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.
TRAFFIC UPDATE

TRAFFIC OUTPOST

• Wildlife protection stepped up at Tiger Reserves in India

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

TRAFFIC ALERT

TRAFFIC Alert (Latest news on illegal wildlife trade in India):

• Alarming rise in Black Spotted Turtle trade across Asia, finds TRAFFIC report

• CITES releases a report on Elephant poaching and ivory smuggling

CITES UPDATE

TRAFFIC ALERT

• Ivory recovered from wildlife smugglers

• Four poachers held in Manipur with venison

• Alarm bells over rising pet trade in wild animals in India

IN FOCUS

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
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

Building 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.

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 Amravati 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.

Continued on page 6
very 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.
Continued from page 6

“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 Sonepur 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.
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.
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.

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.

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_2013Released
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.

Source:
http://aquafind.com/articles/Sea_Cucumber.php
http://www.fao.org/docrep/011/i0375e/i0375e00.htm
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8557621.stm
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.

Source: 
http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/10/ivory/christy-text
http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/02/20132772531868802.html
http://www.thehindu.com/todays-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.

Source: 
http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140101/jsp/northeast/story_17740050.jsp
http://forumblog.org/2013/06/can-myanmar-crack-down-on-the-regions-illegal-wildlife-trade/

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 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://www.trafficonline.net/Documents/TRAFFIC_2012_05_01_02.pdf
http://www.trafficonline.net/Documents/TRAFFIC_2012_05_03_04.pdf
http://www.trafficonline.net/Documents/TRAFFIC_2012_05_05_06.pdf
http://www.trafficonline.net/Documents/TRAFFIC_2012_05_06_07.pdf
http://www.trafficonline.net/Documents/TRAFFIC_2012_05_07_08.pdf
http://www.trafficonline.net/Documents/TRAFFIC_2012_05_08_09.pdf

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 duvaucelii*, 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:
http://www.telegraphindia.com/1140101/jsp/northeast/story_17740050.jsp
http://forumblog.org/2013/06/can-myanmar-crack-down-on-the-regions-illegal-wildlife-trade/
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

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 Sonepur, 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 Sonepur 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 Sonepur 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).
Continued from page 11

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.

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 Anthracoceros 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.

Continued on page 13
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.

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 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).
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 2005-2012. Among these four species, *Botia striata*, *Carinotetraodon travancoricus* and Redline Torpedo Barbs *Puntius denisonii* and *P. chalakkudensis* 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 Polices 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 111of the Customs Act 1962, however, it was very difficult to establish evidence of smuggling under the current laws.
Continued from page 14

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, Sonepur 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.

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 Sonepur 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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common name</th>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>WPA 1972 schedule listing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scarlet Macaw</td>
<td><em>Ara macao</em></td>
<td>Appendix I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munias</td>
<td><em>Lonchura and Amandava spp</em></td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Mynah</td>
<td><em>Gracula religiosa</em></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baya Weaver</td>
<td><em>Ploceus philippinus</em></td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-headed Bunting</td>
<td><em>Emberiza bruniceps</em></td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common name</th>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>CITES appendix listing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common marmoset</td>
<td><em>Callithrix jacchus</em></td>
<td>Appendix II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimpanzee</td>
<td><em>Pan troglodytes</em></td>
<td>Appendix I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Glider</td>
<td><em>Petaurus breviceps</em></td>
<td>Not listed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Capuchin Monkey</td>
<td><em>Cebus appella</em></td>
<td>Appendix II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball Python</td>
<td><em>Python regius</em></td>
<td>Appendix II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Chamikutty, P. 2014 Two veterinarians plan to change pet care and zoo development business in India through Myvets Link: http://yourstory.com/2014/04/myvets/ Downloaded on 21 May, 2014


Kolkata Pet fair website Link: http://www.petfairkolkata.com/contact-us/


Times of India 2014 29 January Rescued chimps may have Nigeria link Link: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Rescued-chimps-may-have-Nigeria-link/articleshow/29527488.cms Accessed on 19 May, 2014

Wildlife Extra 2013 October 98% of wild-caught saltwater fish die within 1 year Link: http://www.wildlifeextra.com/go/news/aquarium-fish-death.html#cr

About the authors:

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj is the Head of TRAFFIC in India based in New Delhi. He can be contacted at shekhar.niraj@gmail.com or sniraj@wwfindia.net. You can also call him at 011-43516246

Shubhobroto Ghosh is Senior Programme Officer at TRAFFIC in India based in New Delhi and attended the Principles and Practice training course at Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust in 1999. He can be contacted at sghosh@wwfindia.net
Weaved in illegal wildlife trade, future for Bayas appears bleak

Abrar Ahmed, Bird Trade Expert

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 megarghynchus*.

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.
Continued from page 18

**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 dying 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.

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

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 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

Managing Editor:
Dilpreet B. Chhabra
dchhabra@wwfindia.net

Editorial Team:
Shekhar Kumar Niraj
sniraj@wwfindia.net
Shubhobroto Ghosh
sghosh@wwfindia.net

Design:
Vandana Singh
vandanasingh.c@gmail.com
Dilpreet B. Chhabra
dchhabra@wwfindia.net

Photo Credit: Front cover
Gloriosa superba: Amit Kotia
01 TRAFFIC India Updates

1. India to double its wildlife sniffer dog brigade

2. TRAFFIC breaks new grounds at Coimbatore wildlife law enforcement training workshop

3. South Asia strengthens cooperation, moves a step closer to eradicating wildlife crime

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

5. TRAFFIC highlights illegal shark trade at CITES workshop in Chennai

6. WWF-India’s latest PANDA magazine illuminates illegal wildlife trade

7. Meet the team: TRAFFIC’s new members in the India office

02 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

03 CITES Update

1. New shark fin identification tool released

05 In Focus

1. Sonepur Fair once again on the wrong side of the wildlife law

04 TRAFFIC Alert

1. Peacock feathers seized from a passenger in Kerala

2. Twenty two poachers arrested in two years in Mizoram

3. Three hundred and sixty Star Tortoises seized in West Bengal

4. Man arrested with 10 kg of pangolin scales

06 Wild Cry

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

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.

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.

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 averisons 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.

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 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.
TRAFFIC India Update

1. India to double its wildlife sniffer dog brigade
2. TRAFFIC breaks new grounds at Coimbatore wildlife law enforcement training workshop
3. South Asia strengthens co-operation, moves a step closer to eradicating wildlife crime
4. TRAFFIC rolls out social media campaign on illegal trade in lesser known non-charismatic species
5. TRAFFIC highlights illegal shark trade at CITES workshop in Chennai
6. WWF-India's latest PANDA magazine illuminates illegal wildlife trade
7. Meet the team: TRAFFIC's new members in the India office
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 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.”

To find out more about TRAFFIC’s sniffer dog training programme in India, please visit www.trafficindia.org.
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.
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.
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.
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 13,000 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 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 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

TRAFFIC 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.

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

“According to a joint study conducted by TRAFFIC and PEW, India is the world’s second largest shark fishing nation"
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#
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

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

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
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.

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 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

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.
On 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.

**Sources:**
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 Laltlanhlua Zathang said that the Chakma poachers mainly hunted pangolins for their scales, while Bru hunters hounded 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.

Sources:
http://www.wwfindia.org/news_facts/wwf_publications/panda/?id2101/Panda-Special-Issue;
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.

Sources:
http://www.indianjungles.com/090607.htm;
Unpublished TRAFFIC report on Star Tortoises
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 Southest 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
In Focus

Sonepur Fair once again on the wrong side of the wildlife law
The 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-

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

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 Sonepur 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.”
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

Shekhar Kumar Niraj and Mohnish Kapoor
TRAFFIC India Office
WWF India Secretariat,
172-B, Lodi Estate
New Delhi 110003
Introduction

Medicinal 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.

References


Convention on Biological Diversity (2014). India’s 5th national report to the Convention on Biological Diversity p27.


Pushpangadan, P. 1995. Ethno-Biology in India. A status report. All India Co-ordinated research Project on Ethno-Biology, MOEF, GOI, New Delhi.


Signpost

Other significant news stories

**India Today/13-11-2014**

**The Times of India/ 1-10-14**

**Hindustan Times/1-2-2015**

**Mail Today/ 3-8-14**

---

**Contact:**

TRAFFIC India Office  
C/O WWF-India  
WWF-India Secretariat  
172-B, Lodi Estate  
New Delhi-110003

Tel: +91-11-41504786/43516290  
Email: trafficind@wwfindia.net

Website: www.trafficindia.org; www.traffic.org
India's national bird at risk

WILD CRY FEATURE......
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

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

Managing Editor:
Dilpreet B. Chhabra
dilpreet.chhabra@traffic.org

Editorial Team:
Shekhar Kumar Niraj
shekhar.niraj@traffic.org
Shubhobroto Ghosh
shubhobroto.ghosh@traffic.org
Mohnish Kapoor
mohnish.kapoor@traffic.org

Design:
Dilpreet B. Chhabra
Vandana Singh (Design template)

Photo Credit: Front cover
Peacock: Balaji Seshan

This Issue was proofread and copy edited by Shubhobroto Ghosh and Richard Thomas from TRAFFIC.
TRAFFIC India Updates

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

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

TRAFFIC organizes police training to combat wildlife crime in Odisha

TRAFFIC hosts regional planning workshop to curb Tiger poaching and trade

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

Coming Soon: Publications

Outpost

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

CITES Update

CITES CoP17 to be held in South Africa in 2016

Wild Cry

‘Tale’ of peacock train feathers: India’s national bird at risk

In Focus

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

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

Coming Soon: Publications
On 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.
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
Fourteen 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.

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.”
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.

DO YOU WANT TO BECOME A SNIFER 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

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.

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.
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 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 roadmap 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.
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.”

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.
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 as 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.
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, Yuriii 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.

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:
CITES Update

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 documents 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.

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
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
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 upsizing the status of this species to Appendix I for greater protection.

Baba 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.


TRAFFIC’s unpublished report on illegal trade in Red Sanders titled “Red Sanders: An ecological boon or an enforcement bane?”
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 stock ing them in 11 barrels and hidding 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.

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.

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.

In Focus

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

Balaji Seshan and Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj,
TRAFFIC’s India Office
C/O WWF-India Secretariat
172-B, Lodi Estate
New Delhi- 110029
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 km² forest area, Narikuravars hunt Crested Serpent Eagles *Spilornis cheela*, whose meat is considered a delicacy. They use *(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.

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

Table: Body parts of various animals and birds traded and their uses, according to interviewed Narikuravars
TRAFFIC’S recommends the following actions:

1. Studies are needed to gain further insights into the Narikuruvvar community to understand their demography, socio economic 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 Narikuravar in Tamil Nadu

Wild Cry

'Tale' of peacock train feathers: India's national bird at risk
The Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*, 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.
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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Demand during the months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>Ghusadi</td>
<td>Hats, 3000 feathers are used to make a hat</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>Janmashtami</td>
<td>Temple puja &amp; household functions, fancy dress for children</td>
<td>August-September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>Muharram</td>
<td>Blessing</td>
<td>October-November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>Jain and Hindu temples</td>
<td>As a jhadu or broom for cleaning deities and the floor of the temple</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Kavant Mela</td>
<td>Dancing headgear for Rathwa tribe</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Thai Pusam and Panguniuthiram</td>
<td>Kavadi, 300 feathers per Kavadi: there are 300 Kavadi</td>
<td>January-February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Janmashtami</td>
<td>Temple puja &amp; household function, fancy dress for children</td>
<td>August-September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Muharram</td>
<td>Blessing</td>
<td>October-November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>Thai Pusam and Panguniuthiram</td>
<td>Kavadi, 300 feathers per Kavadi: there are approximately 17,000 Kavadi</td>
<td>January-February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>Pooram</td>
<td>Alavattam, 550 feathers per Alavattam: two Alavattam are used per elephant, 550 elephants are used</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>All festivals</td>
<td>Ambala Kavadi, For dancing during the festivals</td>
<td>Festival time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>Janmashtami</td>
<td>Procession, temple puja &amp; household function</td>
<td>August - September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Festival</td>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Demand during the months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>Bhagavathy temples</td>
<td>Arjunan Nritham or Mayil Peeli Thookkam Ritual art performed by men of Ezhava community</td>
<td>Festival time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>Janmashtami</td>
<td>Procession, home use, puja</td>
<td>August - September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>Jain and Hindu Temples</td>
<td>As a jhadu or broom for cleaning deities and the floor of the temple</td>
<td>year-round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>Dargah</td>
<td>Broom used for blessing the devotees</td>
<td>year-round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Janmashtami</td>
<td>Procession, temple puja &amp; household function, fancy dress for children</td>
<td>August-September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Thai Pusam</td>
<td>Kavadi 300 feathers per Kavadi; approximately 20,000 Kavadi</td>
<td>January-February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Panguniuthiram</td>
<td>Kavadi 300 feathers per Kavadi and there are 25,000 Kavadi</td>
<td>March - April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu and Kerala</td>
<td>Folk dance</td>
<td>Mayilattam Folk dance, school functions, corporate functions</td>
<td>Festival time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>Janmashtami in Mathura and Vrindavan</td>
<td>Procession, temple puja &amp; household function Used for Krishna temples and as clothes for deities worldwide.</td>
<td>August-September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>Mayur Nritya</td>
<td>Dance where women wear wings made of peacock feathers and dance like a peacock</td>
<td>Festivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>Govardhan Puja</td>
<td>Brooms of peacock feathers used by devotees</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>Janmashtami</td>
<td>Procession, temple puja &amp; household function</td>
<td>August-September</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 Mynamar 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 and 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

Mail Today/12-05-2015

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

Hindustan Times/05-06-2015

30 rhino poachers shot in N-E last year
WILDLIFE MONITORING: Other animals still fear the boot. 30 tigers, 19 leopards poached in 2014 across country

Hindustan Times/12-06-2015

STF nabs notorious tiger poacher in Bijnore
CAMOUFLAGE FINALLY: The accused is also involved in sandalwood smuggling in Uttar Pradesh. Besides, he was in touch with poachers, smugglers in South India

Hindustan Times/01-06-2015

TECH TO TRAP POACHERS

Hindustan Times/12-06-2015

Mail Today/12-05-2015

Hindustan Times/12-06-2015

Sunday Times of India/12-07-2015

Mail Today/12-05-2015

Hindustan Times/05-06-2015

Hindustan Times/12-06-2015

Sunday Times of India/12-07-2015

#StopIllegalWildlifeTrade

TRAFFIC India Office
C/O WWF-India
WWF-India Secretariat
172-B, Lodi Estate
New Delhi-110003

Tel: +91-11-41504786/43516290
Email: trafficind@wwfindia.net
Website: www.trafficindia.org; www.traffic.org

TRAFFIC
the wildlife trade monitoring network
is a strategic alliance of

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

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

Managing Editor:
Dilpreet B. Chhabra
dilpreet.chhabra@traffic.org

Editorial Team:
Shekhar Kumar Niraj
shekhar.niraj@traffic.org
Merwyn Fernandes
mfernandes@wwfindia.net
Shubhobroto Ghosh
shubhobroto.ghosh@traffic.org

Design:
Dilpreet B. Chhabra
Vandana Singh (Design template)

Photo Credit: Front cover
Shubhobroto Ghosh
01
TRAFFIC India Updates

India’s first national workshop on capacity building for effective wildlife law enforcement organized in Tamil Nadu

TRAFFIC issues warning of illegal wildlife trade at Sonepur Fair

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

SUPER SNIFFERS: A film on TRAFFIC’s sniffer dog training programme in India

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

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

02
Outpost

Unseen harvest: Southeast Asia’s illegal orchid trade

Chinese TCM industry says NO to illegal wildlife trade

03
CITES Update

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

04
TRAFFIC Alert

Two hundred Indian Star Tortoises seized at Chennai airport

Ivory weighing 487 kg seized in Delhi

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

05
In Focus

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

© Shubhobroto Ghosh

© Natl. Archives of Australia / WWF
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 100,000 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 lead 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.

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

2. TRAFFIC issues warning of illegal wildlife trade at Sonepur Fair

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

4. SUPER SNIFFERS: A film on TRAFFIC's sniffer dog training programme in India

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
HELP STOP ILLEGAL TRADE OF TURTLES AND TORTOISES

Poaching and illegal trade of Indian turtles and tortoises continues unabated, driven mainly by the demand for their meat, and in some cases, for the pet trade. The loss of these valuable animals has been exacerbated by a rise in burgeoning domestic and international wildlife trafficking.


SUPPORT: your support is required to protect India’s wildlife. For more information visit (www.wildlife.gov.in) or contact TRAFFIC India.
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”.

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 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”.

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](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

Sonepur 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, bulbul, 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 Chiriya Bazaar located at the fair.

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

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC India said, “It’s concerning to witness open violation of wildlife laws at Sonepur 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 Sonepur. 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.

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*. 
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, “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

TRAFFIC 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

On the eve of World Pangolin Day on 20th February 2016, TRAFFIC released a poster, “Sealy 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
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.

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 or download at http://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/enablers/traffic/publications/posters/
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 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.
Outpost

1. Unseen harvest: Southeast Asia’s illegal orchid trade

2. Chinese TCM industry says NO to illegal wildlife 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 Vietnam 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 15th 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, Leiyunshan, 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.”

© Vivek R. Sinha / WWF
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.
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
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.


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.


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://www.nio.org/index?option=com_nomenue/task/show/tid/85/sid/92/id/195
http://www.arkive.org/organ-pipe-corals/tubipora-spp/
In Focus

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

TRAFFIC India Office
C/O WWF-India
WWF-India Secretariat
172-B, Lodi Estate
New Delhi-110003

Tel: +91-11-41504786/43516290
Email: trafficind@wwfindia.net
Website: www.trafficindia.org ; www.traffic.org

#StopIllegalWildlifeTrade
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

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

Managing Editor:
Dilpreet B. Chhabra
dilpreet.chhabra@traffic.org

Editorial Team:
Merwyn Fernandes
merwyn.fernandes@traffic.org

Design:
Dilpreet B. Chhabra
Vandana Singh (Design template)

Copy Editing:
Richard Thomas

Photo Credit: Front cover
Ganges River Dolphin: François Xavier Pelletier / WWF
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

Sixteen new wildlife sniffer dog squads to help combat wildlife crime in India

India and Nepal to strengthen wildlife law enforcement at border regions

Hundreds pledge support for curbing illegal wildlife trade on World Environment Day 2016

India adopts “World Elephant Day”: Children pledge to protect and conserve Elephants

In a record haul, Police seize over 6000 turtles in Uttar Pradesh

Over 70 snakes seized from a residence in Pune, two arrested

Five caracals and a wild cat seized in Uttar Pradesh

Silent cries of the Ganges
River Dolphin: Poaching for oil threatens India’s National Aquatic Animal
1. 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

2. Sixteen new wildlife sniffer dog squads to help combat wildlife crime in India

3. India and Nepal to strengthen wildlife law enforcement at border regions

4. Hundreds pledge support for curbing illegal wildlife trade on World Environment Day 2016

5. India adopts “World Elephant Day”: Children pledge to protect and conserve Elephants
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 Tigers, especially in their strongholds in India, Nepal, Russia, Malaysia and Indonesia, could only be achieved 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.


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...
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”.

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/ 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 Sashastra 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.
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.
India adopts “World Elephant Day”: Children pledge to protect and conserve Elephants

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

Dr 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
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

Forty 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

In 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
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 Granddidier’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
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
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 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.

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.

Sources:

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.

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.

Sources:
http://indianexpress.com/article/india/over-70-snakes-seized-from-pune-flat-two-arrested-4447546/
http://indiansnakes.org/content/russells-viper
**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.

**Sources:**
http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/Five-caracals-seized-from-smugglers/article17016570.ece
In Focus

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 km²), 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.
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.
Wild Cry

Silent cries of the Ganges River Dolphin: Poaching for oil threatens India's National Aquatic Animal
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.

River 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 150 kg 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”.

© Françoise Xavier-Peletier/WWF

March 2017
**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.

**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: Eutropiichthys 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
http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/41758/0
http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/cetaceans/about/river_dolphins/ganges_river_dolphin/
https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/ganges-river-dolphin
http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/endangered_species/cetaceans/about/river_dolphins/ganges_river_dolphin/
http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/166491/0
http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/166588/0