

TRAFFIC POST

the wildlife trade monitoring network

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TRAFFIC INDIA'S NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA



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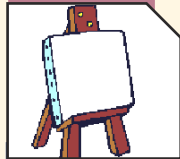
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Judiciary in Manipur and Mizoram take lead in fighting wildlife crime



The judiciary plays a significant role in championing the cause of forest and biodiversity conservation. The higher level judiciary has shown support for issues related to wildlife conservation, however there is a need to extend this to the judiciary at the district level. TRAFFIC India recognizes this need and has been conducting orientation programmes on wildlife conservation for the judiciary across the country. In northeast India, the Gauhati High Court has taken a lead to update the judiciary regularly on the status of forest and wildlife legislations, international conventions on related issues and enforcement of wildlife laws in India. They had asked TRAFFIC India and WWF to help conduct such workshops in Mizoram and Manipur. TRAFFIC India has also conducted similar programmes in Karnataka, Assam, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi.

Mizoram: The Gauhati High Court in partnership with TRAFFIC India and WWF-India conducted a two day orientation programme on wildlife conservation for the judiciary from Mizoram at Guwahati on 10–15 September 2011. The programme was attended by 30 judicial officers of the Mizoram Bench. The workshop was held at the Administrative Training Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram and was inaugurated by Dr Garbyal, IFS, Principal Secretary & Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Environment and Forest, Government of Mizoram. Mr R Thanga, Registrar, Aizawl Bench also presided over the inaugural function.

Dr Garbyal said “Implementation of wildlife laws will depend on the perception of the judicial officers and judges. When environment and wildlife related cases come to court, the understanding of the judges towards such issues is necessary for undertaking the right decisions. Therefore without proper orientation and training regarding these laws, the judiciary will not be able to do justice to our environment”.

The state of Mizoram in northeast India is strategically located between the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh and Myanmar and has shared borders with the Indian States of Tripura, Assam and Manipur. It has been acknowledged as a hotspot for illegal trade in various wildlife products including pangolin scales, live birds, Red Sanders and medicinal plants.

Manipur: The Gauhati High Court - Imphal Bench, in association with TRAFFIC India and WWF-India organized an orientation programme on wildlife conservation for the judiciary from Manipur at Imphal on 24–25 July 2011. Twenty seven senior officials of the Manipur Judiciary participated in the programme that was inaugurated by Hon. Justice TNK Singh, Judge, the Gauhati High Court - Imphal Bench.

Shri A Kharsi-ing, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF), Manipur was the Guest of Honour at the inaugural session. Shri A.K. Joshi, Special Secretary - Forests, Manipur was also present during this occasion.

In his key note address, Hon. Justice TNK Singh, Judge, Gauhati High Court - Imphal Bench said: “The Indian Judiciary has played an important role in helping conserve the rich natural heritage of our country. However, it is important that it is regularly updated on the latest developments in this field. Such programmes will go a long way in addressing this crucial need for this region which is a hotspot of biodiversity.”

Broad topics covered during the orientation programme for the judiciary included: issues related to biodiversity conservation; forest and wildlife wealth of the states; role of local communities in conservation; laws on biodiversity conservation including the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India and discussions of case laws.

South Asian countries upscale skills on wildlife law enforcement



Under the aegis of the newly established SAWEN (South Asian Wildlife Enforcement Network), a training programme on “Strengthening Wildlife Law Enforcement for Wildlife Protection in South Asia” was organized at the University of Forensic Sciences, Gandhinagar, Gujarat on 11–15 July 2011. It is the first such training to be organized for SAWEN members on wildlife law enforcement and was inaugurated by Shri Balwant Singh, Additional Chief Secretary, Govt of Gujarat.

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Senior-level government officials working in the field of wildlife conservation of South Asian countries—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka—attended the programme which was organized by TRAFFIC with support from the Global Tiger Forum, the Directorate of Forensic Sciences, Govt. of Gujarat and the Gujarat Forest Department.

The participants received comprehensive inputs on the present scenario of wildlife crime and trade in South Asia and its implications for field conservation. They were also introduced to the modern tools and techniques used in strengthening wildlife law enforcement.

Hon. Chief Minister, Gujarat, Shri Narendra Modi said in a statement to the meeting: “I welcome all wildlife experts representing various countries to the State of Gujarat. It is high time that the law enforcement agencies' focus is channeled towards prevention and detection of crimes. Gujarat State has taken a lead in this direction by establishing an important branch called 'Wildlife Forensics' at the State Forensic Laboratory. I compliment the SAWEN Secretariat for organizing this workshop”.

In a message by former Minister of Environment and Forest, Govt. of India, Shri Jairam Ramesh said, “The establishment of SAWEN is a very crucial, timely and much needed step forward to institutionalize the collaborative efforts of member nations in controlling wildlife crime in the region. I am especially happy to note that under the SAWEN work plan, the first multi country training programme on Strengthening Wildlife Law Enforcement for Wildlife Protection in South Asia is being held in Gandhinagar. Gujarat has some very good successes to share in this direction”. Shri Balwant Singh, Additional Chief Secretary, Govt. of Gujarat said: “Illegal wildlife trade is a serious issue and requires concerted and well co-ordinated action to curb it. The newly formed South Asia Enforcement Network should help in this direction.”

Mr Krishna Prasad Acharya, Chief Enforcement Coordinator of SAWEN & the Director General, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal said: “Illegal wildlife trade is a form of trans-national organized crime that threatens many iconic species across the world. National Governments in South Asia recognize this threat and are committed to work together to counter such threats. The establishment of SAWEN is an expression of this commitment. This training programme, the first of its kind under SAWEN, will support our common cause and will surely be the first of many more such collaborative efforts.”

The programme brought together various national and international experts and agencies working in this field to exchange ideas, experiences and knowledge on curbing illegal wildlife trade. This initiative further helped to strengthen regional collaboration amongst various South Asian countries and wildlife law enforcement agencies across the region.



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Participants during hands-on training on identification of wildlife products



© TRAFFIC India

Participants during a demonstration on various tools used for investigating a crime scene

The key resource people at the training programme included experts from the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University, Central Bureau of Investigation, Financial Intelligence Unit, Govt. of India, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Wildlife Institute of India and TRAFFIC.

Financial support for this important regional training event was generously provided by the US Government's Department of State, implemented through a grant to TRAFFIC International, with additional support from the Global Tiger Forum.

The training was followed by a field visit to Gir National Park, Gujarat where the participants interacted with the park management authorities and learned about various mechanisms put in place for strengthening the Protected Areas. The Field Director of Gir further familiarized the participants with the field based anti-poaching and wildlife conservation systems in place for the National Park.

SAWEN releases its first newsletter on wildlife trade issues



In October 2011, the SAWEN Secretariat launched its quarterly newsletter entitled 'The SAWEN Bulletin'. The newsletter was especially published for the members of the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network, covering issues related to illegal wildlife trade and wildlife crime in South Asia. The Bulletin aims to highlight and disseminate information on developments in the region with respect to wildlife crime and trade. It will additionally give an overview of the reported wildlife seizures in various South Asian countries. Any relevant updates on CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), INTERPOL and other similar organizations will also be communicated through this newsletter.



China, India and Nepal meet to strengthen co-operation for curbing wildlife trafficking



© Stefan Widstrand / WWF

A two-day meeting between China, Nepal and India was held on 12–13 October 2011 in Chengdu, capital of China's Sichuan Province, to collaborate action for stopping wildlife trafficking. Specific issues related to optimizing co-operation to prevent smuggling of wildlife such as Tiger and other Asian big cats, Red Sanders, otter skins, Shahtoosh, pangolin and several species of endangered medicinal plants were discussed in detail by the delegates of the three countries.

This important workshop was hosted by China's CITES Management Authority and was the second workshop on CITES Implementation and Enforcement with China, India and Nepal addressing common concerns for the three countries, including their commitments to the Global Tiger Recovery Program. TRAFFIC and WWF provided the technical and financial support for holding the trilateral meeting.

In addition to this trilateral dialogue, the meeting also built upon existing bilateral Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between China and India, and China and Nepal.

China expressed its intention to engage productively with the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), the Secretariat of which is hosted by the Government of Nepal.

Effective law enforcement is seen as a fundamental platform for sustainable economic development, the management of natural resources and protection of ecosystems.

“Establishing functional exchange of information will enable more effective law enforcement action between the three countries, and between China and SAWEN,” said James Compton, TRAFFIC's Senior Director for Asia-Pacific.

New forensic manual to identify guard hair of Indian mammals



The WII (Wildlife Institute of India) with support from TRAFFIC India and Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Government of UK) has recently published a comprehensive manual on the protocols for identifying 53 species of wild animals from their guard hair. It depicts microphotographs of guard hair of various mammalian species in a systematic user friendly manner. The manual is the outcome of painstaking research by a team of wildlife forensic researchers and scientists from the WII.

WWF and TRAFFIC India organize wildlife quiz

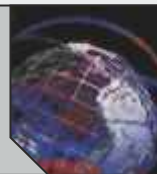


© WWF India

Every year, WWF-India with support from TRAFFIC India organizes a wildlife quiz entitled "Wild Wisdom" to commemorate national wildlife week (October 2-8). The week provides an opportunity to engage with children, to inspire, educate and empower them, thereby creating a more informed, aware and environmentally responsible future generation.

This year, Wild Wisdom 2011 (Delhi & NCR) was held on 19 October 2011 at the WWF-India auditorium. Thirty two schools participated in this event. Vishwa Bharti Public School (Noida) won the competition while Air Force Golden Jubilee Institute, Subroto Park (Delhi Cantt.) ended in second place. Third place was taken by Apeejay School, Saket. The winner will now represent Delhi at the national level quiz due to be held on 17 November 2011. Eighteen cities are participating in this mega quiz. Log on to www.wwfindia.org to catch more action.

OUTPOST: 'Jakarta's illegal trade in threatened tortoises and turtles flourishing, warns TRAFFIC



TRAFFIC's latest report entitled "The trade in Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles in Jakarta, Indonesia revisited" released in August 2011, has revealed persistence of the illegal freshwater and turtle pet trade in Jakarta's markets, with an apparent increasing emphasis on rare and threatened species.

Surveys in the Indonesian capital's animal markets, reptile expos and pet stores showed that there were more species in trade in 2010 (49 species) than recorded in a similar study in 2004 (47) by the wildlife trade monitoring network, TRAFFIC. It was also found that over 70 per cent of species seen in trade in Jakarta originated outside Indonesia, compared to just over half in 2004. Much of these were from other parts of Asia, with the highly-prized Indian Star Tortoise topping the list.

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TRAFFIC Alert



Spot-bellied Eagle-owls rescued from poachers, tantrics

People's ignorance and superstition is decimating the population of two species of owls. Spot-bellied Eagle-owls and Barn Owls are being caught by poachers as they are in great demand for pooja and black magic rituals. Several of these birds have been rescued from captivity in Hyderabad and in Maredumalli in East Godavari district. Mr P. Prabhu of the Asian Wildlife Foundation said, "A Spot-bellied Eagle-owl was found in a remote tribal village near Maredumalli. It was brought down by the tribal youth. It was rescued and treated."

Mr Raja Ramana Reddy, the forest range officer said, "We have rescued Barn owls in the Hyderabad city and outskirts which are used for black magic and to remove bad omens."

TRAFFIC India adds.....

In India, owls are highly prized and in demand for black magic purposes, despite legal protection under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and their inclusion in Appendix I or II of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). TRAFFIC India undertook a study on illegal trade, trapping and utilization of owls in India, findings of which have been documented in a report entitled "Imperilled Custodians of the Night" released in November 2010.

The report found that out of 30 species of owls found in India, at least 13 species have been recorded in domestic live bird trade. These species include Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*, Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Rock Eagle-owl *Bubo bengalensis*, Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*, Collared Scops-owl *Otus bakkamoena*, Brown Fish-owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*, Dusky Eagle-owl *Bubo coromandus*, Mottled Wood-owl *Strix ocellata*, Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides*, Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodiei*, Brown Wood-owl *Strix leptogrammica*, Oriental Scops-owl *Otus sunia* and Eastern Grass-owl *Tyto longimembri*.

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Indian Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans*

Indian Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans* is a species of tortoise found in dry areas and scrub forest in India and Sri Lanka. In India, the species is included in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and poaching of or trade in the species is banned. Further, the export of the species from India is also prohibited and the species is listed in Appendix II of CITES.

The 2010 observations found a total of 139 individuals of seven species listed in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), compared to 113 individuals of six species observed in 2004—such species are prohibited from international commercial trade.

Those found in 2010 were the Black Spotted Pond Turtle *Geoclemys hamiltonii*, Egyptian Tortoise *Testudo kleinmanni*, Indian Peacock Softshell *Aspideretes hurum*, Indian Softshell Turtle *Aspideretes gangetica*, Ploughshare Tortoise *Astrochelys yniphora*, Radiated Tortoise *Astrochelys radiata* and Spider Tortoise *Pyxis Arachnoids*.

Also found were native species like the Pig-nosed Turtle *Carettochelys insculpta*, New Guinea Snapping Turtle *Eiseya novaeguineae* and the Malaysian Giant Turtle *Orlitia borneensis*, all protected under Indonesian national law.

“The 2010 data confirm previous findings about the levels of illegal trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises in Jakarta’s markets and also demonstrates how it has persisted,” said Carrie J. Stengel, researcher with TRAFFIC Southeast Asia.

“Of further concern is the apparent and threatened species in the pet trade.”

increasing emphasis on rare

With more Asian freshwater turtles and tortoises expected to become Critically Endangered in the coming years, the ramifications of such targeted and persistent illegal extraction and trade will be enormous. To download the report, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2011/8/17/jakartas-illegal-trade-in-threatened-tortoises-and-turtles-p.html>



TRAFFIC Alert



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The Spot-bellied Eagle-owl *Bubo nipalensis* has only once previously been recorded in domestic trade in India, in 1998.

Use of owls in black magic and sorcery linked with superstition, totems and taboos drives the illegal trade of owls in India. Shaman or black magic practitioners frequently referred to as tantriks in India, prescribe the use of parts from live owls such as skull, feathers, ear tufts, claws, heart, liver, kidney, blood, eyes, fat, beak, tears, eggshells, meat and bones for ceremonial pujas and rituals. The trapping of owls largely takes place in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Uttarakhand while the main owl trading centres in India are Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bihar.

Source:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/channels/cities/hyderabad/spot-bellied-owls-rescued-poachers-tantrics-227>
<http://www.traffic.org/home/2010/11/2/black-magic-behind-illegal-owl-trade-in-india.html>

Shahtoosh shawls seized at Delhi airport

Customs officials at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi arrested a resident of Srinagar on 13 September 2011 carrying 25 Shahtoosh shawls, 89 Pashmina shawls and 55 stoles. The accused had arrived in Delhi from Washington on Tuesday night. On detailed examination 114 shawls, stoles, three watches and other expensive items were recovered from his luggage. An inspector from the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) identified 25 shawls made from the highly endangered Tibetan Antelope.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

The underfleece of the Tibetan Antelope *Panthelops hodgsonii* commonly known as Chiru is used to weave Shahtoosh shawls.

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CITES UPDATE:

EU States urge stricter CITES regulations for captive bred specimens



Expressing concern that illegal trade in wild specimens declared as captive bred is occurring and is being conducted globally on a large scale, the European Union (EU) and Member States have produced a document to focus attention on the detrimental aspect of this unregulated activity. Captive bred and ranched animals represent a lion's share of overall trade in CITES listed specimens, especially reptiles and birds. The document provides an overview of the problems encountered and sets out possible solutions for the CITES Standing Committee to consider better implementation and enforcement of the provisions relating to captive bred and ranched specimens. TRAFFIC and UNEP-WCMC have provided inputs for the preparation of the document.

Between 2000 and 2009, captive bred and ranched specimens amounted to 75% for live reptiles (approximately 1.2 million specimens) and 33% for live birds (equating to 200 000 specimens in 2008 alone). Trade in captive bred specimens constitutes many different species from a large number of countries. The EU has been regularly faced with reports relating to trade in specimens declared as captive bred for which there are serious doubts as to whether they fulfill the conditions under the CITES Convention and associated Resolutions on captive breeding. While ranched specimens are not subject to the same provisions, the EU and its Member States have also been confronted with cases whereby specimens appear to have been incorrectly declared as "ranched."

Currently, trade in captive bred specimens is not subject to a specific and systematic monitoring mechanism under CITES. In view of this, the EU would like each of the Member States to carry out a comprehensive review of the difficulties encountered by the Parties in implementing the provisions related to captive breeding and ranching and to ensure that these are effectively and consistently implemented by all Parties.

Read more at <http://www.cites.org/eng/com/sc/61/E61-27.pdf>

Snake venom seized in Maharashtra, three arrested

On 26 September 2011, Thane police arrested three persons and seized 600 g of rare snake venom. Acting on a tip-off, police nabbed the three from near the railway station. A police team is carrying out further investigations.

TRAFFIC India adds.....

In India, the trade of snake venom is heavily regulated and has a very limited and niche market. Snake venom is used to make anti-venom serum, the only cure for snake bites. The venom is mainly extracted from four species of snakes in India commonly known as the "Big Four"—the Indian Cobra *Naja naja*, Common Krait *Bungarus caeruleus*, Russels Viper *Daboia russelii* and Saw-scaled Viper *Echis carinatus*. The venom is injected into horses in increasing doses and then the blood is drawn and purified. This serum contains vital antibodies that help to combat invasion of venom. Romulus Whitaker in his book, "Snakeman" (1999) said "Venom is one of the most expensive natural resources on earth...". However, it is not clear if there are ready buyers for such products and if they really do command such prices for products from dubious, unknown sources who may not have scientifically collected the venom. Many such attempts to buy or sell such products are usually with the intention of trying to cheat gullible people, often by creating a hype around such products regarding their value and use.

Source:

<http://news.in.msn.com/national/article.aspx?cp-documentid=5473727>
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/rssarticleshow/msid-2296621.prtpage-1.cms>
<http://www.deccanherald.com/Content/Aug212007/national2007082020383.asp>

TRAFFIC Alert



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In India, there are very few Chirus left in the wild. Most of the global population survives on the Tibetan plateaus, where there numbers are declining. However, most of the weaving is undertaken in the Kashmir valley. There are reports confirming that there is an unhindered supply of its wool for Kashmir's weavers who make these luxurious shawls.

The above incident is alarming and clearly implies that despite the strict ban, trade in Shahtoosh shawls continues. Usually the shawls are smuggled from India to affluent markets in other countries. It is surprising to learn that the shawls have come back to India. This suggests that the traders are confident of smuggling shawls easily to and fro, as and when they like.

There is a need for stricter enforcement initiatives especially at airports. There is also a need to create awareness about this trade so that demand for the

Source:

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-09-15/delhi/30159624_1_shahtoosh-shawls-tibetan-antelope-pashmina
<http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/project-in-focus/sept2009-shahtoosh-workers-rehabilitation-project.html>
<http://199.48.254.95/~wtiorgin/publications/beyond-the-ban.pdf>

IN FOCUS:

Spotlight on Indian Bullfrog trade

An overview of the ongoing trade in Indian Bullfrog between the states of Nagaland and Assam

Text and images by Abrar Ahmed, Consultant, TRAFFIC India



Frogs and toads are amphibians, belonging to the order Anura (the largest subdivision with the most diverse set of species in the Class Amphibia). About 216 species of frog and toads, representing six families are presently known in India (Daniel 2005). Among these species, the Indian Bullfrog *Hoplobatrachus tigerinus* formerly *Rana tigrina* is undoubtedly the most commonly known frog.

The Indian Bullfrog can be identified by its large size and the bold tiger-like stripes on its pale skin. It has a broad white-yellow vertebral stripe. The breeding males turn bright lemon yellow (Daniel 2005).

The Indian Bullfrog is found in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. (Daniel 2005). It is found in a wide variety of habitats ranging from sea level to 2000m above sea level. It is, however more often found in hills, mainly inhabiting rice plantations, irrigation channels, ponds and sides of streams.

Indian Bullfrogs like many other frog species are largely exploited for food. Frogs' legs are a well known delicacy of French and Cantonese cuisine. However, they are also eaten in many other parts of the world. In some regions of India, frogs are called "jumping chickens," as their taste is similar to chicken. Their palatability amongst humans is why billions of frogs are consumed annually (Altherr *et al.* 2011).

Trade in Indian Bullfrog

Export of frog legs from India started in the early sixties and over a period of time it was evident that this would be harmful to agriculture. In 1987, based on a pioneering study on the export of frog legs from India by the Bombay Natural History Society, the Government of India decided to ban the export of frog legs (Beauty Without Cruelty 2011).

Before the blanket ban, India was as a major exporter of frog legs with 3000-4000 tonnes exported each year (Abdulali 1985). The Indian Bullfrog being the largest frog (in fact the largest of the Indian amphibia), was in highest demand in the frog leg trade.

Trade in Indian Bullfrog

In 1985, as a consequence of unsustainable exploitation, the Indian Bullfrog was listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Rajalakshmi 2011). In India, all freshwater frogs, including the Indian Bullfrog, are listed in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Despite the protection, there is continued illegal local collection, trade and consumption of Indian Bullfrogs in some states in India such as Assam and Nagaland. Local utilization of frogs has also been reported from Goa, Kerala, Gujarat, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh (Abdulali 1985).

Frog meat in Nagaland is not only considered a delicacy but is believed to have medicinal properties. A short term survey conducted on behalf of TRAFFIC India in Nagaland has revealed large scale trade in the species. The survey was undertaken in the New Market and Super Market in Dimapur and the vegetable market in Kohima in Nagaland in July 2008 and again in August 2011. On average, about 2500-3000 frogs were sold per day in the above markets. There were about 15-20 stalls in Dimapur and about six stalls in Kohima vegetable markets selling frogs on a regular basis.

Frogs play an important role in the ecosystem both as predators and prey. They help in balancing or stabilizing aquatic environments. As prey, frogs contribute to the diet of many species. As predators, they consume agricultural pests and mosquitoes. Their absence could have a detrimental effect on agriculture and crops.

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The small sized (up to 5-6 cm) live frogs were sold together in a group of 30-40 individuals in plastic bags or in open tubs and were priced between INR 100-150 per group. The large sized (about 15 cm) frogs were tied by their bellies with jute strings and sold in a bunch of 3-6 individuals and were priced INR 100 for three frogs. These were most preferred and valued. Unlike the exclusive demand of frog legs for export purposes, in this case entire frogs were being traded in Nagaland.

The hind legs were broken at two joints so that the frogs, even when kept in open dishes, could not jump away. The practice of cutting off the legs was not recorded.

On interviewing many of the frog traders, it was found that the frogs were caught and transported from the neighboring state of Assam. Certain trappers from the Cachar and Garo districts catch and bring the frogs by passenger trains or night buses to Dimapur, from where they are further sent to Kohima and other small markets. Most of the retail trade is handled by women dealers but most of the catching is done by men.



Live frogs for sale at a vegetable market in Kohima, Nagaland



Live frogs for sale at a supermarket in Dimapur, Nagaland

The collection of frogs in Assam and organized interstate trade with Nagaland needs to be investigated in detail. However, some recent seizures are indicative of the ongoing collection of frogs in Assam. For instance, in September 2007, 3000 Indian Bullfrogs were seized in 14 jute bags on a highway near Kaziranga National Park. Earlier that year 85 Indian Bullfrogs concealed in a container were seized in Guwahati (Hussain 2007). In April 2007, 71 frogs were seized in another incidence in Guwahati Railway station (Siddiqui 2011).

Besides the trade in live frogs, trade in dried frogs was also observed during the study.

Mr Samir Sinha, Head-TRAFFIC India adds, "Frogs are an essential element of a healthy ecosystem. The open trade in species that is legally banned and at a such high level is extremely alarming. There is an urgent need to investigate further the ongoing collection of frogs in Assam and organized interstate trade between Assam and Nagaland, and to undertake effective enforcement initiatives to curb this menace."

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Siddiqui, A (2011) Azam for Animals- with the animals of northeast India: 71 nos of Indian Bull Frogs (*Hoplobatrachus tigerinus*) seized by the Guwahati Railway from a passenger train in Guwahati, Assam on 10th April 2007.

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.)

'Hare' raising truth: Poaching and trade of Indian Hare



© Dr. Shekhar Kumar Niraj

The Indian or Black-naped Hare *Lepus nigricollis* belongs to the order Lagomorpha which includes rabbits, hares and pikas. The Indian Hare is one of four species of hares found in India. Hares are distinguished from rabbits by their larger size, longer ears and longer hind legs. Young rabbits are born blind, naked and helpless, but baby hares are born fully furred and with their eyes open. The Indian Hare weighs around 3 kg and is a solitary creature. It is a crepuscular or nocturnal animal, preferring to remain hidden during daytime.

Distribution: It is found widely in the Indian Subcontinent and occurs in most habitat types, including forests and grasslands, except for mangroves and tall grassland habitats. It prefers relatively open habitats and can be seen along forest roads, forest openings and edges.

Status:

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule IV

IUCN Redlist: Least Concern

CITES: Not listed

Hunting of, or trade in the species is banned in India.

Threats:

Although the Indian Hare is a widespread species, its population continues to face serious fragmentation (Maheshwaran and Jordan 2008). Threats to the species include destruction and conversion of its forest and grassland habitat for agricultural purposes; feral dogs causing mortality near settlements and hunting.

Intensive hunting by local communities for meat is also emerging as a serious threat. Indian Hares are often hunted illegally by many communities for consumption or sale in local markets. The recent discovery of a specialized commercial illegal trapping operation has added an altogether different dimension to this otherwise low-key illegal operation. The arrest of 21 alleged poachers from Virudhunagar district in Tamil Nadu in September 2011 has been an eye-opener. The target of the poachers was specifically the Indian Hare and they carried specialized gear to catch them. As well as members of a particular community from the Sivakasi and Virudhangar districts in Tamil Nadu, those involved included college students. Twenty six hares were recovered from the poachers. In the month of July, more than 100 hares were found in gunny bags on the top of a public bus.

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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.)

'Hare' raising truth: Poaching and trade of Indian Hare

Continued from page 10

Dr. Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Conservator of Forests, Virudhunagar Circle, and Director of Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Reserve who led this investigation reported that the poaching gangs involved are well networked. They hunt and send the dead animals to different districts using public transport. They also have specialized tools to catch the hares. The trap consists of a conical shaped strong net and searchlights fitted with buzzers that attract the animals towards the light at night. (As quoted on <http://indiasendangered.com/poachers-new-target-the-indian-hare/>)

Hares are an important part of the ecosystems they inhabit. They are a key herbivore and important prey species for a range of small carnivores such as the Jungle Cat, foxes, and mongooses. Larger predators such as the Jackal, Indian Wolf and Leopard will also often eat them. Large scale removal of the animals from the wild is a matter of concern.

Abrar Ahmed, Consultant-Bird Trade Project, TRAFFIC India, during his nationwide study on bird trade in India, has documented trapping and trade of Indian Hares. His key observations are:

1. A large number of grassroot tribes still continue with their traditional vocation of trapping and selling birds and mammals for the food and pet trades. One of the mammals commonly seen with these trappers is the Indian Hare. In peninsular India, especially in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, the Pardhis go on exclusive hunts for hares. In the southern states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, the Narikurava and Hakkipukki trappers target mongoose, hares and field rats with the hares forming the major catch. In north and eastern India the Baheliya and the Harries are professional trappers. In eastern India the Kurmi-baheliyas and the Mirshikar trap hares.
2. Major trade locations for the hares were recorded in Ahmedabad (Vagri basti, Dilli darwaza), Bhopal (Jehangirpuri and Barigarh (Pardi Basti)), Hyderabad (Chowk Market, Lingampally, Pardiwarda), Uttar Pradesh (Pasiyana – Jhansi, Chprana Bazaar in Unnao), Agra (Nai-ki Mandi), Jaipur (Shikari Basti), Cuttack (Thoria sahi), Pakshirajpuram – Nagahole-Hosur road and sometimes Rusell market in Bangalore and vegetable markets in Yavatmal and Wardha - Maharashtra. Hares were also sold in Tamil Nadu (Sangam market in Madurai and Ulkadam market in Coimbatore).
3. Hares are considered a delicacy by the Gujarati cloth vendors, while several other communities also consume hare meat.
4. Domestic rabbit's meat is often sold as wild hare meat. In certain cases, dead albino rabbits or pied rabbits from the pet trade are fraudulently dyed a brown and natural mud colour and sold as hare meat. Wild caught hares do not survive in captivity for more than a week as they do not accept feed easily and die of stress.

The exploitation and utilization of hares remains largely undocumented. There is an urgent need to study the dynamics and scale of this illegal trapping and trade and undertake enforcement actions accordingly.

Reference:

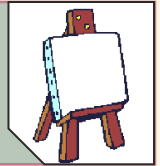
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Conical shaped net used for trapping Indian Hares



SIGNPOST: Other Significant news stories to read



Disclaimer: Links to external news items as given below are provided for information only and are not intended to represent TRAFFIC's policies, positions, opinions or views on the issues raised in the items.

Live ornamental turtles seized from a passenger at Cochin airport: Officials of the Air Customs Intelligence Unit at Cochin International Airport on Tuesday seized about 6000 live ornamental turtles from a passenger who arrived from Singapore. The passenger attempted to pass through the green channel and told customs that he was not carrying anything that needed to be declared. However, he was stopped by officials on suspicion. When his baggage was checked, officials found that he had concealed live ornamental turtles in it. For more information, please visit <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/article2220714.ece>

According to TRAFFIC India's source, the turtles that were smuggled were Red-eared Sliders *Trachemys scripta elegans*

Indonesia foils pangolin smuggling attempt: In September 2011, Marine police in North Sumatra seized over a hundred pangolins and arrested three men who were en route to Malaysia with the animals. The Sunda Pangolins *Manis javanica*, hidden in 20 gunny sacks, were found in a boat seized in waters off Belawan. The smugglers were believed to have left from Pantai Cermin, a popular holiday beach resort near Medan. For more information, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2011/9/30/indonesia-foils-pangolin-smuggling-attempt.html>

Survival of Snow Leopards Endangered: Expert: Poaching, mining and invasion of herders are threatening the survival of the Snow Leopard, one of the world's most endangered animals, an official of WWF in Mongolia warned. Illegal trade of skins and skulls of Snow Leopards, and a new trend of mining operations in the Snow Leopard's habitat also pose major threats to the big cats. For more information, please visit http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-10/17/c_131196684.htm

Chinese demand for ivory threatens Kenya's elephants: Officials in Kenya say Chinese demand for ivory has prompted a surge in elephant poaching and the illegal smuggling of elephant tusks. Now authorities are looking at ways to curb demand and to defend the elephant population better. For more information, please visit <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/Chinese-Demand-for-Ivory-Threatens-Kenyas-Elephants-131600618.html>

Javan Rhino extinct in Viet Nam: The last Javan Rhinoceros in Viet Nam was shot and its horn removed, presumably by poachers, according to a new WWF report. The Javan Rhino was confirmed extinct in the country after genetic tests confirmed that all 22 rhino dung samples collected between 2009-2010 in Cat Tien National Park in southern Viet Nam originated from a single animal. For more information, please visit <http://www.traffic.org/home/2011/10/25/javan-rhino-extinct-in-viet-nam.html>

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