



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

The *TRAFFIC Bulletin* carries a selection of seizures and prosecutions reports. Readers are referred to the seizures section of the TRAFFIC website (www.traffic.org/media-reports/) for regular updates on cases reported from around the world.

ABALONE

AUSTRALIA: On 17 July 2014, Milton Local Court, New South Wales, Hyeong Sung Kim, of Newington, and Hwan Gon Kim, of Lidcombe, were each fined AUD10 000 (USD8700) in their absence, after being caught in February diving off Bawley point and later found in possession of 378 abalones (67 kg); 372 were undersized. The bag limit per person is two abalones.

South Coast Register: <http://bit.ly/WvgON4>, 22 July 2014

HONG KONG SPECIAL

ADMINISTRATIVE REGION: On 9 May 2014, Customs officials seized 989 kg of dried abalones from a container at Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound that had arrived from South Africa declared as "dry goods pillow inner waste". One arrest.

Hong Kong Customs & Excise Department, Press Release: <http://bit.ly/1rDXZtg>, 9 May 2014

SOUTH AFRICA: On 8 July 2014, police in Benoni, near Johannesburg, arrested a Chinese national and three Mozambicans following a raid on an illegal abalone-drying facility; five tonnes of abalones were seized. This is reportedly one of the largest-ever inland confiscations. The seized abalones will be processed and auctioned off to raise money for government efforts to combat wildlife poaching and smuggling.

On 1 August 2014, two men were to appear in Kimberley Magistrates' Court, Northern Cape Province, after police stopped their vehicle at a road block near Kimberley and seized 76 kg of abalones.

On 4 August 2014, a Chinese national and a Malawian were expected to appear in Beaufort West Magistrate's Court, Western Cape, after being found with 32 bags (1257 abalones) in the boot of their vehicle on 1 August during a routine patrol near Karoo National Park.

On 14 September 2014, three Chinese nationals were arrested at an illegal abalone processing facility in Van Dyk Park, Boksburg. 10 508 dry abalones (860 kg) and *ca.* a tonne of wet abalones and drying equipment were confiscated.

The Star: <http://bit.ly/1qWxXxo> 9 July 2014
SABC: <http://bit.ly/1ocg52r>, 31 July 2014
The New Age: <http://bit.ly/1s8ZKv6>, 5 August 2014
AllAfrica: <http://bit.ly/1uzWmwv>, 15 September 2014

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.

BIG CATS

CHINA: In April 2014, in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, a man arrested in January 2014 in possession of a dead Siberian Tiger *Panthera tigris altaica* (CITES I) was sentenced to seven and a half years' imprisonment and fined USD8000.

On the Trail No. 5, Robin des Bois, 29 July 2014

IRAN: In August 2014, it was reported that a poacher arrested in Northern Khorasan while selling the skin of a Leopard *Panthera pardus* (CITES I) had been sentenced to three years in gaol. The head of the Northern Khorasan Department of the Environment said the individual had been under surveillance by investigators for some time.

Iranian courts have reportedly been handing out more severe sentences to poachers in the past year following reports of a declining number of Leopards and Cheetahs *Acinonyx jubatus* (CITES I) in the country.

Payvand Iran News: <http://bit.ly/1tnFB8z>, 30 August 2014

NEPAL: On 21 July 2014, Chitwan National Park (CNP) imposed a five-year gaol term on Sita Ram Thing of Manahari-2 for his involvement in poaching and smuggling Tiger *Panthera tigris* (CITES I) body parts. Thing was caught while selling Tiger skins in Makwanpur district on 27 July 2012. Although CNP had already announced the gaol term last year, affirmation of the punishment was made public on 21 July. Two accomplices, who had escaped from detention, were returned to Bharatpur Jail.

MY Republica: <http://bit.ly/1r6vj88>, 22 July 2014

BIRDS

BELGIUM: In June 2014, a six-year investigation by the Belgian Federal Police resulted in the conviction of five people in Ghent; gaol terms range from between one and four years, with fines in excess of €200 000 (USD254 000). The group was convicted of being part of a criminal organization that had acquired protected birds of prey and passed them off as captive-bred using falsified and forged permits. Enforcement action involved five countries and included search warrants being executed in the UK by the police and the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU). The court ordered the forfeiture of cash and assets in excess of €700K.

Dozens of birds of prey are now in the care of the Belgian authorities, but any cost is being borne by the defendants by order of the trial judge.

Following a two-year investigation by Gloucestershire police and the NWCU, in May 2013 a Gloucestershire man was convicted of fraud and trading in Black Kites *Milvus migrans* (CITES II); documentation in that case was linked directly to one of the defendants convicted in Belgium.

UK National Wildlife Crime Unit: <http://bit.ly/1vlybeL>

CUBA: On 16 May 2014, at Ignacio Agramonte International Airport, Camagüey, a man was arrested after attempting to smuggle 66 hummingbirds and finches to the USA that had been placed in pouches sewn into his trousers.

Mail Online: <http://dailym.ai/1137woWW>, 3 June 2014

MALAYSIA: On 10 June 2014, the Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan) seized 241 White-rumped Shamas *Copsychus malabaricus* at an oil palm estate in Kampung Sepakat. The bird is protected under the nation's *Wildlife Conservation Act*. Enforcement officers detained two suspects after they found the songbirds in cages believed to have been built as a collection centre for the birds. Two Indonesian suspects were remanded in custody.

www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/06/12/Wildlife-smugglers-sing-the-blues-after-songbird-seizure/, 12 June 2014

MALTA: On 6 June 2014, the Court of Appeal halved the fine imposed on a reoffending hunter, Branco Fenech, ruling that the first court had been too severe in its punishment.

In June last year, the man was convicted of trapping protected birds by using a mist net during the closed season. He was also found guilty of keeping protected birds and using them as bait for trapping in July 2012 at Ta' Qali. He had already been convicted of the same offence in April 2010.

The first court fined Fenech €3000 (USD3800), seized the items and disqualified him from keeping a hunter's licence for three years. However he appealed the judgement stating that he had admitted his guilt and had immediately removed the illegal trapping equipment. The Court of Appeal upheld the guilty judgement, confirmed the seizure of the illegal trapping equipment, and the three-year disqualification of a hunter's licence, but reduced the fine to €1500.

On 23 July 2014, a passenger arriving on a flight from Frankfurt, Germany, was found in possession of 411 bird skins in his luggage. The person, from Malta, had just returned from a hunting trip in Argentina. The consignment was made up of grebes, swans, ducks, eagles, hawks, falcons, storks, flamingos, ibises, cranes, gulls, owls and passerines, the majority of which are protected in their country of origin and some 120 specimens were CITES-listed.

An official of the Wild Birds Regulation Unit said that the consignment represented one of the most significant cases of wildlife smuggling attempts involving dead protected birds during the last decade.

Malta Today: http://bit.ly/1trv1z, 6 June 2014;
Malta Independent, http://bit.ly/1pjSSYT,
25 July 2014

SRI LANKA: On 16 September 2014, at Colombo airport, a Chinese man en route to Guangzhou, China, was arrested while trying to smuggle out in cans of tea some five kilogrammes of edible nests, a delicacy in China. The confiscated nests were to be sent for display in Colombo's museum.

Channel News Asia: http://bit.ly/1oUp59C,
25 September 2014

USA: On 16 May 2014, it was reported that a Dallas man had been indicted after allegedly smuggling 61 dead hummingbirds into the country from Mexico for sale between

February 2013 and January 2014. Specimens, all CITES-II listed, included 14 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds *Archilochus colubris*, three Black-chinned Hummingbirds *A. alexandri*, five Violet-crowned Hummingbirds *Agyrtria violiceps*, one Allen's Hummingbird *Selasphorus sasin* and 38 female hummingbirds of unreported species. USFWS agents said that hummingbirds are commonly intercepted by agents in the post and at the nation's airports. They are reportedly dried and sold as good luck charms in some cultures, known as *chuparrosas* (Spanish for "rose sucker").

KLTV: http://bit.ly/1mRqEAn, 17 May 2014

ELEPHANTS

CAMBODIA: On 9 May 2014, Customs officers at Sihanoukville Autonomous Port in Preah Sihanouk province confiscated three tonnes of elephant tusks, reportedly the largest-ever confiscation of elephant tusks in the country. The tusks, placed in 108 sacks and concealed in a container of beans, were in transit—their provenance and destination not disclosed. An investigation is under way. It was the third recent seizure of ivory tusks in Cambodia: in February, Customs officers arrested two Vietnamese nationals at Siem Reap International Airport for smuggling 79.5 kg of illegal elephant tusks (see *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 26(1):22) and in March, 263 kg of ivory tusks were seized in eastern Svay Rieng province, bordering Viet Nam.

http://bit.ly/RG6nI7, 9 May 2014

CAMEROON: On 1 September 2014, 197 ivory tusks were seized at a local checkpoint 20 km from Yaoundé. It is estimated that around 100 elephants were killed to provide the quantity of ivory seized. The offenders evaded capture but are being sought. The source of the tusks is under investigation but is believed to be the southern part of the country, around the Cameroon-Gabon border.

http://bit.ly/1sAc55s, 18 September 2014

CHINA: On 27 March 2014, at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, a detector dog with the Guangzhou Customs Anti-smuggling Police detected ivory in the suitcase of an inbound passenger; some 13 ivory bracelets (total 420 g) were confiscated. The dog is one of the first graduates of a detector dog training programme run by the China Customs Anti-smuggling Bureau, in co-operation with TRAFFIC and supported by WWF-Germany and WWF-UK. The reaction to the discovery from a fellow passenger raised the suspicions of the anti-smuggling police. Following another positive reaction to the second passenger's luggage by the dog, officers carried out a search and found ivory necklaces, pangolin scales and other items, weighing a total of 500 g.

These are the first seizures of endangered wildlife goods made by Customs officers in China using a detector dog.

TRAFFIC: http://bit.ly/Qh63j4, 17 April 2014

CZECH REPUBLIC: On 23 July 2014, authorities at Václav Havel Airport, Prague, seized 24 kg of elephant ivory from the luggage of a Vietnamese national living in the country who was travelling to Hanoi; four complete tusks divided into 15 pieces were confiscated and the suspect taken into custody. Two earlier ivory shipments, on 15 June and 28 January, comprising 35 kg and 33 kg respectively, were seized at the airport, again from Vietnamese citizens living in the Czech Republic and travelling to Viet Nam. Samples of the ivory have been sent for isotope analysis to determine their origin.

CITES Department, Czech Environmental Inspectorate, CITES News, Prague Airport No. 112, 2014

FRANCE: On 21 May 2014, it was reported that authorities in Var had seized at least 280 carved ivory pieces from the premises of a retired couple. The items included carved statues, lamps and jewellery, most of which had been purchased over the internet. The pieces are to be sent to museums or destroyed.

http://bit.ly/ZAbKxI (in French), 24 May 2014

GERMANY: Two cases involving Vietnamese citizens, living in the Czech Republic, and travelling to Viet Nam: in May 2014, 60 kg of ivory was seized [location not specified]; on 8 June, 31 kg of ivory was seized at Frankfurt airport.

CITES Department, Czech Environmental Inspectorate, CITES News, Prague Airport No. 112, 2014

HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION: On 24 July 2014, at Tsuen Wan Court, 15 Vietnamese passengers were each gaoled for six months after being arrested on 10 June following their arrival on a flight from Angola, via Ethiopia, with a total of 790 kg of ivory in their baggage, the largest-ever seizure of ivory brought in by plane. The suspects had reportedly been bound for Cambodia via South Korea.

"The Hong Kong authorities are to be congratulated for their diligence in detecting this sizeable quantity of ivory, but the case throws up many questions and could be a harbinger of new criminal tactics emerging in the illicit ivory trade," said Tom Milliken, TRAFFIC's Elephant and Rhinoceros Programme Leader. "This case seems to suggest employing a veritable team of 'mules' to move a large quantity of ivory by dividing it up into check-in baggage-sized units for air travel. That's something very different to what we typically see: the large-scale movement of ivory in containerized shipments through seaports," said Milliken.

"Angola has one of the world's largest unregulated illegal ivory markets and these products could have been mass-produced there", he said. [See pages 44–46].

http://bit.ly/1rF1JE8, 25 July 2014

KENYA: On 25 July 2014, Customs officers at the Swissport Cargo Service at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport seized 1350 pieces of

worked ivory (260 kg) from boxes declared as containing live dogs. The shipment, destined for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, had been disguised as wood carvings, and the ivory painted black and red. The source of the ivory is being investigated.

Environment News Service: bit.ly/1o1BcQk, 25 July 2014

MALAWI: On 17 September 2014, at Kamuzu International Airport (KIA), Lilongwe, officials intercepted nine boxes containing some 50 kg of worked ivory destined for China via express delivery service. The owners of the ivory, two Chinese nationals working at an hotel in the capital, were later arrested and granted police bail; a resident acting as the middleman was tracked down but it is not clear whether he will be prosecuted.

Agriculture, Environment and Development: <http://bit.ly/1v4Jens>, 24 September 2014

SOUTH AFRICA: On 5 September 2014, at Khayelitsha Magistrates' Court, Cape Town, Cheng Jie Liang was sentenced to 10 years in gaol for illegal possession of ivory—the highest penalty ever imposed in South Africa for such an offence. He was also fined R5 million (USD443 000) for possessing one tonne of poached elephant tusks; his gaol sentence was to be suspended if he could pay the fine within a year. Liang, a Chinese national who has been living in South Africa since 2003, was sentenced to a further two years in gaol for the illegal possession of abalone. The court heard he was probably part of an international ivory smuggling syndicate working at a high level as a courier and exporter. He was arrested in September 2012 in Milnerton, where the ivory was being stored in two units. The stash included 67 tusk tips, the nerve cavities of which were mostly still moist with blood and tissue, indicating that at least 34 elephants had been killed.

iol news: <http://bit.ly/1uGT10d>, 8 September 2013

USA: On 4 June 2014, Victor Gordon, a Philadelphia shop owner was sentenced to 30 months in gaol for smuggling into the country a total of 400 pieces of carved elephant ivory over a period of nine years. On four occasions, beginning in 2006, he paid a smuggler to bring ivory from Gabon through John F. Kennedy Airport. In some instances, he stained the ivory and created false receipts to make it appear as though it had been lawfully acquired prior to the 1989 international ivory trade ban. Gordon was also ordered to forfeit USD150 000, along with a tonne of elephant ivory that agents seized from his shop in April 2009. The sentence marks the close of an eight-year investigation that has yielded nine convictions for smuggling and related offences. The government believes Gordon's illegal ivory collection to be the largest uncovered by law enforcement in the USA to date.

Philly.com: <http://bit.ly/114pmDR>, 4 June 2014

VIET NAM: On 24 May 2014, Customs officials in Hai Phong seized more than one tonne of cut ivory pieces smuggled from Hong Kong, by sea, in a container bound for China which was claimed to contain charcoal. The declaration form had been completed by a construction company based in Quang Ninh province.

Tuoi Tre News: <http://bit.ly/1jVNpc8>, 25 May 2014

On 11 June 2014, Customs officials at Tan Son Nhat Airport, Ho Chi Minh City, seized 77 elephant tusks (110 kg) in luggage declared as personal goods. The ivory reportedly originated from Nigeria and had arrived on a flight from Doha, Qatar. No arrests reported.

On 22 June 2014, Customs officers at the airport seized 39 elephant tusks and 100 ivory items (total of 90 kg) that had been smuggled through several transit airports, described as food.

Wall Street Journal, Southeast Asia: <http://on.wsj.com/1yBZbB6>, 11 June 2014;
Thanh Nien News: <http://bit.ly/1uhVZbl>, 23 June 2014

PANGOLINS

CAMEROON: In April 2014, a woman known to the police for the illegal trade in protected species was arrested in Yaoundé in possession of 120 kg of pangolin scales, some derived from Giant Ground Pangolins *Manis gigantea* (CITES II). She had previously been arrested in December 2012 for smuggling Gorilla *Gorilla gorilla* (CITES I) parts.

On the Trail No. 5, Robin des Bois, 29 July 2014

CHINA: On 12 May 2014, border police in Guangdong province seized 956 dead pangolins *Manis* (CITES II) from a vehicle. The carcasses (nearly four tonnes) had been concealed in 189 cool boxes. One arrest. This is reported to be one of the biggest pangolin trafficking cases ever recorded in China.

Shanghai Daily: <http://bit.ly/OEFpjZ>, 13 May 2014

FRANCE: On 9 July 2014, it was reported that Customs officials at Roissy Charles de Gaulle Airport had seized 250 kg of pangolin (*Manis*, CITES II) scales, the most important case of its kind to have taken place in France. Some three or four pangolins are reportedly needed to obtain one kilogramme of scales. Declared as "fish scales", the shipment had arrived from Nigeria, bound for Lao PDR. A total of 558 kg of pangolin scales have been seized at the airport since 2009.

French Government Customs: <http://bit.ly/1rQVWAZ>, 9 July 2014

HONG KONG: In two separate shipments arriving via Malaysia in May and June 2014, Customs seized what has been described as the largest amount of pangolin scales in Hong Kong in the past five years. The haul weighed 3.3 t.

On 28 May, 1000 kg of pangolin scales were detected in a container at Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound. Customs officers selected a shipment arriving from South Africa, declared as "Plastic pet", for inspection and found pangolin scales in 40 of the 510 bags of goods in the container.

On 11 June, another container in which the contents were declared as sawn timber from Cameroon, was found to contain 2.34 t of pangolin scales packed in 115 bags. A Malaysian businessman has been released on bail in connection with both shipments.

Hong Kong Customs Press Release: <http://bit.ly/1oGPKAv>, 28 May 2014; The Star: <http://bit.ly/1leVidD>, 19 June 2014

THAILAND: On 16 May 2014, three people were arrested after 130 pangolins were found in a warehouse in Pathum Thani.

Bangkok Post: <http://bit.ly/1gfSrR3>, 17 May 2014

VIET NAM: On 30 June 2014, police from the Ministry of Public Security rescued 350 kg of live pangolins in Quang Ninh province. According to a report in Tuoi Tre newspaper, one worker said hundreds of pangolins are smuggled into China every day after being gathered in Quang Ninh to be force-fed a rice flour solution that increases their weight (and price). A member of the smuggling team said that he and five others were tasked with stuffing the animals with between 300 g to 500 g of the solution daily.

Thanh Nien News: <http://bit.ly/1mNx7FD>, 1 July 2014

On 23 July 2014, Customs officers at Hai Phong port seized 1.4 t of pangolin scales smuggled on a container ship from Sierra Leone. The scales were concealed under a layer of dried sardines.

The designated receiver sent a letter to Hai Phong Port authority refusing to receive the consignment soon after the case was uncovered.

<http://bit.ly/1vzMLEj>, 25 July 2014

ZAMBIA: On 11 April 2014, at a court in Chipata, Eastern Province, two men were sentenced to three years of forced labour after being found in possession of a live pangolin (CITES II and nationally protected).

On the Trail No. 5, Robin des Bois, 29 July 2014

ZIMBABWE: On 12 June 2014, Nyasha Binga and Gift Famba were sentenced to the maximum nine years in gaol after being found guilty of poaching a pangolin, a Specially Protected Species. In the same week, another two people were arrested for pangolin poaching; two live pangolins were confiscated.

On 25 August 2014, it was reported that a Frank Mutanha of Harare had been sentenced to nine years in gaol after being found trying to sell a pangolin.

Tikki Hywood Trust, 16 June 2014;
Bulawayo 24: <http://bit.ly/1mMaFaM>, 25 August 2014

REPTILES

BRAZIL: On 8 August 2014, a two-year police investigation culminated in the dismantling of an operation involving the illegal hunting, transport and sale of Giant South American Turtles *Podocnemis expansa* and Yellow-spotted River Turtles *P. unifilis* (both CITES II). Dozens of search and seizure warrants were issued for premises in Manaus (AM), Boa Vista and Caracará, in the State of Roraima.

D24am: <http://bit.ly/Xcrg1v> (in Portuguese), 8 August 2014

FRANCE: On 28 April 2014, Customs officials seized 70 live Spur-thighed Tortoises *Testudo graeca* (CITES II/Annex A) from a vehicle disembarking from a ferry arriving at the port of Sète from Nador, Morocco. The animals, were concealed in two bags in the vehicle's engine compartment. The driver was reportedly on his way to Belgium.

French Government Customs: bit.ly/1oGQgon (in French), 7 May 2014

INDIA: On 1 August 2014, Customs officials at Chennai airport detained a man who was attempting to smuggle 88 Black Pond Turtles *Geoclemys hamiltonii* (CITES I and Schedule I protected species in India) to Bangkok, Thailand. The suspect, who had placed the specimens in his bag underneath clothing, was handed over to forest officials. The turtles, which were examined by a veterinarian, are to be kept in a unit at Velachery, before being handed over to the children's park in Guindy.

The New Indian Express, bit.ly/Z9HJV, 3 August 2014

PAKISTAN: On 20 September 2014, at Karachi airport, authorities foiled an attempt to smuggle to Thailand more than 218 Black Pond Turtles *Geoclemys hamiltonii* (CITES I). The reptiles, one of which had perished, were found in the luggage of a man who had boarded a flight to Bangkok after arriving from Lahore; he was removed from the aircraft and taken into custody. The reptiles are being kept at the Indus Dolphin Centre in Sukkur and are to be released into the wild.

Two hundred Black Pond Turtles smuggled out of Sindh to China were confiscated by Chinese authorities last month. Two Pakistanis and five Chinese poachers were held. The turtles were later handed over to the Pakistani authorities.

bit.ly/1viPCRG, 21 September 2014

PHILIPPINES: On 6 May 2014, authorities seized 555 marine turtles from a vessel off Palawan Island, including Hawksbill Turtles *Eretmochelys imbricata* and Green Turtles *Chelonia mydas* (both CITES I). The turtles had reportedly been fished by Filipino fishermen and delivered to the Chinese vessel. Eleven arrests. A local fishing boat was apprehended at the same time with 70 turtles on board.

On The Trail No. 5, Robin des Bois, 29 July 2014

UK: On 9 July 2014, 12 critically endangered Bahamian Rock Iguanas *Cyclura rileyi* sp. (CITES I) were repatriated to their native Bahamas following the seizure, at Heathrow Airport, by officers of the United Kingdom Border force in February. Of the 13 specimens seized, one had died and three more perished following repatriation. In April, two Romanian women were each sentenced in the UK to 12 months' imprisonment (see *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 26(1):25).

Officers from Border Force's specialist CITES team worked with the Bahamas High Commission in London to arrange for repatriation of the iguanas and IAG Cargo arranged for their complimentary carriage: special dispensation was given to carry them in the main cabin of the aircraft. The animals were initially rehabilitated at the Gerace Research

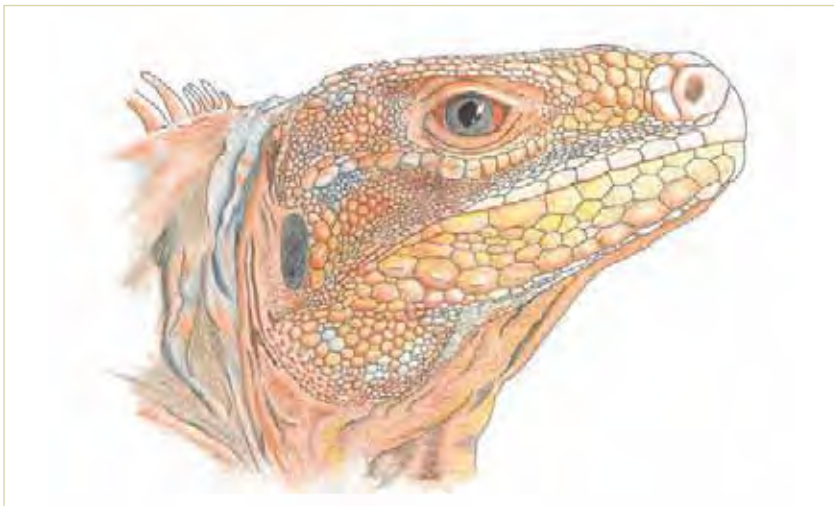


ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN BENDON

Center in San Salvador before being released in Moriah Harbour Cay National Park in Exuma.

bit.ly/1mYIZoC, 11 July 2014; bit.ly/1BDhSRj, 25 September 2014

RHINOCEROSSES

INDIA: On 18 July 2014, in Kaziranga National Park, forest guards found the carcass of an adult male Great Indian Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* (CITES I) that had been killed by poachers and the horn removed. Empty cartridges and ammunition were found at the spot. It was reported that the total number of rhinoceroses killed by poachers in the park had gone up to 21 this year to date.

India Times: bit.ly/1rlaguo, 19 July 2014

MOZAMBIQUE: On 16 May 2014, at Mtubatuba Regional Court, KwaZulu-Natal, Antonio Sendes Langa of Mozambique was gaoled for eight years for killing a White Rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* (CITES I) in Imfolozi Game Reserve in September 2013.

iol news: bit.ly/1yByGRm, 19 May 2014

SOUTH AFRICA: On 22 May 2014, three Chinese nationals were arrested in Gauteng for possession of and dealing in rhinoceros horn, whilst six suspected poachers were arrested in the surrounding areas just outside Kruger National Park (KNP), and a further two arrested and two fatally wounded inside the park.

On 27 May 2014, a former SANParks ranger and two policemen based at Skukuza police station in KNP were arrested for alleged involvement in rhinoceros poaching. Park rangers and officers of the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (known as the Hawks) came across a Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* (CITES I) carcass during a routine patrol. Acting on information, the team pulled a marked police van over and found inside a person suspected of being a poacher, armed with a hunting rifle and ammunition. Both policemen face charges of corruption and the suspected poacher is facing charges of being in possession of unlicensed firearms and ammunition. In another operation on the same

▲ *Cyclura rileyi cristata* from White Cay, Exumas, Bahamas.

THE SAN SALVADOR ROCK IGUANA consists of three subspecies: *Cyclura rileyi rileyi* from San Salvador cays; *C.r. nuchalis* from Bush Hill Cay in the Exumas; and *C.r. cristata* from White (Sandy) Cay in the Exumas, the subspecies that was smuggled to the UK (see text). This animal (listed as Critically Endangered, B1+2e, C2b in the IUCN Red List) is probably the rarest of all the Rock Iguanas and may be the rarest iguana in the world. Numbers may have been decimated by raccoons which will catch and eat iguanas; the footprints of one raccoon were observed on White Cay in 1996 but the animal has since been confirmed dead. At that time, the count of *C.r. cristata* specimens was about 180 individuals and over the years has ranged from between 100 and 200 specimens. Latest sightings put the current figure as very low, maybe fewer than 100. Some individuals have been offered for sale in Europe as "captive bred" but as no permission has ever been granted for their export, they could not be of legal origin. Subsequent to this smuggling incident, the Bahamian authorities have said that two more shipments of unidentified Appendix-I Bahamian *Cyclura* sp. iguanas have taken place this year.

John Bendon,
IUCN/SSC Iguana Specialist Group

day, rangers at Pretoriuskop came across a group of suspected poachers; during the encounter, one of the suspects was fatally wounded and the remaining two managed to escape. Poaching equipment, a hunting rifle and ammunition were recovered during the operation.

On 9 June 2014, Hawks personnel reported that two men had been arrested in connection with the theft in April of rhinoceros horns from Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, near Johannesburg. They had cut into a strong box and made off with 112 pieces of rhinoceros horn (80 kg), the first known theft of its kind. Most of the horns, which have not been recovered, were from dehorning operations undertaken by local authorities. A third suspect was arrested on 24 June.

On 23 June 2014, at Naphuno Regional Court, Limpopo, Hlengani Reckson Mathebula and Erick Mathebula, both of Mozambique, were each sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment for rhinoceros poaching. The Hawks arrested the men after a shoot-out between a group of poachers and KNP rangers in February last year. Three poachers were shot dead while the two managed to escape. They were tracked down and arrested in Lulekani and Phalaborwa, respectively. Each was in possession of a fresh rhinoceros horn when arrested.

On 8 July 2014, at Nelspruit Regional Court, Mozambicans Joseph Ephraim Bila and Ndombama Salvatore Nkuna were each sentenced to 16 years in gaol for their involvement in killing a White Rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* (CITES I) (10 years for killing and dehorning the animal; four years for trespassing and carrying out a restricted activity in a restricted area, and six years for illegal possession of a firearm and ammunition). The 10- and four-year sentences would run concurrently. The pair, arrested by rangers in KNP in April last year, pleaded guilty to the charges.

On 23 July 2014, at Nelspruit Magistrates' Court, Mandla Chauke was sentenced to 77 years in gaol on charges relating to the hunting of three rhinoceroses in KNP in 2011. Chauke and two others had just shot a rhinoceros bull, a cow, and a calf when discovered by rangers in the park; the cow and calf were badly wounded and the adult bull was killed. A shoot-out ensued and Chauke and one other man were wounded. The third man escaped and was still at large. The wounded man died in hospital. Chauke was sentenced to 15 years for the murder of his accomplice, eight years for theft of horns, 15 years for illegal possession of a firearm, seven years for illegal possession of ammunition, two years for trespassing, and 10 years each for illegally hunting each rhinoceros.

On 19 September 2014, the Hawks arrested the alleged kingpin of one of South Africa's biggest and most violent rhinoceros poaching syndicates; nine other members of the syndicate were arrested in various parts of the country as part of an operation that has been under way for a year; another member handed himself over to police. The arrest took place in front of Pretoria North Magistrates' Court where the suspect was due to appear on firearms charges. He is accused of obtaining 84 rhinoceros horns via illegal means.

The syndicate is believed to be responsible for the killing of 24 rhinoceroses in State and privately owned reserves around the country between June 2008 and June 2012. Of the poached animals, 22 were darted; the other two were shot. Only two animals survived the attacks. The syndicate operated in the Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North-West, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State. It is alleged that members obtained up to 84 rhinoceros horns by poaching, as well as stealing the horns and obtaining them in other illegal ways: 41 of the horns were taken from 24 poached animals; 14 horns were stolen; 29 were obtained by other means. The 10 suspects were due to appear in Hatfield Court in Pretoria on 29 September.

On 21 September 2014, three SANParks workers were arrested for alleged rhinoceros poaching in KNP after reportedly being found with a hunting rifle, ammunition, vehicle and poaching equipment shortly after the discovery of a freshly killed rhinoceros in the area where they worked.

On 25 September 2014, Chumlong Lemthongthai, a Thai national, had his sentence for illegal trade in rhinoceros horn reduced from 30 to 13 years by the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA). The judge said the sentence was too severe and disproportionate when compared to the minimum sentences statutorily prescribed for other serious offences. However, he stipulated that Lemthongthai had to pay a R1 million (USD89 000) fine or his sentence would be extended by five years.

Lemthongthai was arrested in 2011 after organizing illegal rhinoceros poaching expeditions having obtained 26 permits from the environmental affairs department to conduct rhinoceros trophy hunts (see *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 25(1):34); he then unlawfully used Customs documents in an attempt to export the horns. He was sentenced to 40 years' imprisonment by a regional magistrate; however after taking the matter to the High Court in Pretoria, Lemthongthai had the sentence reduced to 30 years. He subsequently approached the SCA, arguing a non-custodial sentence would be better suited in his case, but this request was turned down.

www.politicsweb.co.za, 28 May 2014; *Reuters Africa*: bit.ly/1rlamlu, 9 June 2014; *SABC*: bit.ly/1qdr0uO, 25 June 2014; *The Citizen*: bit.ly/1sBtchq, 24 June 2014; <http://bit.ly/VGtyEZ>, 8 July 2014; *iol news*: <http://bit.ly/1vDYvXu>, 23 July 2014; *The Citizen*: <http://bit.ly/1mkVpai>, 19 September 2014; bit.ly/1qtrbwK, 22 September 2014; <http://bit.ly/10iwx8R>, 26 September 2014

USA: On 27 May 2014, at Newark federal court, Zhifei Li, the owner of an antique business in Shandong, China, received a 70-month gaol term—one of the longest sentences to be imposed in the USA for a wildlife smuggling offence—for his role in trafficking 30 rhinoceros horns and rhinoceros horn (and elephant ivory) artefacts from the USA to China. He was also ordered to serve two years of supervised release and to forfeit USD3.5 million of the proceeds from his criminal activity.

TRAFFIC: <http://bit.ly/1iuLhUD>, 28 May 2014

FLORA

INDIA: Red Sandalwood (Red Sanders) *Pterocarpus santalinus* (CITES II), selected seizures:

23 April 2014: 8.5 t from containers in Irugur, Coimbatore. 18 arrests.

28 May 2014: at Walajapet station, Vellore, 757 kg of logs from a vehicle smuggled from the reserve forest area in Andhra Pradesh via Tiruvallur, bound for Tiruvannamalai. One arrest.

Over three weeks in June 2014, Chennai port: 60 t from seven containers, some of which were recalled from overseas ports in China, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and Dubai.

8 June 2014: four tonnes being loaded onto a container lorry at a nursery near Madhavaram at Moola Chatiram Main Road, Chennai. Seven arrests.

27 June 2014: 287 kg at Palasa railway station, Andhra Pradesh. The driver fled but was later arrested and taken into custody.

4 July 2014: 15 t from a godown in Nadiad town, Kheda district, Gujarat.

3 August 2014: four tonnes from a vehicle in Ambattur Estate, Chennai.

4 August 2014: 400 kg in Muttathara, Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala, during raids on five houses; four arrests. The wood, which included carvings, was reportedly from Marayur, Aryanad and Kulathupuzha in Kerala and from Karnataka.

New Indian Express: bit.ly/YWEmzW, 15 May 2014; <http://bit.ly/1viWCy2>, 29 May 2014; *The Times of India*, bit.ly/T1xuy6, 22 June 2014; *New Indian Express*: bit.ly/1uGQQK5, 9 June 2014; *The New Indian Express*, bit.ly/1uj1Rj8, 27 June 2014; *Business Standard*: bit.ly/1mtTA9S, 4 July 2014; *The Times of India*: <http://bit.ly/1orc7mr>, 4 August 2014; *The New Indian Express*, bit.ly/1trfwPd, 5 August 2014

THAILAND: On 31 May 2014, police acting on information that a large number of rosewood *Dalbergia* logs had been concealed in a village pending their sale to foreign buyers, seized about 3000 illegally cut rosewood logs at the village in Khun Han district, Si Sa Ket province, close to the border with Cambodia.

Bangkok Post, <http://bit.ly/1r81QbR>, 31 May 2014

USA: On 17 September 2014, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources Law Enforcement displayed during a press conference what they revealed to be the largest seizure of illegally harvested American Ginseng *Panax quinquefolius* (CITES II) in the State's history. Approximately 86 kg of the root had been seized in Wyoming, McDowell, Fayette and Raleigh counties before 1 September, when the ginseng season officially began. Any digging, possession or selling of ginseng before that date is a criminal offence. Eleven arrests have been made and more were likely to follow, it was reported.

Officers confirmed that many prescription drug dealers will buy the ginseng, which is

prized for its purported healing properties, for practically nothing and then hold on to the root until they can sell it for a much higher price when it is in season.

These arrests are the result of a year-long investigation. Additionally, some eight kilograms of ginseng were seized in August.

The Charleston Gazette, bit.ly/1sAytjU, 17 September 2014

OTHER / MULTI-SPECIES

AUSTRALIA: On 2 May 2014, it was reported that John Kolettas of Sydney, New South Wales, was given a 12-month suspended gaol sentence and is required to perform 384 hours of community service after reportedly the largest recorded haul of illegal wildlife items was seized from his home in 2013. Items included skulls and teeth of Orang-utans *Pongo pygmaeus* (CITES I), bears Ursidae (CITES I/II) and Tigers *Panthera tigris* (CITES I). He was also fined AUD4000 (USD3700) for firearms offences.

The Guardian: bit.ly/1xKb9Y8, 2 May 2014

CHINA: On 8 May 2014, in Yongren, Yunnan province, one person was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and fined 10 000 yuan (USD1600) for smuggling 10 paws of Asiatic Black Bears *Ursus thibetanus* (CITES I), two bear gall bladders and 10 live pangolins *Manis* (CITES II). The items were seized in September 2013 from a van heading to Panzhihua, Sichuan province; various deer specimens were also found following a search of defendant's home.

On 28 May 2014, border police in south China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region seized a number of wild animal products along the border with Viet Nam, including the carcasses of 14 Francois's Leaf Monkeys *Trachypithecus francoisi* (CITES II), seven pangolins *Manis* (CITES II), six Leopard Cats *Prionailurus bengalensis* (CITES I/II), and five bear gall bladders (CITES I/II). Two suspected smugglers arrested as part of the case said they had purchased the animal products from Viet Nam with the aim of selling them in Nanning at a profit.

On 1 June 2014, after a six-month investigation, Customs officials in Khorgas, Xinjiang province, near the border with Kazakhstan, seized 2351 Saiga Antelope *Saiga tatarica* (CITES II) antlers contained in 66 boxes. One arrest was reported.

On 22 July 2014, at the Intermediate People's Court in Hulunbuir City, in the Inner Mongolia region, two Chinese and two Russian nationals were sentenced to gaol terms for smuggling 213 bear paws from Russia to China, the largest amount ever seized by China's Customs. The Chinese defendants were gaolled, respectively, to seven years and six years (and fined 300 000 yuan (USD49 000)); the Russians were each sentenced to five years in gaol.

The bear paws were seized on 22 May 2013, in the border city of Manzhouli; they had been taken from at least 63 Brown Bears *Ursus arctos* (CITES I/II) and were concealed in the tyres of a van entering the city (see *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 25(2):72).

On The Trail No. 5, Robin des Bois, 29 July 2014
CRI English: bit.ly/1jLlypq, 30 May 2014
http://bit.ly/1n8FM3N, 22 July 2014

FRANCE: On 17 June 2014, authorities in the region of Poitou-Charente seized more than one tonne of European glass eels *Anguilla anguilla* (CITES II) and dismantled an international network involved in the illegal trade of eels. Seven arrests.

France 3: bit.ly/1E8wewZ, 19 June 2014;
On The Trail No. 5, Robin des Bois, 29 July 2014

HONG KONG: On 6 August 2014, Hong Kong Customs Marine Enforcement Group seized 250 kg of edible birds' nests, 550 kg of fur and assorted electrical goods from a river vessel in waters off Lung Kwu Tan, Tuen Mun. Five arrests.

7th Space Interactive, 8 June 2014

INDIA: On 7 June 2014, in Haldwani, Uttarakhand, eight people were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment (and fined Rs20 000 (USD320) for poaching Tigers *Panthera tigris* (CITES I), otters *Lutrinae* spp. (CITES I/II) and turtles. They were reportedly working on the orders of a close relative of Sansar Chand, a poacher and smuggler well known to the authorities, whose death was announced in March 2014 (see *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 26(1):22).

On 21 July 2014, a Delhi court upheld a decision, made in June 2014, which sentenced Hilal Ahmad Wani to one year in gaol for keeping 49 shahtoosh shawls (made from the wool of the Tibetan Antelope *Pantholops hodgsonii*, CITES I), without a valid permit. Hani had appealed the decision and sought release on probation on the grounds that he had no previous conviction, but this was dismissed. However, a fine of Rs10 000 (USD160) was reduced to Rs5000.

On The Trail No. 5, Robin des Bois, 29 July 2014;
Greater Kashmir: bit.ly/WBwFhY, 21 July 2014

POLICE OFFICERS IN WEST VIRGINIA, USA, EXAMINE 86 KG OF ILLEGALLY PICKED GINSENG—THE LARGEST SEIZURE OF GINSENG IN THE STATE'S HISTORY.



PHOTOGRAPHS: ANNA PATRICK / THE CHARLESTON GAZETTE

MALAYSIA: On 13 May 2014, at the Session Court in Johor Baru, Mohd Roshdam Bilal was fined RM35 000 (USD10 500) in default of eight months' gaol after he pleaded guilty to possessing a Sun Bear *Helarctos malayanus* (CITES II) and a protected species in Malaysia). The animal was found in a cage in a shop in Jalan Tun Razak. Mohd Roshdam did not settle the fine.

The Star online: bit.ly/R3s30G, 20 May 2014

ROMANIA: In May 2014, raids carried out by more than 400 policemen yielded four tonnes of sturgeon meat and 80 kg of caviar, among other fish. The seizures were carried out at commercial premises involved in fishing storage and sale, farms, restaurants and private houses in Bucharest and the counties of Tulcea, Braila, Ialomita, Calarasi, Galati and Constanta. Many tools and illegal nets used for poaching were also seized.

Gazetta de Agricultura: http://bit.ly/1xplWnB, (in Romanian), 18 May 2014