

TRAFFIC POST

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TRAFFIC INDIA'S NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA

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Courtesy: Kamlesh Pandey

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Chitra indica

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WILD CRY

Illegal wildlife trade threatens the future of many species in the wild. This section highlights the plight of one such species in trade.

Indian Rhinoceroses face poaching threat Pg 10

India and China share expertise on use of sniffer dogs for curbing wildlife crime



In December 2011, a first-of-its-kind meeting was organized by the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) in collaboration with TRAFFIC to exchange information and expertise with China's Customs officials regarding use of wildlife detector (sniffer) dogs. TRAFFIC India, represented by MKS Pasha, Interim Head, participated in this meeting along with the world's leading experts on training and use of sniffer dogs. The participants shared first-hand knowledge and experience on training and deployment of sniffer dogs in India for curbing illegal wildlife trade.

Despite efforts to counteract it, illegal wildlife trade continues to prevail and has evolved into an increasingly organized activity threatening the survival of many species across the globe. In order to curb this growing menace, it is necessary that the best enforcement practices are deployed. Use of sniffer dogs for crime detection and prevention is one of the proven practices TRAFFIC has experience of instituting in several countries.

A sniffer dog training programme was started in India in year 2008 and subsequently seven dogs and 14 handlers have been successfully trained. The dogs have been trained to detect hidden wildlife articles such as Tiger bone, Tiger skin, Leopard bone, Leopard skin and bear bile and are located with the Forest Departments of Haryana, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand.

Besides India, countries including Germany, Kenya, Russia, Thailand and the UK all have sniffer dogs as part of their detector dog programmes, and they are proving to be a highly effective enforcement tool, both to detect smuggled wildlife goods and to act as a deterrent.

The meeting on sniffer dogs in China was held in response to the rising number of cases where illegally traded wildlife products, such as elephant ivory and agarwood, have been found at China's ports. Officials aim to stop such trade through the deployment of these dogs. The first dog in China specifically capable of locating wildlife products is currently being trained at Beijing's Drug Detector Dog Training Centre.

TRAFFIC India's sniffer dog programme leading to early successes



© Kamlesh Pandey

Tracey, a two-year old female Alsatian dog trained to sniff out wildlife products, has helped recover two elephant tusks, weighing over 32 kg, from the forests of Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary in Jharkhand, India. The recovery took place on 30 January 2012.

The tusks were from an elephant that had died two days earlier, but when forest officials inspected the carcass they found the tusks had been removed. Tracey was brought in from nearby Betla Tiger Reserve to help locate the missing tusks. She searched the area extensively and led the team to the spot where the tusks were hidden. The whole operation was successfully co-ordinated by Mr Kamlesh Pandey, DFO, Wildlife Division, Ranchi.

Tracey is currently deployed by Betla Tiger Reserve and is one of the seven sniffer dogs trained under TRAFFIC India/WWF-India's

sniffer dog training programme, the first of its kind in India to use dogs for detecting illegal wildlife products.

Earlier, Jackie, another sniffer dog from the programme, apprehended two poachers in Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh. Raja, another of the trained dogs, posted at Bhramपुरi Wildlife Division, Maharashtra, helped crack a Leopard poaching case that led to the arrest of seven involved.

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Ravi Singh, SG & CEO, WWF-India added, “We are proud to have initiated this innovative programme that is leading to early successes. The dogs are being used regularly for patrolling and are proving to be a strong deterrent”.

MKS Pasha, Interim Head—TRAFFIC India said, “Though the dogs are trained to detect hidden wildlife articles such as Tiger bone, Tiger skin, Leopard bone, Leopard skin and bear bile, they are proving effective in detecting other wildlife products as well”.

Forest departments of West Bengal and Karnataka gear up to fight wildlife crime



West Bengal: On 12-13 January 2012, TRAFFIC India was invited by the West Bengal Forest Department to share knowledge and skills on curbing illegal wildlife trade at a workshop organized in Buxa Tiger Reserve. The workshop dealt with the various aspects of strengthening wildlife law enforcement. Forty five senior and middle level forest officials participated in the workshop that was inaugurated by Mr V K Yadav, Special Chief Conservator of Forests and Mr R K Saini, Chief Conservator of Forests and Field Director, Buxa Tiger Reserve.

West Bengal with its large biodiversity has been one of the prime targets of wildlife trade in India. It is a major hub for turtle and bird trade. Bordering three countries-Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal- it acts as an important transit point for wildlife smuggling from India including fur trade.

Karnataka: On 18-19 February 2012, TRAFFIC India in association with the Karnataka Forest Department organized a similar workshop on strengthening wildlife law enforcement at Anshi Tiger Reserve, Dandeli. Seventy forest officials participated in the workshop. The chief guest was Shri BK Singh, IFS (PCCF-Wildlife). Participants included 72 forest officials from 6 forest divisions of Karnataka.

At both the workshops, TRAFFIC India provided the participants with an overview of the illegal wildlife trade and shared knowledge and skills regarding the various tools and techniques available to curb this trade. Demonstration on the use of deep search metal detectors for locating traps and snares set up to catch wild animals was also conducted by TRAFFIC India.

TRAFFIC accelerates efforts to curb illegal parrot trade in India



© Abrar Ahmed

A parrot in captivity is one of the more visible symbols of illegal trade in India, where all native wildlife is fully protected. To help enforcement officers identify native parrot species, and thereby clip the wings of the illegal trade, TRAFFIC India with support from WWF-India has produced an identification poster entitled “Parrots of India in Illegal Trade”.

Identification of parrots and other species in trade is a major challenge. The new poster will help enforcement officers identify the 12 native Indian parrot species. The posters will be distributed to Police, Customs, Forest Departments, Railway Protection Forces and educational institutions, such as schools and colleges.

Despite the blanket ban since 1990-91 on trade in all Indian bird species, hundreds of parrots are collected and traded annually in India. They are taken from the wild and smuggled to various parts of the country and beyond. The bulk of the trade is in three- to four-week old chicks. Parrots are caught using nets and bird-lime. Adult parrots are traded throughout the year, with chicks arriving in trade between December and June. For every bird that reaches the market place, several are believed to die en route.

Of the 12 native species, eight are regularly found in illegal trade. These include Alexandrine, Rose-ringed, Plum-headed, Red-breasted, Malabar, Himalayan and Finsch's Parakeets and Vernal Hanging-parrot.

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Abrar Ahmed, ornithologist and a bird trade consultant to TRAFFIC India, said “The Alexandrine Parakeet is one of the most sought after species in the Indian live bird trade and is traded in large volumes throughout the year. The chicks are collected from forested areas and transported to bird markets in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Patna, Lucknow and Kolkata. Many specimens are smuggled by Indian dealers via Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh to bird markets in various parts of the world. Chicks are dyed in various colours and sold off as non-native species”.

MKS Pasha, Interim Head-TRAFFIC India, said: "Few know that our favourite and well-known '*mithu*' is a protected species in India. Their chicks are captured remorselessly from the wild, and many do not make it to the final destination".

The parrot trade is substantial and well organized, but it can be counteracted through concerted enforcement actions at the grassroots level and through mass awareness campaigns. TRAFFIC India's new poster is a step in this direction. **For more information on illegal bird trade please visit <http://www.traffic.org/birds/>**

[illegible]

Japanese delegation visits India to exchange knowledge about responsible & sustainable trade in medicinal plants

A Japanese delegation including representatives from leading companies dealing in medicinal and aromatic plant products visited India 6–10 February 2012 to learn about sustainable practices used in plant harvesting and collection. They visited the Medicinal Plant Conservation Area field study sites in Karnataka, and met with the local communities, traders and key companies. The visit, facilitated by TRAFFIC and the Institute of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine, was part of a drive to promote responsible and sustainable trade in medicinal and aromatic plants between the two countries.

India is the second-largest supplier of medicinal and aromatic plants to Japan (after China) and many of them are wild-sourced. At the same time, almost 1000 medicinal plant species in India are of conservation concern, and over-exploitation of wild medicinal plants remains a major environmental protection issue. *Continued on page*

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Trade of aromatic plants such as Sandalwood *Santalum album*, and also various edible plants and spices such as tea *Camellia sinensis* and cinnamon *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*, is particularly notable. Other commonly traded plants sourced from the wild in India include Banaba *Lagerstroemia speciosa*, Indian Frankincense *Boswellia serrata*, Salacia *Salacia reticulata* and Gotu kola *Centella asiatica*.

In 2010, TRAFFIC drew attention to the value and significance of the trade in medicinal and aromatic plants to Japan for both manufacture and end-consumption in a report entitled *State of Wildlife Trade in Japan*. The need for conservation of wild medicinal and aromatic plants was also high on the agenda at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD CoP10), held in Nagoya, Japan that same year. The next CBD CoP will be held in October this year, in Hyderabad, India.

Non-sustainable harvest practices, coupled with accelerating trade demands, can lead to losses of large numbers of individual plants within populations, local population depletions and eventually extermination of the species. The private sector is considered one of the most important and influential stakeholder groups along the trade chain. Working with industry members, therefore, is a key step in the promotion of sustainable practices for harvesting and collection of medicinal plants from the wild.

MKS Pasha, Interim Head-TRAFFIC India said "This visit was a critical step towards TRAFFIC's aim of bringing positive behavioral changes in the herbal industry—a sector which deals with cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and food products manufactured from wild medicinal and aromatic plants. The FairWild Standard can help the industry become more responsible in trading in medicinal plants collected from the wild".

The Fairwild Standard is an internationally recognized standard for ensuring sustainable collection of wild plant resources. Development of the Standard was originally led by IUCN's Medicinal Plant Specialist Group in collaboration a number of organizations, including TRAFFIC and WWF.

The Japan-India exchange of experience and knowledge was organized by TRAFFIC with support from I-AIM (I-AIM: formerly known as FRLHT (Foundation for the Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions). The Japanese delegation was led by Kahoru Kanari of TRAFFIC and included representatives from leading companies dealing in herbal-based traditional Japanese incense and pharmaceutical products. The project is supported by the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund.

The delegates also visited Natural Remedies Pvt. Ltd., a leading herbal pharmaceutical company in India, headquartered at Bangalore. Representatives of Natural Remedies showcased their good practices for procurement of medicinal plants, intending to assist in promoting sustainable trade practices for long-term conservation. The delegates also interacted with local communities at Savandurga-MPCA (Medicinal plant Conservation Area), a sustainable harvesting site, and with the grassroot organization CCD, based at Madurai, and Laxmi Seva Sangh at Dindigul.

TRAFFIC Alert



Police seize 30 kg of seahorses in Tamil Nadu

On 15 December 2011, dried seahorses were seized from a bus bound for Chennai from Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu. The smuggling was detected when the bus company owners became suspicious of two parcels and informed the police. On examination, the two parcels were found to contain 30 kg of dried seahorses which were to be delivered to Chinthathiripet in Chennai.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

Seahorses belong to the genus *Hippocampus* and enjoy the same protection status as the Tiger. They are listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which bans poaching of and trade in the species. International trade is regulated under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

Despite this protection and regulation, the trade in seahorses is burgeoning in India and beyond its borders. Seahorses are highly sought after in the exotic pet trade and fetch high prices in the aquarium business. These animals usually fare badly in captivity because they have specific needs that cannot be met properly. High death rates in captivity spur demand to replace dead animals in aquaria.

Seahorses from India find a ready market in many South-east Asian countries. They are poached along the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar coasts and are smuggled to international markets. Often, dried seahorses are smuggled along with dried chillies to mask their smell. Since they resemble the dried chillies they are sometimes traded illegally under the name of "guntur chilli".

TRAFFIC India calls for more vigilance and strengthening of enforcement efforts to protect this unique marine denizen.

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OUTPOST:

Rhinoceros poaching deaths continue to increase in South Africa



Despite increased law enforcement efforts, rhinoceros poaching accelerated in South Africa in 2011. The country lost 448 rhinoceroses to poaching, including 19 critically endangered Black Rhinoceroses of which fewer than 5000 remain in the wild.

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© Martin Harvey / WWF-Canon

In 2010, 333 South African rhinoceroses were killed by poachers, nearly three times the number killed in 2009.

“The rate of poaching increase may appear to be faltering, but the bottom line is more rhinos than ever were poached in 2011”, said Dr Colman O’ Criodain, WWF’s wildlife trade policy analyst. “If left unchecked, poaching gangs could put the survival of these iconic species in jeopardy”.

More than half of South Africa’s rhinoceros deaths occurred in the world-famous Kruger

National Park. The popular safari destination lost 252 rhinoceroses in 2011 and witnessed the poaching of an additional eight rhinoceroses in the first weeks of 2012.

The recent upsurge in rhinoceros poaching has been tied to increased demand for rhinoceros horn in Asia, particularly Viet Nam, where it is valued as a luxury item, as a post-partying cleanser, and also as a purported cancer cure. According to traditional Chinese medicine experts, rhinoceros horn has no proven cancer treating properties. Contrary to popular myth, it has never been used in traditional medicine as an aphrodisiac.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has found that consumer demand in Viet Nam is driving much of the rhinoceros poaching. CITES has also ruled that Viet Nam needs to show progress in curtailing illegal trade in rhinoceros parts and derivatives.

Since South Africa is the home to most of the world’s rhinoceroses it has been the centre of the poaching activity. However, rhinoceroses in other African and Asian range countries are also being targeted by poachers.

Read more at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2012/1/12/rhino-poaching-deaths-continue-to-increase-in-south-africa.html>

TRAFFIC Alert



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Source:

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Four Sloth Bears killed in Kanha's reserve forests in Madhya Pradesh

In the last three months, four Sloth Bears have been killed by poachers in the buffer zone of Kanha Tiger Reserve, indicating that an organized gang might be operating in Madhya Pradesh. Carcasses of two Sloth Bears were recovered in early January 2012 from the jungle of Indira village of Sihora forest range in Mandla district which happens to be the buffer zone of Kanha. Both carcasses were without teeth and nails, suggesting that they had been killed for the body parts.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

India is home to four species of bear—Himalayan Black Bear *Ursus thibetanus*, the Himalayan Brown Bear *Ursus arctos*, Sun Bear *Helarctos malayanus* and the Sloth Bear *Melursus ursinus*. The Brown Bear, Sun Bear and the Sloth Bear are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 while the Himalayan Black Bear is protected under Schedule II, Part II. Hunting of and trade in all four species is banned under this Act. Furthermore, international commercial trade in these species is restricted or prohibited under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

Until recently, Sloth Bears were widely used in roadside performances. Due to stricter enforcement efforts and increased awareness, the activity has declined.

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CITES UPDATE

International zoo community steps in to help efforts against illegal wildlife trade



The Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Executive Director of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 20 December 2011, to facilitate access to expertise for the care of confiscated live animals, and with provision for training and raising public awareness in the implementation of CITES, as part of the UN International Decade of Biodiversity.

The main purpose of the collaboration is to facilitate the use of expertise available in the WAZA network to assist CITES Parties in implementing the Convention, and to support the activities of the CITES Secretariat for the benefit of conservation and sustainable use of species of wild fauna and flora.

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Major fields of co-operation include: care and placement of confiscated live animals; gathering information about current wildlife trade issues; the transport of live animals; research and science, with a focus on Appendix-I species; communication and awareness; training; and capacity-building. Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction that are or may be affected by trade, and CITES prohibits international trade therein (except for non-commercial purposes, such as scientific research).

Co-operation between CITES and WAZA will also help guarantee the safe transport of wild animals between countries, whether it be for commercial trade, breeding, research or conservation purposes. Read more at http://cites.org/eng/news/press/2011/20111220_cites_waza.php

TRAFFIC Alert



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The main threat to the bears in India is from the illegal trade in bear gall bladders, bile and other body parts. Bear bile is used in medicines in China, Japan and South Korea, amongst others, and is also used occasionally in Ayurvedic and Tibetan medicines. Gall bladders and bile extracts are often smuggled out as frozen food and cannot be easily distinguished from those of cattle, sheep or pigs, thus making

detection extremely difficult for the enforcement agencies. Bear paws, meat, and fat are also traded and are considered a delicacy in many Asian countries. TRAFFIC has conducted an extensive study on bear bile farms in South-east Asia in collaboration with Animals Asia Foundation to study the impact of bear bile farms on wild bear populations.

The case above gives an indication that the demand for bear body parts other than gall bladders seems to be worth noting. Past seizures including bear paws in Russia further validate this view.

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Traders arrested with 4000 turtles in Uttar Pradesh

On 9 January 2012, 4000 turtles were seized from a truck at Jalaun, crossing in Auraiya (a neighbouring town of Etawah district), in Uttar Pradesh and two persons were arrested. The vehicle was on its way to West Bengal. Wildlife experts said that the consignments were also meant to reach the north-east of the country, including Assam, via train. From West Bengal turtles are often smuggled to countries like Thailand and Malaysia through a sea route.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

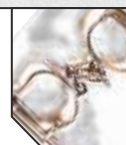
According to the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA), three species of freshwater turtles seized in Uttar Pradesh were identified as 4255 Indian Flapshell Turtle *Lissemys punctata*, one large female Indian Softshell Turtle *Nilssonia gangeticus* and one Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle *Chitra indica*. TSA provided assistance in identification of the species and after care of the seized turtles.

All three turtle species are protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The Indian Flapshell Turtle and the Indian Softshell Turtle are listed in Schedule I of the Act while the Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle is listed in Schedule II. Trade of all of these is further regulated under CITES.

Despite the protection, trade seems to be flourishing. This is clearly evident from the recent spurt in seizures of freshwater turtles in the region. The illegal trade of freshwater turtles, that was largely domestic, has escalated to meet international demands, moving through Bihar and Kolkata to Bangladesh, and from there to South-east Asia. The above seizures, coupled with many others that continue to take place all across India, and a reported hundred thousand in Bangladesh, paint an alarming picture. Besides their involvement in the pet trade, turtles and tortoises are traded for meat, medicines and their carapaces. The current rate of completely unsustainable consumption of turtles and tortoises in India could lead to swift extinction of several their species. Turtles and tortoises play an important role in an ecosystem, where they are scavengers. There have been several international alerts issued on the devastating impact of their illegal trade in recent times. TRAFFIC India maintains that efforts need to be urgently intensified in the field so that enforcement officials can curb illegal killing, trafficking and consumption of these animals.

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TRAFFIC Alert



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Poacher arrested from Guwahati Zoo whilst attempting to kill Rhinoceroses

On the morning of 15 January 2012, guards at the Assam State Zoo in Guwahati caught a poacher from near the rhinoceros enclosure. The man had scaled the wall at night with a 303 rifle, six-round bullets and an axe in a bid to kill as many rhinoceroses as possible. The zoo has nine rhinoceroses. He was apprehended and handed over to the police.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

It is a matter of concern that captive-animal facilities, considered relatively safe as havens for animals, are now being targeted by poachers in their efforts to obtain wildlife products. The recent incident in Assam stands out in its boldness, illustrating that poachers will go to great lengths to kill an animal, as long as there is a demand for its body parts. Add to this the recent theft of rhinoceros horns from museums in Europe and there seems to be a discernable pattern of desperation in these attempts to obtain rhinoceros horns that are in high demand. TRAFFIC India has contributed intelligence towards saving wild rhinoceroses and calls for greater vigilance in captive animal facilities to ensure that these endangered animals are protected there too.

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IN FOCUS:

Scorpions—stung by wildlife trade

Text and images by Abrar Ahmed, Consultant, TRAFFIC India



The scorpion, popularly known as the '*bichchu*' in India, may be in big trouble, finds TRAFFIC. The unrestricted scorpion trade in the country could be posing a serious conservation risk to the species in the wild.

Scorpions are invertebrate animals with eight legs, recognized by a pair of grasping claws and a narrow, segmented tail, often carried in a characteristic forward curve over the back, ending with a venomous stinger (Tikader & Bastawade 1983); (Frembgen 2004).

In India, there are 120 species/subspecies of scorpion (Sardesai 2010). Scorpions are nocturnal hunters and live in warm dry regions throughout India. They inhabit commonly the crevices of dwellings, underground burrows, under logs or debris, agriculture fields and plantations.

Scorpions are infamous for their sting and venom, and to the general public have a reputation of being a dangerous killer. Due to their fearsome reputation they have been extensively cited in Indian poetry, folk and film songs. The sexual imagery of scorpion bites is widespread in the Indian subcontinent (Frembgen 2004); (http://allpoetry.com/poem/8592075-Night_of_the_Scorpion-by-Nissim_Ezekiel)



Scorpion medicines for sale at Charbagh railway station, Lucknow

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Trade and use of scorpions in India

Scorpions are traded as museum specimens, for colleges, and used in folk medicine in South Asia as an antidote for scorpion stings. The importance of scorpions in the preparation of folk remedies and magic by Hakims and Jogi type healers and medicinal practitioners, especially in Lahore & Peshawar (Pakistan) and Kabul (Afghanistan), has been well documented in Muslim folklore (Frembgen 2004).

Reports have further indicated that in India youths purposely get stung by scorpions. They pay the scorpion owners money to be stung on their hands and feet. The sting is painful, but is believed to give a drug like high (<http://www.treatmentsolutionsnetwork.com/blog/index.php/2011/04/08/uses-for-scorpion-venom/>).



Remains of scorpions after oil has been extracted. They are displayed by shopkeepers to convince the customers that the oil is 'genuine'

In India, the scorpion trade was first seen by the author in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh in 1999, outside the Charbagh Railway station (Ahmed & Nambiar 1999). Scorpion trade was also encountered in Aligarh railway station, and Hapur (MKS Pasha *pers. comm*) Uttar Pradesh, and the bus stand in Jaipur, Rajasthan, in subsequent years. In January 2012, during a study on bird trade, the author came across oil prepared from scorpions that was on sale at local railway stations within Kolkata in West Bengal at least twice.

From the author's observation in the field, and other reports, it is clear that the trade in scorpions in India has an organized market. Through interviews with snake-charmers in Kanpur and Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, the author found out that traditional snake-charmers from north India regularly and systematically collect scorpions for use in folk medicines and for live shows. The main collection states suggested by the those engaged in scorpion trade are Gujarat and Rajasthan and collection is done when the snake charmers are collecting snakes, monitor lizards *Varanus bengalensis* and Spiny-tailed Lizards *Uromastyx hardwickii*. Reports also suggest that in Uttar Pradesh the scorpions are collected and traded by the Mongia, Jogi or Nath-saperas (snake-charmers), Kalbeliya and Pardhi tribes. These tribes also often display similar kind of oils for similar ailments prepared from *Uromastyx* spp., snakes, hornbills and herbs.

Scorpions are boiled in oil along with certain herbs. The 'medicated oil' is then marketed and is believed to provide relief from numerous ailments, such as rheumatism, joint-pain, headache, toothache and sinus. However, there is no scientific evidence to support this belief, though there is documentation on scorpions in *unani* folk medicine (Frembgen, 2004). From the surveys conducted and through published information, the author found that the majority of folk medicine prepared using scorpions was marketed for curing sexual disorders. A popular belief that the oil extracted from the sting of the scorpion is useful for restoring or increasing virility is a key reason for sale of the scorpion oil-product.

The oil is sold through vocal street displays with the help of signage advertising the oil's medical properties and also advertising leaflets distributed at railway stations and bus stands. On average, the vendors were observed to have kept more than 300 scorpion body parts (oil extracted) on display, with about five to six live scorpions and a few museum specimens, mounted and bottled. Scorpion stings could be life-threatening, especially for villagers who do not have easy access to emergency medical facilities and hence may be enticed to engage in scorpion trade.

Legal implications

Currently, Indian scorpions are not listed in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 nor in CITES. Lack of significant trade data on the extent and impact of local trade makes the trade difficult to control. Also the international demand for scorpions from India is yet to be ascertained. However, it is clear that the trade in this lesser known species is on-going and may be taking place in large, unsustainable numbers. The volume of trade and collection should be a subject of further investigation so that conservation strategies can be devised accordingly.

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WILD CRY

(Illegal wildlife trade threatens the future of many species in the wild. This section highlights the plight of one such species in trade.)

Indian Rhinoceroses face poaching threat



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The Indian Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*, also called the Greater One-horned Rhinoceros and Asian One-horned Rhinoceros, belongs to the Rhinocerotidae family. The Indian Rhinoceros is an herbivorous grazer and is one of the three species of rhinoceroses native to Asia. It weighs between 1800 and 2700 kg and has a life span of 40 to 50 years.

Distribution:

The preferred habitat of an Indian Rhinoceros is the alluvial flood plains and areas having tall grasslands along the foothills of the Himalayas. Formerly, extensively distributed in the Gangetic plains, today the species is restricted to small habitats in Indo- Nepal terai and North Bengal, and Assam. In India, rhinoceroses are found in the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve, Orang National Park, Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary and Dudhwa Tiger Reserve.

Status:

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I

IUCN Redlist: Endangered

CITES: Appendix I

Hunting of, or trade in Rhinoceros is banned in India. The international trade is further restricted under CITES.

Threats:

Rhinoceroses in India are illegally slaughtered for the insatiable demand for their horn. Demand for medicinal products containing rhinoceros horn continues to increase in Viet Nam and other parts of Asia. Rhinoceros horn has no proven ability to treat cancer and is no longer a part of the official Chinese traditional medicine pharmacopeia. However, it continues to be smuggled illegally to international markets having a demand for illegal wildlife products.



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WILD CRY

(Illegal wildlife trade threatens the future of many species in the wild. This section highlights the plight of one such species in trade.)

Indian Rhinos face poaching threat

Continued from page 10

Traditionally, the two main markets for rhinoceros horn are in Yemen, where they were used for dagger handles, and in East Asia, for traditional medicine, for treatment of high fever. However, the latest poaching spree appears centred on demand from Viet Nam, and recent unsubstantiated beliefs that horn can cure cancer, act as a cleansing agent, and where horn is given as a prestige gift.

The total rhinoceros population estimate in May 2007 was said to be 2575 individuals, with estimates of a total of 378 in Nepal and 2200 in India (Asian Rhinoceros Specialist Group 2007). The populations have gradually increased over the years, however the spate of rhinoceros killings in 2011 in India could pose serious risk to the species in the wild. In this year alone, at least 24 rhinoceroses were poached with a maximum number of cases having been reported from Kaziranga, Assam. Even though statistics show that the rhinoceros population has been increasing, the escalation in poaching cases is alarming.

While India suffered heavy rhinoceros losses in 2011, Nepal celebrated a zero rhinoceros poaching year. The past statistics of rhinoceros poaching for India and Nepal clearly show a correlation in the poaching trend between the countries. Whenever there is a stricter enforcement effort in one country, the poachers shift focus to the other country. This also clearly establishes a strong link between the poaching gangs that operate in both countries.

MKS Pasha, Interim Head-TRAFFIC India said, “TRAFFIC recognizes the grave peril for the Indian Rhinoceroses and is catalysing new instruments to combat this very serious threat. The information network established by us has helped us to avert several cases of rhinoceros poaching in the country”.

“With new multilateral agreements coming into place between India and Nepal and with the establishment of the new South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), the countries will join efforts to eradicate these poaching gangs that have been targeting the rhinoceroses in both countries” he further added.

Some of the commonly known trade points for illegal trade of rhinoceros horn in the country are Guwahati, Silchar, Imphal, Kolkata, Siliguri, Kohima, Tezpur, and Dimapur. The international trade from India is largely known to occur through the Indo-Nepal borders adjoining Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. In north-east India, international trade occurs through Moreh and Dimapur to Myanmar and through the Indo-Bhutan bordering areas.

TRAFFIC India calls for increased vigilance around the key rhinoceros habitats to curb poaching. There is also a need for the border security agencies, like the border police, para military forces and Customs, to join forces to curb the flow of illegal wildlife products from India. Enhanced intelligence-gathering and sharing can help avert poaching and curb trade. All of this coupled with increased awareness should help control the on-going crisis.

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HEADLINES

Cobra venom, rare turtles seized on way to Nepal



New Delhi: Police have seized a large quantity of cobra venom and rare turtles on their way to Nepal. The venom was found in a container in a vehicle near the border. The turtles were found in a container in a vehicle near the border. The venom was found in a container in a vehicle near the border. The turtles were found in a container in a vehicle near the border.

Indian leopards battle against extinction



In the last four years, India has lost 1,200 leopards in poaching and hunting. The skin and bones of leopards are sold in the black market.

Hunters rule the roost in Manipur



Manipur: A group of hunters and officials are standing around a table. One person is holding a large bird, possibly a vulture.

Delhi's new low: Animal trafficking at all-time high



Delhi: A person is holding a large animal, possibly a bear, in a cage. The animal is looking towards the camera.

51 tigers died in '11: Report

With 14 Deaths, Uttarakhand Tops Casualty List, K'taka Second



New Delhi: Fifty-one tigers died in 2011, according to a report by the Wildlife Department. The report shows that Uttarakhand has the highest number of deaths (14), followed by Karnataka (12). The report also shows that the number of deaths has increased in all states except West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh.

उल्लू बेचने वाले पहुंचे सलाखों के पीछे



Ullu: A person is holding a large owl, possibly a scops owl, in a cage. The owl is looking towards the camera.

Venomous rave parties to ring in V-Day



Venomous: A person is holding a large snake, possibly a cobra, in a cage. The snake is looking towards the camera.

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