

TRAFFIC POST

the wildlife trade monitoring network

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TRAFFIC INDIA'S NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA

TRAFFIC INDIA UPDATE



- **MP, Maharashtra and Jharkhand** Pg 2
deploy sniffer dogs to combat wildlife crime
- **Himachal Pradesh High Court** Pg 2
takes lead in sensitizing judicial officers on wildlife conservation
- **GTF gains impetus,** leads long Pg 3
term sustained commitment to Tiger Conservation
- **India and Nepal sign accord** Pg 3
to protect wildlife and tackle crime
- **Captured on camera:** Pg 4
Communities benefitting from sustainable plant harvest in India
- **Meeting in Himachal Pradesh** Pg 5
to review the status of Kuth in India
- **New guidelines in sustainable** Pg 5
wild plant harvesting prove a global success
- **Springdales School** wins the Pg 6
Delhi 'Wild Wisdom' quiz
- **Preserving India's Wild** Pg 6
Heritage-TRAFFIC India profiles its work through images
- **New collaterals launched** under Pg 7
the "Don't Buy Trouble" campaign



- **Live Tiger found in check-in** Pg 7
baggage in Bangkok
- **Malaysia gets tough new wildlife** Pg 8
law

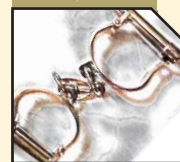
OUTPOST



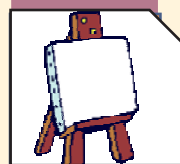
IN FOCUS



CITES UPDATE



TRAFFIC ALERT



SIGNPOST

- **Birds of the night reveal their** Pg 10
dark secrets (TRAFFIC India exposé into surreptitious owl trade in India)



© Abrar Ahmed

- **Ministry of Environment and** Pg 9
Forests, Govt. of India creates new CITES cell

TRAFFIC Alert (Latest news on illegal wildlife trade in India):

- **Gangtok police seizes 2.1 kg of** Pg 6
Yarsa Gumba
- **Two held with snake venom in** Pg 7
Delhi
- **Sansar Chand gets 6-yr term** Pg 8
- **Poaching gang busted, 2.5 kg of** Pg 9
pangolin scales recovered
- **Puma skin found in parcel sent to** Pg 10
India by post from USA



© Anthony B. Rath / WWF-Canon

- **SIGNPOST: Other significant** Pg 11
news stories to read

MP, Maharashtra and Jharkhand deploy sniffer dogs to combat wildlife crime



Five dogs specially trained to sniff out illegal wildlife products joined the ranks of the Forest Departments of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Jharkhand on 29 July 2010. The dogs have been trained to detect hidden wildlife articles such as bones and skins of Tiger and Leopard and also bear bile.

The dogs and their 10 handlers completed a rigorous nine month training programme at 23rd Battalion of Special Armed Forces, Madhya Pradesh. The training was facilitated by TRAFFIC India that culminated in a passing out ceremony held in Bhopal.

This is the second phase of TRAFFIC India's sniffer dog training programme. Previously two dogs were trained and deployed by the forest departments of Haryana and Uttarakhand.



© TRAFFIC India

TRAFFIC has helped to conduct sniffer dog programmes to detect smuggled wildlife parts in other countries as well such as in the Russian Far East and Europe.

"Illegal wildlife trade has evolved into an organized transnational activity threatening the survival of many species in India," said Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India.

"In order to curb this growing menace it is necessary to deploy the best enforcement practices available including the use of sniffer dogs, which have a proven track record in detecting crime and serving as a long-term deterrent."

TRAFFIC India is overwhelmed by the support and response this programme has received from the forest departments and is especially grateful for the contribution of the 23rd Battalion of Special Armed Forces.

Himachal Pradesh High Court takes lead in sensitizing judicial officers on wildlife conservation



On 22 August 2010, the Himachal Pradesh Judicial Academy, the Himachal Pradesh High Court and the Forest Department of the State organized an orientation programme on various issues related to biodiversity conservation for over 125 judges of various district level courts at the Himachal Pradesh High Court in Shimla.

The programme was addressed by the Hon. Chief Justice of Himachal Pradesh Justice Kurian Joseph and Hon. Justice Vinod Gupta—Chairman of the Judicial Academy. Many other senior judges and forest officials of the state were also present at the programme.

The workshop aimed to sensitize the judiciary on issues related to wildlife conservation. Presentations were made by Mr Vinay Tandon IFS (Indian Forest Service), Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Himachal Pradesh; Dr. P.K. Mathur of the Wildlife Institute of India and Mr Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India.

The judiciary plays a significant role in championing the cause of forest and biodiversity conservation, so it was felt necessary to update them on the status of forest and wildlife legislation, international conventions on related issues and enforcement of wildlife laws in India.

In his presentation, Mr Sinha emphasized the significant role of the judiciary in protecting the natural wealth of the country. He presented an overview of the illegal wildlife trade in India and the South Asian region and of efforts needed to curb this growing form of organized transnational crime.

Such inputs are part of a regular engagement with the judiciary for their orientation on wildlife law enforcement issues being regularly conducted by TRAFFIC India across the country.

GTF gains impetus, leads long term sustained commitment to Tiger Conservation



At the meeting of the Global Tiger Forum (GTF) held at the WWF-India Secretariat on 28-29 June 2010, the governments of member Tiger range countries and other member countries expressed solidarity in giving an impetus to Tiger conservation efforts and to take steps to steer the commitment forward.

The two-day meeting was convened to develop a new strategy for the GTF, and to provide a platform for sharing of conservation approaches across range countries, focusing on issues that can be replicated and scaled up, with an intention to galvanize political will and action to save the iconic species from extinction. Representatives from eight Tiger range countries including India and representatives from organizations such as WWF-India, TRAFFIC India, Wildlife Trust of India, Wildlife Institute of India and Wildlife Protection Society of India were also present.

Standardizing the methodology of conservation approaches on monitoring and habitat management, increasing law enforcement, linking critical area systems and looking at the issue of habitat fragmentation were the commonalities that emerged from among the initial discussions of the country delegates. The need to realize a sense of urgency and create awareness-raising campaigns, build capacities and tackle transboundary issues were the other pertinent points discussed during the course of the conference.

“GTF can play a lead role through close collaboration with Tiger range countries and other organizations to check international hotspots of Tiger trafficking, besides evolving a regional roadmap to strengthen global Tiger conservation through respective National Action Plans,” said Indian Minister of Environment, Shri Jairam Ramesh in his message.

“The commitment from Tiger Range Countries is important at this juncture to revitalize and strengthen the forum. I appeal to all Tiger range countries for their active participation in this regard”, he added. GTF is the only inter-governmental body representing countries that still have wild Tigers, and it is responsible for facilitating, co-ordinating and strengthening these governments' commitments and actions towards saving Tigers in the wild.



© Rohit Singh

India and Nepal sign accord to protect wildlife and tackle crime



India and Nepal have signed an agreement that will help strengthen efforts for better management of forest areas along the 1751 km of the Indo-Nepal border, much of which are key habitats for Tigers and other threatened wildlife.

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 29 July 2010 followed a meeting on transboundary biodiversity conservation held in Kathmandu, Nepal, between senior officials of India's National Tiger Conservation Authority and Nepal's Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation.

Both the countries will co-operate and co-ordinate implementation of national action plans to protect Tigers, rhinos and elephants and strengthen the role of personnel involved in wildlife conservation, by intensifying the joint patrolling of border areas and restoring border habitats.

“For the value of long-term conservation, it is encouraging to see the strengthening of the existing collaboration between India and Nepal for the protection of biodiversity and ecological security in the area bordering the two countries,” said Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, WWF-India.

Key transboundary areas to benefit include Sukhlaphanta- Lagga Bagga- Pilibhit, Bardia-Katerniaghat-Khata, Banke-Suhelwa, Jhapa-Darjeeling and Kosi Tappu.

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

“With wildlife moving freely across the border and illegal wildlife trade increasingly a transnational crime, such inter-country agreements are imperative for ensuring adequate biodiversity conservation in South Asia,” said Mr Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India.

“In the past, porous borders have allowed smuggling of protected wildlife and other wildlife products out of the region for consumption in other parts of Asia”.

“The new collaboration will enable a better flow of intelligence between India and Nepal and lead to joint operations to curb the illegal wildlife trade”.

Items smuggled from India to Nepal include animal parts such as Tiger, Leopard, Snow Leopard and otter skins, pangolin scales, Yarsa Gumba and Red Sanders, as apparent from the seizures made.



© WWF Nepal

India and Nepal have signed an agreement for better management of forests along the shared border region

Captured on camera: Communities benefitting from sustainable plant harvest in India



A new video was released in August 2010 showcasing how village forest communities implement sustainable harvesting of wild medicinal and aromatic plants to supplement local livelihoods and as a result ensure conservation of natural resources which would otherwise be at risk of over-exploitation.

The film covers a field project in Karnataka, India, where the recently developed International Standard for the Sustainable Wild Collection of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP) was field tested.

The project in Karnataka was implemented by FRLHT in collaboration with TRAFFIC India as part of a “Saving Plants that Save Lives and Livelihoods” programme supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT), India, (now renamed IAIM, the Institute for Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine) helped develop the methodology and the management plan for the field sites in the Agumbe Range in Shimoga and the Katgal Range in Honnavara.

The field project drew heavily on traditional knowledge of the local community, and combined this with innovative techniques to ensure sustainability of the plant species.

“It was important to find a way to collect the resin in a commercially viable way but not adversely affect the tree,” explains Dr M N B Nair of FRLHT in the video.

Now, thanks to a new technique developed by FRLHT, grooves are first cut in the bark, a hormone painted on to stimulate resin flow, and then only is the resin collected.

Local communities formed special Task Teams to collect various forest products as per the new practices.

To view the video, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2010/8/25/new-film-shows-how-communities-benefit-from-sustainable-plan.html>

Meeting in Himachal Pradesh to review the status of Kuth in India



TRAFFIC India in association with the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department organized a meeting on 23 July 2010 in Kullu, Himachal Pradesh to discuss issues related to the status of Kuth *Saussurea costus* in India and the impact of its listing in CITES. This one day meeting was attended by various stakeholders including forest department officials of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand, officials from HRDI (Herbal Research and Development Institute) Uttarakhand, representatives from Dabur India Ltd. and Chemexil India Pvt. Ltd, traders, farmers and cultivators from Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand.

TRAFFIC India has been invited by the CITES Secretariat to carry out a review of the status of Kuth in India and the impact of its listing in CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

Saussurea costus locally known as 'Kuth' is a robust perennial herb of the Western Himalayas, distributed over Pakistan and India. The species has been used in traditional health systems of the region including Ayurveda, Tibetan and Chinese Medicine, for centuries. As per the various documented uses, it is in high demand both locally and at the international level.

Saussurea costus was listed in Appendix I of CITES in 1985, which strictly regulates its international commercial trade. It is also listed under Schedule IV of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. This offers protection to the plant species and prohibits picking, uprooting etc. from any forest land and any area so specified by notification. The cultivation of such plants without a licence is also prohibited.

The meeting in Himachal was to understand the impact of these legal implications on the conservation of the species in the wild.

TRAFFIC India has been interacting with various stakeholders to understand the dynamics of the Kuth trade and will be submitting a detailed report shortly.

New guidelines in sustainable wild plant harvesting prove a global success



Worldwide application of new guidelines for sustainable harvesting of wild medicinal, aromatic, dye and food plants and trees are charting new ways to protect the species and their habitats and benefit the communities that depend on them, according to a new report from world wildlife trade monitoring network, TRAFFIC.

The report—Wild for a cure: ground-truthing a standard for sustainable management of wild plants in the field—was released in September 2010 and details projects in India, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cambodia, Lesotho, Nepal, and South Africa where new methods have been devised to protect key natural resources in the wild whilst ensuring improvements in the livelihoods and benefits to local people through application of guidelines on sustainable collection from the wild.

The report stresses the importance of ensuring that all local stakeholders—from collectors to local organizations, resource management authorities, and businesses—are actively involved in partnership from the outset, and that clear and realistic market channels should be identified for harvested products with ways devised to give “added value” to products and a fair share of benefits to the owners of traditional knowledge.



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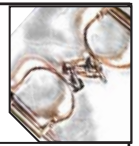
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In India, the guidelines for sustainable wild plant harvesting were implemented in the states of Karnataka and Uttarakhand. The implementation was successful in flagging the harvesting issues of medicinal plants at the state and national level. For example, in Uttarakhand, the guidelines have been adopted under the State's policy on sustainable harvesting and collection of wild medicinal plants and on-ground positive initiatives are being undertaken to minimize the gaps between the various stakeholders of the medicinal plant industry.

Another example of its success comes from Karnataka where a new method to collect the valuable resin of the *Ailanthus triphysa* tree was devised. Instead of removing the bark, killing the tree, collectors now make shallow "wishbone" grooves in the trunk which are coated with a hormone to stimulate resin flow.

Also in India, the ISSC-MAP guidelines have been adopted by the national working committee working for the development of the MADP (Medicinal, Aromatic and Dye Plants) code. To download the copy of the report, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2010/9/15/sustainable-wild-plant-harvesting-proves-a-global-success.html>

TRAFFIC Alert



Gangtok police seizes 2.1 kg of Yarsa Gumba

On 23 July 2010 Gangtok Sadar police arrested five persons while they were trying to sell 2.1 kg of Yarsa Gumba illegally. The police had been tipped off regarding the group trying to peddle Yarsa Gumba in Sikkim's capital city. A decoy was sent to strike a deal with the group and after much negotiation and despite evasive maneuvers by the group, a deal for ₹ 270 000 per kg was struck. When they arrived to make the exchange, a police team in plainclothes pounced on the group at 12:30 pm near State Guest House and recovered the consignment. Some members of the group had apparently brought the Yarsa Gumba from the high altitude region of Lachung in North Sikkim.

Springdales School wins the Delhi 'Wild Wisdom' quiz



TRAFFIC India and WWF-India organized an inter-school wildlife quiz titled 'Wild Wisdom' in New Delhi on 8 September 2010. Fourteen schools participated in the quiz which was conducted by renowned RJ Mr Mounish Jolly.

In between the rounds on various issues related to wildlife, students were also shown a film on illegal wildlife trade by TRAFFIC India and provided an overview of the damage this trade is causing on the country's precious flora and fauna.



Springdales School, Pusa road, won the competition and has qualified for the inter-city grand finale due to be held in November this year.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

Yarsa Gumba *Cordyceps sinensis*, commonly known as *Keera Ghaas* (insect-grass) in India is becoming a quiet victim of massive over-exploitation in the country. Originally known only from Nepal, Tibet and Sichuan, Qinghai, Xizang and Yunnan provinces of China, Yarsa Gumba was collected and exported through both regulated and unregulated channels. It is only during the last few years that it has been found in the higher reaches of Arunachal Pradesh and more recently in the Garhwal and Kumaon Himalayas in India.

Yarsa Gumba is considered a miracle ingredient in many traditional medicines and practitioners believe it helps to enhance lung function, bolster the kidney's yang energy, relieves coughs, poor vitality, impotency, spermatorrhea, asthma, aching joints, and reduces sputum and the general debility caused by long term illness.

Yarsa Gumba is not listed under the Wildlife Protection Act of India, nor under the EXIM Policy of India.

Continued on page 7

Preserving India's Wild Heritage- TRAFFIC India profiles its work through images



TRAFFIC India has released a new brochure that outlines its work in India through a series of images. The brochure captures the essence of TRAFFIC India's journey in helping conserve India's precious wild flora and fauna since its inception. To view a copy, please visit

http://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/enablers/traffic/downloads/



New collaterals launched under the "Don't Buy Trouble" campaign



TRAFFIC India released four brand new Public Service Announcements (PSAs) as part of its ongoing "Don't Buy Trouble" campaign. The posters advise tourists to be careful of what they buy as souvenirs during their travels to India.

Targeted at domestic and foreign tourists, they send a clear message that it is not only the poachers and traders of endangered wildlife who are liable for punishment under India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, but also those who purchase and use such items and ignorance of the law cannot be taken as an excuse.

Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India, said: "In the eyes of the law, the end consumer is as much a partner in wildlife crime as the trader or the poacher. Tourists who inadvertently or otherwise become a party to this trade only end up fuelling the demand. As such, their awareness and co-operation is invaluable in curbing this illegal trade".

"Through these posters, TRAFFIC India hopes to drive home the message that souvenirs derived from endangered species of wildlife should not be treated as mementos, but rather as symbols of the wanton destruction of our natural heritage. Therefore, if in doubt, don't buy".

The posters have been created pro bono by Titus Upputuru, Saatchi & Saatchi. The "Don't Buy Trouble" campaign has been received very well and has been running successfully at hotels/resorts, Tiger reserves and national parks, and other major tourist hotspots through hoardings, posters, films, leaflets etc.

OUTPOST: Live Tiger found in check-in baggage in Bangkok



A two-month old Tiger cub was found sedated and hidden among stuffed-Tiger toys in the luggage of a woman at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport on 26 August 2010. The 31-year old Thai national was scheduled to board a Mahan Air flight destined for Iran when she had trouble checking in her oversized bag.

Continued on page 8

TRAFFIC Alert



Continued from page 6

Currently there is very little information regarding the trade of Yarsa Gumba from India. People go to various extremes to collect this fungus. Dharchula District in north Uttarakhand, bordering Nepal is believed to be one of the major collection areas in India. People from across Nepal also enter this area to collect.

For more information on this trade, please refer to TRAFFIC India's article on Yarsa Gumba featured in TRAFFIC Post Issue 4 (July 2008). You can view the newsletter at http://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/enablers/traffic/newsletter/ or at http://www.traffic.org/regional-newsletters/traffic_post_4.pdf.

Source:

<http://voiceofsikkim.com/2010/07/24/gangtok-police-seizes-2-1-kgs-of-yarsa-gumba/>
Chandra S. Negi, Department of Zoology, Government Postgraduate College, Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand.

Two held with snake venom in Delhi

Two men were arrested for attempting to sell cobra venom illegally in Adarsh Nagar in north-west Delhi on 7 August 2010. Mudhasu Vaker Rao (56) and Anil Jain (65) were arrested for engaging in illegal trade of venom of King Cobra and other snakes. About 285 g of venom kept in two bottles was seized from them.

Deputy Commissioner of police (northwest) N S Bundela said, "The two had received the venom from a person named Harish and were planning to sell it at a higher price. Harish had reportedly promised to give them ₹ 20 00 000 if they were able to find someone who would buy the venom."

TRAFFIC India adds.....

The trade in snake venom is heavily regulated and has a very limited and niche market. Snake venom is used to make anti-venom serum, the only cure for snake bites.

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

Airports of Thailand (AOT) staff suspected something amiss when they scanned the bag and x-ray images showed an item resembling a real cat. Officers from the Livestock Development Department and the National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department were then called in to open the bag for inspection and discovered the tranquilized cub.



© Wildlife Checkpoint, Suvarnabhumi Airport

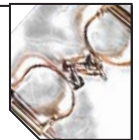
The drugged Tiger cub in check-in luggage at Bangkok airport

Investigations are underway to determine if the cub was caught from the wild or captive-bred, who arranged for the cub to be transported and what was the suspect's intended final destination.

Tiger populations in Thailand and throughout Asia are critically threatened by poaching and trade to meet the international demand for tiger parts, products and, as illustrated in this case, even live Tigers.

This seizure demonstrates the importance of raising awareness of illegal wildlife trade among port security personnel, who are ideally placed to detect instances of smuggling. The CITES Secretariat issued a certificate of commendation to the Airports of Thailand Public Company and the CITES Wildlife Checkpoint of the National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department of the Government of Thailand, at Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok. It noted that such personnel in Thailand had received training of this nature, which was delivered by the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network's Programme Coordination Unit and TRAFFIC, and funded by USAID.

TRAFFIC Alert



Continued from page 6

The venom is extracted from mainly four species of snakes in India commonly known as the "Big Four"—the Indian Cobra *Naja naja*, Common Krait *Bungarus caeruleus*, Russels Viper *Daboia russelii* and Saw-scaled Viper *Echis carinatus*. The venom is injected into horses in increasing doses and then the blood is drawn and purified. This serum contains vital antibodies that help to combat invasion of venom. Romulus Whitaker in his book, 'Snakeman' (1999) said "Venom is one of the most expensive natural resources on earth..."

However, it is not clear if there are ready buyers for such products and if they really do command such prices for products from dubious, unknown sources which may not have been scientifically collected. Many such attempts to buy or sell such products are usually trying to cheat gullible people, often by creating a hype around such products regarding their value and use.

Source:

- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/2-held-with-snake-venom/articleshow/6284265.cms#ixzz0z1pITs31>
- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/rssarticle/show/msid-2296621,prtpage-1.cms>
- <http://www.deccanherald.com/Content/Aug212007/national2007082020383.asp>

Sansar Chand gets 6-yr term

On 25 August 2010, notorious wildlife trader Sansar Chand was sentenced to six years in jail, —the maximum punishment prescribed under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972,—following a trial involving a case relating to the seizure of a Leopard skin 15 years ago. A fine of ₹ 50 000 was also imposed. This is the fourth conviction for Chand.

Continued on page 9

OUTPOST : Malaysia gets tough new wildlife law



In August 2010, Malaysia's Parliament passed the country's tough new Wildlife Conservation Bill 2010 which provides significantly higher penalties and mandatory jail terms for wildlife crime.

The new law, expected to come into force by the end of this year, will replace their 38-year-old Protection of Wild Life Act. The highest penalty in the existing Act is a maximum fine of MYR15 000 (USD4700) or five years jail, or both, for hunting a Sumatran Rhino, Tiger or Clouded Leopard.

Under the newly passed law, the same offence carries a minimum fine of MYR100 000 (USD31 600), and a jail term not exceeding five years.

It provides for minimum fines, a mandatory jail sentence for setting snares and closes loopholes by providing penalties for products containing parts of protected species or their derivatives. It also prevents zoos from operating without a permit.

Illegal trade in protected species such as pangolins and monitor lizards has also been singled out for tougher penalties.

The new Bill received widespread support from the public with many writing to their Members of Parliament asking them to support it when it was being debated. Last year thousands of people signed a petition seeking better protection for Malaysia's wildlife.

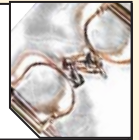
CITES UPDATE:

Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India creates new CITES cell



The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India has recently constituted a special CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) Cell within the Ministry to help strengthen the enforcement of the CITES regulations in the country. The new cell will assist in the technical, administrative and legal functioning of CITES implementation in India. It will also act on the various Decisions taken at CITES Conferences of the Parties (CoPs) and respond to requests from the CITES Secretariat. It is expected that this new body will better aid efforts to halt the exploitative trade in endangered species that is threatening the ecological security and integrity of the country. The new cell has ten members with two NGO representatives including the Head of TRAFFIC India. The Additional Director General of Forests (Wildlife) is the Chairman with the Member Secretary of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Director of Project Elephant and the Additional Director of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau amongst the members.

TRAFFIC Alert



Continued from page 8

TRAFFIC India adds.....

TRAFFIC India congratulates the enforcement agencies, judiciary and all those involved with this case. This is clearly a landmark judgment and will help set an example for others. Even though the matter has taken 15 years to reach its conclusion, it is hoped that it will still send a strong message to deter wildlife crime.

Source:

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Norths-Veerappan-gets-6-yr-term-for-poaching/articleshow/6435689.cms>

Poaching gang busted, 2.5 kg of pangolin scales recovered

The pangolin has become a hot favourite with wildlife traders. In August 2010, the police busted a gang of poachers in Kamalapur village near Hampi (Karnataka) and arrested seven men with 2.5 kg of pangolin scales destined for the international market. Honorary wildlife warden, Bellary district, Santosh Martin said that the demand for pangolin scales and monitor lizards has shot up in the international market place because of their perceived medicinal value. He maintained that around 1000 pangolins have been hunted in the last two months alone in the region and explained that the poachers get 2 kg of scales from each of the animals.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

The Indian Pangolin *Manis crassicaudata* and the Chinese Pangolin *Manis pentadactyla* are the two pangolin species found in India. Within India, the Chinese Pangolin is confined to Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram and northern parts of West Bengal. The Indian Pangolin is found discontinuously throughout the plains and lower slopes of the hills from south of the Himalayas, except the north-eastern region, to Kanyakumari.

In India, both the Indian and the Chinese Pangolin enjoy the same protection status as the Tiger and are listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. Internationally, both are listed in Appendix II of CITES, which strictly regulates all international trade in the species: currently none is permitted.

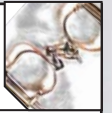
The flesh of pangolins is relished by some Indian tribal communities and scales and skins are found in trade. Pangolins are the most frequently encountered mammals seized from illegal traders in Asia. Illegal trade in Asian pangolin meat and scales has caused the scaly anteaters to disappear from large swathes of Cambodia, Viet Nam and Lao PDR.

China has a long history of consuming pangolins as meat and in traditional medicine. Pangolin meat is considered a delicacy in Southeast Asia and their scales are used in traditional medicine. Some pangolins are even stuffed and displayed to be sold as curios.

Source:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/bengaluru/1000-pangolins-hunted-2-months-020>
<http://envfor.nic.in/news/janmar03/pangolins.pdf>
www.traffic.org

TRAFFIC Alert



Puma skin found in parcel sent to India from USA

On 7 August 2010, the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) officials opened a parcel at Kolkata's Foreign Post Office that was sent from the United States of America to India through the U.S. Postal Service and which was labeled as containing a rug, only to discover that it contained a complete animal skin of what is suspected to be a puma. The WCCB officials had previously received information that parts of a big cat were being transported through the post.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

Popularly known as the American Lion, cougar, deer tiger, Mexican lion, panther, mountain lion or catamount, *Pumas Felis concolor* can be found in diverse habitats varying from the mountain forests 500 m above sea level to lowland swamps and grasslands. This large, solitary cat has the greatest range of any large wild terrestrial mammal found in the Western Hemisphere, extending from Yukon in Canada to the southern Andes of South America.

Pumas are listed in Appendix I of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), thus any international trade in this species, its parts and derivatives without the relevant CITES documentation is illegal. Pumas are threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, and poaching of their wild prey base. They are persecuted across their range by retaliatory hunting as a consequence of livestock predation, and due to fear that they pose as a threat to human life (IUCN Cats Red List workshop, 2007).

The seizure of the Puma skin is quite alarming as it is evidence some people are willing to bring exotic wildlife products into the country. A full investigation is needed to determine where the parcel was heading and for what purpose.

TRAFFIC India congratulates WCCB officials for their efforts in conducting this seizure.

Source:

<http://www.wisedude.com/animals/puma.htm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cougar>

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/18868/0>

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/08/16/stories/2010081660271300.htm> javascript:history.go(-1)

<http://mundoazul.org/habitats-species/puma/save-the-puma/>

IN FOCUS:

Birds of the night reveal their dark secrets (TRAFFIC India exposes the surreptitious owl trade in India)



Use of owls in black magic and sorcery driven by superstition, totems and taboos is one of the prime drivers of the covert owl trade, finds a TRAFFIC India investigation into the illegal trade, trapping and utilization of owls in India.

TRAFFIC India's report entitled "Imperilled Custodians of the Night" was launched on 2 November 2010 by Shri Jairam Ramesh, Hon. Minister of Environment and Forests at his office in New Delhi. The prime investigator and author of the report is ornithologist Mr Abrar Ahmed.

Hunting of and trade in all Indian owl species is banned under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 of India. While the exact number of owls traded each year countrywide is unknown, it certainly runs into thousands of individuals and there are anecdotal reports of owls becoming rare throughout India due to loss of suitable habitat especially old growth forests.



Hon. Minister Shri Jairam Ramesh (right) releasing the report at his office in New Delhi. Mr Samir Sinha, Head of TRAFFIC India (left)

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Continued to page 11

Continued from page 10

In light of such reports, TRAFFIC is calling for measures including better law enforcement to curb the trade in owls immediately.

TRAFFIC also calls for raising awareness of the beneficial and vital role of owls in the ecosystem, the birds being of particular benefit to farmers through their predation of rodents and other crop pests. The sacrifice of owls on auspicious occasions appears to be a regular practice and TRAFFIC warns of a possible increase in owl trade and sacrifice around Diwali, the Festival of Light, which this year is on 5th November.

Shaman or black magic practitioners frequently referred to as tantriks in India, prescribe the use of owls and their body parts such as skull, feathers, ear tufts, claws, heart, liver, kidney, blood, eyes, fat, beak, tears, eggshells, meat and bones for ceremonial pujas and rituals.

Of the 30 owl species recorded from India, 15 have been recorded by this study in the domestic live bird trade. Owl species most highly sought after by traders are large species, especially those with false "ear-tufts" (actually feather extensions on the head), which are thought to bestow greater magical properties on the birds.

However, trade includes both large (e.g. Rock Eagle-Owl) & small (e.g. Spotted Owlet) owl species inhabiting areas as varied as urban settings and forest or riverine tracts with the main centres for the illicit trade located in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bihar, according to TRAFFIC.



Shri Jairam Ramesh, Hon. Minister of Environment and Forest said at the launch, "Diwali should be a time for celebration across our nation, not one when our wildlife is plundered to feed ignorant superstition. India's wildlife already faces many pressures; the additional burden of being killed out of ignorance and fear is not one that has any place in our modern society".

"Owls are as important to our ecosystem as the Tigers or any other better known charismatic species. It is important that the threat to the species is brought to light on the festival of Diwali and concrete on ground action is undertaken to curb its trade" he further added.

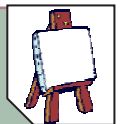
The TRAFFIC investigation also finds that besides black magic, owls are trapped and traded for use in street performances; killed for taxidermy and for their meat; their parts are used in folk medicines; even their claws and feathers are sometimes used in headgear. Live owls are also used as decoys to catch other bird species.

For a copy of the report, please visit <http://www.wwfindia.org/?4940/Black-magic-behind-illegal-owl-trade-in-India>

Parts of owls sold for folk medicinal use/black magic

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The biggest animal bone trading network ever in Vietnam intercepted; 15 September 2010; <http://www.traffic.org/home/2010/9/20/police-in-viet-nam-uncover-wildlife-bone-trade-network.html>

Consensus on measures to conserve Saiga antelopes; 14 September 2010; <http://www.traffic.org/home/2010/9/14/measures-to-serve-saiga-antelopes-agreed.html>

Middle East linked to falcon egg trade; 22 August 2010; <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100822/NATIONAL/708219862/1042>

