

SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS



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

The following section features a selection of seizures and prosecutions reported between April and September 2015. Sources are cited at the end of each country section. Readers are referred to the TRAFFIC website (www.traffic.org/media-reports/) for regular updates on cases reported from around the world.

BIRDS

INDONESIA: On 4 May 2015, harbour police at Tanjung Perak port, Surabaya, caught a passenger disembarking with two birds packed in jerry cans; a search of the boat uncovered some travel bags that were found to contain 21 Yellow-crested Cockatoos *Cacatua sulphurea* (CITES I) that had been placed in plastic water bottles. Officials had to cut the birds free; seven subsequently died.

According to BirdLife, this species has declined extremely rapidly owing to international trade and widespread deforestation within its range, with an estimated global population of fewer than 7000 individuals.

On 12 June 2015, two people were arrested in Langkat, Sumatra; the beaks or casques of 12 Helmeted Hornbills *Rhinoplax vigil* (CITES I) were confiscated, together with firearms. Langkat is an important entry point for poachers trespassing in the Gunung Leuser National Park (GLNP). The suspects' operation involved 30 hunters who poached the birds inside Indonesia's Leuser landscape—a continuous forest covering more than 25 000 km², most of which lies in the province of Aceh, including GLNP.

Helmeted Hornbills are one of Indonesia's most hunted bird species. In recent years, international trade for their casques has increased sharply, owing to demand for their use as carved decorations. The suspects confessed to selling at least 124 casques within six months to a Chinese middleman.

A shipment of Helmeted Hornbill casques was seized with pangolin scales and other wildlife in Hong Kong in May 2015 (see Pangolins).

CNN: <http://cnn.it/IEWRUxz>; 7 May 2015

Newswise: <http://bit.ly/1MTgldW>, 19 June 2015

ELEPHANTS

see also under **Other / Multi-seizures**

BENIN: In August 2015, a former eco-guard with CENAGREF (Centre National de Gestion des Réserves de Faune) was sentenced to 18

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

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

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

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

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

months' imprisonment and ordered to pay USD13 000 for killing an elephant (CITES I) and its baby for ivory.

The Eagle Network, August 2015

CHINA: On 7 September 2015, it was reported that an antique shop owner called Tai of Shandong province had been gaoled for 15 years for smuggling 18 ivory (CITES I) tusks into China (131.36 kg). Qingdao Customs found the tusks in 7 parcels arriving by post from Japan in October 2014. Police traced the suspect from the recipient's telephone number.

In September 2015, it was reported that a woman in Beijing had been gaoled for 6.5 years for smuggling six ivory (CITES I) pieces into China (14.5 kg) that she had purchased in Côte d'Ivoire. The woman was stopped at Beijing international airport in December 2013 with the ivory in her luggage. She claimed that she had purchased the ivory from a Chinese person as souvenirs. The pieces had been wrapped in aluminium foil and prosecutors alleged this was to try to prevent the items showing on airport X-ray machines.

<http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2015-09-08/doc-ixhghuf8218843.shtml>; *South China Morning Post*: <http://bit.ly/1Gpv8kR>, 16 September 2015

FRANCE: On 27 May 2015, Customs officials at Paris-Roissy Charles de Gaulle Airport seized 136 kg of raw elephant ivory (CITES I) from two suitcases in transit from Democratic Republic of Congo to Viet Nam, labelled as "spare parts". The dozen ivory tusks had been cut into 39 pieces and concealed under sheets of aluminium plates.

French Customs: <http://bit.ly/1Gg13C1>, 11 June 2015

HONG KONG: A number of shipments of ivory (CITES I) have been seized at Hong

Kong International Airport in recent months, several of which have involved the same modus operandi of concealment of items in tailor-made vests and arriving from African countries via Dubai, United Arab Emirates:

On 7 August 2015, a man travelling from Harare, Zimbabwe, via Dubai, was arrested in possession of 15 kg of ivory (CITES I) pieces concealed in a tailor-made vest he was wearing; another 15 kg of ivory products were concealed in a tailor-made vest in the hand luggage of a man arriving from Abuja, Nigeria, via Dubai, on 24 August.

On 2 September, authorities seized a parcel of 24 kg of ivory sent from Zimbabwe, via Amsterdam, the Netherlands, declared as "decorative tiles". On 6 September, 51 kg of ivory pieces were seized from two inbound airmail parcels, again declared as "decorative tiles" and using the same route from Zimbabwe. On 25 September, a man arriving from Harare, Zimbabwe, via Dubai, was arrested after officials seized 13 kg of suspected worked ivory products from a tailor-made vest found in hand luggage. On 29 September 2015, 16 kg of suspected ivory pieces similarly concealed were found in the luggage of a man arriving from Abuja, Nigeria, via Dubai.

Hong Kong Customs press releases: www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201508/07/P201508070420.htm, 7 August 2015; <http://bit.ly/1JlPais>, 24 August 2015; www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201509/04/P201509040446.htm, 4 September 2015; www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201509/26/P201509260213.htm, 26 September 2015; *The Standard*: <http://bit.ly/1W5rjs5>, 7 September 2015; *South China Morning Post*: <http://bit.ly/1jTk2Kv>, 29 September 2015

MALAWI: In August 2015, brothers Patrick and Chancy Kaunda were each fined MK2.5 million (USD5500) at the High Court of Malawi after pleading guilty to charges of ivory trafficking and money laundering; they chose to pay the fine instead of serving the seven-year gaol term for their involvement in the illegal

trade in 2.6 t of elephant ivory (CITES I). These are reportedly the harshest sentences ever handed down for wildlife crimes in the country. Brighton Kumchedwa, Director of Parks & Wildlife, added, "The fine is the highest in the history of wildlife in Malawi. However we are aware that this is not commensurate with the sentencing of other countries, and with this in mind we look forward to the imminent review of the *Wildlife Act* and associated legislation."

African Conservation Foundation:
<http://bit.ly/1W45lkb>, 5 August 2015

MOZAMBIQUE: Over one tonne of ivory was seized in May 2015 with rhinoceros horns (see under Rhinoceroses)

SINGAPORE: On 19 May 2015, the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA), with the support of Singapore Customs and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, seized a shipment of two containers from Kenya, destined for Viet Nam, which held 3.7 t of illegal ivory (CITES I) declared as "tea leaves". Concealed among bags of tea, authorities uncovered some 1783 pieces of raw ivory tusks (whole/cut), as well as four pieces of rhinoceros (CITES I) horns and 22 pieces of canine teeth believed to be from African big cats. One man and his two sons were arrested at their home in Kenya for their alleged involvement in the case, which is under investigation and follows the interception of another 3 t of Kenyan ivory in Thailand.

Joint media release: Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority and the Singapore Customs: <http://bit.ly/1NnsZG8> 19 May 2015; *The Star (Kenya):* <http://allafrica.com/stories/201506040374.html>, 5 June 2015

SWITZERLAND: On 6 July 2015, Customs officials at Zurich airport seized 262 kg of ivory that three Chinese men had dispatched from Tanzania. Estimated to derive from up to 50 elephants, the ivory (CITES I) had been cut into 172 pieces and packed in eight suitcases, together with 21 teeth and claws of *Lion Panthera leo* (CITES II). The shipment was being transported from Tanzania's capital, Dar es Salaam, to Beijing via Zurich. It is reported that the trio were charged and fined (amount not reported).

www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/08/04/swiss-customs-seize-578-pounds-of-ivory-en-route-to-china, 4 August 2015; *The Citizen:* <http://bit.ly/1jTkCle>, 17 August 2015

UGANDA: On 4 June 2015, it was reported that aviation police had seized six boxes in transit to Singapore which contained over 740 kg of ivory (plus 100 ivory bangles) that had eluded airport security. The ivory was registered in the names of a Ugandan and was being sent to a company in Singapore dealing in ivory. The tusk markings indicate that the ivory was from outside Uganda. Five security personnel were arrested for alleged connivance to export the ivory; the Ugandan suspect is on the run.

Kfm: <http://bit.ly/1KefhoA>, 4 June 2015



MUHAMMAD ALZAHRI

HELMETED HORNBILL *Rhinoplax vigil*

Several shipments of Helmeted Hornbill casques have been seized recently in Hong Kong and Indonesia. One of Indonesia's most hunted bird species, in recent years demand for their casques—often referred to as "golden ivory"—has increased sharply on the international market to supply demand for their use for carving decorative items.



◀ Hornbill casques and a sack of pangolin scales seized with other wildlife products by Hong Kong Customs and marine police in May 2015.

Photograph: Hong Kong Customs

On 30 June 2015, border police at Ha Tien International Border Gate and Kien Giang Province seized 387 kg of elephant tusks in a lorry travelling from Cambodia. The case is being investigated.

www.thanhniennews.com/society/65-kgs-of-smuggled-rhino-horns-ivory-busted-at-hanoi-airport-42265.html, 17 April 2015; <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/society/135037/social-news-4-7.html>, 4 July 2015

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES:

On 7 May 2015, it was reported that police at Dubai airport had seized 84 pieces (300 kg) of raw ivory (CITES I) that had originated from Côte d'Ivoire, bound for Viet Nam. The consignment was to be handed over to the Ministry of Environment and Water and would be destroyed.

In July 2015, police seized a total of 622 kg of ivory from travellers in transit through Dubai airport in five separate incidents, and involving passengers travelling from African countries to the USA and Asia.

Khaleej Times: <http://yhoo.it/1QSYOr1>, 7 May 2015; www.emirates247.com/news/emirates/622kg-ivory-worth-dh5m-seized-in-dubai-2015-08-25-1.601353, 25 August 2015

VIET NAM: On 16 April 2015, Customs officers at Noi Bai Airport, Ha Noi, discovered 18 suspected ivory (CITES I) pieces (60 kg) and three rhinoceros (CITES I) horns (4.86 kg) packed in two boxes arriving from France. The case is under investigation.

MARINE / FRESHWATER

AUSTRALIA: On May 2015, at Warrnambool Magistrates' Court, Cuong Van Hoang, Nhan Ngoc Hoang and Vinh Thanh Pham pleaded guilty to fisheries offences. The trio were arrested at Griffith Island, Port Fairy, after being observed by authorities fishing and carrying bags of abalones (304 specimens, 173 under the 13-cm size limit). Two of the men, who were charged with further offences relating to the possession of commercial mesh nets, were fined AUD7500 and the third, who had been keeping watch during the fishing operation, was fined AUD5000. All were sentenced to one month in gaol, suspended for two years.

The Standard (Australia): <http://bit.ly/1RW8dii>, 25 May 2015

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CAMEROON: One person has been sentenced at a court in Buea to two years' imprisonment after being arrested in April 2015 in possession of nine marine turtle shells; the defendant was also ordered to pay USD10 000 damages to the government.

The Eagle Network, August 2015

CHINA: Between March and May 2015, the China Coast Guard (CCG) impounded 140 vessels used in the trade in red coral, detained 80 suspects and seized large amounts of coral, a protected species. It is reported that cases of red coral poaching are on the rise in coastal provinces such as Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong, severely harming the marine environment. The CCG has set up checkpoints targeting vessels without names, numbers, certificates or home ports.

Eco-Business: <http://bit.ly/1LLpgCX>, 26 May 2015

ECUADOR: In May 2015, police seized around 200 000 shark fins which were about to be illegally exported to Asia. The fins were discovered after raids on nine locations in the port city of Manta. Six people, including a Chinese national, were arrested.

Interior Minister Jose Serrano said at least 50 000 sharks had been killed by the traffickers. He said the authorities had "dealt a major blow to an international network that trafficked shark fins". "We must end these criminal networks that are only interested in their own economic interests and are destroying the ecosystem."

BBC News: <http://bbc.in/1PSlwTI>, 29 May 2015

SOUTH AFRICA: On 11 May 2015, a raid on a house in Texas, Hangberg, led authorities to an operation involving five people who were discovered cleaning and packing bags with abalones. The suspects fled when approached. Eleven bags each containing 100 abalones (45 kg/bag) and one bag containing 70 abalones (30 kg) were confiscated and handed over to Marine Coastal Management.

On 12 May 2015, a joint effort between members from Port Elizabeth K9-Unit, Kabega Park Crime Prevention Unit and Abalone Task Team led to one arrest in Westering in Port Elizabeth and the seizure of 7570 abalones.

On 12 May 2015, police attached to Philippi SAPS acting on information found 8300 unshelled abalones at a house at 6th Avenue Philippi. No arrests at time of report.

On 5 July 2015, two men were arrested for being in possession of 2915 abalones when they were apprehended in their car near Rivieronderend, Western Cape.

On 5 August 2015, police arrested two suspects and seized over 4000 abalones concealed in a coffin being transported in Beaufort West, bound for Johannesburg. One of the suspects is reportedly a former police officer previously convicted of poaching and illegal abalone trade.

On 14 August 2015, it was reported that a man had been arrested after some 6965 abalones were discovered in his vehicle after he was apprehended following a high-speed chase in the Western Cape.

On 26 August 2015, police in East London recovered 1576 units of frozen unshelled abalones (10 kg) and 669 dried abalones following a raid on a house in Gonubie. Items linked to the illegal harvesting of abalone such as diving equipment and weighing scales were also confiscated. A suspect was arrested.

On 29 August 2015, at O.R.Tambo International Airport, a 100 kg-consignment of abalones arriving from Cape Town and disguised as frozen fish, was seized following a routine check; one person was arrested when he came to collect the cargo.

On 15 September 2015, a suspect was arrested while driving erratically and was found to be transporting 6824 shucked abalones.

AllAfrica.com: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201505121471.html>, 11 May 2015; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201505130974.html>, 12 May 2015; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201505140824.html>, 13 May 2015; www.thenewage.co.za/159906-1008-53-Cape_police_arrest_man_for_possession_of_abalone_worth_R150000, 23 May 2015; www.thenewage.co.za/164061-1008-53-Two_people_arrested_for_possession_of_abalone, 6 July 2015; [iol news: http://bit.ly/1W5IPOf](http://bit.ly/1W5IPOf), 7 August 2015; [iol news: http://bit.ly/1XjUa9o](http://bit.ly/1XjUa9o), 14 August 2015; [iol news: http://bit.ly/1GT033R](http://bit.ly/1GT033R), 26 August 2015; www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/R100-000-worth-of-abalone-sized-at-OR-Tambo-20150830, 30 August 2015; [Times Live: <http://bit.ly/1Fd4tHK>](http://www.timeslive.co.za/159906-1008-53-Cape_police_arrest_man_for_possession_of_abalone_worth_R150000), 15 September 2015

PANGOLINS

All pangolin species are listed in CITES Appendix II, with a zero quota for Asian species.

See also under Other / Multi-seizures

HONG KONG: On 6 May 2015, Customs and the Marine police seized 129 kg of suspected pangolin *Manis* scales, live tortoises, lizards, spiders, and some 10 kg of Helmeted Hornbill *Rhinoplax vigil* (CITES I) casques, plus a large haul of electronic goods. Several men were discovered by the authorities loading boxes of goods onto a speedboat at Rambler Channel Public Cargo Working Area; several suspects fled in the speedboat. One arrest. The items were retrieved from 150 boxes and 30 bags. The investigation is continuing.

Hong Kong Government press release: <http://bit.ly/1kqFIOD>, 7 May 2015

INDIA: On 11 May 2015, Madhya Pradesh forest department officials arrested 13 people involved in the smuggling of pangolins *Manis* to China and Viet Nam; two kilogrammes of pangolin scales were seized. The accused allegedly confessed to poaching and trafficking 100 pangolins from Madhya Pradesh to China over the previous 12 months, employing tribal people to collect the animals from the wild.



◀ **Poached abalone shells line the shoreline after being washed ashore on Robben Island, South Africa.**

Photograph: Peter Chadwick / WWF-Canon

On 29 May 2015, police in Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, north-east India, uncovered a shipment of at least 10 t of pangolin *Manis* scales during a routine car check. Six people travelling in three cars were detained. Ginseng *Panax* (500 kg) was also seized.

The Times of India: <http://bit.ly/1K6cMWq>, 12 May 2015; <http://wildlifeneews.co.uk/2015/05/indian-police-seized-10-tonnes-of-pangolin-scales/>, 30 May 2015

INDONESIA: On 23 April 2015, at Belawan seaport, Medan, Sumatra, authorities seized five tonnes of frozen pangolins *Manis*, 77 kg of pangolin scales, and 96 live pangolins. A suspect who was arrested allegedly dealt and exported pangolins that he ordered from local dealers in Aceh and north Sumatra. In order to avoid detection, the suspect had exported the cargo of pangolins from a secondary port to a cargo ferry offshore, where it was obscured by other containers. The cargo ferry then docked at Belawan port where the container was to be transferred to a vessel destined for China via Hai Phong Seaport in Viet Nam. The exporter reportedly also shipped live pangolins to Penang, Malaysia, through a remote seaport in Medan.

On 8 July 2015, Customs officials at Surabaya's Juanda International Airport foiled an attempt to smuggle 455 (1390 kg) dead pangolins *Manis* to Singapore. Suspicious of a man with 43 cartons he claimed were full of fish, officers checked the boxes to find the pangolins packed with fresh fish.

Newswise: www.newswise.com/articles/indonesian-national-police-seize-major-shipment-of-pangolins-arrest-smuggler, 27 April 2015; *Mongabay*: <http://bit.ly/1ZXs2uY>, 9 July 2015

MALAYSIA: On 10 September 2015, authorities foiled an attempt to smuggle 97 live pangolins *Manis* across the country's northern border into Thailand. The pangolins were found in two cars at a house in the village of Padang Buloh in the State of Kedah. One arrest. The pangolins were subsequently kept at a wildlife centre in the State and would be released back into the wild.

www.news24.com/Green/News/Nearly-100-live-pangolins-saved-in-Malaysia-anti-smuggling-raid-20150910, 10 September 2015

VIET NAM: On 17 August 2015, authorities rescued 56 Sunda Pangolins *Manis javanica* (232 kg) from various locations in Nga Son district, Thanh Hoa Province, the largest incidence in which officials rescued pangolins being illegally sold in Viet Nam. The animals were to be released in the wild. A Chinese Pangolin *Manis pentadactyla* was among a further seven pangolins seized from Pu Mat National Park in Nghe An Province and taken into the care of the Carnivore and Pangolin Education Centre, a joint-programme between Save Vietnam's Wildlife and Cuc Phuong National Park which were involved in the earlier rescue of the 56 specimens.

Viet Nam News: <http://bit.ly/1gXY3kb>, 17 August 2015

ZIMBABWE: Nine-year gaol terms have been imposed for pangolin offences in a number of recent cases:

In May 2015, Noel Holman and Tendai Musatyira of Harare each received mandatory nine-year gaol terms after being convicted in a Harare courtroom of possessing a pangolin. The pair was apprehended by authorities on 18 January 2015. Acting on information, police joined Zimparks officials masquerading as buyers; the duo was apprehended after a pangolin contained in a sack was presented to the "buyers" to view. They have since filed an application for bail pending appeal at the High Court.

On 18 June 2015, Gilbert Nyamuziwa Karanda and Oliver Kakumura of Harare were each sentenced to nine years in gaol for possessing a pangolin carcass. A third person is on the run.

On 8 August 2015, at Chiredzi Magistrates' Court, Mozambique national Blessing Aron was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment for the possession of a pangolin in violation of the *Parks & Wildlife Act*. The pangolin was released into a safe environment.

Newsday: <http://bit.ly/1Gi90cf>, 21 May 2015; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201506190111.html>, 19 June 2015; *Tikki Hywood Trust*, 16 August 2015

REPTILES / AMPHIBIANS

CHINA: On 4 August 2015, at Guangzhou Airport, Guangdong, forest police arrested two people arriving from Madagascar with 298 Radiated Tortoises *Astrochelys radiata* (CITES I) in their luggage; an airport worker reportedly helped the duo to clear Customs checks. The case is under investigation.

In August 2015, Customs officials at Xiamen airport, Fujian Province, arrested a Chinese national after an X-ray image of his carry-on luggage looked suspicious. On opening his luggage, they found what were later identified as 182 gall bladders of Reticulated Pythons *Python reticulatus* (CITES II). The case is under investigation.

China Wildlife Conservation Association, www.cwca.org.cn/news/tidings/ff808081471ed293014efb222e6e5037.html, 5 August 2015; http://digi.dnkb.com.cn/dnkb/html/2015-08/15/content_391128.htm, 15 August 2015

INDIA: On 25 July 2015, at Chennai airport, Customs officials seized 50 live Indian Star Tortoises *Geochelone elegans* (CITES II) from the luggage of a passenger bound for Malaysia. On 2 July, 60 Indian Star Tortoises were seized from the luggage of another passenger and seven days later, 41 specimens of this species, also bound for Malaysia, were seized. Forest department officials reportedly suspect the involvement of a gang in the sourcing and smuggling of this species (see also pages 73–78 of this issue).

On 9 August 2015, at Kempe Gowda International Airport, Bangalore, two people arriving from Chennai were arrested for trying to smuggle 59 Indian Star Tortoises *Geochelone elegans* (CITES II) and 20 Spotted Black Terrapins [believed to be Black Spotted Turtles *Geoclemys hamiltonii* CITES I] to Malaysia. The reptiles, which had been bound using tapes to restrict their movements, were moved to a PFA (People for Animals) wildlife rehabilitation centre.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/Malaysia-bound-flyer-held-with-suitcase-full-of-star-tortoises/articleshow/48220382.cms>, 26 July 2015; *Bangalore Mirror*: <http://bit.ly/1Gi98IT>, 14 August 2015

JAPAN: In early May 2015, at Chubu Airport, Aichi Prefecture, a couple was caught trying to smuggle some 400 turtles including Yellow Pond Turtles *Mauremys mutica* (CITES II) and Japanese Pond Turtles *M. japonica* (CITES II) out of the country. The turtles, valued in China for their medicinal properties and as pets, had been placed inside socks, and packed in suitcases. The couple's nationality and their destination have not been disclosed.

The Asahi Shimbun, <http://bit.ly/1NU4cFH>, 25 May 2015

MADAGASCAR: On 29 September 2015, at Antananarivo's Ivato International Airport, Customs and border police officials scanning luggage discovered 771 wild native tortoises in two wooden boxes being sent as freight to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, via Mauritius. The seizure was described by Customs as the largest ever of its kind at the airport. It included eight Ploughshare Tortoises *Astrochelys yniphora* (CITES I)—considered to be the world's rarest tortoise—and 763 Radiated Tortoises *A. radiata* (CITES I); both species—classified by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as Critically Endangered—are found only in Madagascar.

The contents of the containers had been misdeclared and the tortoises concealed beneath clothing. Twenty Radiated Tortoises are understood to have died subsequently; the surviving specimens were handed over to the Turtle Survival Alliance. The Ploughshare Tortoises have been sent to the Durrell Conservation Trust for rehabilitation, before their release into the wild (see also pages 79–84 of this issue).

TRAFFIC: <http://bit.ly/1MU4q3e>, 5 October 2015

PHILIPPINES: In June 2015, over 4000 endangered turtles were confiscated from a well-known syndicate of poachers in the Philippines. Some 3800 specimens were Philippine Forest Turtles *Siebenrockiella leytensis* (CITES II), a Critically Endangered species that is endemic to the island of Palawan; historically this species was known from just four specimens, before being rediscovered in 2004 in northern Palawan where it is known to have a very restricted range. These specimens were destined for the illegal food and pet trade markets in East Asia. The Katala Foundation based on Palawan was alerted to this massive confiscation: to cope with such large numbers of turtles, a coalition of turtle conservation

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groups rapidly united and sent veterinarians and additional manpower, supplies and funds to the Philippines. The Director of Katala's Foundation's Philippine Freshwater Turtle Conservation Program, Dr Sabine Schoppe, and her small team found a temporary location at the Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Center to manage and triage the confiscation and created suitable makeshift ponds. Some 2828 turtles have been released to date and after an initial peak of deaths in the first days, very few further deaths had occurred. Approximately 505 turtles remained in poor condition at the time of the report and had been started on a treatment regime.

Turtle Conservancy: <http://bit.ly/1GpDSHN>, 29 June 2015

SPAIN: On 15 July 2015, it was reported that some 40 Spur-thighed Tortoises *Testudo graeca* (CITES II) that had been left in crates, apparently abandoned in the street in Malaguete, Malaga, were seized by the authorities. The specimens were to be examined with the aim of returning them to the wild.

Spanish News Today: http://spanishnewstoday.com/endedangered-native-spanish-tortoises-dumped-in-m%C3%A1laga_21848-a.htm#.VabOuNoaySN, 15 July 2015

TAIWAN: On 16 July 2015, Tainan Coast Guard officials seized a total of 3876 turtles, including 2286 Chinese Box Turtles *Cuora flavomarginata* and 920 Yellow Pond Turtles *Mauremys mutica* (both CITES II), 469 Reeves' Turtles *Mauremys reevesii* (IUCN Endangered), and one Keeled Box Turtle *Coura mouhotii* (IUCN Endangered). The specimens were believed to be bound for mainland China.

Yam News: <http://bit.ly/1W4kWQK>, (in Chinese), 18 July 2015

RHINOCEROSES

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

See also under **Other / Multi-seizures**

CZECH REPUBLIC: On 19 June 2015, at Prague 6 district court, three Vietnamese nationals were convicted of the illegal export of rhinoceros horns; two received gaol terms of five years and the third to three years after they were caught trying to export to Viet Nam the horns (6.7 kg) of a rhinoceros hunted by a Czech hunter in South Africa. The consignment was seized at Václav Havel Airport in December 2013 following a routine x-ray baggage check; the horns had been concealed under layers of resin, plastic wrap and tar in a parcel containing electrical insulation material.

Prague Post: <http://bit.ly/1GI9AqC>, 19 June 2015

HONG KONG: On 27 July 2015, at the freight delivery centre at Hong Kong International Airport, Customs officers seized 10 pieces of suspected rhinoceros horns (6.71 kg) in three express parcels mixed with wood products. Each item had been wrapped in foil and plastic sheets. The parcels had arrived on different flights on 26 and 27 July from Pemba, Mozambique, via Johannesburg, South Africa. The slabs were suspected to have been cut from two whole horns, and believed to be intended for delivery in separate consignments to evade detection. The case was handed over to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for follow-up action.

Hong Kong Customs press release: <http://bit.ly/1RWz0H>, 29 July 2015

INDIA: On 1 May 2015, Gohpur police in Biswanath police district apprehended nine rhinoceros poachers at several locations in Gohpur and Bandardewa, among them an Arunachal police inspector. One rhinoceros horn was recovered.

www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may0215lat054, 2 May 2015

KENYA: On 23 May 2015, at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi, a Vietnamese citizen in transit to Ha Noi, was arrested for smuggling seven pieces of rhinoceros horn, rhinoceros tails and Lion *Panthera leo* (CITES II) teeth (total 12 kg) out of Maputo, Mozambique.

http://en.starafrika.com/news/kenya-nabs-vietnamese-for-alleged-rhino-horn-smuggling.html, 25 May 2015

MOZAMBIQUE: On 3 May 2015, police in central Maputo seized 4.6 kg of rhinoceros horn and large sums of foreign currency from two Mozambicans and two South Koreans resident in South Africa and believed to be part of an international ring of traffickers in rhinoceros horn. The items were found in a car the group was using.

http://allafrica.com/stories/201505060127.html, 5 May 2015

It is reported that 12 of 65 rhinoceros horns seized in early May 2015 were stolen from a police strongroom in Matulo, Maputo province, on 22 May. A number of arrests have been made in connection with the latest theft. Mozambican police confirmed on 2 June that four individuals detained in connection with the theft of the 12 rhinoceros horns are senior police officers. The 65 horns and 340 elephant tusks (1.1 t) were found at a house on the outskirts of Maputo.

The seizure was originally heralded as a significant breakthrough in international efforts to clamp down on the criminal syndicates behind rhinoceros poaching and the smuggling of horn from Africa to Asia, although considerable confusion still exists over the number and nationality of people arrested in connection with the record bust. However, news of the police strong-room theft represents a serious setback in efforts to follow up the seizure with significant investigations that could help break a major trafficking network.

"TRAFFIC again urges Mozambique to seek the assistance of INTERPOL in providing the specialist support needed when significant seizures are made, to ensure that vital law enforcement opportunities are not squandered," said Tom Milliken, TRAFFIC's Elephant and Rhino Programme Leader. "Mozambique should share with INTERPOL all evidence relating either to the original seizure or the subsequent theft."

The theft is a significant blow to the newly elected government, which has publicly signalled its intent to address the country's poor law enforcement record and corruption.

"While there are encouraging signs that the political will exists to get to grips with the corruption and crime that is undermining Mozambican society, this latest law enforcement lapse will come as a huge setback. Mozambique now has an opportunity to act on its stated commitments to stamp out corruption and demonstrate to the world that it is serious about tackling wildlife crimes, but a failure to do so will result in a serious loss of credibility for the new government," said Milliken.

TRAFFIC: <http://bit.ly/1ME5UU>, 15 May 2015; <http://bit.ly/1ZXv7LH>, 1 June 2015; *News Ghana:* <http://bit.ly/1GTayV0>, 2 June 2015

SOUTH AFRICA: On 6 May 2015, four members of Middelburg Flying Squad Unit were arrested in Mpumalanga. The constables had allegedly seized a rhinoceros horn and cash from a vehicle that they had stopped while on duty. Instead of arresting the five occupants, they reportedly demanded a bribe for the horn's release. The five suspects handed themselves over to members of the Organised Crime Unit in Middleburg and provided details of the event. A subsequent sting operation led to the arrest of the four constables and seizure of the horn.

Sowetan Live: www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2015/05/08/four-cops-arrested-for-possession-of-rhino-horn-corruption, 8 May 2015

On 31 August 2015, at White River Magistrates' Court, Mpumalanga, Mozambican nationals Phinias Sithole and France Nkuna, were convicted and each sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment after being arrested in Kruger National Park on 27 October 2014, armed with a hunting rifle and an axe. They were sentenced to five years in gaol for possession of an unlicensed firearm, five years in gaol for unlawful possession of ammunition and one year in gaol for trespassing.

"This conviction will serve as a deterrent to other would-be poachers; they will know that the task teams will stop them in their tracks even before committing the crime," said national police spokesperson, Brigadier Vishnu Naidoo.

MY Lowveld: <http://bit.ly/1MTnfW2>, 3 September 2015

USA: On 20 May 2015, in a federal court in Florida, Christopher Hayes, the President and owner of an auction house was sentenced to 36 months in gaol followed by two years of supervised release for his role in the purchase,

sale and smuggling of rhinoceros horns and objects made from rhinoceros horn, elephant ivory and coral that were smuggled from the USA to China. Hayes' corporation, Elite Estate Buyers Inc., located in Florida, was ordered to pay a USD1.5 million fine to the Lacey Act reward fund. The court also banned the corporation from trading wildlife during a five-year term of probation.

Hayes and his company reportedly sold six horns of Black Rhinoceroses *Diceros bicornis* (CITES I); two of the horns were sold to Ning Qiu, a Texas resident who was involved in smuggling the horns to China. Qiu pleaded guilty to being part of a broader conspiracy to smuggle rhinoceros horns and items made from rhinoceros horns to Zhifei Li, the owner of an antiques business in China and the ringleader of a criminal enterprise that smuggled 30 rhinoceros horns and objects made from rhinoceros horn and elephant ivory from the USA to China. Qiu was sentenced to 25 months in gaol on 14 May 2015, in Frisco, Texas, and Li to a gaol term of 70 months in New Jersey in June 2014.

Elite and Hayes also admitted selling items made from rhinoceros horn, elephant ivory and coral to the president of an antiques business in Canada, who they then directed to a local shipper who agreed to post the items in Canada without the required permits. That individual, Xiao Ju Guan, was sentenced to 30 months in gaol on 25 March 2015 in New York.

The prosecution of Elite and Hayes is part of Operation Crash, a continuing effort by the Special Investigations Unit for the Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement, in co-ordination with the Department of Justice to detect, deter and prosecute those engaged in the illegal killing of rhinoceroses and the unlawful trafficking of rhinoceros horns and elephant ivory.

US Department of Justice: <http://1.usa.gov/1M6RWIG>, 20 May 2015

VIET NAM: On 11 May 2015, police in Nghe An seized 31 rhinoceros horns (37 kg) and arrested two men as they disembarked from a railway station with the horns concealed in three bags. During questioning, one of the suspects confessed that he had been hired to transport the consignment from Ho Chi Minh City to Nghe An. The case is under investigation.

Thanhien News (Viet Nam): <http://bit.ly/1NnH4TP>, 10 May 2015

FLORA

Red Sandalwood (also known as Red Sanders) *Pterocarpus santalinus* is listed in CITES Appendix II.

HONG KONG SAR: On 9 July 2015, Customs officials at the Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound seized a container holding 10 600 kg of logs of suspected Red Sandalwood from a container arriving from India by sea. The shipment was declared as "glass flower pots".

On 22 September 2015, Customs officials and marine police seized 446 kg of suspected Red Sandalwood being loaded by four people onto speedboats at Tsam Chuk Wan, Sai Kung. The suspects fled on one of the boats. The case is under investigation.

Hong Kong Customs press releases: <http://bit.ly/1LEJTNA>, 9 July 2015; <http://bit.ly/1NnHzgT>, 22 September 2015

INDIA: It was reported on 4 September 2015, that some 13 000 t of Red Sanders had been seized in Andhra Pradesh, 12 573 cases had been booked, 7354 vehicles seized and 19 852 people arrested for involvement in the illegal cutting and transportation of Red Sanders in the State, according to the State's Minister for Forests, Environment, Science and Technology in a written reply to a question in the AP assembly. The reporting period was not specified. The reply stated that 12 armed mobile teams and 19 observation posts with 40 CCTV cameras had been deployed. A special task force has been established to curb organized Red Sanders smuggling and an amendment to the AP Forest Act 1967 was also proposed as a deterrent against illegal cutting and smuggling of Red Sanders trees, the reply stated.

Business Standard: <http://bit.ly/1PAi9jhl>, 4 September 2015

In early May 2015, 20 t of Red Sanders was seized from a container in Korampallam, Tuticorin.

On 12 May 2015, 2700 kg of Red Sanders was seized from a lorry on Jharsa Chowk flyover, Gurgaon, after police, acting on information, put up barricades. Four suspects, who were arrested, had brought the wood from Khushkhera in Rajasthan, destined for a warehouse in Delhi.

On 16 May 2015, two policemen in Kadapa District were suspended for alleged dereliction of duty in connection with the theft of 18 Red Sanders logs from the premises of a police station in Vontimitta town. Three other policemen from Sambepalli police station were also suspended for alleged involvement in the smuggling of Red Sanders. The trio reportedly had supported the smugglers in transporting the logs from Dudyala and Yerramorampalli.

On 19 May 2015, a police constable in Kalamboli was arrested for allegedly conspiring with smugglers and abetting the crime; he is being held in custody. Four others were arrested. The case relates to an incident on 6 April 2015, when a container loaded with 7.5 t of smuggled Red Sanders arrived from Tamil Nadu and was delivered to a warehouse in Kalamboli steel market. The contraband, which was to be exported, had been sent from Tamil Nadu by a man, who is still at large.

On 28 May 2015, police in Kadapa district, Andhra Pradesh, arrested 72 people and confiscated 77 logs weighing 1.5 t. The smugglers had tried to dupe the police by disguising themselves as a marriage party. Woodcutter blades and axes were seized, together with 77 logs being transported on a bus.

On 5 June 2015, it was reported that a Chinese suspect detained for smuggling Red Sanders had told police that large quantities of Red Sanders are being sent to Dubai, mainly by sea.

On 29 June 2015, the anti-poaching flying squad of the Tirupati Wildlife Division seized more than a tonne of Red Sanders logs in Devarakonda in the Chamala range of the Seshachalam hills after they came across a group loading logs into vehicles; there were several arrests, though a number of people fled.

On 14 July 2015, Kadapa district police arrested a timber merchant and alleged international Red Sanders smuggler in Navrangpur village in Gurgaon district of Haryana, Kadapa. The suspect is accused in two cases relating to Red Sanders smuggling in Obulavaripalle and Pedlimarri police stations. Information leading to his arrest was provided by three recently-arrested Red Sanders smugglers. The accused are reported to have smuggled nearly 120 t of Red Sanders logs out of the country to Dubai, Nepal and China.

On 17 August 2015, three alleged smugglers were arrested and 2 t of Red Sanders (122 logs) recovered by Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force officers. The suspects were reportedly associates of a known international Red Sanders smuggler. Their modus operandi involved procuring the wood from other smugglers, transporting it as waste paper, fruit and vegetables, and supplying the logs to smugglers in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Delhi and other northern States of the country with links to international smugglers.

www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/3-red-sanders-smugglers-held-logs-worth-over-rs-2-cr-seized-115081700839_1.html, 17 August 2015; <http://bit.ly/1jTzg21>, 2 May 2015; *Times of India*, 14 May 2015: <http://bit.ly/1Fi5ziN>; *Deccan Herald*: <http://bit.ly/1LnPj8g>, 16 May 2015; *Times of India*: <http://bit.ly/1W5AicS>, 24 May 2015; *The New Indian Express*: <http://bit.ly/1W4edGe>, 30 May 2015; *The Hindu*: www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/dubai-a-thriving-hub-of-red-sanders-smuggling/article7284277.ece, 5 June 2015; www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/rs-2-cr-worth-red-sanders-logs-seized-smugglers-held/article7368517.ece, 30 June 2015; *The New Indian Express*: <http://bit.ly/1PAaWzK>, 19 July 2015

OTHER / MULTI-SEIZURES

Operation COBRA III, the biggest ever coordinated international law enforcement operation targeting the illegal trade in endangered species, has led to the recovery of a huge amount of wildlife contraband, including over 12 t of elephant ivory and at least 119 rhinoceros horns.

European seizures included 11 439 dead and live specimens, almost 2000 parts and products, and over 6 t of timber, plants and animal parts. In addition, 100 000 pills of traditional Asian medicine were confiscated. Several individuals have been arrested and investigations are continuing in many countries.

Conducted in two phases between mid-March and the end of May 2015, Operation Cobra saw the participation of law enforcement teams and agencies from 62 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and America. The operation was organized by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) and the Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF), and supported by numerous international agencies and organizations such as Europol and INTERPOL.

Europol: <http://bit.ly/1RnVPqo>, 18 June 2015

BANGLADESH: On 6 September 2015, skins and body parts of Bengal Tigers *Panthera tigris tigris* (CITES I) and other wildlife products were seized at Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Market in Gulshan-2. A raid of a leather shop at the market yielded skulls of a Tiger and Fishing Cat *Prionailurus viverrinus* (CITES II), skins of Tiger, deer and snake, animal bones and a further 20 bags and belts made from skins of Tiger, snake, Fishing Cat and monitor lizards *Varanus* spp. (CITES I/II). The shopkeepers reportedly escaped.

www.thedailystar.net/backpage/tiger-skins-body-parts-seized-139138, 7 September 2015

CHINA: In April 2015, Shangluo police, Shanxi Province, spent six months investigating and subsequently arresting 50 suspects from more than 20 provinces and cities; some 1000 national first-class protected animals were seized. The first arrested suspects were Liu Liang, Gou Yu and Wang Xiao who were respectively sentenced to five years, 10

years and three years in gaol (suspended for five years) and fined CNY20 000 (USD3000), CNY15 000 and CNY10 000.

On 3 July 2015, border police at Jimunai, Xinjiang, found packages of Chinese Caterpillar Fungus *Ophiocordyceps sinensis* (15.66 kg), the skin of a bear *Ursus* (CITES I) and 35 bear paws concealed in a car. The driver confessed that a Kazakhstan national had paid him to transport the items to China.

On 7 August 2015, at Yuwang district court, Kaifeng city, a Mr Li was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, suspended for four years and fined CNY20 000 (USD3000). This follows his arrest in 2014 when forest police raided his shop in Kaifeng city and seized 68 ivory pieces (1.5 kg) (CITES I), one piece of Saiga Antelope *Saiga tatarica* (CITES II) horn and one piece of Helmeted Hornbill *Rhinoplax vigil* (CITES I) product.

On 18 August 2015, it was reported that the former director of Liupanshui Zoo, Guizhou province, Mr Yin, had been sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment and fined CNY100 000 (USD15 700) for purchasing five Francois' Langur *T. francoisi* (CITES I) from local hunters. Mr Yang and Mr Zhao during 2011 and 2014. Mr Zhao was given a 15-years prison sentence, and fined CNY150 000 (USD23 565) for hunting, transporting and selling three monkeys; Mr Yang was given a 10-year prison sentence and fined CNY50 000 (USD7800) for hunting and selling two monkeys.

China Wildlife Conservation Association: <http://bit.ly/1PAj2bx>, 10 July 2015 [in Chinese]; www.jsi.gov.cn/News/szsm/xinj/201507/20150713111641_13679.html, 13 July 2015; www.cwca.org.cn/news/tidings/ff808081471ed293014f05a4215150e8.html, 7 August 2015 [in Chinese]; www.cwca.org.cn/news/tidings/ff808081471ed293014f488ef10f534f.html, 20 August 2015

UGANDA: A woman arrested with the skin of a Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* (CITES I), antelope horns, skins of Serval *Leptailurus serval* (CITES II), python (CITES I/II) skin and other contraband has been sentenced to 1.5 years in gaol and fined USD280.

The Eagle network, August 2015

VIET NAM: The port of Da Nang has been the entry point into the country for a number of shipments involving elephant, rhinoceros and pangolin products in recent months, in sharp contrast to previous ivory seizures that have taken place in either Hai Phong port or Mong Cai province, further north in the country.

On 13 August, Customs at Tien Sa port, Da Nang, seized a shipment of almost 600 kg of elephant ivory and 142 kg of rhinoceros horns declared by a local company as marble and imported from Mozambique.

This was followed by a seizure on 21 August of over 2 t of ivory inside a container full of timber from Nigeria. The recipient of this shipment was the same as the one on 13 August. On 25 August, Customs in Da Nang seized 1023 kg of tusks and over 4 t of pangolin scales that reportedly arrived from Malaysia. The tusks were hidden among sacks of beans in a shipment weighing nearly 20 t. The confiscation of a large amount of ivory, pangolin scales and rhinoceros horn by authorities shows the vigilance of Viet Nam Customs. However, it is worrying as it also points to Da Nang as a new port of entry for illegal wildlife trade in Viet Nam.

"With ivory and other wildlife smuggling at the forefront of global attention and enforcement efforts, traffickers are constantly exploring new routes and ports to exploit in the movement of illicit goods. The seizures in Da Nang are a perfect illustration of this," said Madelon Willemsen, TRAFFIC's Head of Office in Viet Nam.

"Although some ivory processing in Viet Nam does take place and may actually be increasing, the evidence suggests that most of the raw ivory imported into Viet Nam is re-exported to China using land routes over the terrestrial border in the far north. Thus, trafficking through Da Nang represents increased transport costs as it is much further away from the Chinese border than the port of Hai Phong where most seizures of transit trade in the past occurred," said Tom Milliken, TRAFFIC's Elephant and Rhino Programme Leader.

www.traffic.org/home/2015/9/24/spotlight-on-danang-as-new-conduit-in-global-ivory-traffic.html, 24 September 2015

Seizures undertaken in numerous countries during Operation Cobra III, conducted between March and May 2015, led to the recovery of shipments containing (below, left to right) ivory, plants and coral in Italy, Sweden and Poland, respectively.

