



# The SAWEN Bulletin



South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network's quarterly bulletin on wildlife crime issues.

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**NOTE :** This bulletin needs your support. Please contribute by sharing wildlife crime/seizure reports or any other significant news report pertaining to wildlife trade from your country.

**Editor's Note:** This Bulletin contains wildlife crime related news compiled from various online sources. To make it concise and informative, multiple news are combined. Please refer to the web version of the Bulletin in SAWEN website ([http://www.sawen.org/publication/list\\_all/bulletin](http://www.sawen.org/publication/list_all/bulletin)) for the original news and the sources.



## THE 3rd ASIA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

The 3rd Asia Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation took place in New Delhi, India on 12-14 April 2016. The main objective of the conference was to review and endorse the national and global priorities relating to the Global Tiger Recovery Programme (GTRP) for the next implementation phase.

The conference took stock of the progress made by tiger range countries in implementing GTRP and National Tiger Recovery Programs (NTRP) towards doubling the number of tigers by 2022. To renew the collective actions from the range countries, the conference produced a seven point's resolution. The resolution focuses on accelerating the implementation of GTRP and NTRP, aligning development and tiger conservation, leveraging funding and technical support, recognizing the importance of tiger habitats for ecosystem services and economic development, emphasizing recovery of tiger population in habitats having low tiger densities, strengthening formal and informal transboundary coordination for controlling poaching and illegal trade, and enhancing knowledge sharing and capacity development.

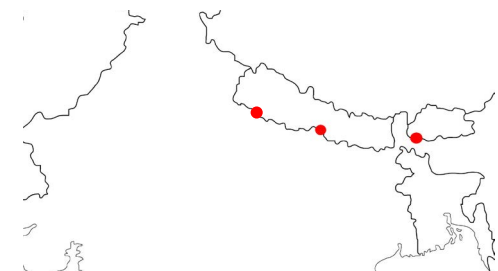
In the conference, SAWEN was represented by Dr. Maheshwar Dhakal, SAWEN principal focal person of Nepal. He underpinned the role of international collaboration for better enforcement for conserving tigers. He further highlighted the ongoing activities of SAWEN and importance of SAWEN in enhancing cooperation for improved transnational and national law enforcement in the tiger range countries in South Asia.

During the opening remarks by the Honable Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi had announced the adoption of SAWEN Statute by the government of India.

On behalf of the government of India, the conference was hosted by the Global Tiger Forum (GTF) and National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). Ministers and high level government officials from all the 13 tiger range countries as well as representatives of various intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working in tiger conservation were present in the conference.

## TRANS-BORDER CRIME

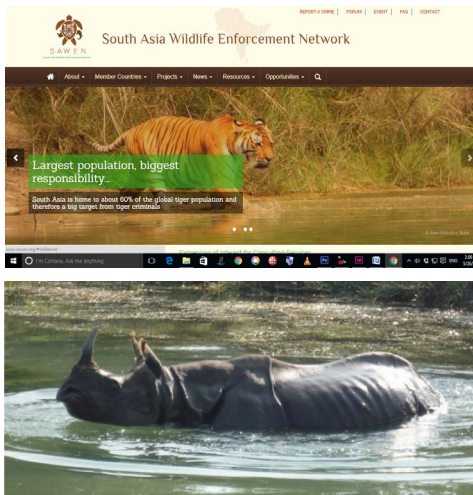
The organized criminal networks involved in wildlife crime continue to exploit the international porous borders and weak law enforcement along such borders in South Asia.



An 8-foot long tiger skin and 88 pieces of tiger bone were seized from four men in north Bengal's Hashimara on 20 March, 2016. This consignment was allegedly brought from Bhutan and promised IRs 16 lakh for it. Three of the four people arrested are from Jaigaon, which is on the Indo-Bhutan border. The fourth

person is from Phuntsoling in Bhutan. Police suspects that two other people from Assam believed to be involved in the smuggling may have fled.

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Continued from page 1

Two Nepalese nationals, Nirmal BK and Bhakta BK, were arrested after a leopard skin was recovered from them in Rupediya area, a no man's land of Indo-Nepal border, on 20 March 2016. The leopard skin, which was being taken to Nepal from Rupediya, had the jaw and 27 teeth of intact which worth crores of rupees in the international market. The two had got the skin from someone in Gorakhpur and were taking it to third country via Nepal.

### TORTOISES AND BIRDS TARGETED

**Bangladesh:** Bangladeshi officials arrested three smugglers, Samiur Rahman, (35) Jewel Ahmed, (29) and Mizanur Rahman, (30) and seized 30 tortoises from their possession at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

As reported in another news from Bangladesh, there has been a surge in poaching of migratory birds in Netrakona, Kishoreganj and Sunmanganj areas. Normally, the

### INDIA ADOPTS THE SAWEN STATUTE

**India:** The government of India has adopted the SAWEN Statute on 13 April, 2016. The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi gave approval for India adopting the Statute and be a formal member of the regional intergovernmental body for combating wildlife crime.

A press release from the government of India recognizes that the South Asia region is very vulnerable to illegal traffic and wildlife crimes due to presence of precious biodiversity and large markets as well as traffic routes for wildlife products in the south East Asian region. The collaboration in harmonizing as well as enforcing the wildlife protection in the region is considered very important for effective conservation of such precious biodiversity.

### BURGEONING BIG CAT CRIME

**India:** As reported by Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), the number of tigers poached in India during the first four months of 2016 were higher than that of the entire year 2015. Data from WPSI shows that 28 tigers have been illegally killed till 26 April, 2016 while the number was only 25 throughout the year 2015. The number is a record high for the first four months in the last decade.

According to the official database of National Tiger Conservation Authority of India, a total of 69 tiger deaths were reported throughout the country during the year 2015. The highest number of deaths was recorded in Karnataka with 15 followed by Maharashtra with 12 and Madhya Pradesh with 11 tigers. Officials claim that the major cause of death is natural.

The big cats face a looming threat from

The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), India seized a large cache of dead octopus and sea crabs weighing 67kg near Bhikhna Thori on Indo-Nepal border. 'The coolies dumped their large polybags revealed sea-crabs and octopus packed in ice and retreated to Nepali territory,' said Alok Kumar, DFO of Bettiah. 'This is the first time that sea animals have been seized in these parts,' Kumar told.

[Link: 1, 2, 3](#)

poachers set poison traps on the bank of the wetlands to hunt these migratory birds. Thousands of migratory birds, including Bali Duck, Samukal, Bright, Rose King, Bali Lenja, Boikal, Nilshir, Piyang, Pankouri, Pintail, Pantamukhi, Chokha-chokhi and Khonjona flock to various wetlands including greater Mymensingh. During the winter, poachers were found selling the birds in various kitchen markets which they said were hunted as there is a high demand for their meat.

[Links: 1, 2](#)

SAWEN Secretariat is highly encouraged by the adoption of Statute by the government India. The Secretariat would like to congratulate and acknowledge the efforts made by the individuals and agencies involved in the process including the SAWEN Focal Person from India.

The Prime Minister Shri Modi had announced the adoption of the SAWEN Statute by the government of India during his highly encouraging and widely appreciated speech delivered at the opening of the 3rd Asian Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation in Delhi.

With this, SAWEN has got its Statute endorsed by two countries. Earlier, Sri Lanka had endorsed the Statute in December 2015.

#### STATISTICS OF TIGER MORTALITY AND BODY SEIZURE IN INDIA

Tiger Mortality	
2015	as of April 2016
69	37
Seizure of Tiger body	
2015	as of April 2016
08	12

Source: <http://www.tigernet.nic.in/Alluser/Default.aspx>

poacher and smugglers as suggested by the several incidents of seizures and arrests in different states in the country. During the past four months, enforcement actions resulted in the seizure of leopard skins, tiger skins, claws, and bones. The confiscated items also included bear paw as well as single barrel gun, a car, nets and other incriminating materials.

The biggest of the haul in recent times was in Uttarakhand where seven leopard skins

and bones along with used car were seized in Lalpul area of Pauri district on January 26. The four arrested in this case have been identified as Manoj Dasmana, Pankaj Rawat, Prem Singh and Arjun.

In another bust, forest officials of Odisha's Nabarangpur district seized six leopard skins, a few leopard teeth and bear paws from five persons who were reportedly trying to sell them. This was possible after an undercover operation conducted at night on 2 February 2016 following a nine-month surveillance on suspected wildlife derivatives trade. While the five were under arrest, three others who were also part of the suspected trade managed to escape. None of the arrested were poachers. Forest officials suspect that the leopard skins came from Karlapat reserve forest in Kalahandi district.



Similarly, a robber named Srinivas, alias Seena (24) hailing from Hale Siddaranahalli was arrested on 4 February who was later revealed as a tiger poacher by Sakharayapatna police. Seena with other seven members poached a tiger a couple of months ago at Siddarahalli Reserve Forest area.

In another incident regarding the big cat crime in the country, Kuttu alias Rahul Gulabsingh Gondthakur who was involved in tiger poaching case of 2007 escaped from the grip of enforcement officials. He was in magisterial custody and was being brought from Wadsa after a court hearing. Earlier, the state forest department had opposed bail of Kuttu and Shalis alias Shailesh Pardhi in tiger poaching and wildlife body parts trade cases.

It has been often reported that use of poor local villagers by middlemen and traders to kill big cats for a small financial motivation is a commonplace. A news story revealed that villagers in Uttarakhand kill leopards for as little as IRs 2,000. They poison carcass of cattle and leave it for leopards to eat.

Meanwhile, TRAFFIC field operatives have come across four fake tiger skins in the past two months in Chennai. Those in the know say fake tiger skins, made of cow or dog skin, are being sold online and delivered in Chennai which are meticulously made, using paints that are mixed with gum. If a lime juice was poured on fake skin, the colours fade instantly.

*Continue to page 3*



Continued from page 2

In an effort to improve enforcement through the use of new technologies, the Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR) Jharkhand is going to deploy three drones to carry out air surveillance of the protected forest for better management and prevent incidents of poaching. [Links: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16](#)

## RED SANDERS SMUGGLING

**India:** During the past four months, Indian officials arrested number of smugglers including two international smugglers and seized tonnes of red sanders from different parts of the country. Of the two international smugglers, Vikas Mahendi from Delhi exported 200 tonnes of red sanders abroad and involved in 22 cases. The other, Lakshman from Kolkata was a most-wanted smuggler who transported red sanders to Nepal, Dubai, Burma and other countries and was the owner of number of red sanders godowns across the country.

In a single haul, forest officials of the Tirupati Wildlife Circle seized a huge container with over six tonnes of red sanders logs worth over IRs.10 crore at about 6 am on 14 January, 2016 at Balapalle check-post on the Chittoor-Kadapa border. The container was on its way to Renigunta.

In another major case, Renigunta police arrested seven red sanders smugglers including five from Tirupati and two from Tamil Nadu in Gundala Kaluva forest area, near Kodur on the Chittoor-Kadapa border. They were loading the red sanders logs into a vehicle. Police seized red sanders logs weighing 624 kg worth IRs 32 lakh. However, one person managed to escape.

Similarly, a crane operator was arrested on 27 January, 2016 for allegedly stealing a container loaded with 15 tonnes of red sanders worth IRs 1 crore from the container freight station (CFS) in Uran. The container was seized by the customs department in January 2014.

To help protect the red sanders in Chittoor, the Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) and the Forest Department have come up with an innovative idea to raise awareness among the local people. Renowned scholars of Telugu literature and Vedic studies associated with the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) are asked to conduct out an awareness campaign in the forest fringe villages abutting the red sanders core belt, seeking participation of local population in preventing the contraband operations. It helps to educate rural people about the importance of flora and fauna in the red-sanders rich zone of Seshachalam and Nallamala hills, giving a touch of spiritualism by drawing references from the Vedas, Mahabharata, Ramayana and Bhagavatam, in addition to the famous works of famous saint-poet. [Links: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7](#)

## BIG CATS; A MAJOR CONCERN

**Nepal:** Nepal Police made number of arrests on charge of smuggling and poaching of wildlife from different parts of Nepal during the past four months along with the seizure of various wildlife and their parts.

During the period, big cat crime outstood as a major concern. Seven smugglers were arrested with three leopard skins in three separate cases on 9 & 23 March and 2 April. Two more poachers were held on charge of poaching a snow leopard on 13 March. Recently, a joint team of District Nepal Police and CIB arrested a smuggler red handed with one tiger skin on 8 April from Bardiya while they were bargaining for price. Earlier in 2015, Nepal Police had seized as many as nine tiger skins. Of the skins seized in 2015, four belonged to tigers of Bardiya National Park (BNP).

Similarly, a total of 4.1 kg pangolin scales were seized in two separate incidents in the first week of January and April with three persons detained. Six incidents of smuggling of pangolin body parts were reported in previous year.

Five smugglers were arrested and two red panda skins were recovered from the min two separate cases on 16 March and 22 April. There was also an incident reported in which two youth poachers were arrested with six owlets of endangered Eurasian eagle owls from Sunsari district on 10 January.

A news report claims that there is a rampant poaching and smuggling of wildlife such as owls, pheasant, lophophorus, wild boar, deer, and bear is increasing in different parts of Nepal. Locals enter into nearby forests and kill these endangered species for bush meat sellable in small sum of money in local market.

Meanwhile, the government of Nepal is conducting a study on the status and distribution of seized wildlife contrabands aiming to properly manage them including through destruction of those contrabands if needed. [Links: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13](#)

## CATCHING THE BIRDS



**Pakistan:** The customs authorities at the airport confiscated five falcons being imported illegally from Dubai to Karachi, Pakistan on 17 January, 2016. The importer identified as Lal Mohammed was arrested with the consignment, which includes one peregrine and four saker falcon species.

In another move, the Sindh Wildlife Department (SWD) recovered at least 90 migratory birds on 31 January 2016 while they were being transported illegally to Badin city. Badin district's SWD team, on a tip-off, recovered the birds from a passenger vehicle plying from villages along the coastal belt to the district headquarters between Lauri Sharif and Kadhan towns. According to the SWD officials, local villagers Haji Aarab Subhero, Imtiaz Subhero and Muhammad Urs Subhero, were transporting the birds. [Links: 1, 2](#)

## TRADE IN TURTLES



**Pakistan:** Pakistani officials recovered a large number of turtles from different states of Pakistan and detained smugglers including one Chinese national. Unfortunately, about 60 out of the seized turtles were died of suffocation before their rescue as they were packed inside bags and ill handled by the smugglers.

The Chinese arrested was identified as Rihong who was nabbed by anti-smuggling team of wildlife departments. Total of 22 tortoises were recovered from his luggage at Allama Iqbal International Airport. He was trying to smuggle the tortoises to Colombo, Sri Lanka.

In a joint operation with the Wildlife Department, the Customs officials at Faisalabad Airport arrested Muhammad Iqbal, a Karachi-based exporter of dried fish and preserved vegetables, from a Doha bound flight of a private airline early morning on 8 March 2016. He was trying to smuggle the endangered tortoises to Malaysia via Doha, Qatar.

Similarly, as many as 62 turtles were recovered by the crime branch police of Jamshed Town on 7 April 2016 and handed over to the SWD. These turtles were being smuggled to Malaysia which worth Rs 10 million in the international market. The 13 surviving female black pond turtles were released into the Haleji Lake.

Likewise, the SWD recovered 170 black-horn turtles during a raid near Northern Bypass on the Super Highway on 28 April. They released the confiscated 161 black pond turtles into the Haleji Lake. The turtles were

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being smuggled from Taunsa in Punjab to Karachi, from where they would have been shipped to another country. The smugglers fled from the scene.

It has been reported that the scale of the illegal wildlife trade is evident from the last year's seizure of five illegal consignments comprising 1,345 freshwater turtles and 1.9 tonnes of their body parts (including dried meat and bones) which were destined for different South East Asian countries.

[Links: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8](#)

### BLOOD IVORY DESTROYED



**Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka Customs destroyed more than 359 African elephant tusks weighing 1.5 tonnes, thought to be worth \$2.7 million, in their custody at Galle Face Green on 26 January, 2016. The ivory was crushed using a modified crusher and then it fed in to furnace. The tusks were confiscated in 2012 while it was en route to Dubai from Kenya.

Sri Lanka has become the first South Asian country to destroy poached ivory publicly and the 16th country in the world to destroy confiscated elephant tusks so that they cannot be traded in the black market.

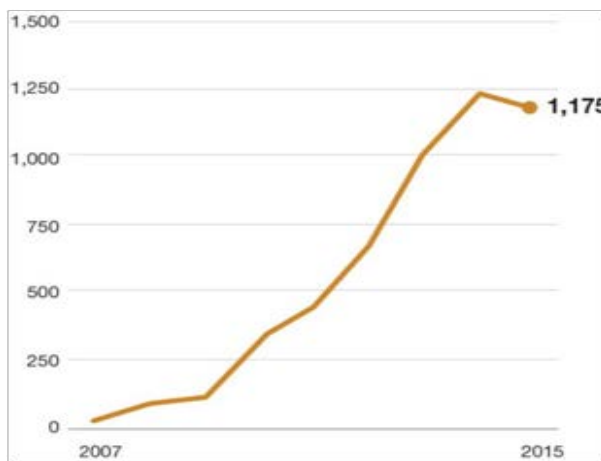
During the burning of ivory, the crowd observed two minutes of silence in remembrance of the elephants which had to die for the ivory.

Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, president of Sri Lanka, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, prime minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Gamini Jayawickrema Perera, minister for sustainable development and wildlife, Sri Lanka, Mr. John Scanlon, secretary general of Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) and other dignitaries were present in the stockpile destroying ceremony. The ceremony was scheduled to coincide with International Customs Day.

[Links: 1, 2, 3](#)

### GLOBAL

**South Africa, Rhino:** Nearly 1,200 rhinos were killed by poachers in South Africa in 2015 which is slightly lower than in 2014. The number of rhinos poached has rocketed since the year 2008 when fewer than 100 rhinos were poached. Total of 1,215 were killed in 2014 which is a record high. South Africa is



said to be home to around 20,000 rhinos, some 80 percent of the worldwide population.

**African Elephants:** Researchers at Colorado State University say an average of nearly 35,000 elephants each year have been killed in African nations since 2010. 'Between 2011 and 2014, African elephant poaching reached the highest recorded level since records were kept, beginning in 2002. In just a three-year time span, 100,000 elephants, roughly, were killed for their ivory' said Ms. Sally Jewell, US Secretary of Interior, in a media conference on 20 January, 2016.

**Kenya, Ivory Recently,** Kenya sets ablaze 105 tons of ivory and rhino horns on 30 April. It is the largest destruction of its kind in history. It is meant to send a message to the world that ivory has no value and that its trade should be banned.

**China, Crocodile tails:** Chinese officials seized 88 frozen crocodile tails along with 70 frozen wild Siamese crocodiles

from smugglers in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on 22 January, 2016. The 88 crocodile tails were all a similar length of just over five feet. They are trafficked for their skin which is used on luxury leather products.

**China, Pythons:** Customs officials from the southern province of Hainan announced on 18 March that they have seized 68,000 pieces of python skins worth 48 million U.S. dollars and arrested a total of 16 suspects in a raid in five cities of Hainan, Fujian and Guangxi. This is the largest python skin smuggling case ever.

About 500,000 skins are imported from Southeast Asia each year, primarily to Europe, according to a report by the International Trade Center, a subsidiary of the World Trade Organization. Python skins are in high demand in Europe and the U.S. for upscale shoes and handbags.

[Links: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5](#)



**Lesser known...only to the good people**

Poaching and illegal trade in lesser known wildlife species such as pangolins, turtles, exotic birds, lizards, snakes are rampant and often attracts less attention from public and enforcement agencies.



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