

A CITES PRIORITY:

CONSERVATION OF TIGERS AND OTHER ASIAN BIG CATS

TRAFFIC AND WWF BRIEFING DOCUMENT
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POACHING OF AND
ILLEGAL TRADE IN
ASIAN BIG CATS
CONTINUE TO PREVAIL
THROUGHOUT MOST OF
THE COUNTRIES THESE
SPECIES INHABIT.
DESPITE THE IMMEDIACY
OF THE THREAT TO
ALL ASIAN BIG CATS,
THE MEASURES TAKEN
TO DATE HAVE NOT BEEN
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THE THREAT OR
THE MOTIVATION
BEHIND THE ILLEGAL
KILLING AND TRADE.

IUCN defines the big cats as Pantherinae, including Clouded Leopard *Neofelis nebulosa*, Snow Leopard *Uncia uncia*, *Panthera* species and Marbled Cat *Pardofelis marmorata*. All Tigers and other big cats in Asia have been listed in Appendix I of CITES since 1975, with the exception of the Asiatic Lion *Panthera leo persica* and the Amur Tiger *Panthera tigris altaica*, listed in Appendix I in 1977 and 1987, respectively. Illegal hunting of and trade in parts and derivatives constitute the main threats to the survival of most Asian big cats.

Resolution Conf. 11.5 – Conservation of and trade in tigers – provided updated guidance to the Parties on steps to address the trade in Tigers, their parts and derivatives. However, eight years after the adoption of the first Resolution on the conservation of Tigers (Res. Conf. 9.13), many of these steps still remain to be adequately addressed.

Progress, however, has been made in some areas, for example through the CITES Tiger Task Force initiative designed to monitor the trade in the range States. Those Parties which have taken steps to address the illegal trade in Tigers, such as strengthening domestic legislation, increasing awareness amongst user groups, convening training workshops and establishing anti-poaching initiatives, are to be commended.

Heightened awareness of threats facing the Tiger and enactment and enforcement of stricter legislation in some countries have undoubtedly benefited Tiger conservation but, in certain cases, this emphasis on the Tiger alone has shifted the trade to big cat species of equal conservation concern.

Limiting the focus of attention to Tigers has detracted attention from the threats facing other big cats in Asia and, indeed, may have exacerbated the threat.

Conservation of the Tiger remains a priority and warrants continued effort, but such efforts also need to address the conservation of other Asian big cats, particularly when these species share the same threats as those facing the Tiger.

Trade as a by-product of illegal killings

Although the driving forces behind the illegal killing and subsequent trade of Asian big cats vary from region to region, in general they include:

- protection of people living in Asian big cat habitats;
- protection against, or response to, the predation of livestock; and
- financial gain from the sale of live specimens, parts and derivatives.

The first two factors may generally be described as the result of encroachment by humans into big cat habitats and destruction of the habitat and/or prey base. Sumatra is an example where the reduction of Tiger habitat from logging, and reduction of the Tiger prey base from over-hunting has increased conflict between humans and Tigers as they enter agricultural areas in search of food. Surveys carried out by TRAFFIC in northern Sumatra during April 2002 found that, in many instances, Tigers were killed primarily to protect local inhabitants and livestock. The parts and derivatives, however, were purchased for resale by middlemen who maintained close contact with villagers on the edge of Tiger habitat and



Recent Asian big cat seizures:

May 2002 in Viet Nam:

- A large quantity of bones from at least seven Tigers and three leopards
- Bones from the Golden Cat, Marbled Cat and Clouded Leopard
- A Tiger skin
- A leopard skin

November 2001 in Songpan, China:

- Six Snow Leopard pelts

November 2001 in Yunnan Province, China:

- 23 Tiger skins
- 33 leopard skins

September 2001 in Java, Indonesia:

- Two live Tigers
- A Leopard

January 2000 in Uttar Pradesh, India:

- Four Snow Leopard skins,
- A Tiger skin

January 2000 in Khaga, Uttar Pradesh, India:

- 18,000 Leopard claws
- 175 kg of bones from the Tiger and other species
- 132 Tiger claws
- 70 Leopard skins
- Four Tiger skins

December 1999 in Uttar Pradesh, India:

- 50 Leopard skins
- Three Tiger skins

July 1999 in Ruili, Yunnan Province, China, on the border with Myanmar:

- 11 Tiger skins
- Numerous leopard skins

1999 - May 2002, Kyrgyzstan:

- 14 Snow Leopard skins

encouraged them to report Tiger killings. Thus, although the primary motivation for killing the animals was protection of their lives and livelihoods, ultimately the animals' parts and derivatives ended up in trade.

Mongolia, too, is an example of where a reduced natural prey base has led to predation of domestic livestock by Snow Leopards resulting in increased conflict with herders. Although the primary motivation behind Snow Leopard killings in Mongolia is protection of livestock, the pelts and bones from such killings are then sold to obtain hard currency. Hats made of Snow Leopard skin were seen openly displayed for sale in Ulaanbaatar in 2000, and surveys conducted in April 2002 found six Snow Leopard skins in the market in Khovd town. The sale of skins and bones to China and Russia also has been reported. International trade in other species also constitutes an indirect threat to Snow Leopards. In Pakistan, for example, increased exploitation of marmot populations - mainly to meet demand for their pelts in Europe and Russia has led to a reduction of this important prey species.

Simply addressing the trade will not prevent the killing of these animals when people and/or their livelihoods are at stake. Furthermore, where a Snow Leopard is more valuable dead than alive, such as in Kyrgyzstan where a Snow Leopard skin is worth more than 60 times the minimum annual wage, the creation of economic incentives is imperative if local communities are to see any benefit in protecting these animals. From 1999 to May 2002, fourteen snow leopard skins were confiscated in Kyrgyzstan.

Mechanisms to ensure swift compensation to local communities for predation of livestock by big cats are essential, and particular emphasis is required to ensure that those living in habitats of big cats derive benefits from the continued existence of these species. In Mongolia, the International Snow Leopard Trust in co-operation with WWF and others has established Irbis Enterprises - an alternative income-generation scheme of handicraft production for herder communities. Herders joining Irbis Enterprises are required to sign a contract where they agree to wildlife-friendly herding practices. This includes not poaching Snow Leopards or their main prey species, and tolerating livestock predation. WWF's Snow Leopard team and Irbis Enterprises in co-operation with National Park staff check compliance with the contract. Villagers are rewarded with an additional 20% cash bonus if contract conditions are met - but the entire community loses the bonus if just one herder violates wildlife laws or grazing regulations.

Targeted killings and trade in Asian big cats, their parts and derivatives

Although protection of people and livestock is sometimes the primary motive for killing Asian big cats, and trade thereafter a by-product, illegal hunting where trade is the primary motive still occurs. The open sale of Tiger and leopard parts still continues in many countries, such as in Myanmar's Tachilek market near the Thai border where, in 2000, TRAFFIC observed 97 Clouded Leopard skins as well as numerous skins of Leopards and Tigers sold openly, despite legislation which prohibits the sale of such specimens.

In northern Sumatra, a two-week survey carried out by TRAFFIC in April 2002 found Tiger skins, canines and claws for sale in numerous shops and markets, representing at least 20 Tigers. The dealers claimed that the main purchasers of these skins and other parts were foreign nationals, often from Korea. An advertisement for the sale of a Snow Leopard skin in the *Jakarta Post* in 2001, and the sale of Snow Leopard and Tiger skins in outlets in Singapore in 2002 support anecdotal evidence of growing demand for skins of big cats, with final destinations believed to include China and the Middle East.

The resurgence in the trade in skins of Asian big cats, brought to light in TRAFFIC's 2000 report: *Far From A Cure: the Tiger Trade Revisited*, is still not adequately understood and trade routes and countries of final destination require further research to better understand this growing market. Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence of a growing trade in skins.

Targeted killings of snow leopards for their skins is reported to have increased dramatically in some parts of their range, such as in the Russian part of the Altai-Sayan mountain range. Poaching is reported to occur in response to orders from dealers in Novosibirsk, Ekaterinburg and Krasnoyarsk and it is estimated that between 20-25 Snow Leopards are killed each year, out of a total national population of an estimated 120-150 animals. Snow leopard populations also are reported to have decreased by more than 50% over the past decade in Kyrgyzstan and there are reports of an emerging trade to China of their bones, harvested as a by-product of the skin trade. A similar situation is reported from Nepal's northern borders where the exchange of Snow Leopard bones for domestic sheep from Tibet/China has been documented.

The open and illegal sale of big cat skins, for example in Pakistan, where skins of six Snow Leopards and two Leopards were observed in a single shop at Kissa Khawani market, Peshawar, in June 2002, and, in China, where skins have been observed in Kashgar, Xinjiang Province and Songpan, Sichuan Province, indicate a thriving demand and market for skins of big cats. Tiger skins, on the other hand, are not sold openly in China, indicating that whilst government efforts to publicize and enforce legislation prohibiting the hunting and sale of Tigers and their parts has been effective, awareness and enforcement of legislation prohibiting the sale of skins of other big cats is not widely known or enforced.

Seizures reported

Successful enforcement efforts have been reported, however, such as the seizure of six Snow Leopard pelts in Songpan in November 2001. Seizures of Tiger skins and other Asian big cat species illustrate the similarities shared in the trade in Tigers and other Asian big cats. In July 1999, 11 Tiger skins, numerous Leopard skins and a wide and worrying array of other wildlife products were seized in Ruili, Yunnan Province, on the border with Myanmar (TRAFFIC Bulletin, 1999). In November 2001, Forestry Police in Baoshan city, Yunnan Province, seized 23 Tiger skins and 33 Leopard skins.

The TRAFFIC India Informer Network discovered on 12 January 2000, four Tiger skins, 175 kg of bones from Tiger and other species, 132 Tiger claws, 70 Leopard skins and 18 000 Leopard claws in Khaga, Uttar Pradesh, destined most likely for China and the Middle East. Two days later, four Snow Leopard skins and one Tiger skin were discovered and, in the previous month, December 1999, three Tiger skins and 50 Leopard skins were seized, all in Uttar Pradesh.

In Southeast Asia, big cats continue to be hunted particularly for their skins, which are sold on both the local and international markets, and for their bones used in traditional medicines. In May 2002, the Viet Nam Forest Protection Department seized two cargoes, believed to have originated from Lao PDR, which contained a large quantity of bones of mainly cat species (around 150 kg), one Tiger skin and one leopard skin. These two seizures included an absolute minimum of seven Tigers and three Leopards, and bones from the Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii*, Marbled Cat *Pardofelis marmorata* and Clouded Leopard *Neofelis nebulosa*.

Availability of products claiming to contain Tiger or Leopard bone is also widespread in countries where national legislation prohibiting the sale of products claiming to contain such parts or derivatives has not been enacted, such as in Malaysia. Comprehensive legislation addressing the sale of such products, as recommended in earlier CITES Resolutions, clearly remains a priority issue. Such legislation also must clearly define responsibilities of each agency responsible for enforcing national legislation, as well as providing for adequate penalties to deter trade.

The trade in live specimens of big cats to supply zoos, private collections and, reportedly, Tiger breeding operations, is further cause for concern. Five Clouded Leopards, caught with snares and some missing limbs as a result, were observed in zoos in northern Sumatra during TRAFFIC's survey in April 2002, and the trade in live specimens of big cats as status symbols in Indonesia is believed to be increasing. In September 2001, two live Tigers (one *Panthera tigris tigris* and one *P. t. sumatrae*), one Leopard *Panthera pardus*, four Jaguars *P. onca* and four lions *P. leo* were seized in Java.

Those countries which have made and reported seizures should be congratulated and their efforts supported. Nonetheless, the large number of seizures of Asian big cat parts and derivatives clearly show that measures taken to date have not been sufficient to reduce the threat or the motivation behind the illegal killing and trade, despite the immediacy of the threat to all Asian big cats. This suggests that the root causes of trade are not being adequately addressed, and that sufficient steps are not being taken and/or enforced to address factors already identified.

In addition, anecdotal information strongly suggests that Tiger specimens may be entering the market from captive breeding operations in certain countries, thereby potentially fuelling demand for parts and derivatives sourced from the wild.

TRAFFIC



TIGER *PANTHERA TIGRIS*

TIGER BONES AND TIGER BONE MEDICINE



TRAFFIC



SNOW LEOPARD SKINS ON SALE

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TRAFFIC and WWF call upon the Parties to address the primary motivations behind the illegal killing of and trade in all Asian big cats, their parts and derivatives, as a priority issue at the twelfth Conference of Parties to CITES and recommend that Resolution Conf 11.5 (*Conservation of and trade in tigers*) be expanded to include all Asian big cats, with particular emphasis on the following points:

- The Parties should expand the remit of the Tiger Task Force to include all Asian big cats;
- Studies should be conducted to examine the motivations behind the illegal killing of Asian big cats and to recommend appropriate measures;
- Adequate management practices and controls must be put in place to prevent parts and derivatives from entering trade through captive breeding facilities for Asian big cats, particularly the Tiger;
- Forest guards and anti-poaching teams must be established and effectively resourced to counter the illegal killing of Asian big cats, and strong links between these teams and relevant enforcement agencies must be maintained to facilitate intelligence sharing to counter illegal domestic and international trade;
- Research on the extent of the trade in Asian big cats and their parts and derivatives, smuggling routes, methods and final consumer markets must be undertaken. This information should feed into regional workshops in order to facilitate sharing of information and understanding of trade routes and dynamics between law enforcement agencies;
- Practical identification manuals to aid in the detection and accurate identification of Asian big cat species' parts and derivatives should be developed in appropriate languages. Law enforcement training workshops on identification should be convened with Customs and relevant agencies;
- Education and awareness campaigns should be conducted to raise awareness of the threats facing all Asian big cats, with particular emphasis on eliminating the illegal trade in and demand for Asian big cat skins as trophies, ornaments and items of clothing, and the use of bones for the production of traditional medicines.

WWF'S
MISSION IS TO
STOP THE DEGRADATION
OF THE PLANET'S NATURAL
ENVIRONMENT AND TO BUILD A
FUTURE IN WHICH HUMANS LIVE
IN HARMONY WITH NATURE, BY

CONSERVING THE WORLD'S
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
ENSURING THAT THE USE OF
RENEWABLE SOURCES IS
SUSTAINABLE
PROMOTING THE REDUCTION OF
POLLUTION AND WASTEFUL
CONSUMPTION

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PLANTS AND ANIMALS
IS NOT A THREAT TO THE
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