

LEND YOUR EYES TO THE WILD



South-east Asia serves as an important source, transit point and destination for many of the world's most enigmatic wildlife species (TRAFFIC, 2008). Consumption of threatened species in the region—Tiger *Panthera tigris* for example—as well as species not native to South-east Asia such as the White Rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum*, for use in traditional medicine products and as symbols of status, as well as the market for rare species for the pet trade such as Malagasy tortoises, remains a conservation challenge (Milliken and Shaw, 2012; Todd, 2011). Furthermore, the role of South-east Asia as a transit route has been identified on a number of occasions, for example in the illegal trade of Black Spotted Turtles *Geoclemys hamiltonii* en route from South Asia to China and Hong Kong, via Thailand and Malaysia (Chng, 2014).

To address this growing problem, Taronga Zoo, based in Sydney, Australia, collaborated with TRAFFIC in South-east Asia to create the free smartphone Wildlife Witness App, which was launched in April 2014 to enable the public to report wildlife trade by taking a photograph, giving the exact location of the incident and sending relevant details to TRAFFIC (see *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 26(2):51). Reports are analysed by a Wildlife Crime Data Analyst, and credible incidents are referred to enforcement agencies for action. Essentially, Wildlife Witness reports aim to help prioritize response action by improving our understanding of illegal wildlife trade, and highlighting areas in need of increased enforcement resources. To complement TRAFFIC's existing strategic monitoring work, the App boosts our insight of where and how wildlife trade routes exist to catalyse and support proactive law enforcement work but also to underpin and strengthen our research.

NEXT STEPS

TRAFFIC and Taronga Zoo are currently looking for partners who will join the campaign to promote the App and support efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade. The strategic promotion of the App through the global zoo community will target zoo visitors and tourists travelling to South-east Asia. To engage wider participation of the App across the zoo community, this promotion will operate under a new campaign called *Lend your Eyes to the Wild*. By building a force of stakeholders that embrace a zero tolerance approach to illegal trade, the aim is to engage more zoo communities. In addition, conservation organizations in the region will be encouraged to make use of the App, particularly in less accessible locations where fewer tourists are likely to venture.

To this end, the Wildlife Witness website <http://wildlifewitness.net/> will enable partners to download materials for promotion of the App at their establishments. TRAFFIC is also working with the Wildlife Reserves in Singapore, San Diego Zoo Global in the USA, and Chester Zoo in the UK, as well as zoo associations such as World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) to promote the Wildlife Witness App at conferences and side exhibitions at major events.

Besides the zoo community, it is hoped that support can be enlisted from other stakeholders such as corporations and NGOs to help promote the App and spread awareness about the threat of illegal wildlife trade. TRAFFIC is currently working with well-established tour associations to enable participation at travel fairs in order to promote the App to a large number of tourists: in March 2016, it held a booth at the Malaysian Association of Tour & Travel Agents (MATTA) fair in Kuala Lumpur. On average about 100 000 tourists (both local and foreign) visit the fair annually.

Over the next three years, the project aims to educate and empower two million travellers and local people in the region so that law enforcement is better equipped to combat illegal wildlife trade. Currently the App is only available in English, though its features will be enhanced to allow multi-language translations, with Bahasa Indonesia and Thai available soon. Data hubs in Indonesia and Thailand will support management of incident-reporting and law enforcement support in these key countries, and will further complement existing data hubs in Malaysia and Viet Nam. The Wildlife Witness App is available for download at: <http://wildlifewitness.net/>

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