



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

The following pages feature a selection of seizures and prosecutions cases based on media and other reports published between April and mid-October 2019 that are considered significant in terms of species/volumes seized, *modus operandi*, penalties imposed, or to highlight enforcement action. Sources are cited at the end of each country/territory section and have not been checked for accuracy and authenticity. They are not intended to represent TRAFFIC's policies, positions or opinions.

CITES Appendix-listings are placed in parentheses, where applicable.

BIG CATS

CAMEROON: On 26 May 2019, it was reported that a police officer responsible for the protection of wildlife in the hunting areas surrounding Bouba Ndjida National Park had been arrested in Odza, Yaoundé, after being found in possession of a Leopard *Panthera pardus* (CITES I) skin and five Lion *P. leo* (CITES II) skulls (and an elephant (CITES I) tusk). The officer allegedly transported the items to a hotel in Yaoundé with the aim of selling the products, but his activities were already under investigation by the park. He is alleged to have played a role in transporting illegal products and connecting buyers across the country, as well as activating a group of poachers and offering them protection and business opportunities. Shortly before his arrest, he had reportedly sold two fresh cat Felidae skins.

Alwidha: <https://bit.ly/36g6zFW>, 26 May 2019

SOMALIA: On 20 July 2019, it was reported that authorities in Somaliland had seized 29 Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* (CITES I) cubs.

Research by the Cheetah Conservation Fund indicates an estimated 300 Cheetahs are poached and smuggled into the Arabian Peninsula each year, to be sold in the illegal pet trade where demand for the cubs as status symbols is thriving, particularly in the Gulf States. The animals are believed to originate in Ethiopia, northern Kenya, Somalia and Somaliland. Somaliland is reportedly the main transit route for Cheetahs trafficked out of East Africa (see also *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 30(2):72).

The rescued cubs are being kept in a safe place with a long-term aim of reintroducing them into the wild, although following contact with humans this may pose a problem, particularly with Cheetahs under three months-old, it is reported.

News24: <https://bit.ly/2NmqrQB>, 20 July 2019

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

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

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

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

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

VIET NAM: On 26 July 2019, three Vietnamese nationals were detained in Cau Giay District for involvement in the illegal trade in seven frozen Tiger *Panthera tigris* (CITES I) carcasses from Lao PDR. The men were part of a gang that had reportedly been trafficking tiger carcasses from Lao PDR to Viet Nam over several years; the chief operator allegedly used his business as a cover and travelled to Lao PDR to buy and freeze the tiger carcasses before transporting them to Viet Nam.

Xinhuanet: <https://bit.ly/2PrLHFL>, 26 July 2019;
VnExpress: <https://bit.ly/2MTaxYQ>, 26 July 2019

BIRDS

HONG KONG SAR: On 30 July 2019, a man was sentenced at the District Court to 32 months' imprisonment for smuggling into Hong Kong International Airport from Malaysia two air parcels containing 27 Helmeted Hornbill *Rhinoplax vigil* (CITES I) casques in January 2019.

Hong Kong Customs & Excise press release: https://www.customs.gov.hk/en/publication_press/press/index_id_2646.html, 30 July 2019

INDONESIA: On 26 June 2019, authorities arrested two people who were selling birds and other wildlife in their shops in Telangkah Village Katingan Hilir District. Among the 119 birds confiscated was the Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*, Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot *Loriculus galgulus* (both CITES II) and Greater Green Leafbird *Chloropsis sonnerati*. According to the perpetrators, they have been trading since 2013; the birds would usually be sent to Surabaya and Semarang in the Sampit City of East Kotawaringin Regency (Central Kalimantan) and Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan.

On 17 July 2019, officials at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport foiled an attempt to

smuggle 72 Helmeted Hornbill *Rhinoplax vigil* (CITES I) casques that were bound for Hong Kong. One woman was arrested. The beaks had been wrapped in aluminium foil and placed under bread in a tin being carried in a tote bag.

PPID: <https://bit.ly/2owjHG>, 17 July 2019;
Mongabay: <https://bit.ly/2MW52x7>, 17 July 2019;
Kalteng Ekspres.com: <https://bit.ly/2MXDFTE>, 26 June 2019

PHILIPPINES: Jomar L. Toledo and Rompas M. Lumakore of General Santos City, arrested on 8 April 2019 for illegal trade in wildlife, including 345 birds (see *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 31(1):44), have each been fined P30,000 (USD580); the specimens, believed to be from Papua New Guinea, were being held in a warehouse in Mati City and the men were acting as caretakers. Species seized included Red-and-Blue Lories *Eos histrio* and Palm Cockatoos *Probosciger aterrimus* (both CITES I).

Manila News: <https://bit.ly/36fcpYb>, 9 April 2019

ELEPHANTS

The African Elephant *Loxodonta africana* is listed in CITES Appendix I, except the populations of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, which are included in Appendix II; the Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* is listed in Appendix I.

CHINA: On 28 May 2019, Changzhou Customs Anti-smuggling Branch of Nanjing Customs, Jiangsu province, broke up a gang that smuggled, processed and sold ivory; three suspects were arrested.

The investigation began in 2018, when Nanjing Customs received intelligence that criminal gangs were smuggling ivory by land to Changzhou for carving. They identified one person who reportedly had a close relationship with ivory smuggling gangs abroad

as well as local ivory carvers and sellers. He and two others were arrested and 34 pieces of ivory and 39 ivory products were found on their premises; the total amount smuggled by the principal suspect is estimated at 563 kg. The provenance of the ivory is not reported. The head of the smuggling gang suspected of supplying the suspect has also been arrested and is being investigated separately.

<https://bit.ly/34fsN99>, 29 May 2019

GABON: On 30 September 2019, guards in Minkébé National Park in Woleu-Ntem seized 41 pairs of tusks (200 kg) and 37 elephant tails from Cameroonian poachers following an exchange of fire.

Gabon Review: <https://bit.ly/2poflkz>, 2 October 2019; <https://bit.ly/2jtUEdO>, 5 October 2019

KENYA: On 10 June 2019, a Meru magistrate sentenced Francis Muriithi to 10 years' imprisonment, or a fine of KES3 million (USD28,500), for possession of an elephant tusk (6.5 kg) without a permit.

On 15 August 2019, at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA), Laazibi Amal, a French national, in transit from France to Dzaoudzi Island, was arrested for being in possession of an ivory bangle. She was subsequently fined KES1 million (USD9,500). The court allowed her to access the bank in the airport to withdraw the funds or surrender to the court, along with her passport.

In the same month it was reported that Spanish national Maria Pich-Aguilera, in transit from Nairobi to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, had been detained at JKIA in possession of an ivory bangle and fined KES1 million.

On 20 August 2019, at a court in Kibera, four police officers were sentenced to life imprisonment, or ordered to pay a fine of KES20 million (USD190,000) each, after being found guilty of elephant poaching. Stephen Ngawai, Martin Mwitii, Francis Karanja and Peter Kuria Kimungi were caught in Nairobi West in 2016 with a 5 kg elephant tusk.

The Star: <https://bit.ly/36dNyUL>, 13 June 2019; <https://bit.ly/2MXp2PS>, 19 August 2019; <https://bit.ly/2jvb8IX>, 21 August 2019; *Nairobi News:* <https://bit.ly/2Nlc3GL>, 15 August 2019; <https://bit.ly/32Wr0Ww>, 23 August 2019

LIBERIA: At Salayea Magisterial Court, John Z. David of Salayea District, Lofa County, was sentenced to one year in prison and fined USD2,500 after he pleaded guilty to killing more than six elephants.

Daily Observer: <https://bit.ly/2polJHr>, 10 October 2019

MALAWI: On 20 June 2019, at Zomba Magistrates' Court, Fanness Dickson of Machinga was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment with hard labour for possession of two pieces of raw ivory (742 g) and three

PALM COCKATOO ►

Probosciger aterrimus (CITES I) was among over 300 birds seized from a warehouse in the Philippines in April 2019 and in a separate consignment of birds seized in Indonesia in March.



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elephant leg bones without a permit. Dickson was apprehended at Nselema Trading Centre in January as he attempted to sell the pieces.

On 15 July 2019, in a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court overturned a MK2.5 million (USD3,300) fine imposed on two brothers for their role in the trafficking of 2.6 t of ivory and sentenced each to prison for eight years. Patrick and Chancy Kaunda were apprehended in 2013 when their vehicle was intercepted in Rumphii, en route to Lilongwe from Tanzania; inside were 781 pieces of raw ivory tusks concealed amongst bags of cement, representing the death of almost 400 elephants.

On 3 October 2019, it was reported that Nickson Nthukwa Banda and Assani Phiri had been sentenced to imprisonment at Kasungu Senior Resident Magistrates' Court for six-and-a-half years and four years, respectively, after being found guilty of killing an elephant in Kasungu National Park in July 2019. The duo was convicted on three game offences which included entering a protected area, conveying weapons into a protected area, killing a wild animal from a protected area, illegal possession of a specimen of a listed species, and possessing a firearm and ammunitions without a permit.

Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Malawi: <https://bit.ly/2MTkjin>, 21 June 2019; <https://bit.ly/2poKcNX>, 17 July 2019; *Malawi24:* <https://bit.ly/2PsNafd>, 3 October 2019

SINGAPORE: see Other/multi-seizures.

TANZANIA: On 1 June 2019, at Manyoni District Court, Singida Region, Rhamadan Saidi and Mohamed Rashid Sanda were each sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for the killing of four elephants (and one Giraffe *Giraffa* sp.), and the illegal possession of a firearm. The original sentence of 80 years' in jail for each suspect was revised to 20 years, with separate charges to run concurrently.

On 21 June 2019, at Songea District Court, Maxmilian Mwenda from Lilondo Village in Madaba Council and Rashid Migoha alias Mwendomchanja from Ifakara in Morogoro

Region were sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for the possession of 12 elephant tusks.

In November 2016, authorities acting on information arrested the duo at Mwenda's house in Lilongo Village in possession of the tusks. During an earlier hearing, the accused were set free but later rearrested and the case reopened.

On 3 September 2019, authorities in Dar es Salaam seized 338 pieces of elephant tusks from premises in Chamanzi Saku. One person, sought by police for several years, was among several arrested, including two policemen.

On 16 October 2019, it is reported that a High Court judge rejected an appeal by Chinese national Yang Fenglan and two Tanzanian co-defendants who were sentenced in February to 15 years in prison. Labelled the "Ivory Queen", Fenglan was charged with smuggling 2 t of ivory and for orchestrating an ivory smuggling racket.

Daily News: <https://bit.ly/2WrqEEL>, 2 June 2019; *AllAfrica:* <https://bit.ly/2BQO9xN>, 23 June 2019; *Mwananchi:* <https://bit.ly/32XKtGa>, 4 September 2019; *High Court of Tanzania Dar es Salaam District Registry Criminal Appeal No. 95 of 2019*, 16 October 2019; **TRAFFIC**

ZIMBABWE: On 21 June 2019, at Matabeleland North Provincial Magistrates' Court, Hwange, six poachers charged with illegal possession of ivory were each sentenced to nine years in prison.

In November 2018, the authorities received information that the men were in possession of ivory at Dete, which they intended to sell. Officers pretending to be trophy dealers intercepted the group and seized two pieces of ivory (37 kg).

On 18 July 2016, at Hwange Magistrates' Court, Alois Savanhu was sentenced to nine years in prison after being found in the illegal possession of almost 77 kg of raw ivory. Three others jointly charged were acquitted.

NewsDay: <https://bit.ly/2JtkGhC>, 24 June 2019; <https://bit.ly/2MSSaYf>, 20 July 2019

MARINE

BELGIUM: On 30 May 2019, it was reported that officers at Zaventem Airport had seized 24 bags containing 1.2 t of shark fins and ray wings which were being transported on a flight from Liberia to Hong Kong, labelled as dried fish and fish entrails. Among the consignment were wings of guitarfish *Glaucostegus* spp. and fins of hammerhead sharks *Sphyrnidae* spp. The shipment reportedly derived from some 1,600 to 2,000 animals, most of them young.

Guitarfish were listed in CITES Appendix II at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES in August 2019 (effective 26 November 2019). Three species of hammerhead sharks were listed in CITES Appendix II in 2013.

The Brussels Times: <https://bit.ly/345A4Zc>, 14 October 2019

CHINA: In early April 2019, Qingdao Customs officials in Qingdao port, Shandong province, alerted that a horse trading company was involved in illegal wildlife shipments, seized a container arriving from Peru, declared as horse hides. Following X-ray inspection, the consignment was found to contain 560 kg of dried seahorses *Hippocampus* spp. (CITES II) concealed within layers of horse hides. A number of suspects were arrested and subsequent inspection of a warehouse yielded a further 200 kg of dried seahorses.

On 20 May, a shipment containing 520 kg of dried seahorses and reportedly involving the same gang, was seized at the port. The cases are being investigated.

Xinhuanet: <https://bit.ly/2jxf4CZ>, 20 May 2019; <https://bit.ly/2MWv2sv>, 26 June 2019

GHANA: Authorities have fined the owners of a Chinese vessel USD1 million (plus USD22,700 (GH124,000)) for engaging in illegal fishing. The vessel, Lu Rong Yuan Yu 956, was apprehended off Cape Three Points in June 2019 with a crew comprising 22 Ghanaians and five Chinese nationals. Authorities decided to drop charges against the vessel owners after they agreed to pay the fine, opting for an out of court settlement. They had 30 days to pay the fine. Among the items on board the vessel were “405 cartons and 864 slabs of frozen mixed pelagic fish species generally below the minimum landing size”; they were also charged with non-logging of catch on board and nets with undersized mesh sizes.

Africa Feeds: <https://bit.ly/2PpN47Q>, 10 October 2019

HONG KONG SAR: On 12 July 2019, Customs officials at Man Kam To Control Point seized 44 kg of dried sea cucumbers *Holothuroidea* in a consignment of bottles of red wine being smuggled on three outgoing lorries. Three people were arrested.

On 23 August 2019, Customs officials at Hong Kong International Airport seized suspected dried shark fin (180 kg) and dried seahorses *Hippocampus* spp. (CITES II) (500 g), and arrested three passengers arriving from Manila, the Philippines. The items were found in check-in luggage.

Customs and Excise Department, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region press releases: <https://bit.ly/31RhkeF>, 13 July 2019 <https://bit.ly/36dTVap>, 24 August 2019

MEXICO: On 27 May 2019, it was reported that Customs agents in Manzanillo, Colima, had confiscated ca. 10.4 t of shark fins [species not reported] from over 500 crates bound for the Philippines. Mexico prohibits the export of shark fins.

Mexico News Daily: <https://bit.ly/31X7CXW>, 27 May 2019

PERU: On 30 September 2019, a ship bound for Asia containing over 12 m illegally caught seahorses *Hippocampus* spp. (CITES II) was seized by Coast Guard officials in waters off the coastal city of Callao; the vessel had been monitored by the authorities for several days. Three Peruvian nationals and a Venezuelan national were arrested. Fishing, transportation and trade in seahorses has been prohibited in Peru since August 2004.

Daily Mail: <https://dailymail.com/31YsZbs>, 2 October 2019

SOUTH AFRICA: a selection of incidents involving abalone (*perlemoen*) *Haliotis midae*:

On 3 May 2019, a man was arrested in Table View, Cape Town, after being found in possession of 13,042 dried and shucked abalones in his vehicle.

On 8 May 2019, a vehicle leaving a warehouse in Cape Town was searched by authorities and found to contain boxes of dried abalones (348 kg). A subsequent search of the warehouse uncovered an illegal abalone processing facility. A Chinese national was arrested.

On 16 July 2019, authorities in Milnerton, Cape Town, uncovered an illegal abalone processing facility and vehicles containing boxes of abalones. A second premises in the area uncovered further quantities, yielding a total of 19,032 dried abalones and 5,064 wet abalones. Four suspects were arrested. The raid is deemed to be a significant blow to the illegal abalone trade in this province.

On 6 August 2019, authorities in the Western Cape arrested two foreign nationals after an abalone processing facility was discovered in premises in Protea Park, Hermanus. A total of 1,170 kg of wet and dried abalones was seized.

On 5 September 2019, police at Lingeletu West Police station, Western Cape, arrested an employee of the South African National Parks (SANParks) in possession of 936 abalones at premises in Velani Crescent in C-Section, Khayelitsha.

On 10 September 2019, 5,000 dried abalones were seized from premises in Loarti Village, Kraaifontein. No arrests were made and the case is under investigation.

On 12 September 2019, three Western Cape police officers who are part of the Major Offences Reaction Team were arrested for armed robbery. The charges relate to an incident on 21 July when the driver of a taxi transporting poached abalones from Hermanus to Cape Town was pulled over by the officers in Somerset West; one of the officers drove the taxi to his residence, where the abalones were allegedly offloaded. The driver was dropped off and instructed to return to his vehicle which was found without the abalones. An investigation led to the arrest of the suspects.

On 3 October 2019, authorities acting on information intercepted a vehicle in the Table View area and seized bags containing shucked abalones (1,973). A suspect was arrested.

News24: <https://bit.ly/2pmjQMD>, 6 May 2019; *South African Police Service media statements:* <https://bit.ly/36d2aDL>, 8 May 2019; <https://bit.ly/2JxglEF>, 17 July 2019; <https://bit.ly/2pdamn1>, 6 August 2019; <https://bit.ly/2BQpx8d>, 5 September 2019; <https://bit.ly/31WRkhY>, 3 October 2019; *Independent Online (IOL):* <https://bit.ly/2Jv3ng4>, 9 May 2019; *IOL:* <https://bit.ly/31WQRMK>, 12 September 2019 *News24:* <https://bit.ly/31QkM9e>, 15 September 2019

SPAIN: On 31 May 2019, at Madrid Criminal Court, a criminal network accused of removing 724 kg of juvenile European Eels *Anguilla anguilla* (CITES II) from Spain in 500 suitcases between 2011 and 2012 was fined EUR580,000 (USD652,700). The eels were exported using falsified permits that declared the shipment contained the unprotected American Eel *Anguilla rostrata*.

El Pais: <https://bit.ly/34ajS95>, 12 June 2019

PANGOLINS

All eight species of pangolins *Manis* spp. are listed in CITES Appendix I.

CAMEROON: On 31 May 2019, it was reported that four people had been arrested in Tonga, Ndé department, after attempting to smuggle nearly 100 kg of pangolin scales into a hotel. The two women and two men allegedly bought the scales from wild meat sellers and other dealers in Tonga and Makenéné.

In a separate case, police in Douala arrested two people carrying five bags of pangolin scales (200 kg) from a transportation agency.

On 12 August 2019, authorities seized 383 kg of Giant Ground Pangolin *Manis gigantea* scales in Bamenda, North-West region. No further details reported.

Camernews: <https://bit.ly/349PtHX>, 31 May 2019; *Le360Afrique.com*: <https://bit.ly/2C3XlJL>, 15 August 2019

CONGO, DEM. REP. OF: On 24 July 2019, police in Kinshasa arrested an individual in possession of 300 kg of pangolin scales. The seizure results from collaboration between the Garamba National Park and African Parks Network.

Congo Actuel: <https://bit.ly/2poLV5R>, 29 July 2019

CÔTE D'IVOIRE: On 23 July 2019, authorities seized three tonnes of pangolin scales, reportedly the largest consignment of pangolin scales ever recorded in the country. Eight people were arrested.

VOA: <https://bit.ly/31UEukh>, 27 July 2019

HONG KONG SAR: On 17 July 2019, Customs officials at Hong Kong International Airport detained two male passengers arriving, respectively, from Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Xiamen, Fujian Province, China, after a total of 100 kg of suspected pangolin *Manis* spp. scales were found in their suitcases.

On 10 September 2019, at District Court, a man was sentenced to 34 months' imprisonment for smuggling 64 kg of pangolin scales (and for breaching a condition of stay). He was arrested after Customs officials at Hong Kong International Airport uncovered the consignment arriving from Malaysia; a further 190 kg of pangolin scales were seized from industrial premises in Sheung Shui where the suspect was working.

Customs and Excise Department, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region press releases: <https://bit.ly/2PvduoH>, 17 July 2019 https://www.customs.gov.hk/en/publication_press/press/index_id_2696.html, 10 September 2019

MALAWI: In September 2019, at a court in Lilongwe, Jimmy Mkwelzalemba and Julius Sanudia of Malawi were sentenced to three years in prison for smuggling and the illegal possession of pangolins following their arrest in May 2019. Both men are thought to be part of one of Africa's largest transnational wildlife trafficking syndicates.

The suspected chief operator of the trafficking network, a Chinese national, was arrested in August 2019. He has reportedly been linked to a range of wildlife crimes including the possession and smuggling of processed elephant ivory, 103 pieces of rhino horn, 556 pangolin scales and three live pangolins, and had been on the run following the May arrests that included his wife.

Mongabay: <https://bit.ly/348ZHII>

NIGERIA: On 17 July 2019, it was reported that Customs officials had seized some 670 kg of pangolin scales from a warehouse in Lagos. No details on provenance or of any ensuing arrests were reported.

The Sun: <https://bit.ly/3475hLu>, 17 July 2019

SINGAPORE: see Other/multi-seizures

SOUTH AFRICA: On 14 June 2019, it was reported that Shadrack Malatji, Israel Mamejia and France Shai had each been sentenced at Lenyeny Regional Court, Limpopo, to an effective five years in prison for possession of a live pangolin. The animal, which was seized from a vehicle, was returned to the wild.

In August 2019, at Mhala Regional Court, Vincent Nyathi was sentenced to eight years in prison after being found in possession of a pangolin. He was arrested in Rietboklaagte near Acornhoek; a pangolin found in a drum at his house was later released following treatment.

Bosveld Weekend Review: <https://bit.ly/2BXRbQx>, 14 June 2019; *Lowelder*: <https://bit.ly/36doFsd>, 29 August 2019

TURKEY: On 29 July 2019 it was announced that security forces at Istanbul Airport had seized over 1.2 t of pangolin scales after becoming suspicious of a shipment declared as "simply prepared (animal) bones or horn cores." Authorities were initially alerted by Customs to a possible health and safety hazard before the contents were found to consist of pangolin scales. No further details reported.

Daily Sabah: <https://bit.ly/2WmsbMt>, 29 July 2019

VIET NAM: In May 2019, authorities announced a seizure of 8.3 t of pangolin scales from "an African country" in the northern Haiphong port. In total, officials discovered 311 bags hidden beneath sacks of Cassia *Senna siamea* seeds; each bag of scales weighed between 25 kg to 30 kg.

On 23 May 2019, Customs officials at Cai Mep International Port Terminal, Ba Ria-Vung Tau, made a record seizure of more than 5.2 t of pangolin scales concealed in a shipment of cashew nuts from Nigeria. The scales were reported to derive from Giant Ground Pangolin *Manis gigantea*, Black-bellied Pangolin *M. tetradactyla* and White-bellied Pangolin *M. tricuspis*.

Phys.org: <https://bit.ly/2MTT33h>, 24 May 2019; <https://bit.ly/2Jy3S93>, 16 May 2019; *Saigon Giai Phong Online (SGGP)*: <http://sggpnews.org.vn/national/over-5-tons-of-pangolin-scales-seized-at-cai-mep-intl-port-81945.html>, 24 May 2019

ZIMBABWE: On 21 August 2019, it was reported that Matabeleland North Provincial Magistrates' Court, Hwange, had sentenced Killian Siacho of Lusulu, Binga, to a total of 24 years' imprisonment: 15 years for illegal

possession of 175 pangolin scales (2,525 kg) and nine years for possession of a firearm.

Newsday: <https://bit.ly/2WYIYrz6>, 21 August 2019

REPTILES

AUSTRALIA: On 5 June 2019, authorities at Perth Airport arrested two Japanese nationals attempting to smuggle 13 bobtail lizards *Tiliqua* spp. out of the country. The men were about to board separate flights to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur; one of them was found to have 13 native bobtail lizards in his check-in luggage. The lizards, packed in net bags wrapped in towels and placed in plastic containers, appeared to be in poor health and were without food or water. Similar containers were found inside the suitcase of the other suspect and photos of the lizards discovered on his phone. The two were subsequently investigated for possible involvement in an international wildlife smuggling syndicate linked to three other Japanese nationals charged with similar offences in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth over the previous six months.

Kyodo News: <https://bit.ly/2NntvdH>, 6 June 2019

CANADA: On 4 June 2019, it was reported that Li Wan of Vancouver had been fined CAD18,000 (USD13,700) after pleading guilty to attempting to smuggle 19 live turtles *Testudines* into the country from the USA in a duffel bag. The money from the fine will go into the federal government's environmental damages fund. Li was caught with the undeclared turtles in his vehicle at Point Roberts border crossing on 27 January.

The animals were reportedly ordered online from different locations and picked up by Li at a US mailing outlet, and included CITES-listed species: Black Pond Turtle *Geoclemys hamiltonii* (CITES I); Diamondback Terrapin *Malaclemys terrapin* (CITES II); Pig-nosed Turtle *Carettochelys insculpta* (CITES II); and CITES III-listed Pearl River Map Turtle *Graptemys pearlensis* and Black-knobbed Map Turtle *G. nigrinoda*.

CBC: <https://bit.ly/2C41enz>, 4 June 2019

MADAGASCAR: On 22 May 2019, it was reported that an appeals court in Tulear had upheld a six-year sentence against three people convicted of dealing in over 10,000 Radiated Tortoises *Geochelone radiata* (CITES I). The court also fined the defendants MGA100 million (USD26,500) and ordered them to pay MGA100 million to the environment ministry. The men were arrested at a house in possession of the turtles in April 2018.

AFP: <https://yhoo.it/2WzuSsA>, 22 May 2019



◀ **APOLLO BUTTERFLY**
Parnassius apollo (CITES II).
Two Danish nationals were apprehended with ca. 35–40 specimens of a subspecies of Apollo Butterfly in Jotunheimen, Norway, in August 2019.

MALAYSIA: On 18 May 2019, Sabah Wildlife Department seized 220 crocodiles *Crocodylia* spp. at a swamp in Kampung Pasir Putih, Tawau, believed to have been smuggled in from neighbouring Kalimantan. This was reported to be the first time that the authorities had uncovered crocodile smuggling from outside the State; the provenance (and intended purpose) of the animals was being investigated, including whether they were to supply local crocodile farms. Five had perished; the surviving specimens were released in the wild and two Malaysians and two Indonesians were arrested.

Under Schedule 2 of the *Sabah Wildlife Conservation Enactment*, it is illegal to hunt, collect the eggs or remove the crocodiles from the wild under any circumstances.

The *Jakarta Post*: <https://bit.ly/2WnA7Nm>, 20 May 2019

ZIMBABWE: On 2 August 2019, at Harare provincial magistrates' court, Blessed Morris of Beatrice was sentenced to the mandatory minimum nine years' imprisonment for possession of protected wildlife without the requisite permits. He was apprehended on 28 July while walking in Mbare in possession of a woman's handbag, prompting the police to investigate. Inside the bag, wrapped in cloth, were specimens later identified as a Yellow-throated Plated Lizard *Gerrhosaurus flavigularis*, a Mozambican Spitting Cobra *Naja mossambica*, two Olive Grass Snakes *Psammodphis mossambicus*, and a python *Pythonidae*, all protected species.

ZimLive: <https://bit.ly/2NiCblI>, 2 August 2019

RHINOCEROSES

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

CHINA: On 16 August 2019 it was reported that Beijing Second Intermediate People's Court had rejected an appeal by four people sentenced to prison for up to 13 years for trading in 33 kg of African rhino horn.

Defendants Hou and Xin bought the horn through the online platform Wechat, which they sold to co-defendants Lin and Chen. On 26 April 2018, police arrested Hou, Lin and Chen in a vehicle and seized 19 pieces of rhino horns. Xin was arrested at a hotel in Huairou, Beijing.

The four had been sentenced in Xicheng District Court: Lin to 13 years and six months in prison, and fined CNY26,000 (USD3,600); Hou to 13 years, fined CNY26,000; Chen to 13 years in prison, fined CNY2,400, and Xin was sentenced to nine years in prison and fined CNY18,000.

Weixin: <https://bit.ly/2jwLAAa>, 16 August 2019

MOZAMBIQUE: On 26 August 2019, at Maputo City Court, Chinese national Pu Chiujiang was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment following his arrest at Maputo International Airport on 15 April 2018 with 4.2 kg of rhino horn pieces in a suitcase. Pu, who had been bound for Hong Kong via Doha, was also fined an undisclosed amount.

This is reportedly the first case of a foreign national imprisoned in Mozambique for a wildlife crime. The provenance of the horns has not been established.

On 2 September 2019, it was reported that two poachers had been given prison sentences of 17 and 16 years, respectively, for killing two rhinos in Kruger National Park, South Africa, and for the unlawful possession of unlicensed weapons. The duo, from Gaza Province, also received fines. It is reported to be the first conviction and sentencing in Mozambique for rhino poaching since 2008.

Club of Mozambique: <https://bit.ly/2NpwKI5>, 27 August 2019; AllAfrica: <https://bit.ly/2BQTDsb>, 27 August 2019; South African National Parks media release: <https://bit.ly/32XlIkI>, 2 September 2019

SOUTH AFRICA: During 12–16 August 2019, at Skukuza Regional Court, three people received prison sentences for rhino poaching in Kruger National Park. Adolph Ndlovu, convicted of trespassing, being in possession of an unlicensed firearm, unlicensed ammunition, and possession of a firearm with intent to commit a crime, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. Abednigo Mahlabane, arrested in 2017, was convicted of trespassing, being an illegal immigrant, possession of and pointing an unlicensed firearm, and given an effective sentence of 10 years in prison. Jeffrey Mathebula, arrested in 2015, was fined R10,000 (USD678) or sentenced to two years' imprisonment of which half is suspended for five years.

South African National Parks media release: <https://bit.ly/2B0xzi1>, 16 August 2019

USA: On 1 October 2019, Richard Sheridan, an Irish national, pleaded guilty to trafficking a "libation cup" carved from the horn of a Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* and was sentenced to 14 months in prison, with two years of supervised release.

Sheridan was extradited to the USA in August following his indictment in May charging him and an accomplice, Irish national Michael Hegarty, with "conspiracy to traffic in a libation cup made from the horn of protected rhinoceros". Sheridan was also charged with smuggling the cup out of the USA. He was arrested in the UK as part of an ongoing criminal investigation.

Sheridan and Hegarty were alleged to be members of an organised crime gang accused of carrying out raids on museums and auction houses to steal rhino horn and high-value artefacts from UK museums and from European countries, Hong Kong SAR and the USA. Both have previously served prison sentences in connection with related offences (see *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 28(1):33; 30(1):32).

NY Daily News: <https://bit.ly/2BTyT36>; The Irish Sun: <https://bit.ly/2Nn0WgzI>, 3 October 2019; *TRAFFIC*

VIET NAM: On 16 May 2019, in a Lao Cai courtroom, three men received prison sentences for attempting to smuggle rhino horn across the border into China. The sentences were prosecuted under the country's recently amended penal code, which includes a provision for higher penalties for those convicted of wildlife crime.

Two of the men, Duong Van Thanh and Duong Van Sang, were arrested in May 2018 in Lao Cai after police received information that they would be transporting the horn over the border. They were caught in a car with 20 kg of rhino horn concealed in vases and a nylon bag. Police later arrested the owner of the rhino horn, Duong Van Chiem.

Duong Van Thanh and Duong Van Sang were each imprisoned for 8.5 years, while Duong Van Chiem received a 10-year sentence.

On 25 July 2019, authorities at Hanoi's Noi Bai airport seized 55 pieces (125 kg) of rhino horn that had been encased in plaster. The provenance of the horn, which was bound for the United Arab Emirates, was not known.

TRAFFIC: <https://bit.ly/36cl39U>, 17 May 2019; *Haiquan Online*: <https://bit.ly/2WnCDmM>, 27 July 2019; *Herald Live*: <https://bit.ly/2ow3HE0>, 28 July 2018

ZIMBABWE: A man serving 10 years in jail for poaching a rhino in Beitbridge has been jailed for a further nine years for poaching another rhino at a safari lodge in Chipinge. Godknows Mashame was found guilty at Chipinge Magistrates' Court after a witness provided evidence against him. He will finish serving one sentence before serving the second term.

It is alleged that Mashame entered the safari lodge area in July 2011 without a permit and poached a Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* (CITES I) using a gaming GPS monitor, with intentions to sell the horn to foreign buyers. He fled after committing the crime.

The Herald: <https://bit.ly/3493CVV>, 21 May 2019

FLORA

CHINA: In July 2019, a raid involving 100 wildlife law enforcement officers resulted in the seizure of many tonnes of teak *Tectona* spp. and rosewood *Dalbergia* (CITES II) logs and the dismantling of a major crime syndicate involved in the smuggling of timber from Myanmar to Yunnan Province. The timber was seized from eight warehouses around Nongdao. Anticipating resistance from workers and villagers employed by the timber smuggling syndicates, helicopters were used for initial surveillance and power was cut to the town to disable CCTV cameras and prevent news of the raid spreading.

Several major operators involved in the syndicate, one of whom owned a wood processing factory in Ruili, on the border with Myanmar, were arrested and await trial.

Environmental Investigation Agency: <https://bit.ly/2PtIOWj>, 2 September 2019

INDIA: On 10 September 2019, authorities in Mumbai disrupted an international smuggling racket and arrested three people in possession of 1,556 kg of Red Sandalwood (Red Sanders) *Pterocarpus santalinus* (CITES II). The consignment had been transported from Chennai and was bound for Hong Kong via contacts in Goa.

On 27 September 2019, at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi, authorities arrested three people for illegal possession and an attempt to smuggle to Hong Kong 160 kg of Red Sandalwood. Bundles of sandalwood were detected in the luggage of one suspect; he was allowed to check in while being kept under surveillance, during which time it was evident that two other passengers were accompanying him; all three were apprehended. Others are believed to be involved and the case is under investigation.

During two separate incidents at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, Mumbai, on 4 October 2018, officials seized a total of 87 kg of Red Sandalwood chips from two Sudanese nationals. The first man, flying to Addis Ababa, was carrying 75 kg of the wood in his carry-on luggage (9 kg) and checked-in baggage (66 kg); the second case involved 10 kg of sandalwood chips in plastic packets in the possession of a passenger bound for Doha, Qatar.

Over 60,000 specimens of *Conophytums* *Conophytum* spp. were among two separate seizures of succulents illegally collected in the Western Cape, South Africa, in recent months. These plants form clusters and grow largely on inhospitable rocky slabs, sheltering from the sun in cracks and crevices. The clusters are not large and it is easy to destroy entire populations at a local level.



Conophytum ernstii

Hindustan Times: <https://bit.ly/2MWlzkY>, 11 September 2019; <https://bit.ly/343QLEu>, 28 September 2019; *India Today*: <https://bit.ly/32SDChg>, 8 October 2019; *The Hindu*: <https://bit.ly/2WxCrSh>, 6 October 2019

PERU: On 8 August 2019, at Second Unipersonal Penal Court of Maynas, Rubén Antonio Espinoza, director of Cacao del Perú Norte SAC, a company charged with the illegal trade in timber and obstruction, was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment; Ernesto Vega Delgado and Giovanni Cubas Ramírez of the same company, were given a four-year suspended sentence for related offences.

The three are linked to a Czech-American businessman, who since 2010 established a network of companies for the large-scale cultivation of oil palm and cocoa in the country. Cacao del Perú Norte SAC (now called Tamshi SAC), was one of these companies, accused of deforesting more than 13,000 ha of forests in Loreto and Ucayali, in the Peruvian Amazon, and for the illegal trade in timber forest products. The company prevented inspections of the deforested areas leading to a charge of obstruction.

On 2 September 2019 the company was also ordered to pay the State the equivalent of USD4,626,750 within the first year of the sentence as compensation for the transformation of 1,950 ha of forest in Tamshiyacu, in the district of Fernando Lores, in Loreto. Images and testimony presented during the trial showed what the area had looked like before the arrival of the company and the subsequent extent of deforestation; it was also able to prove that the wood had been extracted and later processed and illegally traded commercially without a permit.

The accused, who did not attend the hearing, have appealed their sentences.

SERFOR Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation: <https://bit.ly/332Ljli>, 9 August 2019; *Mongabay*: <https://bit.ly/2MX06ID>, 30 July 2019

SOUTH AFRICA: On 12 September 2019, at Cape Town Regional Court, Czech nationals Jaromir Chvastek and Tomas Malir were sentenced to prison for two years, suspended for five years, and each fined ZAR500,000 (USD33,500).

The duo was apprehended in Rietpoort, Western Cape, on 7 August 2019 after more than 1,000 plants were found in their possession. The specimens had been collected near Bitterfontein, including several "critically rare" plants and more than 900 vulnerable or protected plants, predominantly *Conophytum* and *Adromischus* spp., as well as some aloe *Aloe* spp. (CITES II) and *Haworthia* spp. Also in their possession were collection bags and GPS co-ordinates to pinpoint the location of these commercially valuable plants. It is reported that Chvastek operated a website in the Czech Republic in which a wide variety of succulent plants, including South African species, were offered for sale. The men were ordered to be deported once the case was completed.

On 8 October 2019, two suspects were arrested in a vehicle travelling between Ashton and Robertson, Western Cape, while transporting 60,397 *Conophytum succulents*.

News24: <https://bit.ly/2NfCU72>, 21 September 2019; South African Police Service media statement: <https://bit.ly/2MVe8dr>, 9 October 2019

USA: A three-year investigation has concluded with the imprisonment of William Starr Schwartz after he was found guilty of stealing more than 500 federally protected cactus plants from Lake Mead National Recreation Area (Arizona/Nevada). Schwartz, who has been ordered to serve 24 months in prison, will then serve three years of supervised release, during which time he is banned from entering the park and surrounding public land. He must also pay USD22,655 in restitution.

Court documents detail how Schwartz stole and directed others to steal the plants for him between October 2014 and August 2018. He sold the cacti via the internet, illegally shipping specimens to more than 20 countries. Numerous cacti plants obtained illegally were recovered during a search of Schwartz's residence in August 2018.

US National Park Service: <https://bit.ly/2qTZlaA>, 2 May 2019

OTHER/MULTI-SEIZURES

CHINA: On 16 May 2019, Gongbei Customs officials in Zhuhai city, Guangdong province, seized 1.6 t of ivory, later identified as teeth of Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibius* (CITES II) and related products during inspection of a craft manufacturing company. The company allegedly imported the items from overseas and hired workers to process and sell them illegally.

Economic Daily, <https://bit.ly/369gsp3>, 20 June 2019; China Daily: <https://bit.ly/36ep3qu>, 20 June 2019

CONGO: On 13 May 2019, Congo nationals Armand Tonton Ibanda and Justin Wawa were sentenced to two years in prison and each fined FCFA1 million (USD1,680).

The duo was caught in possession of a bag holding 260 ivory (CITES I) chopsticks, 100 ivory bracelets, necklaces and rings, 100 ivory pendants, seven ivory statuettes, two ivory pieces, as well as skins of three Leopards *Panthera pardus* (CITES I).

Journal de Brazza.com: <https://bit.ly/2WIGil0>, 16 May 2019; Africa Sustainable Conservation News: <https://bit.ly/3495Rsj>, 17 May 2019

GUINEA: On 7 May 2019, two brothers were arrested in Kissidougou with more than 60 skins of 15 protected species (felines, mammals, antelopes, crocodiles, pythons). Reportedly,

they had been supplying traffickers in Senegal, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire since the 1980s. They await trial.

VisionGuinee.info: <https://bit.ly/2Nnglls>, 14 May 2019

INDONESIA: On 19 September 2019, four people were each sentenced to four years in prison and fined IDR50 million (USD3,500). They were found guilty of attempting to smuggle by boat to Malaysia via Rupaat Island, in March, 40 protected animals, including 38 birds (including Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus*, Helmeted Hornbill *Rhinoplax vigil* (both CITES I)) and Macgregor's Honeyeater *Macgregoria pulchra* (CITES II), and two Agile Gibbons *Hylobates agilis* (CITES I), before being foiled by the authorities.

<http://archive.is/6lph0>, 21 March 2019; Garda Animalia: <https://bit.ly/31WAPSM>, 20 September 2019; <http://archive.is/7rnll>, 22 September 2019

MALAYSIA: On 15 May 2019, at Kuala Terengganu Sessions Court, Vietnamese nationals Hoang Van Viet and Nguyen Van Thiet were convicted of the illegal possession of threatened wildlife and each sentenced to two years in prison and fined MYR1.56 million (USD390,000). The duo was caught in April 2019 in Hulu Sungai Tersat in Taman Negara Pahang National Park, with 22 snares and 138 parts of the following CITES I-listed species: Leopard *Panthera pardus*, Serow *Capricornis sumatraensis*, Tapir *Tapirus indicus*, Sun Bear *Helarctos malayanus*, and Golden Cat *Catapuma temminckii*. It is the first time in Malaysia's history a fine of more than MYR1 million has been imposed for wildlife crime. The duo face a further 16 years in prison if they fail to pay the fines.

On 5 October 2019, almost 800 animal parts were seized during a raid on premises in Kapit, Sarawak, Borneo, including casques of 148 hornbills Bucerotidae, hornbill feathers, pangolin *Manis* spp. (CITES I) scales, porcupine quills, bear (CITES I/II) bile and deer antlers. One man was arrested.

TRAFFIC: <https://bit.ly/2Jw4Fam>, 15 May 2019; AFP: <https://yhoo.it/2Ws60VI>, 10 October 2019; New Straits Times: <https://bit.ly/2MUskn2>, 9 October 2019

NORWAY: On 1 August 2019, two Danish nationals were detained after being observed collecting butterflies in the Gjendebu area near Jotunheimen; in their possession were some 35–40 Apollo Butterflies *Parnassius apollo* (CITES II and listed in EU Annex A); the specimens seized were the endemic subspecies, which is rare. The duo was released from custody but reportedly face criminal action.

Ekstra Bladet: <https://bit.ly/2MZgpVn>, 1 August 2019

PHILIPPINES: On 30 May 2019, Ninoy Aquino International Airport officials, at the Central Mail Exchange Center in Pasay City, intercepted six packages of wildlife, two of which contained 100 live tarantulas Theraphosidae in plastic containers declared as "mails and toys"; they had arrive from Malaysia and Poland and were addressed to residents of Sto Tomas, Batangas, Naga City, and Cebu. Stingray *Myliobatoidei* skins (71) were also found in a package from Jakarta, Indonesia.

Inquirer.net: <https://bit.ly/2BQWT6P>, 31 May 2019; Manila Bulletin: <https://bit.ly/2PrgH8Y>, 31 May 2019

SINGAPORE: On 21 September 2019, authorities seized three containers declared to contain timber arriving from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in transit for Viet Nam. One was found to contain 8.8 t of ivory from African Elephants *Loxodonta africana* (CITES I), Singapore's largest seizure of ivory to date, and 11.9 t of pangolin scales contained in 237 sacks, later identified as being from Giant Ground Pangolins *Manis gigantea* (CITES I).

This case brings the volume of pangolin scales reportedly seized in Singapore since April 2019 to 37.5 t. The items were to be destroyed to prevent them entering the market.

The seizure was made possible following information shared by the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China.

National Parks, Singapore: <https://bit.ly/2PoPZ0N>, 23 July 2019

VIET NAM: On 12 April 2019, authorities at Nam Hai Dinh Vu Port, Hai Phong, discovered a shipment transporting 3.5 t of ivory and 4 t of pangolin *Manis* spp. scales, (both CITES I), concealed in containers of asphalt.

Viet Nam News: <https://bit.ly/31XUwJY>, 13 June 2019; Haiquaonline: <https://bit.ly/36jhdvU>, 13 June 2019; <https://bit.ly/36d6nr2>, 13 June 2019

ZIMBABWE: On 27 April 2019, it was reported that Never Ndlovu of Dete, had been sentenced at Hwange Provincial Magistrates' Court to 27 years' imprisonment. He was convicted of the unlawful possession of Lion *Panthera leo* (CITES II) skin, a python Pythonidae and raw ivory (CITES I). He claimed to have picked up the items while herding cattle in Hwange National Park, intending to use them for medicinal purposes.

Newsday: <https://bit.ly/31XmXbc>, 27 April 2019