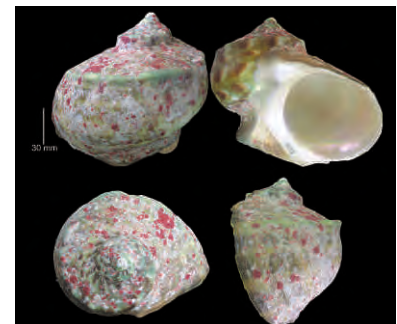


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# From the Desk



Dr Saket Badola, IFS  
Head of TRAFFIC, India Office

Dear Readers

With a long coastline extending for more than 8,118 km including islands, India has a vast interface with marine wildlife and marine products. With more than 150 species of sharks, 3,400 species of mollusc, 2,443 species of marine fishes, 200 species of sea cucumber and 206 species of coral, India is bestowed with a very rich marine biodiversity. To add to this there are at least four million fisherfolks who are also dependent on these marine resources for their livelihoods and for fulfilling their basic food requirements.

However, some of these resources are illegally exploited: recent seizures include more than 8,000 kg of shark fins near Mumbai, hundreds of kilogrammes of seahorses and sea cucumbers from all across the country, and huge volumes of sea fans and corals seized often hundreds of kilometres away from the coast. Incidences of large seizures of marine products far from the coast—such as seahorses near the Indo-China border in Sikkim or Mobula ray gills from Moreh (Manipur) on the Indo-Myanmar border—are strongly indicative of the involvement of organised wildlife criminals. A visit to almost any curio shop in a coastal tourist destination is enough to reveal the level of extraction of seashells and corals, many of them prohibited for sale under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Illegal and unsustainable extraction of marine resources is a concern for biodiversity conservation and also harmful for the livelihood sustainability of millions of people who are dependent on our oceans.

Problems concerning illegal extraction of marine products occur at every level, beginning with a basic lack of awareness about marine species and the issues involved—both among the general public and enforcement agencies. Enforcement agencies entrusted with monitoring of marine products in trade are thinly stretched, while legislation concerning marine wildlife diversity is sometimes weak, poorly implemented, or there are gaps with its harmonisation with international regulations such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), while enforcement staff often have limited capabilities in recognising products of marine origin.

To begin to address these shortcomings, we decided to dedicate the present issue of the TRAFFIC Post to illegal trade in marine wildlife as part of our efforts to highlight this hugely important but little discussed issue.

This Issue of the newsletter also gives an update on various programmes undertaken by TRAFFIC in recent months in India, ranging from capacity building of forest staff from Nagaland to Tamil Nadu, updating



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publications under the “Don't Buy Trouble” campaign, to an advisory on the illegal owl trade.

Two highlights of our work in recent months have been the organisation of “enforcement co-ordination meetings” for relevant agencies and the continuing roll out of our Sniffer Dog Programme.

For the first of these, TRAFFIC helped bring multiple enforcement agencies together to ensure coordinated action against wildlife crime. One such meeting targeting illegal wildlife trade across the Indo-China border took place in North India, with support from Indo-Tibet Border Police (ITBP), the paramilitary organisation entrusted with peace time border security. Representatives from ITBP, the State Forest



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Department, scientific institutions such as the Wildlife Institute of India and other enforcement agencies came together to discuss and build strategies for combating illegal wildlife trade. A similar meeting took place in the coastal city of Mumbai and focused on illegal marine trade in coastal areas and through seaports. This meeting, in collaboration with the Mangrove Cell of Maharashtra Forest Department, was attended by representatives from the police, customs, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Port Authorities, Railway Police, and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau.

Our wildlife sniffer dog programme also entered a new phase with the passing out of the seventh batch of dogs and their handlers. The graduation ceremony was witnessed by Ms Yami Gautam, a renowned film actress, who expressed her keen interest in supporting TRAFFIC's efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade in India and agreed to become brand ambassador of our Super Sniffer programme—a perfect amalgamation of her love for dogs and her concern for vanishing biodiversity across the globe. We hope that Yami's active involvement in the programme will help to spread awareness about the dangers from wildlife crime to a wider audience.

Happy Reading!

Dr Saket Badola, IFS  
Head- TRAFFIC, India Office





## **TRAFFIC Updates (India)**

- 1. Yami Gautam announced as Brand Ambassador for Super Sniffers**
- 2. Zoonackathon 2.0 held to find tech-solutions to curb wildlife crime**
- 3. TRAFFIC strengthens wildlife law enforcement capacity for curbing poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India**
- 4. Enforcement agencies in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh meet to strategise tackling wildlife crime across borders**
- 5. IFS Officers learn about the role of NGOs in the field of wildlife conservation**
- 6. TRAFFIC's new "Don't Buy Trouble" leaflet includes a checklist for wildlife consumers**
- 7. Air Vistara educates its passengers about illegal wildlife trade**
- 8. Haldwani Zoo celebrates Wildlife Week and children learn about curbing wildlife crime**



**BUY**  
**LE**

Wildlife products,  
buying trouble

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**YOU CAN HELP**

- Do not buy illegal wildlife products. Also discourage your family and friends from doing so.
- Help raise awareness about illegal wildlife trade. Follow and share news, stories and updates on social media.
- If you come across any information on illegal wildlife trade, you may contact the following:
  - Local Forest or Police officials.
  - Customs officials, at airports, seaports and other international transit points.
  - Offices of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB). WCCB is the nodal agency under Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, established with the purpose of curbing illegal wildlife trade.

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**Guwahati** 0361 2532708  
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## Yami Gautam announced as Brand Ambassador for Super Sniffers

**W**ell-known Indian actress Yami Gautam was announced as the Brand Ambassador for TRAFFIC and WWF-India's Super Sniffer programme. Yami attended the graduation ceremony of the seventh batch of 10 wildlife sniffer dog squads at the National Training Centre for Dog (NTCD), BSF Academy, Gwalior, on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2018 to pledge her support.

The new batch of 10 dogs and their handlers will now join their counterparts deployed across the country, taking the total strength of TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dog squads to 66. Yami met the dog squads belonging to the Forest Departments of Telangana, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru during the ceremony.

Illegal wildlife trade is the fourth largest organised criminal activity globally, threatening the survival of many species the world over. India, as a major biodiversity hotspot, has been the target of wildlife poachers and smugglers. Combatting wildlife crime is therefore urgent and crucial to the conservation of the natural world.

TRAFFIC with support from WWF-India launched the Super Sniffer programme in India to help combat illegal wildlife trade in 2008. The initiative helps raise and train wildlife sniffer dog squads to strengthen anti-poaching and anti-trafficking measures of the Forest Departments and other enforcement agencies concerned with wildlife protection. The seventh batch of wildlife sniffer dogs began their nine-month training programme in April 2018 at the NTCD as 6–9 month old puppies, following a rigorous training schedule before their passing out parade as highly-skilled wildlife sniffer dog squads.

Yami Gautam said, "Illegal wildlife trade is increasing by the day, threatening the existence of our wildlife and the rich biodiversity of India. For me, these heroic dogs are not just 'man's best friends', but also nature's best friends! During the ceremony I have heard some heart-warming



stories of their bravery and I am proud to be able to help and support their cause."

Dr Saket Badola, IFS, Head, of TRAFFIC's India office said, "Illegal wildlife trade and trafficking is a transnational and organised criminal activity, threatening the future of our wild resources. Tigers, leopards, elephants, pangolins, birds, timber such as red sanders, orchids, turtles and tortoises and many other endangered wildlife are targeted for this illicit trade. Super Sniffers have proven to be the game changers, acting with tremendous skill and courage to protect wildlife. Yami's support to the Super Sniffer programme will help us spread awareness about the issue of wildlife trafficking and poaching. It will also help us strengthen the work that the Super Sniffers and their handlers are doing to protect the wildlife of this country."

Dr G.S Nag, CVO, Officer Commanding, NTCD said, "This is the third batch of wildlife sniffer dogs that was trained at NTCD under TRAFFIC's programme and we are happy to have partnered for this important cause.

Support of well-known personalities like Yami Gautam will help bring visibility and acknowledgement to the efforts of wildlife sniffer dogs in the field of wildlife protection in India.”

Super Sniffers have undertaken at least 250 wildlife seizures in India and have been trained to detect tiger bone and skin, leopard bone and skin, elephant tusk, bear bile and caterpillar fungus.



## SUPER SNIFFERdigest, India's first newsletter on wildlife sniffer dogs

**launched:** TRAFFIC has recently launched an e-newsletter on its wildlife sniffer dog squads deployed in the field across India. The newsletter titled “SUPER SNIFFERdigest”, is a bi-monthly newsletter that brings stories and updates from across India about how these dogs are helping to curb wildlife crime. The subscription to the newsletter is free, simply send an email to [trafficind@wwfindia.net](mailto:trafficind@wwfindia.net).

The first Issue highlights the achievements of Karim, a young wildlife sniffer dog deployed at Buxa Tiger Reserve in West Bengal and the second Issue celebrates the achievement of a retired Super Sniffer from Madhya Pradesh. You can download the newsletters at [https://www.wwfindia.org/about\\_wwf/enablers/traffic/publications/newsletter/](https://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/enablers/traffic/publications/newsletter/)

**TRAFFIC**  
The wildlife trade monitoring network

**SUPER SNIFFERdigest**  
Issue 2, November 2018

TRAFFIC is monthly e-newsletter to celebrate achievements of its wildlife sniffer dogs in India.

**CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF JIMMY, ONE OF THE FIRST WILDLIFE SNIFFER DOGS IN INDIA**

Jimmy is calm but exceptionally skilled wildlife sniffer and trapper dog who was one of the first dogs trained under TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dog programme in India. She started in November 2017 after a successful seven years of active service with Madhya Pradesh Forest Department.

Jimmy's deep bond with her handlers Kalish Charan and Prakash Khawar had been the foundation of her successful career as a wildlife sniffer dog.

In the span of seven years of her service, this veteran dog assisted with the "Tiger Sniff" trial in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh by catching a record 27 wildlife contrabands, that included six cases of tiger poaching, five cases of leopard poaching, two cases of bear poaching, two cases of langur poaching, three cases of cheetah poaching, seven cases of wild dog poaching, three snake and turtle rescue cases and others.

These cases resulted in the arrest of more than 100 offenders and seizure of several wildlife articles including tiger bones, claws, leopard skins and claws, bear claws, meat and joints of sambar and chital deer, wild boar meat and bone, parts of their tusks and skin of Gaur and nilgai and a langur skull. Apart from seizure of various wildlife parts and specimens, Jimmy helped the Forest Department in recovery of several pieces of poaching gear and traps.

Before her retirement in 2017, Jimmy captured her last local leopard poaching in Khatu Wildlife Division. During her active service, Jimmy didn't just earn appreciation for herself but also helped her dedicated handler Kalish Charan were recognition as well as Madhya Pradesh Forest Department for exemplary work in the field of wildlife protection.

Jimmy retired from active duty in November 2017 under the supervision of her handlers. In the past year, she was given a special award in August 2018. She was given an emotional and ceremonial send off by Madhya Pradesh Forest Department.

**ABOUT WILDLIFE SNIFFER DOGS TRAINING CENTRES**  
TRAFFIC has in collaboration with three training centers for its Super Sniffers since 2008, viz. National Training Centre for Dogs (NTCD), SSP Academy, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh; 23rd Battalion Special Armed Force - Police Dog Training Centre, Dehra Dun, Uttarakhand and National Dog Training Centre of India, Sector 10, Police Cantonment, Meerut. The current batch of TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dogs are being trained at SSP Academy which is a government institution devoted to training dogs and their handlers from various Central Police Organization, State Police Forces and other law enforcement agencies of India and other foreign countries.

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## Zoohackathon 2.0 held to find tech-solutions to curb wildlife crime

**M**umbai and New Delhi hosted Zoohackathon, a technology based challenge to help find solutions to curb poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India. The Mumbai Zoohackathon, the city's first, was organised by the U.S. Consulate, Mumbai in partnership with TRAFFIC and WWF-India on 15-16<sup>th</sup> September, at Veermata Jijamata Udyaan, Mumbai. The New Delhi Zoohackathon 2.0 was held on 22-23<sup>rd</sup> September, at the WWF-India Secretariat and was jointly organised by the U.S. Embassy, New Delhi, TRAFFIC, and WWF-India.

### What is “Zoohackathon”?

Zoohackathon, is a novel two-day technology-based challenge where software coders, wildlife enthusiasts, and web designers work together to find solutions to the problems related to illegal wildlife trade. The first Zoohackathon events took place in 2016 in London, Sydney, Washington D.C., San Diego, and Seattle. India's first Zoohackathon was held at the WWF-India Secretariat in New Delhi on 7–8<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

### Why is it organised?

Illegal wildlife trade is devastating wildlife species the world over, as poachers, traffickers and highly organised criminal syndicates ruthlessly pursue profit at any cost to meet international demand. In light of this, Zoohackathon was conceptualised and organised to challenge the public to develop technology-based solutions that can help stop wildlife trafficking. It brings together young developers, designers, project managers, and subject matter experts to create applications, systems, and tools to help reduce demand for illegal wildlife products.

### What happened at Zoohackathon, Mumbai?

Mumbai's first ever Zoohackathon emphasised the need to use innovation and technology as important tools for fighting wildlife crime in India. The competition commenced with an introduction to the “problem statements” related to wildlife crime by U.S. Department

of State's Ms Victoria Peabody. These statements included-Demystifying Laws about Wildlife Trafficking; Communication Tools for Wildlife; Wildlife Trafficking on Social Media and Identifying and Tracking Animals in Captivity. Seven competing teams from across Mumbai chose a topic of their choice and worked for two days to develop tech-based solutions that were presented before the judges by the end of the second day.

“Team Fauna” a group of four young enthusiasts won the Mumbai Zoohackathon with their concept to use virtual reality animal models to help zoos and conservation organisations better communicate the plight of endangered and trafficked wildlife species to their visitors. They also developed a new social media tool (a “bot”) which can pre-warn online shoppers about the illegalities involved with purchasing endangered animal products.

The runners up group - “Team Syndicate”- developed a machine-learning platform to scan e-commerce platforms and blogs which are used to buy and sell trafficked animals against prevailing laws. The programme developed by the team identifies such illegal transactions and then pulls out contact and other relevant information about the buyers and sellers, so that law enforcement agencies can more efficiently reach these traders and break up the trafficking ring. The



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programme could also generate wildlife trafficking alerts to send to law enforcement agencies via SMS in real time whenever such transactions are identified.

Ms Jennifer Larson, Deputy Principal Officer, U.S. Consulate General Mumbai said “Events such as these provide a unique platform where new ideas can be developed to create solutions and assist administrations and enforcement agencies to combat poaching and illegal wildlife trade”.

Mr N. Vasudevan, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Mangrove Cell, Maharashtra Forest Department added, “Illegal wildlife trade is hampering conservation efforts for various wildlife species while crippling the ecosystem where these species are known to occur. Concerted efforts are needed including a need to use tools and technologies to combat the problem, while also using such mechanisms to reach out and educate the masses”.

TRAFFIC believes that integration of technology and conservation is essential to combat the growing menace of illegal wildlife trade. Such technologies can also go a long way in educating and creating awareness among various stakeholders.

The judging panel for the event included Mr N. Vasudevan IFS, APCCF Mangrove Cell, Maharashtra Forest Department; Ms Jennifer Larson, Deputy Principal Officer, U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai; Mr Abraham Koshy, Country Manager—India, The Open Group; Dr Shubhalaxmi, Founder of Ladybird Environmental Consulting Firm, iNatureWatch Foundation; and Dr M. Maranko, Regional Deputy Director, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Western Region, Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change.



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## What happened at Zoonackathon 2.0, New Delhi?

Zoonackathon 2.0, New Delhi, had nine teams, including 45 participants, who worked tirelessly for two days to understand the various issues related to wildlife trafficking and then develop tech-based answers to curb poaching, track wildlife criminals, raise awareness among wildlife consumers, and help stop illegal wildlife trade. The teams were mentored by wildlife experts from TRAFFIC and the San Diego Zoo, USA, as well as IT and communications experts.



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Team “Zoonackini” from IIIT-D won the challenge while the Team “Error: Error not Found” from the University of Delhi were the runners up.

Team “Zoonackini” came up with a unique web tool called “ClawNet”. This concept involves an interactive platform to demystify wildlife laws and make it easier for the general public to understand and differentiate between illegal and legal wildlife products. This tool will be helpful in generating information that will be used to map out trade routes for law enforcement agencies to use. The team used a 3D-rendered globe for mapping the routes.

Team “Error: Error not Found” presented an idea to develop a voice user interface called “Wildlife Guru” that would provide details about wildlife products, wildlife species in trade, laws, lists of organisations that can be contacted to report a crime, etc. This concept, once fully developed, can be built into Virtual Assistants available in the market today.

The teams presented their ideas/solutions in front of a panel of judges that included: Dr Gabriel Miller, Senior

Scientist, Research and Development at San Diego Zoo Global; Dr Dipankar Ghose, Director, Species and Landscape Programme, WWF-India; Ms Julia Kennedy, Deputy Director, Clean Energy and Environment Officer, USAID; Mr J. Dinesh Kumar, Comp Programmer, U.S. Embassy; and Mr Ashish Choudhary, Senior Software Engineer, Golden Technology International Pvt. Ltd.

Mr Anoop Kumar Naik, Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority and Ms. Tilotma Varma, Additional Director, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau were present at the opening session of Zoohackathon 2.0, New Delhi on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2018 and spoke about the various aspects of wildlife crime and how it has become an organised criminal activity. They encouraged young people to participate and support initiatives such as Zoohackathon so their interest and knowledge can be tapped to find new and innovative solutions to secure the future of wildlife.

Ms. Victoria Peabody, Public Affairs Specialist, Bureau of Oceans, Environmental, and Scientific Affairs, U.S Department of State said: “The New Delhi Zoohackathon was a great success and the participants were inspiring as they created many innovative solutions to end wildlife crime.”

Dr Saket Badola, IFS, Head, TRAFFIC's India Office, presented the certificates and prizes to the winning teams along with Robert Garverick, Minister Counselor for

Economic, Environmental, Science, and Technology Affairs at the U.S Embassy New Delhi.

Dr Badola said that illegal wildlife trade is a serious issue threatening the survival of many wildlife species and he was glad to see so much support among young people to help curb this menace. “Zoohackathon is a platform that brings together intelligent minds to work together to find future solutions to the current problems of wildlife crime. We are happy to have partnered with the U.S. Embassy for this important initiative.”

### **What's next for the winners of Zoohackathon in India?**

The winning teams competed for the global prize, the winners of which were announced on World Cheetah Day, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018. Team Zoocchini, from Zoohackathon New Delhi, came second with “Claw Net”—the web tool and interactive platform that identifies web searches through “code words” commonly used to refer to illegal wildlife items. Team Yamakapi, from the Zoohackathon in San Diego, California was the global winner for the Zoohackathon 2018. They developed “Conscious Consumer,” a Google Chrome browser extension that educates online shoppers about product sustainability through sensitive key terms related to conservation. The winners will be promoted through Zoohackathon events and beyond and will receive mentorship from the U.S. Department of State and its partners.

## **TRAFFIC strengthens wildlife law**

## **enforcement capacity for curbing**

## **poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India**

### **NAGALAND: Community based wildlife protection initiatives—the need of the hour to curb wildlife crime in Nagaland:**

In order to strengthen wildlife law enforcement efforts in Nagaland and adjoining areas to curb poaching and illegal wildlife trade, TRAFFIC along with the Nagaland Forest Department and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) organised a two-day wildlife crime investigation

and law enforcement training workshop in Dimapur, Nagaland. The workshop was held on 22-23<sup>rd</sup> June 2018 and was attended by 45 forest officials from the State Forest Department. The workshop was an important one for the region that is a rich biodiversity hotspot located in the middle of a trade route notorious for trafficking wildlife products both for local as well as international demand. Nagaland is a key location where strong wildlife



law enforcement and protection is needed owing to its shared border with Myanmar.

The training workshop was inaugurated by Shri C. M. Chang, Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Nagaland. During his discourse he stressed the need for stronger community-based initiatives to curb wildlife poaching and smuggling in Nagaland where the local communities are major stakeholders of wildlife resources. He suggested stronger awareness initiatives among the community members and advised building the capacities of the Forest Department for tackling wildlife crime.

During the programme, Hon'ble Minister, Shri Chang also launched the May 2018 edition of TRAFFIC Post.

Shri I Panger Jamir, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force, Nagaland chaired the programme and suggested the inclusion of wildlife crime investigation and law enforcement in the regular training programmes of the Forest Department.

The training programme covered various important aspects of wildlife crime investigation and law enforcement and the sessions were led by experts from various wildlife specialist organisations conducted through discussions and field exercises. The training workshop ended with a vote of thanks from Shri Satya Prakash Tripathi, Chief Wildlife Warden, Nagaland.

**TAMIL NADU: Specialised wildlife forensics training organised for the Tamil Nadu Forest Department:** TRAFFIC and Advance Institute of Wildlife Conservation (AIWC), Vandalur, Chennai organised a special training

programme for officials of the Tamil Nadu Forest Department on 26-28<sup>th</sup> September 2018 to introduce the use of forensic science for effective prosecution in wildlife cases. The training was organised at the premises of AIWC and was attended by 54 officials.

Use of forensic science for wildlife crime scene investigation and prosecution is considered a significant tool for combatting wildlife crime. Established on the same principles as human forensics, wildlife forensics can be used to identify a variety of wildlife species, especially as the evidence is usually in the form of animal parts or derivatives and rarely a whole animal. Moreover, sometimes the characteristics of the derivative may not represent those of the animal, making it difficult to document and use it as evidence in a case. Further to this, if improper methods are used for collection and preservation of the samples, the forensic results may be inconsistent or even incorrect. Therefore, adequate training for collection and preservation of samples for forensic use by wildlife law enforcement officials in crime scene investigation is required.

The three-day training covered various aspects of forensic science including the essentials of wildlife forensics; molecular DNA and its use in wildlife crime investigation; species identification and differentiation based on various forensic samples; veterinary pathology in investigating wildlife crime; and wildlife sample collection procedures.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Director—AIWC who led the training programme said, “India's proximity to demand countries and long porous borders makes it precariously vulnerable to wildlife crime and illegal wildlife trade.” He listed the various species in trade and emphasised the need for better enforcement and for efforts to curb both domestic and international demand.

Dr Merwyn Fernandes, Coordinator—TRAFFIC's India Office spoke of the need to develop and strengthen skills of the Forest Department in relation to wildlife forensics. He said that effective crime scene investigation is crucial to building prosecution and successful conviction of the perpetrators.

The training also provided an opportunity for enforcement and wildlife experts to discuss future developments, including the use of aroma sensors; enhancing legal knowledge; laboratory accreditation; developing e-tutorials about wildlife forensics; and conducting refresher courses on a regular basis to update the knowledge and skills of wildlife officials.



## Enforcement agencies in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh meet to strategise tackling wildlife crime across borders

**E**nforcement agencies in India are increasingly recognising that addressing wildlife crime cannot be undertaken in isolation. On 11th July 2018, TRAFFIC helped bring together representatives of various wildlife law enforcement agencies—Indo Tibet Border Police (ITBP), Uttarakhand Forest Department and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)—to discuss issues relating to wildlife crime in border areas. The meeting was also attended by scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and hosted by ITBP at their Northern Frontier Head Quarter, Seema Dwar, Dehradun.

“Inter-agency co-operation and collaboration is crucial to eradicating wildlife crime,” was the unambiguous message of the meeting, which was attended by nearly 40 officials mainly from ITBP and Uttarakhand Forest Department posted in the border regions of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

Ms Aparna Kumar, IPS, Deputy Inspector General, ITBP, shared her extensive experience of dealing with wildlife crime in border regions and reiterated that ITBP staff managing border areas can play a significant role in curbing trans-boundary wildlife smuggling.

Dr Dhananjai Mohan, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Uttarakhand, highlighted the ongoing illegal wildlife trade at the porous borders of the state with the Tibetan Autonomous Region and Nepal. He also gave an overview of how enforcement agencies have been working with the local communities in different landscapes to gather intelligence to prevent wildlife crime in those regions.

Mr Vivek Kishore, IPS, Joint Director, WCCB, highlighted cases from Kaziranga National Park and Valmiki Tiger Reserve where joint operations and collaboration among agencies had led to successful seizures and wildlife crime prevention and detection.

Dr Rajiv Bhartari, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, Uttarakhand suggested that as the Forest Department has limited resources for patrolling high altitude areas of the Himalayas, especially during harsh weather, the ITBP with its permanent presence in the area could help support the Forest Department in fulfilling its anti-poaching and anti-trafficking goals.

Participants unanimously agreed on the need for sensitisation and capacity building programmes for ITBP officials at grassroot levels who are posted in critical wildlife areas and transit points for wildlife smuggling. The participants also agreed to taking forward initiatives related to joint patrolling by the ITBP and Forest Department. d to joint patrolling by ITBP and forest department.



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## IFS Officers learn about the role of NGOs in the field of wildlife conservation

In July and September 2018, WWF-India and TRAFFIC hosted two batches of over 60 Indian Forest Service (IFS) Officers undergoing their Mid-Career Training Programme (MCTP) from Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA) in order to help strengthen synergies between enforcement agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working for conservation and protection of wildlife.

The IFS officers, belonging to various state / central government cadres and in the ranks of the Chief Conservator of Forests and Conservator of Forests, visited the WWF-India Secretariat and learnt more about the structure and programmes of WWF-India and TRAFFIC. Many of the participants attending the session also headed organisations outside of the forest department and were in various Ministries of the Government of India and State Governments.

The session with WWF-India and TRAFFIC was organised as part of the MCTP, aimed at introducing participants to the work of leading conservation NGOs in the country.

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, WWF-India; Dr Sejal Worah, Programme Director, WWF-India and Dr Saket Badola IFS, Head of TRAFFIC's India office all spoke about WWF-India's and TRAFFIC's pioneering programmes in India.

Question and answer sessions clearly indicated a raised level of interest and understanding among the participants about the crucial and catalytic role played by NGOs to support government initiatives for accomplishing bigger goals.

## TRAFFIC's new 'Don't Buy Trouble' leaflet includes a checklist for wildlife consumers

Generating awareness about issues related to poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India has been an important component of TRAFFIC's work in the country. In 2008, TRAFFIC launched the Don't Buy Trouble campaign, targeted at tourists and the general public who may knowingly or unknowingly become a party to illegal wildlife trade. The campaign not only highlighted the impacts on various wildlife species but also warned consumers against buying illegal wildlife products.

The Don't Buy Trouble campaign has been successful in reaching out to the masses in India and has been TRAFFIC's longest running campaign in the country. One important campaign tool is a leaflet educating wildlife consumers about making the right choices. The latest version of the leaflet, in English and Hindi, can be obtained free of cost by writing to TRAFFIC's India office at [traffind@wwfindia.net](mailto:traffind@wwfindia.net). It can also be downloaded at [https://www.wwfindia.org/about\\_wwf/enablers/traffic/publications/posters/](https://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/enablers/traffic/publications/posters/)

## Don't Buy Trouble Leaflet

### ARE YOU COMMITTING A CRIME?

#### THINK BEFORE YOU BUY!

Wildlife, in all its forms, is a vital component of the natural environment. For centuries, human activities have threatened to upset the balance of nature, for example through indiscriminate and unsustainable utilisation of wild animals for consumption as food, decorative items, clothing, jewellery, medicines and other uses. Not only are the majority of wildlife species in India legally protected, making such activities illegal, they may also have caused populations of some species to diminish to critically low levels.

Therefore 'Think before you Buy!' Your actions may be violating the law and pushing wildlife species towards extinction

Poaching of wild animals for their skins, bones and other body parts is driven by consumer demand and is frequently orchestrated by organised criminal networks. It has become one of the most severe threats to wildlife today. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), wildlife crime is the world's fourth largest global crime, and over 7,000 wildlife species world-wide have been found in illegal wildlife trade.

In India, the trade in more than 1,800 species of wild animals, plants and their derivatives is prohibited under India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. International trade is further regulated through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)—to which more than 180 countries, including India, are Party—and under which roughly 5,800 species of animals and 30,000 species of plants are protected against over-exploitation.

BE WISE:  
If in doubt - DON'T BUY.

Remember, Ignorance of the law is not an excuse.



This is a list of commonly encountered wildlife items that are illegal to offer for sale or buy in India:

**Marine products:** Reef-building Corals, Organ-pipe Corals, Black Corals, Fire Corals, Sea Fans and other highly endangered marine species including dried seahorses and pipefish; molluscs such as Nautilus, Horse's Hoof and Horned Helmet are sold as artefacts, curios and jewellery. One report claims that thousands of tonnes of live seashells and corals are dredged from the oceans every day—many of them protected species.

**Ivory items:** Figurines, carvings, artefacts and jewellery made from elephant tusks has endangered the future of the Asian Elephant in India and the African Elephant in Africa. Ivory continues to be smuggled to destinations in Asia for carving into decorative items.

**Shahtoosh shawls:** Three to five Tibetan Antelopes (Chirus) are slaughtered to obtain sufficient wool from their soft underbelly to produce just one shahtoosh shawl.

**Reptile skin bags and other accessories:** Handbags, belts, wallets, shoes and other products made from the skins of protected species of reptiles including snakes, crocodiles, monitor lizards etc may be sold in clandestine markets.

**Body parts and derivatives of Tiger, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Clouded Leopard and other wild cats:** Products commonly seen in illegal wildlife trade include fur coats, wallets, scarves, traditional Chinese medicines, wine etc. Almost every part of a tiger's body can turn up in illegal trade.

**Live birds sold as pets:** These include the various parakeets species of India, munias, Hill Mynas, falcons, shikras, Baya Weavers, bulbuls and many other protected wild bird species. More than 450 species of the approximately 1,300 Indian species have been documented in international and domestic bird trade. Also in illegal trade are non-native (exotic) species including Grey Parrots, toucans, macaws, sugarbirds and others brought illegally into India without adequate clearances. At least 110 non-native species are reported to be in trade in India.

**Turtles and tortoises:** Black Spotted Turtle, Indian Star Tortoise, Gangetic Softshell Turtle, Indian Flapshell Turtle, Indian Tent Turtle and many other species of tortoises and freshwater turtles are exploited for the illegal pet trade, medicines and meat.

**Medicinal plants and orchids:** International trade in 1,290 species of orchids, timber species and medicinal plants in their raw form such as logs, whole plants, crude drugs, oil and resinoid extracts is prohibited under India's EXIM policy. Only value-added products such as medicines derived from a cultivated variety of specified species may be allowed for export.

**Others:** Mongoose hair paintbrushes and make-up brushes; perfume fixative, incense material, and medicine made from the musk pod of musk deer and medicines from bear bile and pangolin body parts are also among the products illegally traded.

## Air Vistara educates its passengers about illegal wildlife trade

In June 2018, Air Vistara began supporting initiatives to educate their passengers about illegal wildlife trade in India. In Issues 6 and 7 of their inflight magazine—Vistara—a two page beautifully designed and informative spread on conservation of Snow Leopard *Panthera uncia* and Indian Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* respectively featured in partnership with TRAFFIC. With nearly 1 million individuals having travelled on an Air Vistara flight between June and July 2018, the printed infographics were a strong outreach tool.

In recent years, there has been a surge in illegal trade of wildlife and their derived products with many smugglers misusing the complex international aviation system to evade customs and other enforcement agencies. While some wildlife products are smuggled out of the country overland through porous borders, much is believed to be transported by airlines either as cargo or with passengers.

There is also lack of awareness among some passengers about the legality or otherwise of wildlife trade. Many

tourists arriving in India may knowingly or unknowingly buy wildlife products that are illegally for sale or purchase. The support and co-operation with the aviation industry is therefore a critical factor in curbing illegal wildlife trade.

## Haldwani Zoo celebrates Wildlife Week and children learn about curbing wildlife crime

On 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018, TRAFFIC's India Office in association with Haldwani Zoo organised an awareness programme for nearly 200 students and forest staff at the premises of the zoo. The students were from 11 schools in and around Haldwani in Uttarakhand.

The full day programme included nature trails, pledges to protect and conserve nature, a slogan writing competition on the theme of curbing wildlife crime, movie screenings and quizzes. Educational material from TRAFFIC was shared with participants.

Participants included 11 students from the National Association for the Blind, Haldwani. They gave a singing performance on stage and spoke about the importance of wildlife and its conservation. TRAFFIC awarded them special prizes.

Raj Shekhar Singh from TRAFFIC's India office said, "Participants found the nature trail the most exciting part



© TRAFFIC

of the celebration. The students learnt about various species of trees, plants, birds and butterflies along the trail and were guided by naturalists from the region."

Wildlife Week is celebrated every year from 2-8<sup>th</sup> October in India to draw attention to wildlife conservation and highlight the threats to many species. The theme for 2018 was "Big cats—Predators under Threat."

# B

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## Outpost

**1. Gaps in knowledge threatening precious coral populations:  
TRAFFIC's latest study "Seeing Red"**

## Gaps in knowledge threatening precious coral populations: TRAFFIC's latest study “Seeing Red”



© Hiromi Shiraishi / TRAFFIC

**A** new TRAFFIC study released in September 2018 has shed light on the trade in precious corals in East Asia, revealing that inconsistent trade data and questionable harvesting practices could threaten vulnerable species.

Precious corals have been harvested and traded internationally since as early as pre-dynastic Egypt, valued for their beauty by diverse cultures around the world. *Seeing Red: Precious coral trade in East Asia* focuses on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)-listed Coralliidae family, which comprises over 40 species and three genera of precious deep-sea corals. The new study examines CITES and customs data to present an overview of the changing trade in CITES-listed precious corals in the Coralliidae family, and potential consumption trends that could threaten the species if not addressed.

Corals in the Coralliidae family are distributed throughout the world's tropical, subtropical and temperate oceans, but in only two areas—the Mediterranean Sea and the northern Pacific Ocean—are

they commercially exploited. Between 2011 and 2015, roughly 80,000 individual pieces and 210 tonnes of CITES-listed raw *Corallium* corals were imported globally. Between 2011 and 2015 Aka Coral *C. japonicum*, distributed throughout Japan, the northern Philippines, Indonesia, and Japan and valued for its intense red colour and characteristic translucent finish, was the dominant species in trade.

While various conservation and management measures have been introduced in different countries/territories as well as protection of four *Corallium* species as CITES Appendix III-listed species from 2008, there remains concern over the conservation status of the species. Pressure from persistent demand and a slow rate of renewal makes them vulnerable to over-exploitation, and illegal fishing and trade has been reported.

Market surveys conducted in Japan, mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong SAR revealed that although differences in species and product preferences exist, tourists from mainland China seem consistently to play an important role as consumers of precious coral products across the board.

“As knowledge of the populations and conservation status of *Corallium* corals is limited, there is an urgent need for research in range and harvesting countries and territories to gain a better understanding of these issues,” said Hiromi Shiraishi, TRAFFIC's Programme Officer.

TRAFFIC presents a series of recommendations, covering sustainable management, regional co-operation, data collection, and effective implementation of CITES, to help stakeholders work across supply chains towards a fully transparent and sustainable trade in these precious resources.

Download a copy of the report at <https://www.traffic.org/site/assets/files/11127/seeing-red-vfinal-1.pdf>



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## **CITES Update**

- 1. “Life below water: for people and planet” announced as the theme of UN World Wildlife Day 2019**
- 2. India gearing up for the 18th CoP to CITES**

## “Life below water: for people and planet” announced as the theme of UN World Wildlife Day 2019

For the first time ever, the next World Wildlife Day is bound to make a splash as it focuses on marine species. This was announced by the Secretariat of CITES and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), working closely together to facilitate the global celebration of next year's United Nations World Wildlife Day (3<sup>rd</sup> March).

World Wildlife Day 2019 will give a chance to highlight the crucial importance and value of marine wildlife to our everyday lives, to celebrate successful initiatives to conserve and sustainably manage these species and to scale up support for such initiatives.

Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, UN Assistant Secretary General and Director of UNDP's Bureau for Policy and Programme notes, “Oceans regulate our climate, produce half the oxygen we breathe, provide nourishment for 3+ billion people, and absorb 30% of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere and fully 90% of the heat from climate change. To ensure that oceans and marine species are preserved and protected, nature-based

solutions that bring together public, private and civil society partners need to be replicated and scaled-up.”

David Morgan, Officer-in-Charge of the CITES Secretariat, said: “All whales and dolphins, all marine turtles, all seahorses, many coral species, and more and more shark species have been put under the protection by CITES—the world's wildlife trade regulator. For marine species, CITES is at the interface between sustainable use and international trade for fisheries, working to ensure that trade in marine species listed under the Convention is legal, sustainable and traceable.”

World Wildlife Day 2019 will be marked by a series of events and media activities around the world, including a high-level event at UN Headquarters in New York on (Friday) 1<sup>st</sup> March.

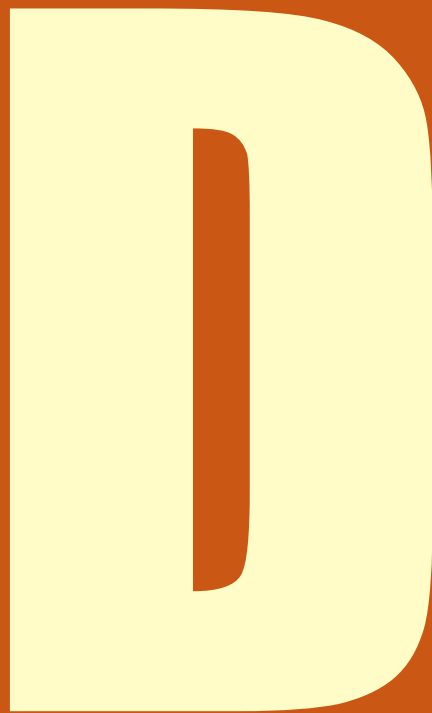
Read more at [https://cites.org/eng/news/focusing-on-marine-species-for-the-first-time-the-next-world-wildlife-day-is-bound-to-make-a-splash\\_16112018](https://cites.org/eng/news/focusing-on-marine-species-for-the-first-time-the-next-world-wildlife-day-is-bound-to-make-a-splash_16112018)

## India gearing up for the 18<sup>th</sup> CoP to CITES

In October 2018, the CITES Management Authority of India under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) convened a meeting of various CITES Committee members to discuss proposals regarding the CITES Appendix listings of Indian Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans*, Tokay Gecko *Gekko gekko* and *Dalbergia* spp. to be tabled ahead of the

18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18) to CITES. CoP18 will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 23<sup>rd</sup> May–3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019. At each CoP, CITES Parties discuss and vote on proposals to amend the Appendices. Two-thirds of the parties must vote in favour of a proposal for it to be accepted.





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## **TRAFFIC Alert**

- 1. 1,190 kg Sea Cucumber seized in Tamil Nadu**
- 2. 8,000 kg of shark fins bound for China seized in Mumbai and Veraval**
- 3. Man held for trying to sell corals in city market in Tamil Nadu**

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1

## 1,190 kg Sea Cucumber seized in Tamil Nadu

In July 2018, Marine Police of the Coastal Security Group seized a huge haul of 1,190 kg of processed Sea Cucumber *Holothuria* spp., after intercepting a boat at sea between Vedhalai and Maraikayarpattinam near Mandapam, Tamil Nadu, and detained two people on suspicion of smuggling contraband to Sri Lanka. Acting on specific information received from headquarters in Chennai, three Marine Police teams seized the cargo, packed in 26 polythene-layered gunny bags.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Sea cucumbers belong to a group of marine animals called echinoderms that are mainly found on the sea floor worldwide and have a leathery skin and an elongated body. Sea cucumbers are estimated to comprise more than 90 percent of the mass of all creatures living at a depth of 26,000 feet or more, making them the dominant organism in some ocean trenches.

Sea cucumbers are often referred to as the oceans' vacuum cleaners, cleaning the seabed by swallowing large quantities of sediment, filtering out the organic matter, and leaving clean sand in their wake. Despite the important ecological role played by them, sea cucumbers are harvested in large numbers for human consumption.

There are nearly 1,250 known sea cucumber species worldwide and reports have suggested that globally at least 38% of sea cucumber fisheries are overfished.

Nearly 200 known species of sea cucumbers are found in Indian waters, about 75 of them are present in shallow waters. Almost 20 of

the sea cucumber species found in Indian waters have commercial importance, including White Teatfish *Holothuria fuscogilva*; Black Teatfish *H. nobilis*; Brown Sandfish *H. spinifera*; and Prickly Redfish *Thelenota ananas*.

In India, sea cucumbers are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, making extraction, trade or any other forms of utilisation of the species a punishable offence.

However, these marine animals continue to be smuggled in large numbers to China and many Southeast Asian countries where they are boiled, dried or smoked to prepare a delicacy known as *bêche-de-mer*. Apart from their demand as a delicacy, sea cucumbers are also used in traditional Chinese medicine and have featured in products such as "Holothurian wine" or soap. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands have the richest diversity of sea cucumbers



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# 1

## 1,190 kg Sea Cucumber seized in Tamil Nadu

*Continued from page 23*

in India followed by the Lakshadweep Islands, Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay, Gulf of Kutch, coastal areas of Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka.

Sea cucumbers are reported to be primarily collected from the Gulf of Mannar and are smuggled from the Ramanathapuram-Tuticorin coast in Tamil Nadu to countries including China, Japan and Malaysia.

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# 2

## 8,000 kg of shark fins bound for China seized in Mumbai and Veraval

**O**n 1st September 2018, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized 8,000 kg of shark fins from Mumbai and Gujarat destined for export to China and Hong Kong. According to a DRI statement, the fins were meant for illicit export by misdeclaring them as dried ray skins, dried marine products and fish maw. In total, 3,000 kg of shark fins were seized from a godown at Sewri in Mumbai and 5,000 kg from Veraval in Gujarat. Four people were arrested.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

International demand for shark fins and other shark products has been the main driver of shark fisheries operating out of India. Sharks are sought for their meat, leather, liver oil, cartilage and fins: several species are threatened.

More than 70 species of sharks have been sighted in Indian waters and over 20 are



*Continued on page 25*

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2

## 8,000 kg of shark fins bound for China seized in Mumbai and Veraval

*Continued from page 24*

reported to be caught for commercial trade. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), India was the world's second biggest shark catcher. In 2015, India banned the export of all shark fins.

Prior to this, in 2013, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issued a “fins naturally attached” policy, requiring sharks to be landed with their fins still attached to monitor better how many and what species were being caught. The 2015 ban was announced in an effort to protect threatened shark species.

The international trade in some shark species is further regulated through CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) to which India has been a Party since 1976. In 2003, Whale Shark *Rhincodon typus* was listed in Appendix II of CITES and later in 2013, five species of sharks—the Oceanic Whitetip *Carcharhinus longimanus*, Scalloped Hammerhead *Sphyrna lewini*, Great Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna mokarran*, Smooth Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna zigaena* and Porbeagle Shark *Lamna nasusa* and the two species of manta rays (*Manta* spp.)—were also listed in Appendix II of CITES. In October 2017, the Silky Shark *Carcharhinus falciformis* and all three species of thresher shark (Pelagic Thresher *Alopias pelagicus*, Bigeye Thresher *Alopias superciliosus*, Common Thresher *Alopias vulpinus*) were also included in Appendix II.

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, prohibits hunting, trade and any other forms of exploitation of 10 species of sharks and rays: Narrow Sawfish *Anoxypristis cuspidata*; Pondicherry Shark *Carcharhinus hemiodon*; Ganges Shark *Glyphis gangeticus*; Speartooth Shark *Glyphis glyphis*; Ganges Stingray *Himantura fluviatilis*; Largetooth Sawfish *Pristis microdon*; Longcomb Sawfish or Green Sawfish *Pristi zijsron*; Giant Guitarfish *Rhynchobatus djiddensis*; Porcupine Ray *Urogymnus asperrimus* and Whale Shark *Rhincodon typus*.

To secure the future of sharks in the wild there is a need to curb illegal trade and regulate legal trade by implementing sustainability and traceability measures.

In India, TRAFFIC in collaboration with WWF-India is working to understand the local demand and consumption of sharks and their body parts and also the international demand for all shark species in trade. This will be used as a basis for making recommendations to enhance protection measures and develop shark conservation policies in India. On 17th September, following the seizure of shark fins in Mumbai, TRAFFIC, along with the Mangrove Foundation called for a joint enforcement meeting in Mumbai to take stock of the shark fins that were seized, identify gaps in enforcement and discuss ways to co-ordinate the efforts of various enforcement agencies in tackling wildlife crime. The meeting was attended by eight enforcement agencies including Customs, Forest Department, Railway Protection Force and three non-governmental organisations. The meeting was successful in drawing up both short-term and long-term plans to combat illegal wildlife trade along the coast of Maharashtra.



Shark fin soup © WWF-Hong Kong / Tracy Tsang

**Sources:**

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/8-000-kg-of-shark-fins-seized-by-dri-directorate-of-revenue-intelligence-officials-in-mumbai-gujarat-1910668>

# 3

## Man held for trying to sell corals in city market in Tamil Nadu

In July 2018, sea fans and corals were seized from a man in Nagapattinam city market in Tamil Nadu by the police with the help of the forest cell of the Criminal Investigation Department. According to police officials, following a tip-off, they arrested a man trying to sell corals and sea fan (Gorgonians), which are protected under Indian law.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Globally, there are between 800 to 1,000 known species of corals and possibly many more in unexplored deep water territories. At least, 206 species are known from the Indian coral reef with a large number found in the waters of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

All reef-building corals Scleractinians, Black corals Antipatharians, Organ Pipe Coral *Tubipora musica*, Fire corals *Millipora* spp. and Sea Fans (Gorgonians) are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Under this, any form of extraction, exploitation or trade of these species is prohibited. All reef building corals, Black corals, Organ Pipe Coral and Fire corals are listed in Appendix II of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

Despite legal protection, reports indicate that the trade in many coral species continues in India. Hard corals are exploited for their use in construction, production of lime and for other industrial purposes, while soft corals are sold as curios and for making ornaments and other decorative items. Besides the clandestine market for corals in India and other countries, many protected species are also sold openly at many tourist beaches across India and at many religious destinations in North India.

Coral exploitation and trade can prove challenging to curtail because corals are often collected from offshore areas that may not be regularly patrolled by enforcement agencies. When raw coral enters the market, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to identify particular species. Once the coral is dried and processed, identification becomes even more difficult. They are often combined with other goods or marine products (especially shells) in official customs statistics. Mixed consignments of shells and corals might be labeled as “shell” on trade permits and documents.

Presently, there is no concrete information concerning the level of coral trade in India and much research is needed to understand the latest trends and trade routes. TRAFFIC strongly recommends further research into the illegal collection and trade in various marine species including corals. Coral reefs protect our shorelines from damage and erosion and act as breeding grounds and shelter for many marine organisms, making them a marine biodiversity hotspot. Corals reefs make habitats for several other marine species for their spawning and nursery activities in their life cycles.

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## In Focus

### Getting to grips with trade in protected marine species in India

**Merwyn Fernandes\* and Aaron Savio Lobo#**

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## Getting to grips with trade in protected marine species in India

Seafood exports from India were totalled at 10,85,378 metric tonnes (MT) between April 2017–January 2018, registering a growth of 13.68% against the previous year, with frozen prawns and frozen fish (11.65% growth) contributing the most. Frozen shrimp being the top export item with a share of 42.05% in terms of quantity (456,404 MT). The USA (187,873 MT), Southeast Asia (127,525 MT) and the European Union (62,164 MT) continued to be the three major importers while imports by Japan (28,064 MT) registered a substantial increase (mpeda.gov.in/MPEDA/admin/files/PressRelease/mpeda-exportsApr-Jan-English.pdf). The increase in seafood exports means enhanced marine trade activity at all *entrepôts* in the trade chain.

India's coastline of 8,118 km along with an Exclusive Economic Zone of over two million km<sup>2</sup> and a continental shelf area of 468,000 km<sup>2</sup> sustains diverse habitats supporting a wide variety of marine species. The country stands fifth in global capture fisheries production (3.5 MT) with a growth of 2.9% in the annual export of fisheries products from 2015–2016 (FAO

2018). In 2017, 788 marine fish species (618 species on the west coast of India and 592 species on the east coast) were identified in the landings along the Indian coast. This sector supports nearly 3.79 million fisherfolk and meets the nutritional requirements of a significant portion of the country's population (FRAD CMFRI 2018).

### Harvest and trade in legally protected marine species in India

Marine biodiversity is directly impacted by factors such as overexploitation, pollution and habitat destruction, and indirectly by climate change and related perturbations of ocean biogeochemistry (Worm *et al.*, 2006; Ramirez *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, there is also considerable impact through illegal trade and wildlife crime, which is especially targeted at certain marine species. All these issues are vital for understanding better ways of managing and conserving particular marine species which are cryptic and occur at low density.

There are a few critical issues in the fisheries sector which would need collective action by various enforcement and management agencies for conserving threatened marine species many of which are enlisted in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (henceforth WPA, 1972) including eight species of marine elasmobranchs (sharks and rays), two species of freshwater elasmobranchs, Giant Grouper *Epinephelus lusalceolatus*, all species of seahorses and sea cucumbers, twenty four species of shells (gastropods), three species of crustaceans, all species of corals including pipe coral, sea fan and sponges. Also a number of marine mammals, otters, crocodiles, sea snakes and marine turtles.

Apart from this, India is also signatory to a number of international conventions and regulatory bodies including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species and the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) obligating it to have structures in place to implement decisions taken by these management bodies to regulate trade. However, despite legal protection under the WPA, 1972 and international conventions, many of these species continue to be harvested either through targeted harvests or opportunistically in other unselective fisheries such as



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trawl fisheries. Illegal trade in marine species and their parts very often has strong international drivers and is often part of larger trans-boundary criminal networks with demand originating in a country distant from the source country.

The mode of exploitation of these marine species and their products are as follows:

**a. Targeted exploitation:** Fuelled by their demand in national and international market, some of the species are specifically targeted for extraction by fisherfolks. Some of the most targeted species include:

a. Whale Shark *Rhincodon typus* for meat (Sathiyaselvam *et al.*, 2016), from Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

b. Almost all species of sea cucumber are illegally harvested from Indian waters mainly to fulfil international demand of food and belief-based systems of healthcare in Southeast Asian countries. From 2014-2018 at least 33.8 MT of sea cucumber were seized in India (*pers comm.* 10 December 2018).

c. Corals are another group which are specially targeted for use in jewellery and in aquariums, especially *Tubipora* sp, as well as their calciferous content used as supplementary material in limestone.

Due to diminishing economic returns from fisheries, local communities have also started to exploit other marine resources such as molluscs to supplement income for sustenance. The exploitation of these species such as Window Pane Oyster *Placuna placenta* which is now driven by the shale, oil and gas industries (Sukhdhare *et*

*al.*, 2013); apart from curio trade which is more pervasive and is seen across tourist and sacred religious destinations across India, including sites which are in central and northern parts of India (John *et al.*, 2013); and marine ornamental fish trade which includes seahorses. The main reason behind this targeted exploitation is believed to be poor enforcement of existing laws such as WPA, 1972 due to lack of knowledge about marine protected species among enforcement agencies with officials unable to differentiate between permissible and non-permissible trade of marine species. Thus, in many places along coastal India marine protected species are traded both in open and in clandestine markets.



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**b. Opportunistic exploitation:** This refers to exploitation of wildlife resources during the process of extraction of targeted species, and generally the value of the opportunistically harvested species is higher than the target species (Branch *et al.*, 2013).

These species are generally encountered incidentally in non-selective fisheries, for e.g. seahorses captured in trawl fisheries in India. Trawl fisheries in the country have become increasingly reliant on bycatch that over the years has become commercially valuable. This also includes low-value traditionally discarded bycatch (trash fish now used to make chicken and pet feed, aquaculture feed etc) (Lobo *et al.*, 2010). Rare, high value bycatch can be a major economic subsidy to buffer fishermen against the vagaries of their harvest. Unlike targeted exploitation it is notoriously difficult to monitor the opportunistic harvest of protected species simply because they generally constitute a tiny proportion of the total catch and often fly under the radar of enforcement agencies to



find their way into black markets. Sometimes they are stopped, such as the seizure of 56 kg of dried seahorses at Nathu-La Pass in Sikkim in 2018.

(<https://www.telegraphindia.com/states/west-bengal/seahorses-seized-at-nathu-la-2-detained/cid/1673397>).

In India, accidentally captured protected marine species such as sea turtles and cetaceans are highly visible and fishers tend not to land them but generally to discard them at sea. Also, knowledge about the illegality of landing these larger charismatic species seems to be better known.

**c. Gaps in policies:** There are several Indian marine species listed as threatened on the IUCN Red List that do not feature in the WPA, 1972.

The IUCN global threat status of the 155 Chondrichthyan species recorded from Indian waters are as follows; 3% Critically Endangered (CR), 5% Endangered (EN), 26% Vulnerable (VU), 21% Near Threatened (NT), 8% Least Concern, 27% Data Deficient and 10% Not Evaluated. However, only 10 of these species are protected by Indian law.

In 2001, ten species of elasmobranchs were listed in the Schedules of the WPA, 1972. All of these were included under Schedule I (Part 2A), which affords them the highest level of protection (comparable to terrestrial species of the same status) and prohibits the hunting, trade and any other form of exploitation of these species. Any violation can result in a prison sentence of at least 3 years, which can extend up to seven years and a fine of at least INR 10,000, and up to INR 25,000 (USD 150–370).

The occurrence of three of these listed species (*Glyphis glyphis*, *Himantura fluviatilis* and *Carcharhinus hemiodon*) in Indian waters is yet to be validated and as a result they do not feature in the country's total species count. The rest of the species not listed in the Schedules of WPA, 1972 fall under the management of the fisheries department, and comes under the purview of the Ministry of Agriculture.

In August 2013, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) banned the practice of

“finning” sharks at sea. They had to be landed and brought ashore with their fins intact. The policy prescribes that “any possession of shark fins that are not naturally attached to the body of the shark would amount to hunting” a Schedule I species. Through the “fins attached policy” authorities hope that there will be better monitoring of shark fisheries in India. It is also hoped that this will work more in the favour of fishers, rather than the exporters and traders. There is also an export ban on all shark fins under the Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act 1992 since February 2015.

When it comes to marine rays, it is interesting to note that except for the Porcupine Ray *Urogymnus asperrimus* no other rays are included in the Schedule lists of the WPA, 1972. This is despite the fact that several globally threatened ray species have been recorded in Indian waters.

However, despite these regulations there are reports indicating the persistence of illegal trade in shark fins and Mobula ray gill plates. For example, in 2018, 8.72 MT of shark fins and 86 kg of Mobula ray gill rakes were seized in Moreh, Manipur.

The export of marine species is undertaken through two harmonised system (HS) customs codes 03 and 16, which deal with live and processed forms. The processed forms are either in the fresh, dried, preserved or cold stored forms. There is no institutional mechanism and provisions to monitor CITES Appendix II listed species in trade, as specific HS codes are not yet allocated and hence quantifying the trade for the species is virtually impossible. The present mechanism adopted of generic labelling easily conceals species diversity being exported and also mislabelling within the consignments is used as a mechanism for trading endangered and protected species (Cowthorn *et al.*, 2018). It relies on the exporters wilfully to declare the goods which are being shipped.

**d. Inadequate capacities and knowledge:** The knowledge within enforcement agencies on identification of marine species and their products and derivatives is limited. Technologies and tools too in India have not yet caught up with enhanced sophisticated tools being used for monitoring and managing fisheries such

as Electronic Recording and Reporting system (ERS) which is a mandatory requirement for high sea fishing vessels being used by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission. Limitations in molecular characterisation for marine species are an impediment as currently mainly morphological characters are used for identification. Hence identifying value added products is limited. This is seen as a major gap for enforcing measures to curb illegal trade of marine species.

### Suggestive measures

There is no monitoring mechanism for landing stock and bycatch data, thus incorrect and inconsistent ecological baselines are likely, especially for poorly studied species and groups, that may underestimate the extinction risks for species. In order to curb wildlife crime and illegal trade of marine species a better holistic approach would be required. The critical areas where immediate measures are needed include:

**1. Empowering enforcement agencies other than the Forest Department under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and enhancing their capacities:** As the Forest Department presence is sparse along the coast and most of the fish landings occur at various coastal landing sites, it is necessary to empower enforcement officials other than the Police and Forest Department by using provisions under Section 5 sub section 2 of the WPA, 1972 while simultaneously enhancing capacities for identifying legally protected marine species within the Marine Police, Coast Guards and Customs and Port Officials.

For other species listed in the IUCN Red Lists that occur in Indian waters, the Biological Diversity Act 2002 can be invoked for those not protected under the WPA, 1972 especially for marine bio resources which are indiscriminately exploited for commercial gains such as shells and or ornamental species for the aquarium trade.

Enhancing capacities of law enforcement agencies by incorporating a training programme within their training institutes on legally protected marine species, legal procedures under the WPA, 1972 and Biological Diversity Act 2002.

**2. Community level monitoring:** The fisheries sector has close links to local communities which should be strengthened and developed whereby local communities could be empowered to monitor and manage their own resources. Such models are rare but have worked when communities are homogenous, or they are isolated away from the external factors of the mainland.

There are already multitude challenges in local fisher communities and hence finding ways and means whereby these communities can work together is a task in itself. But this is the way forward as they are at the centre of fisheries and if illegal trade can be controlled or reduced it will be when these fishers communities unite for a larger cause of protecting and conserving marine resources on which they rely.

**3. Improved monitoring by use of advance technologies:** There is an urgent need to create platforms whereby multiple enforcement agencies can have co-ordinated action for effective implementation of various legal instruments in marine and coastal areas. Effective co-ordination and implementation of patrolling within the vast expanses of the sea will go a long way to control illegal wildlife trade for which vessel (trawler) monitoring systems (spatial and temporal) are needed around the coast.

For effectively curbing illegal marine trade there is a need to have in place forensic labs at the port terminal where marine consignments can be screened. These labs must be legally recognised and adopt the latest methods such as real time multiplex PCR that has been developed to detect nine of the twelve CITES-listed shark species in a single reaction (Cardenosa *et al.*, 2018) and which are easy to use, reliable, scientifically sound and most importantly have a quick turn around time.

There is a need to develop and incorporate appropriate technologies (such as artificial intelligence or machine learning) so that legal trade is not hampered while illegal trade can be curbed. Such technologies can also be adapted for monitoring e-commerce platforms and social networks for clues of illegal wildlife trade.

**4. Harmonisation of national and international policies:** Despite there being few attempts to evaluate the vulnerability of marine species to overexploitation only a few marine species have been listed in various Schedules of the WPA, 1972 such as cetaceans and marine turtles. There are a number of species listed under CITES but not listed under India's WPA, 1972 including the globally threatened Scalloped Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna lewini* and Great Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna mokarran*. A few species which are globally endangered such as Broadfin Shark *Lamiopsis temminckii*, Long-headed Eagle Ray *Aetobatus flagellum*, Mottled Eagle Ray *Aetomylaeus maculates*, Ornate Eagle Ray *Aetomylaeus vespertilio* could be included in the Schedules of the WPA, 1972.

Conservation of marine wildlife and resources is still in its infancy and requires understanding the various intricacies that impact this trade before sound conservation policies are developed and implemented. Working with local communities to drive the conservation agenda for marine species, while taking care of their livelihood is the only way forward.

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## Wild Cry

### **Status of marine molluscs in illegal wildlife trade in India**

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## Status of marine molluscs in illegal wildlife trade in India



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The phylum Mollusca (clams, cockles, oysters, mussels, snails, slugs, nudibranchs, octopus, squids, cuttlefish etc.) is the second largest phyla in the animal kingdom next to Arthropods. Molluscs have adapted to terrestrial, marine and freshwater habitats. In fact, Mollusca represents the largest marine phylum, comprising about 23% of all the named marine organisms. The diversity of molluscs (marine and freshwater) recorded from India is 5,100 species (Venkataraman and Raghunathan, 2015), representing around seven percent of the entire world molluscan diversity. Marine molluscan diversity in India comprises 3,400 species (Rao, 1991, Venkataraman and Raghunathan, 2015).

### Shells

Molluscs are soft bodied animals enclosed within a calcareous, hard external surface secreted by the animal inside and are popularly called “shells”. Although most molluscs have an external calcareous covering, slugs, nudibranchs, octopuses, squids, and cuttlefish either have internal shells or no shell at all. Due to their beautiful shapes, colours and structures, shell collection has long been a popular hobby in many parts of the world.

### Legal status: Marine molluscs

In India, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WPA, 1972) protects various wildlife species listed under Schedules I to VI of the Act. Only 24 species of marine molluscs have been included in Schedule I and IV of the WPA, some 0.7% of the total found in the country (Ramakrisna & Dey 2003 and Biju Kumar *et al.*, 2015).

### Shell business in India

In earlier times, the commercial exploitation of selected shell species was practiced at many places in India and was supervised by the Fisheries Departments under British rule and later by the respective State Governments. The most important were (i) *Rochia nilotica* and *Turbo marmoratus* shells in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and (ii) Indian Sacred Chanks *Turbinella pyrum* and Pearl Oysters *Pinctada fucata* in the Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay and Gujarat coasts.

However, the scenario has now changed. Large quantities of shells are obtained as bycatch from bottom trawlers dragged along the seabed gathering whatever comes in their way. The trawl nets are operated at depths from 100–1,000 metres depending on the season. At times, each trawl boat can bring in more than 200–500 kg of shells that are sold to middlemen through auction. As the number of trawlers have grown in recent years, the landing of shells has risen from what was witnessed 30 years ago. Historically, shells (especially Pearl Oysters, Top Shells, Sacred Chanks and conches) were collected by skin diving or from bottom set gillnets. This scenario has completely changed to one enabling the collection of any shell that is of some commercial use. A recent report published by Tina Deins in the

National Geographic (Animals: Wildlife Watch – June 2018 issue) titled “*Seashell souvenirs are killing protected marine life*” claimed that as many as 100 tonnes of seashells a month pass through some shell processing facilities in Tamil Nadu. Major hubs for shell collection and trade are on the east coast of India, particularly Tamil Nadu. Areas like the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay are rich biodiversity hotspots for marine shells besides the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands.



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Commercially important shells dumped at a shell craft unit, Rameswaram

### Ornamental gastropod shell trade in India: A macroeconomic assessment

S. Shyam Salim, I. Jagadis, V. Venkatesan, M. Kavitha and K. S. Mohamed

The total estimated quantity of trade in gastropods is 11,000 tonnes (10% is contributed by imports) and the revenue around 100 crores. According to the Federation of Sea Shell Handicrafts Merchants Association (FOSSHMA), there are around 90 active sea shell handicrafts traders in India, of which 20 are very active, 30 with minimal functioning and 40 dormant units. Around 350 containers, each with a capacity of 20 t, are exported annually. The traders stock around 20,000–25,000 t annually which are sourced either locally (30%), from other parts of India (60%) or through import (10%). Among the different gastropod species procured as raw materials, 75% are small sized. Among the total of 11,000 t of finished products traded, more than 75% are exported, 24% are sold within the country and less than 1% are sold in local markets.

Mar. Fish. Infor. Serv., T & E Ser., No. 231, 2017

## Illegal trade of protected species of marine molluscs

Shell dealers are well aware of the domestic and international demand for shells. Most of the protected and prized shells are brought directly to the shell dealers by fisherfolk. At the landing centres, middlemen or shell dealers also keep an eye on the bycatch of large quantities of shells at particular seasons.

The collected shells are heaped in open areas at processing centres and allowed to rot. The process of cleaning and polishing shells varies from species to species. While some shells are cleaned with mild acids and polished with oil, some varieties are treated in pans containing hot sand.

The protected species may not be openly displayed in shell souvenir shops (curio shops) or shell processing units but in clandestine markets. Demand for the protected shells is high. Species like Top Shell and Turban Shell are prized for their lustre, used to make buttons and other artefacts while Window Pane Oysters *Placuna placenta* are used to manufacture lamps, articles for display, hair clips and other accessories. The larger shells like the Triton *Charonia tritonis*, Pineapple Shell *Cassia conuta* and the Helmet Shell *Cypraeacassis rufa* are sold as souvenirs. The meat of Horse Conch *Pleuroploca trapezium* is traditionally consumed by local fishermen and the processed dried flakes are even sold in local markets in the districts of Tuticorin and Ramanathapuram.

While *Trochus* and *Turbo* shells are protected, overexploitation of Pearl Oysters and destruction of their “paars” habitats have led to a significant decline in the natural environment. Like the Sacred Chank, they are not included in the

Schedules of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WPA, 1972), while demand has increased many fold in the states of West Bengal and Odisha leading to increased fishing pressures. Another protected species, the Window Pane Oyster is commercially exploited in tonnes from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and collecting it is an important livelihood activity for certain fishing communities.

Out of the 24 species of marine molluscs included in Schedule I and Schedule IV of the WPA, 1972, 22 species are recorded from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and 21 species from the Lakshadweep Islands.

In addition to being a major source, India is also a major importer of shells, in particular from the Maldives, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Mexico, China, Tanzania and other East African countries (John et al., 2012). A study by John *et al.* (2012) points out that more than 90% of marine protected species (including marine shells) are available at curio shops in Kanyakumari compared to other major destinations like Rameswaram and Mahabalipuram. Besides the tremendous demand in the international market for these shells, Indian dealers import many shells for the local market. The best example is the African Conch *Busycon contrarium*, which is imported and sold as “Valampuri Sangu” or “Dakshinavarti Sankh” (basically the rare sinistral—shells with a left hand rotation) as an alternative to the Indian Sacred Chank whose shells are dextral—right hand rotation. However, the outer whorl can be cut neatly by shell craftsmen to look like sinistral shells and sold to pilgrim tourists for an exorbitant price. According to interviews with shell traders dealing with marine protected curios, 65% of all identified protected molluscs and corals in the curio markets of Tamil Nadu were collected from



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Windowpane Oysters *Placuna placenta* seized during a joint operation of WCCB, Western Region and Maharashtra Forest Department from a mangrove area of Navi Mumbai in 2016

total weight seized was 1,262 kg. All these species are protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The major collection and supply areas are in southern Tamil Nadu and they are exported via sea or by air through Chennai, Kochi or Thiruvananthapuram under different trade and/or scientific names. The domestic trade hubs are located close to where the shells originate.

Rameswaram (Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay), followed by Andaman Islands (17%), Lakshadweep Islands (10%) and Kerala (3%) (John *et al.* 2012).

One of the biggest seizures of protected molluscs, 80 tonnes of Window Pane Oysters *Placuna placenta*, took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2017 from a seashell company in Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra. Further investigation revealed that the shells had been harvested for use in furniture, lampshades, cutlery and jewellery pieces. Also, powdered shells are apparently smuggled by sea to oil rigs in countries of West Asia and Argentina although their use there is not known.

Similarly, in 2011, smugglers were caught red-handed carrying 8 King Shells, 5 pieces of Pineapple Shells, 140 pieces of *Nautilus Pomilius*, 100 small pieces of clam shell, 28 medium sized paired clam shells, 5 large clam shell pieces and 922 kg of Schedule IV Species—*Trochus*, 220 kg of Panja Shells, and 120 kg of Turbo Shells. The

## International trade

International trade in wild fauna and flora is regulated through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to which India has been a signatory since 1976. However, only three species of marine molluscs from India—Bear's Paw/Horse's Hoof *Hippopus hippopus*, Elongate Giant Clam *Tridacna maxima* and Fluted Giant Clam *Tridacna squamosa* are listed under CITES. CITES aims to protect and conserve species and avoid their decline due to overexploitation, such as the Queen Conch *Strombus gigas* from the Caribbean. From an India perspective, there is a lack of important information on the status of Indian protected species of shells such as landing data, their life history and habitats.

## Gaps in wildlife law enforcement: Identification issues

A major hurdle for enforcement efforts to curb illegal trade of protected marine shells is their identification. A classic example is confusion between Spider Conch Shells *Lambis lambis* (a non-protected species) and Giant Truncate Spider Conch Shells *Lambis truncata* (a protected species). Similarly, there are three closely related species in the Window Pane Oyster group that can be identified only by their cardinal teeth (a locking mechanism for both shell valves)—a relatively straightforward task for a taxonomist, but forest department officials generally struggle. Often, shells of the wrong species are seized. Hence there is clearly a need for identification tools and special training in shell identification for officials including Forest, Fisheries, Coast Guard, Navy, Marine Police and other stakeholders like the Anti-Poaching Watchers (APW) and Panchayat Leaders or Leaders of Fishermen Federations.



Giant Truncate Spider Conch Shells  
*Lambis truncata*



Spider Conch Shells *Lambis lambis*

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## Conclusion

Protection of molluscs in the long run may pave the way for restoration of the natural balance, especially in ecologically sensitive, biologically rich, fragile areas such as coral reef ecosystems. Conservation efforts by various state environment departments and marine research institutions can play a major role in curbing activities involving shell collection and processing to a large extent. One example is that of the Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Trust (GoMBRT), where a specially designed vehicle operated by the Environment Department, Government of Tamil Nadu and funded by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has helped in organising sensitisation programmes like mini-exhibits, village level street plays, posters, flashcards on protected marine species under the WPA, 1972. The Anti-Poaching Watchers (APW), members of the fishing community from villages in the vicinity of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve, also play a crucial role in helping curb marine wildlife crime and therefore their support and commitment is crucial. The presence of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), a nodal agency for curbing wildlife crime in India under the Government of India, at Ramanathapuram can further strengthen the institutional mechanisms and inter-departmental joint patrolling activities.

A major threat to marine mollusc species is that the bottom trawling lands large quantities every day. Shells caught as bycatch are nowadays allowed to rot in the landing centres or on beaches. Some mechanism to avoid protected species from being caught as bycatch needs to be formulated. Habitats of protected species need to be identified and zones demarcated as a conservation measure. Additionally, special capacity building for fishing communities and enforcement officials needs to be conducted on a regular basis as without them conservation efforts are likely to be futile. An additional complication is that scientific names are continuously being updated by taxonomists based on new findings yet the WPA, 1972 still contains the old names/synonyms for many species, creating confusion for enforcement agencies. Nomenclature for a number of relevant species are provided in the table on the next page.

Conservation success stories in many parts of the world provide insights into how species can be protected at the local level. A mechanism to study the breeding biology and life cycle of protected marine species is urgently needed to prepare conservation plans and implement region-specific activities. Research institutions should encourage and fund projects related to status and recovery programmes for marine species to keep a check on wild populations and pressure on them due to their exploitation.



**CHECKLIST OF UPDATED INDIAN MARINE MOLLUSC SPECIES LISTED UNDER THE WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) ACT (WPA), 1972 AND CITES**

Accepted Scientific Name	Old name (as in WPA, 1972)	Common Name	WPA (Schedule)	CITES (Appendix)	Distribution	Size
<i>Rochianilotica</i>	<i>Trochus niloticus</i>	Commercial Trochus/Top shell	IV		Andaman & Nicobar	Standard Height: 76—133 mm Standard Width: 96—122mm
<i>Turbo marmoratus</i>	<i>Turbo marmoratus</i>	Great Green Turban	IV		Andaman & Nicobar	Standard Height: 165—185 mm Standard Width: 165—212mm
<i>Leporicypraea amappa</i>	<i>Cypraea mappa</i>	Map Cowrie	IV		Andaman & Nicobar; Pondicherry, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Lakshadweep	Standard Length: 40—46mm; Standard Width: 33—36mm; Standard height: 29—32mm
<i>Staphylaea limacina</i>	<i>Cypraea limacina</i>	Limacina Cowrie	IV		Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar, Tamil Nadu	Standard Length: 14—24mm; Standard Width: 11—15 mm; Standard Height: 9—13mm
<i>Talpariatalpa</i>	<i>Cypraea talpa</i>	Mole Cowrie	IV		Andaman & Nicobar; Pondicherry, Gujarat, Lakshadweep, Tamil Nadu	Standard Length: 50—70mm; Standard Width: 25—40mm; Standard Height: 22—34 mm
<i>Dolomenaplicata siboldi</i>	<i>Strombus plicatus siboldii</i>	Sibold's Conch/Pigeon Conch	IV		Andaman & Nicobar; Lakshadweep East and West coast of India.	Shell length: 29.5—38.3mm; Shell width: 6.35—11.7 mm
<i>Harpago arthriticus</i>	<i>Lambis chiragra arthritica</i>	Arthritic Spider Conch	IV		Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep	Shell Length 112—121mm; Shell Width: 65—69mm
<i>Harpago chiragra</i>	<i>Lambis chiragra</i>	Chiragra Spider Conch	IV		Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep	Shell Length 171—242mm; Shell Width: 104—170mm
<i>Lambis crocata</i>	<i>Lambis crocata</i>	Orange Spider Conch	IV		Lakshadweep, Tamil Nadu and Andaman & Nicobar	Shell Length: 75—107mm; Shell Width: 35—42mm
<i>Lambis indomaris</i>	<i>Lambis scorpius</i>	Scorpion Conch	IV		Tamil Nadu, Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep	Shell Length: 112—119mm; Shell Width: 48—54mm
<i>Lambis millepeda</i>	<i>Lambis millepeda</i>	Milleped Spider Conch	IV		Andaman & Nicobar	Shell Length: 104—112 mm; Shell Width: 62—74 mm
<i>Lambis truncata</i>	<i>Lambis truncata</i>	Truncate Spider Conch	IV		Lakshadweep, Tamil Nadu and Andaman & Nicobar	Shell Length 162—209mm; Shell Width: 75—127mm

Accepted Scientific Name	Old name (as in WPA, 1972)	Common Name	WPA (Schedule)	CITES (Appendix)	Distribution	Size
<i>Charonia tritonis</i>	<i>Charonia tritonis</i>	Trumpet Triton	I		Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar and Tamil Nadu	390—420mm
<i>Cassis cornuta</i>	<i>Cassis cornuta</i>	Horned Helmet	I		Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar and East and west coasts of India	Shell length: 272—293 mm; Shell width: 112—125mm; Shell Height: 76—90mm
<i>Cypræacassis rufa</i>	<i>Cypræacassis rufa</i>	Bull mouth helmet	I		Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar and Tamil Nadu.	Shell Length: 85—120mm; Shell Width: 60—80mm; Shell Height: 55—66mm
<i>Pleuroploca trapezium</i>	<i>Fasciolaria trapezium</i>	Trapezium Conch	IV		Andaman & Nicobar, Pondicherry, Gujarat, Lakshadweep, East and West coasts of India	Shell length: 144—160mm; Shell width: 74—109mm;
<i>Tudicla spirillus</i>	<i>Tudicla spirillus</i>	Spiral Tudicla	I		Lakshadweep Tamil Nadu	Shell Length: 57—70mm; Shell Width: 35—44mm
<i>Harpulina arausiaca</i>	<i>Harpulina arausiaca</i>	Vexillate volute/Gold Banded Volute	IV		Pondicherry, Lakshadweep, South East Coast of India	Shell length: 65—76 mm; Shell width: 48—53 mm
<i>Conus milneedwardsi</i>	<i>Conus milneedwardsi</i>	Glory of India	I		Lakshadweep, Kerala, East Coast, West Coast, Andaman & Nicobar and Tamil Nadu	Shell length: 103—145mm; Shell width: 33—43mm
<i>Placuna placenta</i>	<i>Placenta placenta</i>	Window Pane Oyster	IV		Lakshadweep, East and West coast of India and Andaman and Nicobar islands.	Shell Length: 46—48mm; Shell Width: 43—46mm
<i>Tridacna maxima</i>	<i>Tridacna maxima</i>	Elongate Giant Clam	I	II	Lakshadweep, Tamil Nadu and Andaman and Nicobar islands.	Shell Length: 110—130mm; Shell Width: 85—95mm
<i>Tridacna squamosa</i>	<i>Tridacna squamosa</i>	Fluted Giant Clam	I	II	Lakshadweep, Tamil Nadu and Andaman and Nicobar islands.	Shell Length: 120—135mm; Shell Width: 85—110mm
<i>Hippopus hippopus</i>	<i>Hippopus hippopus</i>	Bear's paw/ Horse's Hoof	I	II	Andaman and Nicobar islands.	Shell Length: 135—148mm; Shell Width: 89—118mm
<i>Nautilus pompilius</i>	<i>Nautilus pompilius</i>	Chambered Nautilus	I		Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and east and west coast of India.	Standard Length: 175—200mm

