

THE WILDLIFE CONNECTION

Raising awareness of wildlife crime issues in Southeast Asia

TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, is the leading non-governmental organization working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

TRAFFIC specializes in:

- Analysing trends, patterns, impacts and drivers to provide the leading knowledge base on wildlife trade;
- Informing and supporting action by governments to adopt, implement and enforce effective policies and laws;
- Providing information, and encouragement to the private sector on effective approaches to ensure that sourcing of wildlife uses sustainability standards and best practice;
- Developing insight into motivations for consumer attitudes and purchasing, and guiding effective communication interventions aimed at dissuade purchasing of illicit wildlife goods.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR:

This is the second edition of our newsletter aimed at raising awareness of wildlife crime issues in Southeast Asia. Sharing our wealth of knowledge to inform decision making, build understanding and initiate enforcement action has always been at the heart of our mission with this newsletter. In this edition, we bring you new information about online ivory trade in Indonesia and Thailand; an issue we have not previously looked into in such detail. Also, read on to find out more about the links between ambulances, glue and wildlife trafficking.

All information featured in this newsletter has been centrally compiled and retained on TRAFFIC's iBase database. Where appropriate a database unique reference number (URN) which corresponds to each piece of information being discussed is included. If you seek further details of such information, please use this URN when contacting TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia.

This work would not have been possible without the support of The Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia, Auckland Zoo, Dreamworld, Hamilton Zoo, National Zoo and Aquarium, New Zealand Department of Conservation, Perth Zoo, Taronga Conservation Society Australia, Wellington Zoo and Wildlife Reserves Singapore. Their on-going funding supports TRAFFIC's crime data analyst and researcher positions in Southeast Asia. We would also like to acknowledge the support of the University of Adelaide and the Australian Museum Research Institute in building knowledge and capability.

Finally, TRAFFIC is pleased to announce that Jacqueline Evans has taken over the role of Senior Crime Data Analyst and additionally, the management of this newsletter. Jacqueline replaces Sarah Stoner who was an integral part of the TRAFFIC team in Southeast Asia over the last two years and helmed the production of this issue of *The Wildlife Connection*. TRAFFIC thanks Sarah for her extensive contribution to the organisation and this publication.

Dr. Chris R. Shepherd, Regional Director, TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia

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The Open Availability of CITES Appendix I listed Ploughshare Tortoises

While much attention has been devoted to the rise in online wildlife trade, we are reminded that there is no room for complacency as recent observations find that physical wildlife markets continue to pose a threat.





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Ploughshare Tortoise openly on display at a reptile exhibition in a busy mall in Jakarta, 2015.

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The Ploughshare Tortoise *Astrochelys yniphora* is one of the world's rarest tortoises. Assessed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species it is restricted to a tiny range of around 60 km² in north-western Madagascar. Historically, habitat destruction and local consumption contributed to a significant population decline. However, over the past couple of decades, a more potent and imminent threat to the species has emerged: the pet trade. Despite having a fully protected status and being included in Appendix I of CITES (prohibiting any commercial international trade), the Ploughshare Tortoise is continually being poached and smuggled out of Madagascar. Indonesia appears to be one popular destination for these animals. While reasonably comprehensive wildlife laws exist in Indonesia, the legislation does not extend to non-native wildlife thereby creating an unfortunate obstacle for any law enforcement actions once the tortoises have entered the country.

In Jakarta, Indonesia, recent TRAFFIC surveys found that open trade in the world's most threatened tortoise shows no sign of decreasing. The surveys were carried out weekly between September 2015 and April 2016 in four of Jakarta's animal markets, three reptile pet shops and at two one-off reptile exhibitions (expos). The expos were held in busy malls and assisted local traders to promote and sell their stock to the general public.

During 18 surveys, 13 different individual Ploughshare Tortoises were observed on sale, nine were recorded at the reptile expos and four were observed on sale at a single shop in one of the markets. In all cases, the tortoises were on full display to the public with no efforts taken to hide them from view. The only visible precaution taken by the traders was displaying signs forbidding the taking of photos at the two reptile expos.

One trader spoke openly about the Ploughshare Tortoises he was selling. He confirmed that the price was high because these animals are so rare and have to be illegally smuggled into the country, making them very difficult to acquire. This trader was fully aware

of the lack of protection for non-native species and knew that once the animals were in the country, there was little law enforcement could do. Another trader commented that he is only concerned about displaying one of the few native tortoises that are protected under Indonesian law.

Akin to Indonesia, many other Southeast Asian countries display a combination of insufficient legislation for the protection of non-native species, corruption and a general lack of public awareness enabling traders to operate illegally with little fear of recrimination. TRAFFIC will continue to monitor the Ploughshare Trade in Indonesia and around Southeast Asia and work with the respective governments to support law enforcement efforts and raise awareness of this issue. All findings have already been shared with the Indonesian authorities for action. A major milestone in the conservation of Ploughshare Tortoises and other non-native species will be for the Indonesian government to amend its wildlife law to include non-native species in the protected list.



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Critically Endangered Ploughshare Tortoise (left) and Radiated Tortoises *Astrochelys radiata* (right) for sale at a Reptile Exhibition in Jakarta, 2015.

Recent Case Study Analysis: Vietnamese Nationals Targeting Amur Tigers *Panthera tigris altaica*

Incidents reported over the last two years suggest that Tiger *Panthera tigris* bones are being sourced from Russia for the Vietnamese market. Most recently in May 2015, Russian police arrested two Vietnamese nationals who allegedly killed and attempted to smuggle parts of an endangered Amur Tiger¹. The arrests were a consequence of a police-planned sting operation when they posed as buyers after the men attempted to sell Tiger parts online. A subsequent raid on the pair's premises led to the discovery of 59 Tiger teeth, four sets of Tiger bones, 15 kg of Tiger meat, a set of Tiger skin and a frozen Tiger head – these equated to a minimum of two Tigers.

Research in 2009 shows that Vietnamese consumers prefer wild-sourced animals over their captive-bred substitutes (Drury, R., 2009²). Tiger farms are known to add more pressure on wild populations as wildlife farms are believed to be "laundering" facilities for illegally caught wild animals. As wild Tiger populations in Viet Nam and its neighbouring country, Lao PDR, are estimated to be less than five and two Tigers respectively (IUCN, 2015³), it seems that traders are reaching further for supply. An incident in June 2014 demonstrated that Tiger bones were being smuggled into the country on direct flights from Moscow to Ha Noi. Noi Bai International Airport Customs found a Vietnamese national in possession of three nylon packages of fresh animal bones, suspected to be Tiger bones⁴.

Another case in January 2015 highlights that Tiger meat is desirable as a consumable by some Vietnamese nationals. The head and skin of a rare Amur Tiger and a Far Eastern Leopard *Panthera pardus orientalis*, as well as 50 kg of suspected animal meat were confiscated from two restaurants in Moscow⁵. A Police statement noted that the two restaurants were believed to be owned by a Vietnamese national, who used the rare animal parts to produce medicine and to cook "exquisite oriental dishes". Authorities also report that the restaurant is typically not open to the general public, rather it caters to Vietnamese national living in the country.

The use of Tiger *Panthera tigris* bones for medicinal purposes remains popular amongst an emerging sub-culture of consumers in Viet Nam (Akella and Allan, 2012). Bones are often boiled down until they form a glue-like substance, known as *cao*. This is then dried, ground into a fine powder and consumed with alcohol.

The demand for *cao* in particular is reflected in an investigative report by Vietnamese's online newspaper *Nguoi Dua Tin* in 2015. The report focuses on a 60-year-old man who makes *cao* in Ha Noi. Historically he would source his Tigers from Laos but he contracted an infection after killing a pregnant Tiger which resulted in the amputation of one of his legs. He interpreted this as karma for profiteering from animals and gave up producing *cao*. However, this did not last for long and the article describes how he has since returned to making *cao* driven by its high profit margins⁷.



Cao found in Viet Nam

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¹ MOR2885

² Drury, R. (2009). Reducing urban demand for wild animals in Vietnam: examining the potential of wildlife farming as a conservation tool. *Conservation Letters*, 2: 263–270. doi: 10.1111/j.1755-263X.2009.00078.x

³ Goodrich, J., Lynam, A., Miquelle, D., Wibisono, H., Kawanishi, K., Pattanavibool, A., Htun, S., Tempa, T., Karki, J., Jhala, Y. & Karanth, U. (2015). *Panthera tigris*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2015: e.T15955A50659951

⁴ MOR4295

⁵ MOR2680

⁶ Akella, A. and Allan, C. (2012). *Dismantling Wildlife Crime*. TRAFFIC North America, WWF, Washington DC, USA.

⁷ Nguoiduatin.vn (2015). Shocking secrets at a "private station" making *cao* illegally in Ha Noi (1). Online at: <http://www.nguoiduatin.vn/bi-mat-dong-troi-o-mat-dao-nau-cao-ho-chui-giu-a-ha-noi-1-a218512.html>. Viewed on 21 April 2016.



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As countries move to shut down the open sale of ivory, trade moves online.

MARKET SURVEY MONITORING: Comparisons of Ivory Markets in Indonesia and Thailand

Due to the growing levels of illegal wildlife trade online, TRAFFIC undertook a rapid assessment over five days of the ivory trade occurring on four different online platforms in Indonesia and Thailand. The main objective of the assessment was to understand and compare the characteristics of the markets in the two countries and how ivory was being traded online. The two surveys were carried out consecutively, in Thai and Indonesian languages.

A brief scoping exercise was conducted from 24th February to 1st March 2016 prior to the survey to determine search parameters. It found ivory was most commonly traded on four online platforms – Facebook, Instagram, online retailers, and online forums – but there were clear differences in each country. Thailand was found to have a higher occurrence of ivory for sale on Facebook compared to other platforms, whereas Indonesia, was found to have a higher occurrence of ivory for sale on Instagram. Due to this notable difference, these platforms were given a larger portion of survey

time. For the whole survey week, Facebook was allocated with two hours a week of monitoring in Thailand, while Instagram was allocated with two hours a week of monitoring in Indonesia, while the remaining platforms had one hour. The full schedule breakdown for the survey undertaken is shown in **Table 1**.

The assessment took place from 7 to 11 March 2016, only documenting advertisements or posts that explicitly stated an ivory product for sale and were not more than six months old (September 2015–March 2016). The assessment used elephant ivory related keywords to locate adverts. For Indonesia, when searching for advertisements, an additional keyword to accompany the word “ivory” is required, as the Indonesian word for ivory (*gading*) may also refer to the name of a region in Jakarta, or to the “ivory” colour.

A search using only the keyword “ivory” or *gading*, will produce a high number of non-elephant ivory related results, making it difficult to navigate through. A complete description of the keywords can be seen in **Table 2**.

Table 1: Distribution of survey times and platforms monitored over one week.

Survey Parameters	Day of Week				
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Time Allocated for Survey	One hour	One hour	One hour	One hour	One hour
Platform Surveyed: Thailand	Facebook	Facebook	Facebook	Online Retailers	Online Forums
Platform Surveyed: Indonesia	Instagram	Instagram	Instagram	Online Retailers	Online Forums

Table 2: Keywords Search by Country

Keywords used (English translation)	Local Language	
	Indonesia	Thailand
Ivory	Gading Gajah	Nga-chang
Genuine / Authentic Ivory	Gading Gajah Asli	Nga-chang Tae
Sell Ivory	Jual Gading	Khai Nga-chang
Buy Ivory	Beli Gading	Sue Nga-chang
Sell-Buy Ivory	Jual-Beli Gading	Sue-Khai Nga-chang
Ivory Jewellery	Perhiasan Gading	Krueng-pra-dub Nga-chang
Ivory Carvings	Ukiran Gading	Nga-chang Kae-Salak
Smoking Pipe	Pipa Rokok	-
Ivory Smoking Pipe	Pipa Rokok Gading	-
Thai Ivory	-	Nga-chang Thai
Ivory Thailand	-	Nga-chang Prathet-Tahi

RESULTS

A total of 828 ivory products listed in 243 online advertisement posts were recorded from the survey (**Table 3**). Thailand dominated the findings with about 80% (n=655) of all ivory products found and 71% of the total online advertisements. The observed main difference between the two online markets is the type of platform used to advertise ivory products. A higher variety of platforms were used to advertise products in Indonesia compared to Thailand. As previously stated, Facebook was highly dominant in the type of online platform used in Thailand, constituting up to 99.8% of products found in Thailand. While in Indonesia, although Instagram was the dominant online platform, it only constituted 62% of all

advertisement posts (**Chart 1**). A variety of online platforms were used in the remaining 38%.

Sale of ivory products in the form of jewellery was found to be common in both countries. However, the type of jewellery found for sale was different; beads were the most popular item sold in Thailand while bracelets and earrings were popular in Indonesia. Detailed description of the findings from Indonesian and Thai online platforms are discussed below in greater detail, while a general comparison of findings in both countries is shown in **Table 4**.

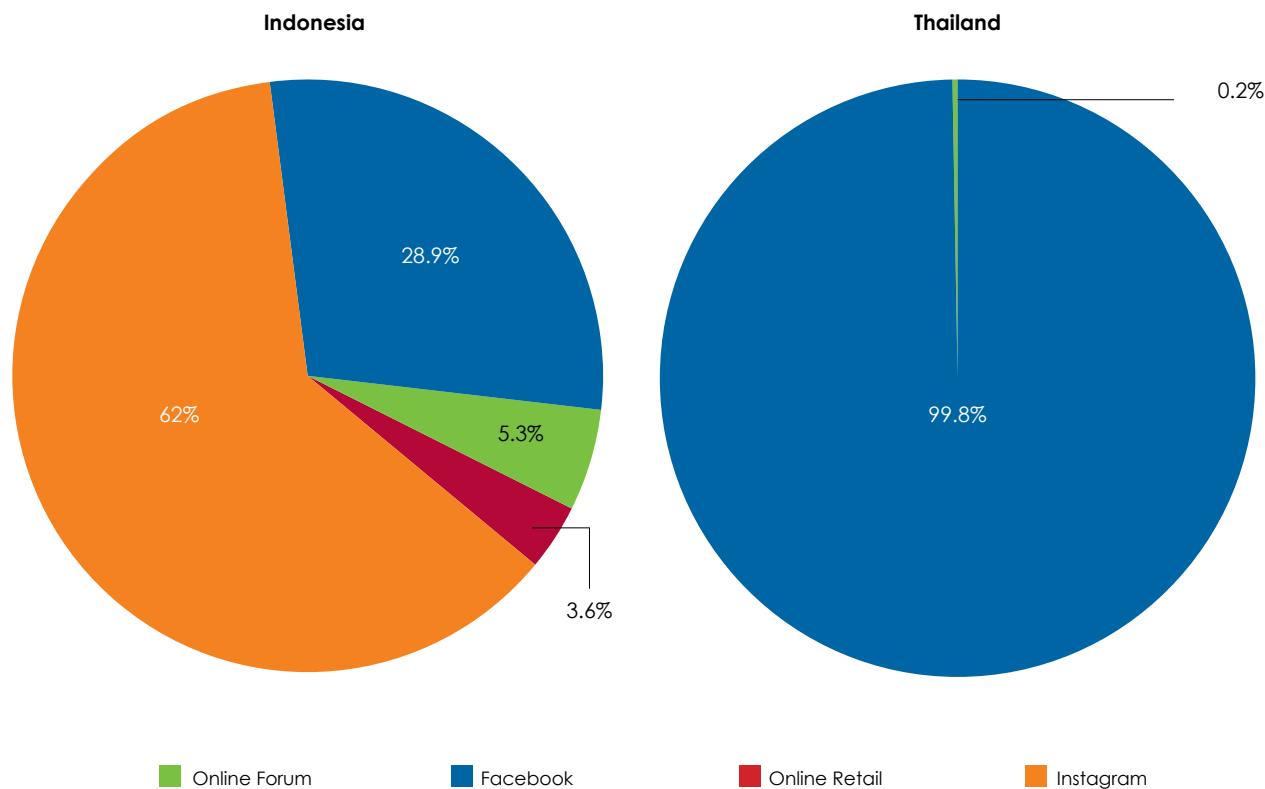
Table 3: Ivory items found for sale online in Indonesia and Thailand over one week (7 March -11 March, 2016)

Item/ Commodity for Sale Categories	Details	Number of Items		Number of Posts	
		Indonesia	Thailand	Indonesia	Thailand
Jewellery (78.9%)		135	518	39	68
	Beads		228		5
	Bracelets	45	11	7	11
	Brooch	4		4	
	Buckle		3		3
	Earrings	44		6	
	Necklace		31		20
	Pendant	9	197	4	17
	Ring	28	48	8	12
	Other	5		10	
Holy items (7.2%)		1	59	1	17
(only for religious or spiritual purposes)	Buddha		22		6
	Ganesha		23		5
	Other		11		3
	Prayer Beads	1		1	
	Singha		3		3
Raw Ivory (5.2%)		1	42	1	18
	Cut Ivory		6		6
	Fossil		3		2
	Ivory Pieces		1		1
	Ivory Tips		29		7
	Raw Ivory Tusks	1	3	1	2
Cigarette Pipe (4.1%)		33	1	26	1
Decorative Items (4.0%)		3	30	3	10
(items may be in the shapes of holy figures but these items are for decorative purposes only)	Dagger Handle	1			1
	Elephant Figurine		1	1	
	Hanuman		19		1
	Other	2	2		4
	Singha		8		3
Ivory Powder 1 kg (0.6%)			5		2
Grand Total		173	655	70	116

Table 4: Notable observations of online ivory trade in Indonesia and Thailand

General Observations	Indonesia	Thailand
I. Typical seller profile	Most traders selling jewellery were women, often selling ivory alongside pearls and silver. In contrast, ivory smoking pipes were frequently sold by men traders.	Most of the sellers in Thailand were men (78%). A few sellers claimed that they were registered with the Thai Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation. Some also claimed that the ivory they sold was legal.
II. Locations of sellers	Most trade was observed from West Nusa Tenggara (24% of all sellers), followed by West Java and East Java (16% of all sellers). Most of the traders were from West Nusa Tenggara (24%), followed by West and East Java (16%)	The sellers most often identified themselves to be from Surin, nicknamed the "Land of Elephants", in the north-eastern region of Thailand. Elephant products from Surin tend to be perceived as being of good quality.
III. Typical buyer profile	Similar to the profile of sellers, ivory jewellery buyers were mostly women, while smoking pipes were mostly sought after by men.	Buyers were mostly men, while holy items were sometimes purchased by women, due to the belief that it will bring them success in business.
IV. Pricing	Prices were not always stated. Pricing enquiries were most often requested through personal messages on all platforms.	There were two price categories: Fixed prices: The sellers may or may not include the prices in their posts. Where no prices were stated, prospective buyers would have to ask via direct message. Auction: The sellers would post a minimum bid and starting prices for each item and interested buyers bid live via the comment box on Facebook.

Chart 1: Comparison of online platforms used to advertise ivory products in Indonesia and Thailand



Indonesia

A total of 173 ivory products from 70 posts were found from four platforms. Jewellery was the most common item advertised (78% / 39 posts) followed by smoking pipes (19.1% / 26 posts) (Figure 1).

Instagram was found to have the most advertisement posts (53% of posts / 37 items) mainly offering jewellery. The second common item advertised was smoking pipes. A popular online forum named *kaskus* had the highest amount of smoking pipe posts, with nine posts (35% out of all smoking pipe ads), while Facebook had 8 posts (31%), the online retailer “Bukalapak” had seven posts (27%) and Instagram only two posts (7%) (Figure 2). Smoking pipes were sold either as new or used. New smoking pipes were often found sold alongside various gemstones, while used smoking pipes were often found to be sold by individual sellers.

According to the Indonesia’s Conservation Act (No 5) of 1990 – the principal legislation governing wildlife trade in the country – it is illegal to sell elephant ivory products. The penalty for violations is a maximum of five years in imprisonment or IDR100 million (USD7630) in fine.

In 2015, one particular case that made international headlines gave rise to public concern regarding illegal ivory trade in Indonesia. In September 2015 Indonesians were outraged by the death of Yongki, a Sumatran Elephant *Elephas maximus sumatrana* that was killed for its tusks. Yongki was an elephant trained to mitigate elephant-human conflicts in and around the Bukit Barisan National Park. Before Yongki was killed, many online stores still openly sold elephant ivory, despite it being illegal in Indonesia. After the death of Yongki, a petition on www.change.org advocated for a ban on the online sales of elephant ivory products. The petition was signed by more than 28 000 people in just three days. This overwhelming public support for the petition prompted some online stores to publically state that they would no longer tolerate the selling of ivory on their website. Others stated that they would actively monitor and take down ivory advertisements on their online stores. For a short time after the petition, trade of ivory was scarce on these online stores. Whenever an ivory item was posted for sale, the administrators of the site would remove the post within one to two days of it being uploaded. However, this effort seems to have waned, with trade levels appearing to pick up six months after Yongki’s death. This assessment has recorded advertisements for ivory on sale on the very sites that vowed to change following on some of the public outrage and petition.

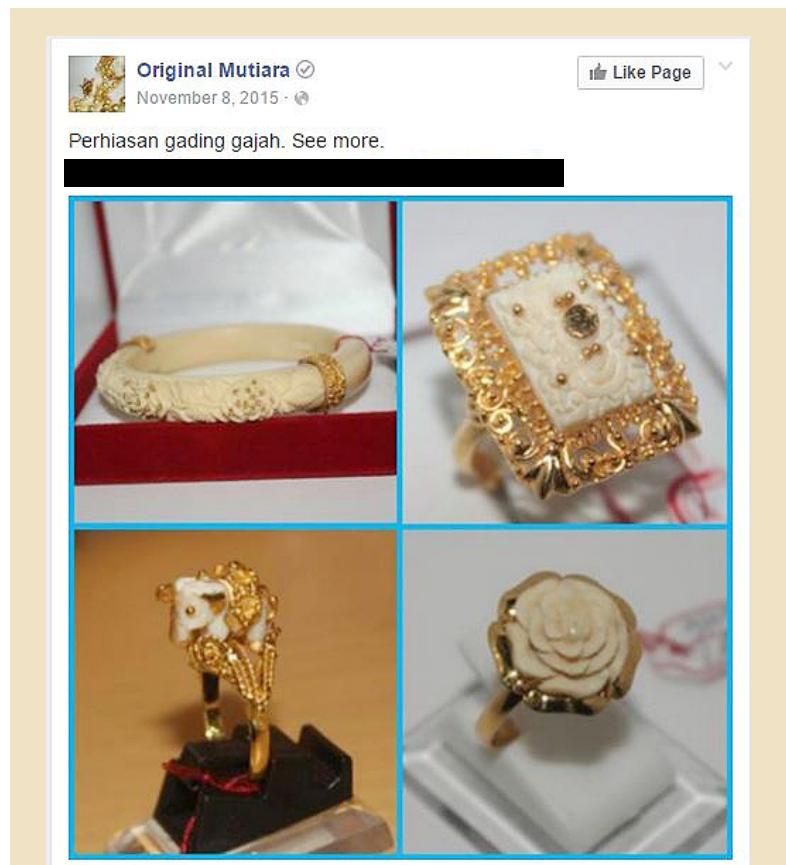
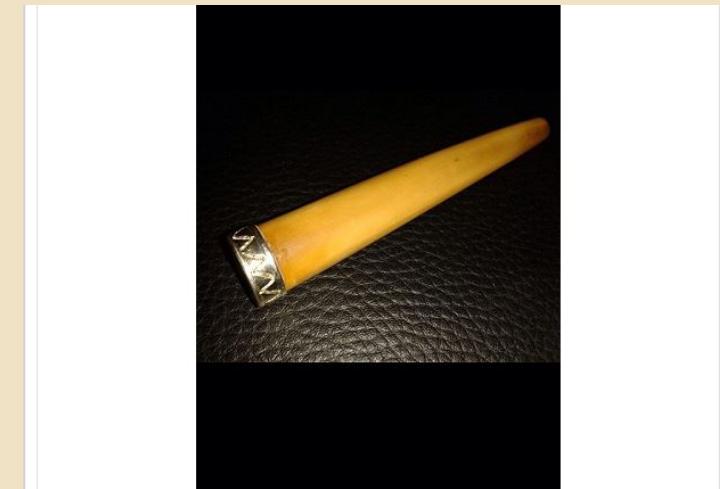


Figure 1: Ivory Jewellery embellished with gold sold online in Indonesia



WTS pipa rokok gading gajah
Rp. 800.000

Jawa Barat Second 0 Terjual

Posted on	:	05-02-2016 08:52
Dilihat	:	218 kali
Berat	:	0 gram
Last Sundul	:	05 February 2016, 08:52:58 AM

Penjelasan Produk

Figure 2: New smoking pipe sold online on “Bukalapak”, one of Indonesia’s popular retail stores



Figure 3: Ivory Powder (1 kg. each bag) leftover from the carving process for sale online.



Ganesha carving (a Hindu elephant-headed God) for sale online.

Thailand

A total of 655 ivory products from 116 posts were found in the survey. As previously mentioned, Facebook was the most used online platform in Thailand accounting for 115 posts and only one post was detected on Instagram. One of the unusual products found for sale in Thailand was ivory powder, as shown in **Figure 3**. It is believed that this is used to reconstruct ivory products, such as amulets or in/as Chinese traditional medicine. The most commonly sold items were ivory carvings; jewellery, holy items, decorative items, and raw ivory in the form of ivory powder or ivory pieces left over from carving (92.7% / 98 posts).

Ivory trade was only found on social media as online forums are perhaps subjected to surveillance from Thai authorities. Most of the forums are well-established with long-term members and warn against trading in ivory items. Some online retailers and forums displayed text similar to the following on their sites regarding the Elephant Ivory Act 2015, Thailand's new legislation governing ivory trade. A translated excerpt from the site is provided below:

*"Dear members,
The Elephant Ivory Act, 2015 (B.E. 2558) will be enforced on 17 January 2015. Our website therefore asks our members *not* to put auction on ivory tusks and all ivory products, including the sale of all ivory products on our website. We will *not* run any inspection on any Buddha, amulet, or holy items made of ivory. All auctions on ivory, ivory products, and elephant products will be put on hold with the sign STOP. Any member involved may be arrested and prosecuted according to the Act."*

In contrast, on Facebook, very little effort is made to conceal ivory being offered for sale. This rapid assessment found that many sellers are members of several ivory Facebook groups. Ivory is highly priced and can be traded very quickly online. One can easily join an ivory trading Facebook group to purchase products. It is suspected that the buyers and sellers feel it is safer to conduct business on social media and it is harder for the authorities to take action against Facebook groups.

In Thailand, people hold elephants and elephant products in high regard. Elephant products in Thailand are often associated with superstitious rituals with many Thai nationals believing ivory will bring them luck and success. Items made from ivory are believed to have "power", as compared to products made from other materials.

CONCLUSION

This rapid assessment provides interesting observations about the illegal ivory trade occurring online and how pertinent it is to understand how markets operate prior to undertaking monitoring of trade. Recent research points to a shift from illegal wildlife trade occurring on commercial sites to social media, and here we demonstrate the differences in dynamics from two Southeast Asian countries. In Thailand, ivory products for sale was prevalent on Facebook, while in Indonesia Instagram was a popular trading tool. It is important to note that both platforms are owned by Facebook.

This monitoring also provides some insights into national level demand for ivory products in each country and may be useful when considering future initiatives on law enforcement action or consumer demand.

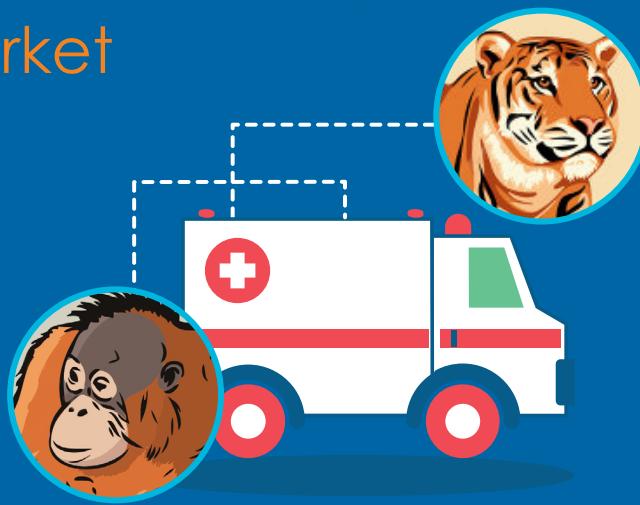


Photo 1: A more recent offering of an ivory necklace online in Thailand.

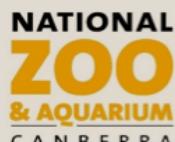
SPOTLIGHT MODUS OPERANDI: The Use of Ambulances to Transport Illegal Wildlife to Market

There seems to be no end to the astounding methods wildlife criminals employ to conceal and transport their contraband. News of birds squeezed into tubes or plastic water bottles, Tiger cubs packed into personal luggage or leopard skins hidden in vehicle compartments are increasingly common. And now traders are found to be using ambulances for such purposes.

In February 2012, an ambulance was stopped while transporting the carcass of a 110 kg Tiger from Ha Long, Viet Nam to the town of Mong Cai, a border town with China. Refusing an inspection, it came to a halt only after police shot the back tyres. In October 2013, traffic police in Phu Yen Province caught a man driving an ambulance containing 49 live pangolins in an ambulance from Ho Chi Minh City to Ky Anh District, Ha Tinh Province, Viet Nam. Investigations later revealed that the ambulance was sold to another person who had yet to carry out the ownership change procedures and the driver himself used a false number plate to avoid detection. Most recently, in April 2016 wildlife traffickers reportedly used ambulances to deliver orangutans to areas in East Java, including Tanjung Perak, Surabaya, Malang and Probolinggo.



In Indonesia and Viet Nam, emergency services can be run by private businesses or operators and this could be a contributing factor to the use of ambulances to carry out illegal activities. The lack of standards for permit registration, management and monitoring allows certain operators to commit crime while minimising detection. Ambulances can even be rented, creating a loophole with due diligence processes on the renters and the actual intended usage, and enabling such abuse.



Wildlife Reserves Singapore Group



Wildlife Reserves Singapore Conservation Fund

Wildlife Witness is the first global communication action tool in the fight against illegal wildlife trade. This smartphone app lets you easily report wildlife trade by taking a photo, pinning the location of an incident and sending these details to TRAFFIC. It is free and available for iPhone and Android.



To give feedback or be added to the recipient list for this newsletter, please email wildlifewitness@traffic.org.

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