

TRAFFIC POST

the wildlife trade monitoring network

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TRAFFIC INDIA'S NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA



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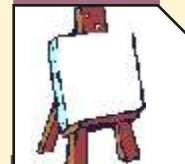
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TRAFFIC ALERT

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

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SIGNPOST

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SIGNPOST- Other significant news stories to read such as: On the red sandalwood trail (India Today), In the gun-sights: Leopards (Business Standard), Insect appeal (India Today) etc..... Pg 11

National Tiger Conservation Authority and TRAFFIC India come together to work for Tiger conservation



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On 13 October 2008, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and TRAFFIC India had signed a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) to pool their efforts on issues related to wildlife conservation and enforcement in India, particularly those on Tigers *Panthera tigris*. The MOU was signed by Dr Rajesh Gopal, Member Secretary & IGF, National Tiger Conservation Authority and Mr Samir Sinha, Head-TRAFFIC India at the NTCA office in New Delhi. Shri S.P Yadav, Joint Director, NTCA was also present.

Under the newly signed agreement, NTCA and TRAFFIC India will work together to stop the illegal trade of Tiger parts and derivatives and also to strengthen protection of Tigers in the wild.

“Wildlife crime in India has taken a heavy toll on our precious flora and fauna especially Tigers, our national animal. This collaboration with TRAFFIC India will give us an edge in combating such crime and we are looking forward to working together on these issues” said Dr Rajesh Gopal, Member Secretary, NTCA.

Mr. Samir Sinha, Head-TRAFFIC India commented, “This collaboration will lead to better on the ground support for conservation of Tigers in India and will help curb illegal trade in Tigers.” He further added, “As the largest wildlife trade monitoring

network, TRAFFIC actively monitors and investigates wildlife trade and provides its information to a diverse audience world-wide, as a basis for effective conservation policies and programmes. TRAFFIC will bring to this partnership its experience on tackling such issues”.

TRAFFIC India supports State Forest Departments in curbing illegal wildlife trade



TRAFFIC India has supported the efforts of several state forest departments across the country in conducting wildlife seizures in recent few months. Seizures were undertaken following the inputs and support provided by TRAFFIC India and with the help of local police. In many cases, the Indian Army also assisted. An overview of some of the seizures conducted with support from TRAFFIC India is given below:

- One Point 303 rifle and one Point 22 rifle recovered from Dalgaon in district Darrang, Assam, and one person arrested on 15 March 2008.
- One person arrested from Dalgaon in district Darrang, Assam, on 1 May 2008, although no items recovered.
- One person was arrested from Dalgaon in district Darrang, Assam, on 2 June 2008, although no items recovered.
- One Point 303 rifle recovered from Dalgaon in district Darrang, Assam, and one person arrested on 2 June 2008.
- One Point 303 rifle with 17 rounds of ammunition recovered from Lalpool in Udalguri district, Assam, and one person arrested on 24 June 2008.
- One person arrested in Howraghat in Karbi Anglong district, Assam, on 24 June 2008, although no items recovered.
- One Point 303 rifle with 17 live rounds of ammunition recovered in Morigaon, Assam, and one person arrested on 29 July 2008.
- Ivory reportedly worth INR 300 000 (USD 6100) seized in Gundlpet Taluk, Karnataka, and two persons arrested on 2 September 2008.
- One AK-47 rifle with 25 rounds of ammunition and an Italian made pistol with 1 magazine were recovered in Guwahati, Assam, and one person was arrested in this connection on 13 September 2008.

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- One Point 303 rifle recovered in Kaziranga, Assam, on 20 September 2008, although the alleged owner escaped.
- Two rhino horns, one of them fake, seized and two persons arrested in Kohora Range in Karbi Anglong District, Assam, on 25 September 2008.
- One Leopard skin seized and three people arrested in Choladi in the Bitherkad range near Gudalur district, Tamil Nadu, on 1 October 2008.
- One country made gun and a search light was recovered in Bospara area of Mudumulai Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu, on 16 October 2008 while the accused managed to escape.

Indian Army and TRAFFIC India join hands to curb illegal wildlife trade

The Indian Army and TRAFFIC India have joined hands to curb poaching and illegal wildlife trade across the country. This partnership will hopefully lead to better coordinated efforts, especially at sensitive border areas, in curbing such illegal trade. The Indian Army has a very successful ongoing collaboration with WWF-India, working on various environmental issues across the country. This association with TRAFFIC on wildlife trade issues is taking this relationship a step forward.

Senior Enforcement Officials share experiences on combating wildlife crime



TRAFFIC India, with support from WWF-India, organized an experience sharing meeting of Senior Enforcement Officials from across the country on 26 July 2008 at the WWF-India Secretariat in New Delhi.

Shri Ved Marwah, former Governor of Manipur, Mizoram and Jharkhand, chaired the meeting. Participants included Mr Nandan Dubey, ADGP-CID, Madhya Pradesh Police; Miss Reena Mitra, Addl. Director- Wildlife Crime Control Bureau; Mr Keshav Kumar, IGP- Gujarat Police; Miss Tanuja Srivastav, DIG-CBI; Mr Amitabh Yash, SSP- Special Task Force, Lucknow, Dr A.K. Bapuly, Director, Forensics Department- Govt. of Jharkhand; Dr S.P. Goyal, Scientist- Wildlife Institute of India and other senior officials from the Narcotics Control Bureau, Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, NICFS (National Institute of Criminology and Forensic Science), and NGOs including the Ranthambore Foundation and the Wildlife Trust of India.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide a platform for enforcement officials to discuss their experiences and find a way forward to combat wildlife crime. Organized crime needs an organized response was the unequivocal statement of the participants at the meeting.

Shri Ved Marwah commented: "Wildlife crime is growing to become one of the most serious crimes in India and must be tackled immediately. There is a need to create awareness not only among the top enforcement officials but also among those working in the field. Creating a databank of information related to wildlife crime and making it available to agencies on the ground at all times should prove to be one of the strongest tools for curbing illegal wildlife trade".

The meeting was successful in generating ideas on co-operation and collaboration that will further help to curb wildlife crime. Developing a mechanism to share data related to wildlife crime at the institutional level, identifying key forensic experts from across the country and using their expertise to collect scientific evidence in wildlife cases and co-ordinating efforts of various agencies, were some of the key action points discussed at the meeting.

TRAFFIC India hopes that this commitment and collaboration will motivate on the ground efforts to combat wildlife crime.



© Dr. Bibhab Talukdar / Aaranyak

Release of a poster on “Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles of India”



During an experience sharing meet of Senior Enforcement Officials on 26 July 2008 at WWF-India Secretariat, Shri Ved Marwah former Governor of Manipur, Mizoram and Jharkhand released TRAFFIC India and Wildlife Institute of India’s latest poster on Tortoises and freshwater turtles of India. The poster is a pictorial guide that will help enforcement officials such as the Forest Department, Customs, police and others to identify various turtle and tortoise species that are illegally traded in India and across India's borders. Identification of the species and knowledge of their legal status will help such agencies take stricter legal action.

Amongst the threats turtles and tortoises face today, one of the most serious is the uncontrolled trade for food and traditional medicine in South Asia. Recent studies conducted by TRAFFIC in prominent markets in Indonesia and Thailand found that the Indian Star Tortoise ranks in the top three of the most commonly traded species of tortoises. The poster was produced in response to this growing threat to turtles and tortoises in India and has been well received by the enforcement agencies all across the country.

A copy of the poster can be downloaded at http://www.traffic.org/species-reports/traffic_species_reptiles14.pdf

Implementation of ISSC-MAP moves ahead in Uttarakhand



© Samir Sinha

TRAFFIC India and Wildlife Institute of India (WII), in collaboration with the Industries Association of Uttarakhand (IAU), organized a one day orientation workshop at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun on 26 August 2008 to encourage various stakeholders, including traders, cultivators, collectors and others, to implement the International Standard for the Sustainable Wild Collection of Wild Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP) in Uttarakhand.

Workshop sessions were chaired by Mr Pankaj Gupta, President-IAU and Dr S. Farooq, MD-The Himalaya Drug Company was the chief guest. This workshop was a follow up on the launch workshop that took place in Dehradun on 28 February 2008, details of which are available on <http://www.traffic.org/home/2008/2/28/sustainable-use-of-wild-plants-project-launched-in-india.html>

Himalayan Yew *Taxus Wallichiana* - A popular species in trade

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Dr S. Farooq expressed his concern about the current threats to medicinal plants and the decline in availability of many important species. His company, The Himalaya Drug Company, has a huge manufacturing unit for herbal health care products in Uttarakhand but only procures 1% of the raw material from that state, mainly because of the low and disorganized supply of raw materials from the region. He pledged the support of his company for the implementation of ISSC-MAP and for taking this initiative to a larger forum.

Orientation Programme on Wildlife Laws organized for the Judiciary in Assam



© Samir Sinha

TRAFFIC India and WWF-India, in collaboration with Assam Forest Department and the Assam High Court, organized a two day orientation programme on wildlife conservation laws for the Judiciary in Assam. The programme was conducted on 20-21 September 2008 at Guwahati.

The programme was inaugurated by Honorable Justice Chelameswar, Chief Justice- Guwahati High Court. The Guest of Honour was Sri

Rockybul Hussain, Minister-Environment & Forest, Government of Assam. The programme was attended by more than 60 judicial officers from the states of Assam, Tripura and Mizoram.

The main purpose of the programme was to sensitize the Judiciary about various issues related to wildlife conservation. The Judiciary plays a significant role in championing the cause of forest and biodiversity conservation, and this workshop provided a necessary update on the status of Forest and Wildlife legislation, International Conventions on related issues and enforcement of wildlife laws in India.

Hon. Chief Justice Chelameswar in his inaugural address appreciated the efforts of TRAFFIC India and WWF-India in organizing the programme and asked the Judicial Officers to make maximum use of this opportunity to get acquainted with wildlife laws.

Sri Rockybul Hussain, Hon'ble Minister Environment and Forest, Government of Assam spoke of the rich wildlife in Assam: "The North East region has been identified as one of the 25 biodiversity hotspots in the globe and hence it has become our responsibility to protect and conserve the rich biodiversity for our future generations". He further added "I hope this workshop will deliberate on all aspects of conservation, including the necessity for conservation, the pressure being exerted on our natural resources; its consequences and steps needed to be taken to counter such pressure".

This is part of the on-going work of TRAFFIC India to work with the country's judiciary officials and to seek their wider support for wildlife conservation.

TRAFFIC 'Alert'



Three arrested for trading in ivory in Uttar Pradesh

In October 2008, three people were arrested for trading in elephant molar teeth and ivory in Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh. A joint team of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) along with Uttar Pradesh police and Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) seized 10 kg of molar teeth from the accused.

Trade in molar teeth clearly indicates that the Elephant was either poached or was dead since the molar teeth cannot be extracted from a live Elephant. A case has been registered under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

The recent seizure of ivory in Bijnor and the numerous other seizures of ivory and its products in India in recent months are a grim reminder of the illicit ivory trade threatening the survival of the Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus*.

The Asian Elephant is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, under which poaching of elephants or trade in ivory is prohibited. The species is listed as Endangered in the IUCN Red List and its international trade is banned under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

China, Japan and Thailand are the main markets where the raw or semi-worked ivory is smuggled. Other emerging ivory trade centres are Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. Ivory is used to make bangles, bracelets, statues, artefacts, chessboards, etc. Powdered ivory is sometimes used for medicinal purposes.

Source:

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Flora_Fauna/Three_arrested_for_trading_elephant_molar_teeth_and_ivory/articleshow/3592738.cms



TRAFFIC 'Alert'

Lion skin seized in Chhattisgarh

In September 2008, a suspected member of an inter-state gang of poachers was arrested with a Lion's skin in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. Atmaram was arrested following a tip off received while he was waiting for a customer to sell the skin. The skin was stuffed in a bag.

He was arrested in Dudhwa forested locality in Kanker district, some 220 km south of Raipur. Police believe he was a member of an inter-state gang of poachers active in the district for about three years.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

This is probably the first time a skin of an Asiatic Lion *Panthera leo persica* has been seized in India from a trader, indicating a new emerging trend in the illegal wildlife trade. Asiatic Lion, also known as the Indian Lion, is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, under which poaching and trade in the species is banned and punishable by law. It is listed in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) under which the international trade in the species is prohibited. The species is listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List of threatened species.

Wild populations of Asiatic Lion are restricted to Gir forests in the state of Gujarat. Besides loss of habitat and human-wildlife conflict, the species appears to be increasingly threatened by illegal wildlife trade. It was recently reported that a tribe of poachers camped next to the Lion sanctuary and were believed to be the same individuals responsible for killing Tigers in India. Lions have been in demand for their bones, claws and teeth; however, the seizure of a Lion skin indicates a new emerging market for the species.

Source:
<http://www.aol.in/news-story/man-held-with-lion-skin-in-chhattisgarh/2008092812239012000034>

“Don't Buy Trouble” Campaign at the Domestic and International Airport



Poster at Delhi International Airport

TRAFFIC India has partnered with TIMES OUT OF HOME, a unit of TIMES INNOVATIVE MEDIA LIMITED for displaying the “Don't buy Trouble” series of posters at both domestic and international airports in Mumbai and Delhi.

Through this partnership, TRAFFIC India aims to reach out to a large number of domestic and international tourists on issues related to illegal wildlife trade. The TRAFFIC posters will advise tourists to be careful of what they buy as souvenirs during their travels. The message conveyed is that souvenirs

derived from endangered wildlife species should not be treated as mementos, but rather as examples of the wanton destruction of our natural heritage.

The first set of posters was put on display in October 2008 at Delhi International airport.

Commemorating Wildlife Week 2008



TRAFFIC India in collaboration with WWF-India organised two special events to commemorate Wildlife Week 2008. These are as given below:

Wild Wisdom - an environmental quiz for school children was jointly organised with the National Zoological Park, New Delhi, on 1 October 2008 at the WWF-India Secretariat in New Delhi. The quiz received a tremendous response with nearly 40 schools from Delhi and adjoining areas participating in the programme. After several interesting rounds, Air Force Bal Bharti School, Lodi Road emerged as the winner followed by Gyan Bharti School, Saket and then Springdales School. The winning teams won a trip to a Marine Camp at Beyt Dwarka in Gujarat.



Mr. Ravi Singh, SG and CEO, WWF-India addressing the participants

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“Expressions of Wilderness” - a unique photo exhibition was officially inaugurated by Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, WWF-India on 2 October 2008 at WWF-India Secretariat in New Delhi. It displayed images from many renowned wildlife photographers such as Akashendu Das, Satpal Gandhi, Bhumesh Bharti, Amritpal Singh, Md. Aslam Warsi and Rajeev Mehta. The pictorial spread covered a wide variety of animals, birds, plants and insects, aesthetically presented.

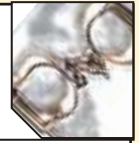


© TRAFFIC India

A visitor at the wildlife photo exhibition

The exhibition was on display from 2-7 October 2008 and received considerable response from the general public. The exhibition featured charismatic species of wildlife such as the Tiger and the Elephant, and also many rare and less popularly known species of birds and butterflies.

TRAFFIC 'Alert'



Wildlife racket operating on Internet networking sites busted

In August 2008, the Special Task Force of Uttar Pradesh along with the Forest Department conducted a raid in Meerut and busted a gang that used Orkut and other popular networking sites for illegal wildlife trade. The team also seized many threatened wildlife such as peacocks, parakeets and a rare albino civet.

Mahesh Chandra, Wildlife Warden of Meerut, said the accused have been sent to jail on 26 August 2008 after being charged under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

The effort of the Special Task Force and the Forest Department in busting this internet trading gang is truly laudable. Hopefully, the investigations should provide guidance for other related cases.

Internet trading of threatened wild species is not a new phenomenon and has been well publicized previously. TRAFFIC has earlier raised concerns about these virtual markets that allow buyers and sellers to connect with ease and speed. In January 2008, TRAFFIC released findings of a study conducted to survey popular auction websites, Yahoo and eBay, in addition to several independent websites with wildlife trade themes in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan that were offering endangered wildlife species. Details of this study can be viewed at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2008/1/28/il-legal-wildlife-trade-flourishing-on-the-chinese-language-i.html>

In 2004, TRAFFIC released *Tackling the ivories: The status of the US trade in elephant and hippo ivory* which revealed for the first time the active Internet trade in elephant ivory from sellers based in China who routinely shipped ivory to the USA.

OUTPOST: Paper Tigers? The role of the U.S. captive Tiger population in the trade in Tiger parts



© Martin HARVEY / WWF-Canon

TRAFFIC and the World Wildlife Fund released a first ever comprehensive report on captive tiger regulations across the United States entitled, *Paper Tigers? The role of the U.S. captive Tiger population in the trade in Tiger parts*, on 31 July 2008 in Washington, USA.

The report found that there are no reliable regulatory mechanisms to keep track of captive tigers in the United States. The U.S. government has no way to determine how many tigers there

are in captivity within its borders, where they are, who owns them, or what happens to their body parts when they die. Captive tigers include animals bred in zoos, used for entertainment in carnivals or promotional exhibits, housed at rescue facilities, and those privately owned. In many states there are no controls on individuals keeping Tigers as pets. Current estimates indicate that there are more than 5 000 tigers in captivity in the United States, more than exist in the wild worldwide. While the report shows no evidence that these Tigers are currently a supply source for the international black market in Tiger parts, these weak U.S. regulations could leave them vulnerable to illegal trade unless the issue is immediately addressed. Tiger populations are fast declining worldwide due to poaching for illegal trade and due to habitat and prey loss. One of the leading threats to the species's survival is the global demand for their bones, skins and other body parts for use in fashion and traditional forms of Asian medicine.

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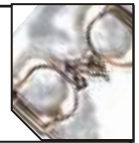
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CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) agreed to a series of Decisions and Resolutions instructing its 173 member governments to implement measures to protect tigers from illegal trade. In 2000, a Resolution agreed upon by all CITES member countries, including the United States, urged governments to ensure they have effective management and controls in place to stop captive Tiger parts from entering illegal trade. The U.S. lacks a comprehensive management system for captive Tigers, which means that the U.S. has not implemented the CITES Resolution it agreed to, according to WWF and TRAFFIC.

A registration scheme for all captive Tigers and a means to monitor disposal of dead Tigers is urgently needed, according to the report. WWF and TRAFFIC recommend that, among other steps, the federal government rescind exceptions to laws that exempt certain categories of captive U.S. Tigers from regulation, specifically under the Captive-Bred Wildlife Registration system, and that all persons or facilities holding USDA licences for exhibition or breeding and dealing in Tigers report annually on the number of Tigers held, births, mortality and transfer or sale.

To download this report please visit, http://www.traffic.org/species-reports/traffic_species_mammals39.pdf

TRAFFIC 'Alert'



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Other NGOs have reported similar findings. In 2005, IFAW published *Caught in the web: Wildlife trade on the internet*, revealing the findings of an intensive investigation into the online trade in wildlife. In 2007, IFAW released a similar report called, *Bidding for extinction*, that revealed how the rampant trade in elephant ivory being carried out across eBay's global network of auction sites was enabling consumers to literally bid for the extinction of the world's largest land mammal.

The trend seems to have caught on now in India, and could have damaging impacts on our wildlife. It is necessary to implement effective internet monitoring for wildlife trade in addition to the usual policing of physical markets.

Source:

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Earth/Internet_wildlife_racket_busted/articleshow/3411489.cms

www.ifaw.org

Tiger trade racket busted in north India

In September 2008, the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) unearthed an international racket in Tiger parts that led to the arrest of three alleged poachers.

A raid was conducted at the house of one of the accused in Gurgaon, Haryana, where a complete skeleton of a Tiger, a penis, two testicles, Tiger fat, two Cheetal horns and a number of traps were recovered from the house. The accused managed to escape.

This racket is believed to have connections with Narayan, brother of notorious poacher Sansar Chand. The racket was busted following a five-month operation in four north Indian states. Three key gang members Dariya, Pema Gytso, Omprakash were arrested in different states, most recently Omprakash in Haldwani, Uttarakhand.

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CITES UPDATE:

CITES gives green light to one-off ivory sales



© Martin HARVEY / WWF-Canon

African savanna elephant *Loxodonta africana africana*

During a CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) meeting held on 16 July 2008, the CITES Standing Committee gave a go-ahead to the one-off sale of ivory that was agreed in principle in June 2007. Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe have now been authorized to make a single sale of a total of 108 tonnes of government-owned ivory. The following quantities of raw ivory have been approved: Botswana: 43 682.91 kg, Namibia: 9209.68 kg, South Africa: 51 121.8 kg, and Zimbabwe: 3755.55 kg.

The Committee also agreed to designate China as an importing country. Japan had already been allowed to import ivory in 2006. Both countries assured that they would closely monitor their domestic markets. All the proceeds of the sale are to be used exclusively for elephant conservation and local communities living side-by-side with elephants.

The request to trade African Elephant ivory was originally approved at the CITES Conference of the Parties in 2002 and then modified to include new conditions at the meeting in 2007. The CITES meeting in July was given the task of deciding whether China could be approved as a trading partner. To gain approval, China had to convince CITES that it had put in place adequate measures to manage regulated sales and tackle any illegal domestic ivory trade.

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"The Secretariat will closely supervise this sale and evaluate its impact on elephant population levels throughout Africa. We will continue monitoring the Chinese and Japanese domestic trade controls to ensure that unscrupulous traders do not take this opportunity to launder ivory of illegal origin", said the Secretary-General of the Convention, Mr Willem Wijnstekers.

CITES banned the international commercial ivory trade in 1989. In 1997, recognizing that some southern African elephant populations were healthy and well managed; it permitted Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe to make a one-time sale of ivory to Japan totaling 50 tons. This sale took place in 1999 and raised about USD 5 million for elephant conservation.

This legal sale of ivory will be from existing stocks gathered from elephants that have died as a result of natural causes or from problem-animal control. Today, the elephant populations of southern Africa are listed in Appendix II of the Convention (which allows commercial trade through a permit system), while all other elephant populations are listed in Appendix I (which prohibits all imports for commercial purposes).

Source: www.cites.org

TRAFFIC 'Alert'



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TRAFFIC India adds.....

The efforts of the newly formed Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) in busting wildlife trade rackets operating across the country are truly commendable. This is one of many seizures undertaken by the WCCB after its establishment following the amendment of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in 2006. The leads from cases such as these should lead to further enforcement actions against illegal wildlife traders operating in India.

Source:

<http://www.sahasasamay.com/samayhtml/articles.aspx?newsid=104967>

Star Tortoises seized from an air passenger in Chennai

On 2 August 2008, Custom officials at Chennai airport seized 950 live Star Tortoises from a passenger travelling on a flight bound for Bangkok via Colombo.

The tortoises were found in the baggage of Ibramsa Abubacker, a resident of Chennai, when the officials intercepted him based on specific intelligence.

He admitted that he was lured by an offer of INR 3000 (USD 60), made by an unknown person for carrying the bag containing the tortoises. Abubacker was handed over to the wild life authorities along with the tortoises for further investigation.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

The seizure of 950 Indian Star Tortoises *Geochelone elegans* at Chennai airport is not an isolated case. Previously, there have been many large hauls of this species in India, especially at this airport. Two recent investigations undertaken by TRAFFIC at wildlife trade markets in Thailand and Indonesia clearly indicate the Indian Star Tortoise is in the top three tortoise species traded.

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CITES UPDATE:

CITES issues a deadline for submission of a report on Tiger-breeding operations



On 8 October 2008, under notification no 2008/059, CITES has directed all parties that have Tiger-breeding operations to submit a report describing such operations by 28 February 2009. This report will further be presented during the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee for review. This followed a Decision 14.69 that was adopted during the 14th Conference of the Parties (CoP14), held in The Hague, The Netherlands in 2007. This stated:

Parties with intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale shall implement measures to restrict the captive population to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers; tigers should not be bred for trade in their parts and derivatives.

Under this notification released in October 2008, the parties are encouraged to take the following issues into account during implementation of the decision and while reporting:

- a) The establishment of a national individual animal registration process, incorporating a marking system using, for example, microchips or DNA profiling;
- b) The segregation of sexes to prevent further breeding;
- c) The development of a strategic plan, incorporating deadlines, for the phasing-out of intensive breeding operations on a commercial scale or their conversion to operations devoted solely to the conservation of tigers; and
- d) The development of a policy with regard to what will happen to tigers currently in intensive breeding operations.

The Government of India, as a party to CITES since 1976, has been significantly instrumental in moving this notification and the National Tiger Conservation Authority was actively engaged with the CITES Secretariat. This announcement of a deadline for reporting the status of all tiger breeding operations is seen as a major step towards implementation of CITES decision 14.69 adopted at CoP 14. Decision 14.69 can be viewed at <http://www.cites.org/eng/dec/valid14/E14-Dec.pdf> while the notification can be viewed at <http://www.cites.org/eng/notif/2008/E059.pdf>

CITES UPDATE:

CITES endorses formation of an International Rhino Task Force



The Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), in July 2008, endorsed the establishment of a Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force to counter rising levels of rhino poaching and illicit horn trade in Asia and Africa. Like other CITES Enforcement Task Forces, it will be co-ordinated by the CITES Secretariat.

The move follows a report from the CITES Secretariat expressing concerns over reports of increased poaching and illegal trade in rhinoceros horn and the highly-organized nature of these activities. The report noted that considerable profits appear to be involved in rhino poaching, with strong grounds to suspect the involvement of money-laundering.

Despite some noteworthy enforcement successes in southern Africa and South Asia, the plight of rhinos in Asia and Africa is becoming ever more alarming. In Asia, poachers have targeted rhinos in Indian national parks, with alarming number of Great Indian Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* being killed in and around Kaziranga National Park in Assam since 2007, and rhino populations in Orang also being poached. The sudden upsurge in rhino killings is a major challenge for regional enforcement agencies, and the Army has been called in for support. WWF and TRAFFIC are also co-ordinating emergency support.

Most rhino poaching is to supply horns for use in traditional Asian medicines, although there is growing evidence that the demand for horns (for use as traditional dagger handles) is re-emerging in the Middle East. A new trend in South Africa is for illicitly acquired horns to be claimed as legitimate sport hunting trophies and exported. Some Vietnamese citizens have been implicated, and Viet Nam is emerging as a key player in the illegal horn trade.

TRAFFIC and WWF welcomed the formation of the International Rhino Task Force and expressed confidence that this initiative will play a significant role in curbing organized illegal rhino horn trade.

TRAFFIC 'Alert'



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TRAFFIC India adds.....

In India, the species is included in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and trade in it is banned. International trade is also restricted as the species is listed in Appendix II of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). Despite its legal protection, trade in the species appears to continue unabated.

Over the years Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Pune, the Port City of Kandla in the Gulf of Kutch, and the coastal areas of Gujarat and Rajasthan have all emerged as centres for smuggling Indian Star Tortoises.

Source:

- http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Earth/TN_950_star_tortoises_seized/articleshow/3318785.cms
- <http://www.hindu.com/2007/06/02/stories/2007060202801300.htm>
- <http://www.mumbaimirror.com/net/mmpaper.aspx?page=article§id=35&contentid=>

IN FOCUS:

Green Avadavat- A silent victim of illegal bird trade



Green Avadavat (Munia) *Amandava formosa*, one of seven species of munias found in India, is becoming a victim of illegal bird trade. According to TRAFFIC India's country-wide study on illegal bird trade undertaken by the author since 1992, munias contribute nearly 40% of the total bird trade in India (Ahmed 1997, 2002, 2004).

Munias are popular aviculture subjects worldwide. Being small in size and adored for their beautiful coloration, melodious calls, low-cost diet and easy captive-care, they are commercially exploited throughout their range. Although parakeets are the most popular pet birds in terms of preference and popularity, munias rank number one in terms of their sheer volume in bird trade (Ahmed 2001). Many bird traders have reported that for every wild parakeet sold almost four munias are traded.

While most Indian munia species are common and widely distributed throughout the subcontinent, the Green Avadavat is a globally threatened species, endemic to India, with a very local and uneven distribution in central India (BirdLife International 2000, Ali & Ripley 1983). The Green Avadavat is small, measuring about 10 cm, and olive-green above with a pale yellow throat and breast. The centre of the belly and undertail coverts are bright yellow whilst the flanks are barred olive-brown and white (Ali & Ripley 1983).

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Despite being listed in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and Appendix II of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) since 1997, under which both domestic and international trade in the species is controlled, Green Avadavat continues to be traded in clandestine markets. It is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List, mainly because of the growing threat from illegal bird trade compounded by habitat loss and degradation.



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Green Avadavat for sale at a local fair held in Kolkatta in July 2008

Green Avadavat has become a highly sought after cage bird both for domestic and international markets because of its rarity and aesthetic appeal. Although, little is known about the bird's habits in the wild, the species is rather delicate and difficult to acclimatize in captivity, especially in temperate countries. Since it is also difficult to breed in captivity, its continued presence in international markets suggests that birds caught from the wild are smuggled out of India (Ahmed 1998, 2002).

The maximum numbers of Green Avadavat are caught from the states of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, largely by members of the Baheliya and the Mir-shikar community. Most records indicate the maximum trade of Green Avadavats is during May to August, indicating that the peak season for trapping is May/June, with most birds being sold off by September.

The Green Avadavat has a red bill and iris and a black tail; all features common to the Red Avadavat *A. amandava*. Consequently some traders colour female Red Avadavats with a light green dye and pass them off as Green Avadavats (indeed this practice has contributed to the trade name of Green Avadavats as hara lal or green-red) (Ahmed 1999, 2002). Traders benefit in two ways; firstly, by passing off Red Avadavat females as Green Avadavats, they can sell the otherwise drab coloured birds at a higher price; and secondly they also avoid being prosecuted for trading in a rare and protected species.

Most Green Avadavats enter the pet-trade under the name of "Tiger Finch" and are smuggled out of India through Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan (Ahmed *in prep*). Currently, the future of the species appears bleak, and there is a need to strengthen enforcement efforts to crack down on this illegal wildlife trade. There is also a need to undertake a comprehensive study on Green Avadavat to understand the biology of the species, its current populations levels and also the impact of trapping and trade in India.

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SIGNPOST:
Other significant news stories to read

On the red sandalwood trail: The demand for the endangered red sandalwood has tempted poachers and smugglers to ramp up their clandestine operations. Smuggling by road from southern India to Nepal is the latest trend in the illegal trade. Trucks laden with red sandalwood from Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh drive to Kathmandu from where it is smuggled on to China, Japan and Singapore where the smugglers receive better prices for their goods. For more information, please visit http://indiatoday.digitaltoday.in/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=15998§ionid=22&issuueid=31&Itemid=1

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2008 released: On 6 October, IUCN released the 2008 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The Red List now includes 16 928 species that are threatened with extinction. Of these, 3246 are Critically Endangered i.e. in the highest category of threat; 4770 are Endangered and 8912 are Vulnerable to extinction. For more information, please visit <http://www.iucnredlist.org/>

In the gun-sights: Leopards: The rampant poaching of leopards in the wilds of Uttarakhand is as alarming as the earlier revelation about vanishing Tigers in protected areas. Some three dozen Leopards are said to have been killed in Uttarakhand in the last few months. Elsewhere, too, Leopards have been the target of animal hunters, as borne out by the recovery of 27 leopard skins from different parts of the country in the past two months. Some estimates place the total number of Leopards annihilated in this period as high as 120, with most incidents being reported from Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. For more information, please visit <http://www.business-standard.com/india/storypage.php?autono=335696>

Insect appeal: Call it a beauty pageant with a difference. A small gathering of tribal youths queue up outside a nondescript hotel in a small town in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh holding plastic bags and ventilated clear plastic jars. What they're selling are huge, velvet-coated palm-sized tarantula spiders, stunningly beautiful, but with a bite that can kill a human. The youths tell a shaky hand-held camera exactly what they are doing there: trying to sell the spiders to a German tourist camping in the hotel. Each spider will fetch them between INR 500 (USD 10) and INR 5000 (USD 100). For more information, please visit http://indiatoday.digitaltoday.in/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&issuueid=31&id=17226&Itemid=1§ionid=36

HEADLINES

Rare avian species disappears



The bird was first reported in 1970 and was thought to be extinct. It was rediscovered in 1991 and was listed as a vulnerable species in the IUCN Red List. The bird is found in the Western Ghats of India and is known for its distinctive call and its ability to fly over long distances.

2 Czech scientists convicted for poaching rare insects

Prague, September 8



Two Czech scientists were convicted for poaching rare insects. The scientists, Jan Štáhl and Jiří Štáhl, were found guilty of collecting and trading protected species of insects. They were sentenced to prison terms for their actions. The case highlights the illegal trade in rare insects and the need for stricter enforcement of wildlife laws.

After tigers, poachers now hunt for leopards



Poachers are now targeting leopards in addition to tigers. The poachers are motivated by the high demand for leopard skins and bones in traditional Chinese medicine. The poaching of leopards is a significant threat to their survival, and conservationists are working to protect these animals.

The great shark hunt



The shark hunt is a major threat to shark populations. Shark fins are highly valued in traditional Chinese medicine and are often sold on the black market. The illegal trade in shark fins has led to a significant decline in shark populations, and conservationists are calling for an end to the shark hunt.

700 storks die as tree falls in Assam village



A massive tree fell in an Assam village, killing 700 storks. The tree was a large, ancient tree that had stood for centuries. Its fall was a tragedy for the local stork population, which relies on the tree for nesting. Conservationists are working to protect the remaining storks and to prevent such incidents in the future.

Great Indian Bustard fights for survival in Maharashtra



The Great Indian Bustard is facing a severe decline in Maharashtra. The bird is a large, ground-dwelling bird that is found in open areas. It is currently listed as a critically endangered species. Conservationists are working to protect the remaining bustards and to restore their natural habitat.

Rail tracks a death trap in Bengal's wild corridors

Rail tracks are a major threat to wildlife in Bengal's wild corridors. The tracks fragment the habitat and create barriers for wildlife movement. This leads to a decline in wildlife populations and a loss of biodiversity. Conservationists are calling for the removal of rail tracks from wild corridors to protect the remaining wildlife.

Experts call for urgent reform as India flies to the top three in illegal bird trade



Experts call for urgent reform as India rises to the top three in illegal bird trade. The illegal trade in birds is a major threat to bird populations and biodiversity. It involves the capture, transport, and sale of birds for the pet trade and for traditional medicine. Conservationists are calling for stricter laws and enforcement to protect birds from the illegal trade.

Website offers tigers 'bred in India' for sale



A website is offering tigers 'bred in India' for sale. The website is a platform for the illegal trade in tigers, where tigers are sold to buyers for various purposes. This is a serious threat to the tiger population and conservationists are working to shut down the website and protect the remaining tigers.

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