



# 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:** The SAWEN Secretariat has compiled wildlife crime related news available in different online sources to make this Bulletin concise and informative. Please visit the link of SAWEN webpage to access the original news. We have provided the link in the Bulletin if it is accessed from single source.



## SAWEN COOPERATES IN INTERPOL OPERATION



Four SAWEN member countries; Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal took part in an INTERPOL coordinated Operation; PAWS II (Protection of Asian Wildlife Species).

Operation PAWS is an intensive investigative operation focusing on joint investigation of significant transnational wildlife crime cases. The operation conducted during the period of April and May 2015 resulted in significant seizures and arrests in the participating countries demonstrating an example of coordinated law enforcement with systematic

intelligence exchange and analysis.

"SAWEN is committed to enhancing cross country coordination in curbing the wildlife crime. The operations like PAWS II provide opportunities for the countries to work together in bringing down the trans-border criminal networks and at the same time building cooperative relations and boosting confidence of the countries for such trans-border efforts" said Mr.

Tika Ram Adhikari, the Chief Enforcement Coordinator (CEC) of SAWEN.

Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam were the other participating countries in the operation. Australia, Canada, Russia, and the United States participated as supporting countries. Along with SAWEN, USAID and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) supported the operation.

## SHRINKED TIGER POPULATION

**Bangladesh:** The number of big cats appeared to decrease drastically as only about 100 Bengal tigers were found in the world's largest mangrove forest, far fewer than previously thought, a new survey said on 27 July, 2015. A government census in 2004 tracking footprints had estimated the number of tigers at 440 in the Bangladeshi part of the Sundarbans.

'The World Bank-funded current assessment covers a reasonably large area of the Sundarbans by camera traps and double sampling approach which estimated a population to be between 83 to 130, with a midpoint of 106 tigers' the report said.

Experts who carried out the study said poaching, a decline in prey and pollution played roles in the reduction of Bengal tiger population in Bangladesh. But experts said better methodology was the reason for the huge drop in the numbers, saying hidden cameras used this time around, rather than pug marks, gave a much more accurate figure.

After the report came out, Bangladesh authorities have enhanced their efforts to control the tiger crime. Police arrested two

youths identified as Enayet Hossain (22) hailing from Gilabari village in Koyra upazila and Babu Hossain (18) of the same village along with 69 bones of tiger at Natun Bazar Launch Terminal in the city on 7 August, 2015.

Two days after the arrest, Bangladesh police shot dead other six alleged tiger poachers in



Sundarban on 9 August, 2015 where police found skins of three adult Bengal tigers, measuring 10-11 feet (3.5 metres), and seized four rifles and a pistol.

Also, members of Rapid Action Battalion have arrested two poachers, Abdul Jalil Gazi and Md Ashraf Fakir, with a tiger skin from a house in Khulna customs gate area with seven feet long tiger skin on 25 August, 2015.

(Source of: links: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)



## WILDLIFE SEIZED

**Bangladesh:** At least 130 Indian pond turtles to be smuggled to Malaysia have been seized by the Customs Intelligence Department, at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on 29 May, 2015.

'The turtles, when discovered were all wrapped in cloth and plastic, but with their heads exposed and kept in two suitcases' said Ashim Mallick, inspector-of-wildlife, Bangladesh Forest Department. 'Indian pond turtles are very popular in Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan and China, where they are used in soups and other cuisines.' Nobody has been arrested in this regard.

Similarly, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel seized 710 turtles of rare species from Boalia Bazar in Benapole on Wednesday morning 29 July, 2015 smuggled from India. But, the paramilitary troops could not arrest anyone involved in the smuggling.

In another incident, a python, 25 Munias and 10 Parakeets including Alexandrian and Rose Ringed Parakeets were rescued during a raid in a weekly bird market at Tongi Bazar in Gazipur, outskirts of Dhaka, on 10 May, 2015. Also, on 27 June, 2015 a bird supplier was held with 28 hilly myna from the same Bazar area Dhaka court gave one year imprisonment to the man who was detained on charge of supplying hilly birds.

(Source of links: 1, 2, 3, 4)

## RED SANDERS SMUGGLING

**India:** More than 115 red sanders smugglers were arrested in four months from different part of India including three international level Indian smugglers, six Chinese nationals and seized more than 20 tonnes of red sanders worth over IRs 80 crore in the international market.

As a major breakthrough to Indian police, the international level smugglers namely Mani Annan, Mukesh Adani and Jaipal were arrested with large quantity of red sanders. Some arrestees are close associates of smugglers Kollam Gangi Reddy (caught in Mauritius this year and India is looking forward for deportation) and Ali Bhai of Dubai. Chinese nationals-including an engineering student at Bengaluru and warehouse owner-were also arrested during the course of time. More than 50 Chinese citizens have been arrested in the past few years relating with red sanders smuggling.

A complex and large network is driving this unlawful activity with support from employees of courier, warehouse owners, retailers and wholesalers to criminal gangs in different parts of the country. The organized networks able to smuggle this precious tree species mainly to Singapore, Japan, Malaysia, Dubai, and China using land, air and sea routes. Smugglers use various means of transport such as theft vehicles, oil tankers, and ambulance to transport the logs. In one incident, a gang pasted images of Tamil

Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa and party slogans on the sports utility vehicles (SUVs) to evade the checking but of their drama went to vain

'The constant vigil and combing operations helped reduce red sanders smuggling to a large extent' said Navin Gulati, Superintendent of Police, Kadappa. 'But some coolies, in the guise of pilgrims, were still managing to enter the forest.' Indian police and the Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) are working jointly to crack this lucrative illegal business.

As an assertive move, South Indian states government called for concerted efforts to curb inter-state wildlife poaching and smuggling, at the Southern Forest Ministers' Conference held on 6 August, 2015 and stressed out for closer and cohesive approach by raising the recent incidents of elephant poaching in Kerala and red sander smuggling in Andhra Pradesh. The state government also proposed that a regional Crime Control Bureau along the lines of the national-level Wildlife Crime Control Bureau be formed to collate and transmit information on all threats. (Source of links: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)

## \$15MN SNAKE VENOM

**India:** The forest department of Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, arrested six persons on 27 June, 2015 for smuggling 9 lbs of cobra venom worth over USD 15 million in International black market hidden in school bags close to Bhutan border in eastern India. The venom is said to have been collected from France and was being taken to Bhutan via Bangladesh.

The arrested persons are identified as Rana Ghosh is a resident of Jalpaiguri and Ashish Kumar Jha- a resident of Kalchini in Alipurduar. The others - Prasenjit Saha, Manas Chakraborty, Gayanath Roy and Ratan Ghosh are Siliguri dwellers. The department seized an I-card from Ratan Ghosh which shows that he is a corporate member of North Bengal Press Club.

The venom is believed to be from a cobra but chemical tests are being conducted to identify the snake species. Extracted venom is used in medicines including to prepare an antidote for snake bites, cosmetics, as well as some narcotic drugs which is of high demand in rave parties.

In the meantime, the Bangalore City Police have arrested seven people for attempting to sell two rare Red Sand Boa snakes (*Eryx johnii*) for IRs. one crore in the city. Red Sand Boas fetch a huge amount in the illegal wildlife business due to the belief that it brings luck to its owner and the medicinal value of the snakes, a police official said. The non-venomous snake is protected under Schedule IV of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and is commonly found in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The forest department, in collaboration with the NGO Wildlife SOS, seized 33 snakes

from poachers in raids at three prominent city temples of Agra. The haul included 27 cobras whose fangs and venom glands had been gouged out, as well as four rat snakes, which are non-venomous, but had their mouths stitched. A python and a red sand boa were also recovered.

(Source of links: 1, 2, 3, 4,)

## PANGOLIN SMUGGLING



**India:** Indian Police arrested over 40 pangolin smugglers and seized more than 10 tonnes of pangolin scales from different states of India in the last four months. Among them some are king-pin of global pangolin smuggling racket and mastermind in operating illegal trade in and outside of the country mainly transporting to China, Korea, Hong Kong, Tibet and Vietnam. Some officials claim that there are two smuggling routes to China-Nepal through north Bengal, Manipur and Myanmar.

In a major bust, police personnel of Khuzama, Nagaland recovered 10,008 Kg of pangolin scales and 502 Kg of *Paris caudifolia* (a species of ginseng) while undertaking routine vehicle checking. The seized pangolin scales could have fetched over IRs 20 crore (about IRs 2 lakh per kg) in the International market. If an adult pangolin has 3.5 to 4 kg of scales on its body, at least 2,500 pangolins should be poached to collect such a large quantity.

Officials claim that roasted pangolin scales are used for detoxification of blood, draining pus, curing palsy and stimulating lactation in traditional Chinese medicine. Using its blood to treat asthma, cancer and reproductive problems is also a common practice in China.

Listed as an endangered species in International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the pangolins- shy, nocturnal and solitary animals- have turned out to be the most trafficked animals in recent times. Pangolins are protected under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife Act, hunting them attracts 3 to 7 years' imprisonment and fine of IRs 10,000.

(Source of links: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)







## TURTLES AND TORTOISES SMUGGLING



(Photo courtesy: Anti-poaching unit of forest department)

**India:** In different moves, Indian Police seized over 600 different species of turtles and tortoises from middle and lower part of India and arrested 12 carriers including two Japanese nationals.

These two Japanese youths, Muray Yojka (21) and Shibi Ottawa (24), also had three small-sized snakes, including a viper, scorpion, chameleon, spider, lizards, earthworms, centipede and beetle in packed plastic boxes hidden inside their baggage. They claimed that these reptiles were caught from Athirapally forest for study purpose but they were heading to Colombo in Sri Lanka Airlines flight.

Major seizures from three international airports namely Cochin (seized 199 star tortoises), Chennai (seized 138 black spotted pond turtles) and Kempegowda (seized 72 black spotted terrapins) clearly shows the involvement of international smuggling racket. Interestingly all the carriers were boarding to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in business class. Chennai is becoming a major transit point from where smugglers would take to Southeast Asian countries.

These aquatic species - listed in IUCN and scheduled in Wildlife Protection Act 1972 of India-will be used for ornamental purpose or hunted for their soft meat referring its aphrodisiac properties. A tortoise is worth between IRs 10,000 and IRs 1,00,000 in the international market. Smuggling or poaching of the animal can attract a sentence of up to seven years of imprisonment and a minimum fine of IRs 25,000 in India.

(Source of links: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)

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

Tiger Mortality		
2014	Jan-Apr, 2015	Apr-Aug 2015
66	23	22
Seizure of Tiger body		
2014	Jan-Apr, 2015	Apr-Aug 2015
12	3	0

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

## DUGONGS POACHING CONTINUES

**India:** The Union government's Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) on 8 July, 2015 declared that dugongs among the five species to be the focus of conservation, but the marine mammals, ironically called the 'angel of the sea', continue to be poached for their meat. There are just 250 dugongs in the Indian seas, according to a study by Zoological Survey of India in 2013. In the Gulf of Mannar, the dugong population ranged between 77 and 158, said the survey. In Andamans, there could be 41 to 81 dugongs, and in the Gulf of Kutch, some 10 to 15, said K Venkataraman, director of ZSI.

The dugongs are categorized in the red list of the IUCN and listed under Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species (CITES). As dugongs had been brought under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, the punishment for poaching is imprisonment, but seldom is anyone punished. 'The offenders would get the same punishment as that of killing tigers, leopards or elephants,' said a senior officer.

More cooperation among countries in the South Asian region is needed to protect



them from extinction, says Venkataraman. Sri Lanka has made efforts to protect its small dugong population that migrate from the Gulf of Mannar.

Threat evaluation, putting an end to illegal and incidental captures, reducing marine pollution through serious monitoring are some of the measures researchers suggest to protect dugongs from extinction. CAMPA has announced 4 crore each for conserving five species including dugongs, sangai deer, Gangetic dolphins, wild water buffalo and the great Indian bustard.

(Source of link: 1)

## ORANGUTANS RESCUED

**India:** The Eluru police in Andhra Pradesh nabbed three persons for allegedly transporting two caged baby orangutans in a car on 17 June, 2015 but one culprit is at large. A car carrying caged animals had entered the State crossing the Odisha border at a toll gate in Vishakapatnam at 7:25 PM one day earlier. The car is registered in the name of Mohamme Abdul Gaffar of Hyderabad. Police is investigating possible involvement of international wildlife trafficking racket as the two animals rescued in Eluru are believed to have been smuggled across international borders.

Recent incidents indicate that an international wildlife smuggling gang is based in Kolkata which has been identified as a major hub for wildlife trafficking, says



the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau of the Union Environment, Forests and Climate Change Ministry. Last year, Customs personnel in that city arrested a gang of 55 smugglers with several chimpanzees, marmosets, capuchin monkeys and many exotic birds. West Bengal's porous borders with Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh are said to be aiding wildlife smuggling. Animals are mostly transported by road in private vehicles to South Indian States, the bureau says.

Orangutans, native to Indonesia, have not been bred in India. 'We do not have orangutan breeding centres in India. The species do not have a record of breeding in Indian conditions,' G. Ramalingam, curator of the Visakhapatnam zoo, said.

Humane Society International (HSI) India has announced a reward of IRs. 5 lakh for anyone providing information leading to the identification, arrest and conviction of the gang responsible for the smuggling of two baby orangutans in the State.

Import, trading and possession of exotic species are illegal under the Indian Customs Act, 1960, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. Sumatran and Bornean orangutan falls under Schedule 1 of the IUCN. (Source of links: 1, 2)

### LATEST LIST OF AIRLINES REFUSING HUNT TROPHIES

S.N.	Airlines	S.N.	Airlines
1	Air France KML	4	South Africa Airways
2	Emirates	5	Singapore Airways
3	Lufthansa	6	Qantas Air



## 21% INCREASE IN RHINO POPULATION

**Nepal:** Nepal's rhino population has increased by 21% since the last count conducted in 2011 to reach to 645. There were 534 rhinos recorded in 2011 census. The census counted 605 rhinos in Chitwan National Park and surrounding area, 29 in Bardiya National Park, eight in Shuklaphata Wildlife Reserve and three in Parsa Wildlife Reserve. A month long census starting from 7 April 2015 to 2 May 2015 was led by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) together with the Department of Forests with support from National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) and WWF Nepal.

Nepal has the greater one horned rhino which is one of the four remaining rhino species in the world and currently survives in India and Nepal only. There are only 3000 of the species left in the wild.

Meanwhile, a great achievement for Nepal is another zero poaching year (365 days) in 2015. This is the third time in the last five years that Nepal has been able to maintain zero poaching of rhino within the span of three separate 365 days. Nepal had already celebrated zero poaching year in 2011 and 2013.

'Controlling poaching is a very tough job particularly in the current time when illegal demand for rhino is exceedingly high and when there is increasing involvement of well

organized transnational criminal networks in poaching and illegal trade of wildlife' said Mr. Tika Ram Adhikari, CEC of SAWEN and Director General of DNPWC.

Mr. Adhikari further added, 'reducing the poaching at zero level and maintaining it for such a long time is undeniably a huge achievement. This requires very committed, well coordinated and sustained efforts from the governments, conservation partners and the local people. I take this opportunity to recognize the hard work of all the protected area staff, forest officials, Nepal Army, Nepal Police, conservation partners and local communities and hope for the continued efforts in the future.

(Source of link: SAWEN)

## INDO-NEPAL TIGER PARTS SMUGGLING



**Nepal:** Nepal Police arrested an Indian national identified as Ramjas Banjara (60) of Ludhiana, Punjab, from his rented room at Bardiya, Nepal with tiger skin and sizeable quantity of its bones on 4 May, 2015.

The authorities suspect that the tiger in all probability was poached from India's Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary of Bahrach which is quite close to the village from where the skin was recovered. Nepal Police said that Ramjas has confessed that he had purchased the skin for Rs 7000 and was trying to send it to China through the Humla-Jumla route. (Source of links: 1, 2)

## ACTION AGAINST WILDLIFE CRIME

**Pakistan:** A team of Wildlife Department of Mansehra has seized two preserved exotic animals during a raid at a hotel in Naran area of Kaghan valley and imposed a fine of Rs 400,000 to the owner of the hotel. These were smuggled from Gilgit-Baltistan. Both the pieces, having a great value in local and international markets, were seized under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife and Biodiversity Act 2015.

In a different action, a team of Wildlife Department of Lakki Marwat foiled a bid to smuggle precious birds to Afghanistan

and seized houbara bustards and grey partridges on Bannu-Dera Ismail Khan road on 22 August, 2015. The team recovered two houbara bustards from Afghanistani national and 24 grey partridges from Pakistani national. The official claimed that the birds were being smuggled to Afghanistan from Baluchistan.

Similarly, more than 50 birds and a pair of monkeys- protected under the Sindh Wildlife Protection Ordinance, 1972- brought to the Empress Market on 24 August, 2015 for sale were confiscated in a raid conducted by the wildlife department, Karachi. The confiscated birds consisted of 20 chakors, 18 wild doves, eight black partridges, four grey partridges and two flamingoes. The arrestees are identified as Sherzaman and Hashim Morio while two others escaped.

(Source of links: 1, 2, 3)

## MAN NABBED WITH TORTOISES

**Sri Lanka:** Customs officers at the Bandaranaike International Airport, Katunayake found 124 live tortoises inside the baggage of a 38-year-old Sri Lankan, who had come to board a flight to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 3 July, 2015.

All tortoises, an endangered species have been protected by Sri Lankan law since 1974. Killing a tortoise or possessing tortoise flesh is an offence under the Fauna and Flora Ordinance of Sri Lanka. The animals are sold as pets and also for flesh. Tortoiseshell is used to produce various ornaments.

(Source of link: 1)

## BOTTLED BIRDS

**Global:** More than 24 cockatoos -critically endangered by the IUCN and Natural Resources in 2007- were rescued by police after being found stuffed in water bottles for illegal trade in Indonesia. Most parrots are



prohibited from international commercial trade unless they are captive bred or permitted by the exporting country.

Smugglers crammed the Yellow-crested cockatoos into empty bottles so they could get through customs at Port of Tanjung Perak in Surabaya. But Indonesian Police discovered the birds, which can be sold for as much as £650 each, and cut them free so they could receive medical attention.

The population is at a critical low due to deforestation and poaching and recent studies suggest there may be less than 7,000 individuals remaining. The white birds can range in size from 12 inch to about 27inch in length and present a beautiful yellow crest. Yellow-crested cockatoos also breed very slowly and lay eggs only once a year. They can produce only two eggs at a time.

More than 10,000 parrots, including Lories and Cockatoos, are caught from the wild in North Halmahera, Indonesia, each year to supply the domestic and the international illegal wildlife trade. Illegal trapping continues in many areas including Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park, Buton and Kadatua Islands, but has reportedly been reduced significantly on Sumba. Around 40 per cent of birds die during the illegal smuggling process.

(Source of link: 1)

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