



CONSERVATION ASIA 2016

RESOLUTION ON Reducing Illegal Wildlife Trade and Trafficking in Asia

BACKGROUND

Wildlife trade has emerged as a major direct and targeted threat to wildlife populations around the world, with thousands of species of plants, animals and fungi now at growing risk of extinction.

Asia remains a centre of illegal wildlife trade, as a source, transit and consumer region. Southeast Asia has a large number of terrestrial critically endangered vertebrate species, many threatened by trade. Much of the region also suffers from challenges in environmental governance, including enforcement, capacity and transparency.

THE PROBLEM

A number of Asian countries are making concerted efforts and important progress to address some aspects of illegal trade; examples include large-scale seizures of ivory and rosewood, destruction of ivory stockpiles, and the near eradication of bear bile trade in Singapore, and the strengthening of national legislation in a number of countries. In addition many countries have made positive efforts to raise awareness and educate people, to reduce demand, increase detection and deter sale.

However, there remains a thriving trade in regionally-sourced Asian species, including pangolins, orchids, hardwood timber species, amphibians, reptiles, songbirds and many other species. Asia is equally central to the trade of species from other regions, such as African elephant ivory, Madagascar tortoises, rhinoceros horn, and the African Grey Parrot. Moreover, illegal trade affects thousands of other often overlooked species.

We the 600 participants 37 countries who attended the Conservation Asia 2016 conference held from 29 June – 2 July 2016, organized under the theme *Sustainable landscapes for people, business and biodiversity*, a joint meeting of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) and the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) Asia Section;

RECOGNISE THAT

- Implementation and enforcement of existing laws on trade are critical for protecting biodiversity, and countries are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of CITES;
- Reduction of wildlife trade is one mechanism by which countries may make progress towards achieving Aichi biodiversity targets through meeting the strategic goal of reducing the direct pressures on biodiversity and promoting sustainable use;

- The research community has lagged behind the conservation practitioner community in recognising the urgency of threats posed by illegal wildlife trade and the need for related research;
- Evidence from across the region suggests that commercial captive breeding programmes are largely under-researched, and have yet to convincingly demonstrate that they support conservation objectives, while some may facilitate laundering of wild caught individuals with farmed stock;
- The vast majority of species threatened by trade are not recognised by either the government agencies or conservation NGOs agencies tasked with biodiversity conservation, and that many species may not even have been described scientifically;
- Customs officials need clear and simple guidelines to be able to differentiate protected from non-protected species;
- The unsustainable trade of many species is not recognised as illegal in either national or international legislation, and
- There is a lack of basic ecological data on many trade-threatened species, and a lack of the long-term, species-specific research likely to generate this knowledge.

RECOMMEND THAT

- The conservation community pursue research on wildlife trade and prospective interventions and solutions, including through improved collaboration between conservation practitioners, industry and academia;
- Countries ensure effective implementation and enforcement of CITES, or risk the imposition of trade sanctions following practices developed by both CITES and the World Trade Organization;
- Parties ensure transparency and independence of CITES Scientific and Management Authorities, and make more proactive use of scientific expertise within the region;
- Enforcement goes beyond seizures of wildlife at customs points, to also ensure monitoring of physical and online markets, and effective prosecution of violations;
- Role models should be used to help elicit behavioural change in consumers, and minimize the demand for protected wildlife;
- Mechanisms be put into place to ensure that commercial captive breeding of wildlife does not have a negative impact on conservation, (e.g., through facilitating the laundering of wild caught individuals or stimulating trade), and
- Legislation be improved to address loopholes that enable illegal wildlife trade, including protection for non-native threatened species and required due-diligence (e.g., documentation, certification) to ensure imported wildlife is sourced legally in its country of origin.

2 July, 2016