



The SAWEN Bulletin

South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network's quarterly newsletter on wildlife trade and crime related issues in South Asia

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SAWEN UPDATES

National training on information and intelligence management for Nepal's wildlife law enforcement officers



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SAWEN organized three days national training on information and intelligence management on wildlife crime in Kathmandu from 22-24 July 2013. The training was attended by 27 officers representing eight law enforcement agencies working on wildlife crime control in the country.

Mr Megh Bahadur Pandey, Director General, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Government of Nepal and Chief Enforcement Coordinator of SAWEN said, "Adequate coordination among various law enforcement agencies is much needed to fight wildlife crime. This gap has made the criminal networks stronger. This training is a common platform for officials from various enforcement agencies to meet, share experiences and strengthen cooperation for curbing illegal wildlife trade".

Law enforcement officers from agencies such as the DNPWC, Department of Forests, Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Central Investigation Bureau of Nepal Police, Office of the Attorney General, Armed Police Force and Department of Customs participated in the training.

Mr Bishwa Nath Oli, Director General, Department of Forests, Government of Nepal stressing on the role of SAWEN for curbing illegal wildlife trade said, "Wildlife crime has become transnational in nature. We need to have better cooperation at international level as well as at the inter-agency level within countries in order to control criminal activities linked to illegal wildlife trade".

The training was in line with the international training organized on 17-21 December 2012 in Kathmandu by SAWEN and INTERPOL. Its main focus was on management of information and intelligence while dealing with wildlife crime issues. The participants were also given exposure to the practical tools and techniques available for the same. Besides this, information on the nature and scale of wildlife crime at global, regional and national levels was provided by expert officials from DNPWC.

Mr Megh Bahadur Pandey threw light on the overall genesis of conservation in Nepal linking it to the history and status of wildlife crime. The training was organized in collaboration with National Trust for Nature Conservation and WWF-Nepal with support from Smithsonian Institution.

South Asia steps up investigative efforts against wildlife crime and illicit trade in Tigers

Senior delegates from various enforcement and intelligence agencies of eight South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) member countries, met from 1-5 July 2013 to work on scaling up law enforcement action to curb the growing menace of illegal wildlife trade in the region.

The Integrated Investigative Capacity Development and Operational Planning Meeting took place at the Headquarters of India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in New Delhi.

Focused on promoting co-ordinated action against wildlife crime by the member countries of the SAWEN, the event was hosted by the CBI, which houses India's INTERPOL National Central Bureau. A specialized training curriculum from INTERPOL's Environmental Crime Programme was delivered, along with input from other experts and additional technical support from TRAFFIC, the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

Illegal wildlife trade is recognized as a type of transnational organized crime, and is often a high-profit and low-risk activity. For example, TRAFFIC's 2012 report on Leopard poaching and illegal trade in India illuminated the fact that at least four Leopards are poached every week for illegal wildlife trade. The persistence of wildlife poaching and trafficking is further illustrated with nearly 50 tigers reported dead in India in the first half of 2013.

Besides driving many endangered species towards extinction, illegal wildlife trade supports criminal networks, undermines national security, and poses increasing risks to global health. Since illegal wildlife trade extends beyond national borders, regional collaboration between the SAWEN member countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) along with international support and connectivity is needed to address wildlife crime.

Against this background, this specialized capacity development and operation planning meeting identified common challenges and delegates worked on best-practice approaches for collaborative action between agencies at the national and regional levels. These included intelligence-led approaches such as controlled deliveries, interrogation techniques, risk management and ethics and professionalism in building wildlife cases.

Smt Jayanthi Natarajan, Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Environment and Forests, India who was the Chief Guest for the valediction ceremony said: "Illegal wildlife trade is one of the most urgent threats to wildlife. It undermines the country's efforts to protect and conserve nature. To combat this, we need to have stricter enforcement of CITES. India's Wildlife Protection Act 1972 is not enough. There is a need for specific legislations to fight wildlife crime."

"The contribution of various agencies and the support of TRAFFIC/WWF-India in strengthening law enforcement measures in India is laudable. This collaborative effort will surely help to bring regional cooperation much needed for eradicating this menace," added Smt Natarajan.

Dr Maheshwar Dhakal, representing the SAWEN Secretariat, highlighted the need for capacity building of law enforcement agencies of SAWEN member countries through robust networking and information sharing to combat wildlife crime in the South Asia region.

This meeting has helped to strengthen SAWEN as an institution by connecting national focal points and the SAWEN Secretariat with other government agency representatives. Officials representing a variety of enforcement agencies, including national police agencies housing INTERPOL National Central Bureaus, Customs, wildlife departments, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, environmental agencies and India's Wildlife Crime Control Bureau helped to bring agency jurisdictions together in a combined mandate.

Financial support from both the US Department of State, through a grant implemented by TRAFFIC, and USAID's support to INTERPOL's Project Predator, is acknowledged in making this landmark training event possible.

NTCC pushes agencies to enhance cooperation for curbing wildlife crime in Nepal

The fourth meeting of Nepal's National Tiger Conservation Committee (NTCC) convened by the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers and the Chairperson of NTCC, Mr Khil Raj Regmi, stressed on the need to enhance inter-agency cooperation to fight wildlife crime in the country. The Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation were directed to take immediate steps to strengthen linkages between the various enforcement agencies in Nepal for controlling the organized wildlife crime.

The meeting was held on 29 July 2013 also the National Tiger Day, at the Prime minister's office in Kathmandu. Besides stressing on the need for enhancing inter-agency cooperation, the meeting also asked the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation to formulate policies for wildlife genetic profiling and to work out a better system for managing the wildlife products and parts seized across the country over the last few years.

NTCC was formed on 16 May 2010, with an aim to have high level meeting focused on Tiger conservation in the country. The meeting is held every year on the National Tiger Day. In May 2010, the Government of Nepal had also formed a central level wildlife crime control bureau which comprises of high level officials from various law enforcement agencies working on wildlife crime control. A similar structure was further replicated at the district level. There are currently 12 wildlife crime control units that cover 14 districts across the country.

NEWS FROM CITES*

www.cites.org

* CITES: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

ICCWC deploys a Wildlife Incident Support Team (WIST) to Sri Lanka

In response to the need to take new approaches to combat the illegal trade more effectively, the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), at the request of Sri Lanka, deployed its first Wildlife Incident Support Teams (WIST).

The WIST was aimed at collecting DNA samples from 359 elephant tusks that were seized by Sri Lanka Customs authorities in the port of Colombo and was in response to a Decision adopted by the Conference of the Parties to CITES at its 16th meeting (CoP16), held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 3 to 14 March 2013. The Decision called for the establishment of WISTs, consisting of enforcement staff or relevant experts, to be dispatched at the request of a country that has been affected by significant poaching of CITES specimens, or that has made a large-scale seizure of such specimens, to assist it, and guide and facilitate appropriate follow-up actions in the immediate aftermath of such an incident.

The DNA samples collected by the WIST, which was led by INTERPOL on behalf of ICCWC, will assist relevant national authorities to determine the origin of the seized ivory through the use of forensic technology. Identifying the areas where ivory seized during large scale ivory seizures originate from is vital, for the design of efficient law enforcement responses and interventions. This will ensure that resources are directed to those areas where the most significant poaching activities occur. Determining the origin of seized ivory will also make a significant contribution to ensuring that the entire crime chain, from countries of origin and transit to the countries of destination, is addressed.

The samples have been sent for analysis to the Center for Conservation Biology at the University of Washington in the United States for DNA analysis – to identify the origin of the ivory – and to the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation for chemical isotope analysis, to determine the age of the ivory.

ICCWC is the collaborative effort by the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank, and the World Customs Organization (WCO) to bring coordinated support to the national wildlife law enforcement agencies and to the sub-regional and regional networks that, on a daily basis, act in defence of natural resources. The deployment of the WIST was generously funded by the European Commission under a project managed by INTERPOL on behalf of ICCWC. Read more at http://www.cites.org/eng/news/sundry/2013/20130725_icwc_wist_srilanka.php

NEWS FROM OTHER RELATED AGENCIES

World experts: all pangolin species at risk from illegal trade

A recent gathering of global pangolin experts concluded that the scaly mammals are more threatened now than ever, with all eight species threatened by illegal trade for their meat and medicinal use of their scales.

Currently international trade in the four species of Asian pangolin is not permitted under CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), while international trade in the four African species is only allowed provided the correct CITES permits accompany shipments—however, this is rarely the case.

The landmark meeting on the conservation of pangolins was organized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature—Species Survival Commission (IUCN-SSC) Pangolin Specialist Group and Wildlife Reserves Singapore.

The conference noted that at least 218,100 pangolins had been seized between 2000 and 2012—a figure likely to represent only a fraction of those being illegally traded. Ninety per cent of these were seized from mainland China, Hong Kong, and four South-East Asian nations—Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam and Thailand. Live animals and meat represented some 60% of all pangolins seizures, while the rest included scales and whole carcasses.

Research also indicates that the main threats to pangolins have escalated over the years, with illegal trade contributing more significantly to the problem than habitat loss, in part driven by the rising prices paid for pangolins on the black market.

During the meeting, TRAFFIC highlighted the scale of the pangolin trafficking problem in China and Malaysia, the former a significant consumer country, the latter a source and transit point. TRAFFIC raised the need for stiffer penalties and more effective prosecution efforts to secure convictions. Read more at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2013/7/15/world-experts-all-pangolin-species-at-risk-from-illegal-trad.html>

REPORTS FROM SOUTH ASIA ON WILDLIFE TRADE ISSUES



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AFGHANISTAN

Bird hunters 'emptying Afghan skies'; 30 July 2013 (BBC)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-23486991>

BANGLADESH

No news reported for this period

BHUTAN

No news reported for this period

INDIA

Twenty Kilogramme of Mouse Deer meat seized at Margao ; 1 June 2013 (The Times of India)

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-06-02/goa/39690077_1_sambar-wild-meat-mouse-deer

Parrots seized from Hyderabad's 'fortune tellers'; 3 June 2013 (The Times of India)

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-06-03/hyderabad/39713430_1_fortune-tellers-birds-wildlife-crime-control-bureau

Two Tiger poachers nabbed, confess to killing five Tigers in Melghat; 6 June 2013 (The Times of India)

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/Two-tiger-poachers-nabbed-confess-to-killing-five-tigers-in-Melghat/articleshow/20513159.cms>

Three arrested for transporting bullfrogs in Goa; 9 June 2013 (The Times of India)

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/goa/3-arrested-for-transporting-bullfrogs/articleshow/20513525.cms>

Two thousand turtles rescued in Andhra Pradesh, released in Kolleru Lake; 19 June 2013 (The Hindu)

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/2000-turtles-rescued-released-in-kolleru-lake/article4826293.ece>

Seizure points to Kolkata link in global turtle racket; 20 July 2013 (The Indian Express)

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/seizure-points-to-kolkata-link-in-global-turtle-racket/1144356/>

INDIA

Sansar Chand acquitted in one more case, conservationists worried; 22 July 2013 (Hindustan Times)

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Jaipur/Sansar-Chand-acquitted-in-one-more-case-conservationists-worried/Article1-1096599.aspx>

Star tortoise seized, three arrested; 22 July 2013 (The Hindu)

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/sar-tortoise-seized-three-arrested/article4938262.ece?homepage=true>

Turtle poaching goes unabated in Haryana; 30 July 2013 (The Times of India)

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Haryana/Turtles-poaching-go-unabated-in-state/Article1-1102402.aspx>

Endangered birds, turtles seized from pet store in Mumbai; 2 August 2013 (The Times of India)

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-08-04/mumbai/41057091_1_pet-store-shop-owner-birds

Four people held for suspected trade in Tiger skins in Gujarat; 4 August 2013 (The Times of India)

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-08-06/surat/41130340_1_skin-tiger-cub

Leopard skins recovered in Uttarakhand; 4 August 2013 (Hindu)

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/leopard-skins-recovered/article4993986.ece>

Pangolin scales seized in Bengal; 6 August 2013 (The Times of India)

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-08-06/flora-fauna/41131043_1_scales-pangolin-siliguri

Andhra Pradesh Forest Department seizes 55 snakes; 12 August 2013 (The Times of India)

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-08-12/hyderabad/41331929_1_snakes-forest-department-rescues-wildlife-crime-control-bureau

Wildlife smuggler nabbed in Odisha; 14 turtles recovered; 19 August 2013 (indileak)

<http://www.indileak.com/wildlife-smuggler-nabbed-14-turtles-recovered/>

MALDIVES

No news reported for this period

NEPAL

Red Panda skin smugglers arrested in Kathmandu and Makwanpur districts; 3 June 2013 (gorkhapatraonline.com)

<http://www.gorkhapatraonline.com/trn/nation/2184-red-panda-skin-smugglers-arrested.html>

Nepal Army seizes 650 kg of Red Sanders from Rasuwagadhi; 29 June 2013 (Ekantipur.com)

<http://ekantipur.com/2013/06/29/top-story/nepal-seizes-650-kgs-of-red-sandalwood-from-rasuwigadhi/374044.html>

Hundred and fifty nine wildlife traders arrested in 64 Nepal Police operations; 4 August 2013 (Himalayan News Service)

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=159+wildlife+traders+arrested+in+64+Nepal+Police+operations&NewsID=386242>

Metropolitan Police Crime Division rounded up seven antique traders, including a Tibetan woman, with a pair of flower vases made of ivory, from Matatirtha; 13 August 2013 (The Himalayan)

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=Seven+arrested+with++rare+Tibetan+artefacts&NewsID=387384>

PAKISTAN

Wildlife authorities seize two black bear cubs; 29 July 2013 (The Express Tribune)

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/583573/laid-bare-wildlife-authorities-seize-two-black-bear-cubs/>

SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka seizes 1.5 tonnes of ivory; 1 June 2013 (TRAFFIC)

<http://www.traffic.org/home/2012/6/1/sri-lanka-seizes-15-tonnes-of-ivory.html>