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WILDLIFE CYBERCRIME

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TRAFFIC *POST*

NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA

TRAFFIC Post

TRAFFIC's newsletter on wildlife trade in India was started in September 2007 with a primary objective to create awareness about poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

Illegal wildlife trade is reportedly the fourth largest global illegal trade after narcotics, counterfeiting and human trafficking. It has evolved into an organized activity threatening the future of many wildlife species.

TRAFFIC Post was born out of the need to reach out to various stakeholders including decision makers, enforcement officials, judiciary and consumers about the extent of illegal wildlife trade in India and the damaging effect it could be having on the endangered flora and fauna.

Since its inception, TRAFFIC Post has highlighted pressing issues related to illegal wildlife trade in India and globally, flagged early trends, and illuminated wildlife policies and laws. It has also focused on the status of legal trade in various medicinal plant and timber species that need sustainable management for ensuring ecological and economic success.

TRAFFIC Post comes out three times in the year and is available both online and in print. You can subscribe to it by writing to trafficind@wwfindia.net

All issues of TRAFFIC Post can be viewed at www.trafficindia.org; www.traffic.org

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CONTENTS

A

TRAFFIC Updates (India)

“TORTOISES AND FRESHWATER TURTLES UNDER SIEGE”: 11,000 found in illegal wildlife trade every year in India since 2009 **8**



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New ID tools to help curb poaching and illegal trade of tortoises and freshwater turtles in India **9**

CANINES FOR FELINES: A special contest for SUPER SNIFFERS on GLOBAL TIGER DAY held **9**

Decoding solutions to end online wildlife crime in India: TRAFFIC organises stakeholders meeting **11**

Zoohackathon generates winning ideas to end wildlife trafficking in India **12**

Combating wildlife cybercrime: Rajasthan Forest Department hones its skills **13**

TRAFFIC sounds alert on Diwali: Releases poster on illegal trade and sacrifice of owls in India **14**

TRAFFIC's elephant poster showcased at Smithsonian's National Museum of American History **15**

Engaging Judiciary for enhancing wildlife crime conviction rate in India **16**

B

Outpost

Hornbills losing their heads to online trade in Thailand **18**

Wildlife crime linked to the internet: TRAFFIC report highlights experiences from China **19**

C

CITES Update

CITES CoP18 ended with progress on key wildlife trade related issues **21**

D

TRAFFIC Alert

Online trade route for pangolin smuggling detected in Odisha **24**

Lion claw parcel blows lid off online inter-state wild animal organ smuggling racket **25**

E

In Focus

Curbing wildlife cybercrime in India: The legal lacunas **27**

Coalition to end wildlife trafficking online: An overview **28**



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F

Wild Cry

Use of social media for live bird trade: Case Study on FACEBOOK **31**



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From the Desk



Dr Saket Badola, IFS
Head of TRAFFIC, India Office

Dear Readers

A very Happy New Year!!

As we step into the new year and a new decade, we are happy to share the latest issue of TRAFFIC Post (now into its 13th year of publication since its launch in 2007) focused on a new-age threat to the conservation of wild flora and fauna—the INTERNET.

In the last decade, the refinement and spread of the internet (a shortened form of “interconnected network”) was probably the most crucial development that influenced almost all aspects of everyday life. It changed how we connect and communicate; how we plan and undertake business; how we seek support and receive it; and how we conceptualise and execute work. Improving technologies and increasing internet usage, mainly led by the availability of low-cost smart phones, affordable data packages and the push by governments to digitise their services, has led to an internet revolution. This vast platform is open to everyone and in India adds over 40 million users every year, making the country the fastest growing market for internet services in the world.

However, the internet has also lured criminals to use its services for their nefarious businesses. Crime via use of the internet’s communications channel—the World Wide Web—has proliferated exponentially and has already emerged as one of the biggest challenges confronting enforcement agencies not just in India but across the globe. The Open Web and the Dark Web (World Wide Web content that uses the internet but requires specific software, configurations, or authorisation to access) provides criminals with an extensive reach as well as the cloak of invisibility. Like other prohibited items for sale, protected wildlife and their products are also openly sold on online platforms, despite having both national and international laws restricting such trade. Further, due to the internet’s unimaginable expanse, it is often extremely difficult even to trace such incidences over cyberspace.

Since the internet has proliferated beyond major cities and towns, percolating to villages and never before accessed areas, opportunities have been presented for illicit trade. Wildlife law enforcement agencies have found growing use of cyberspace for trading illegal wildlife products and for connecting prospective buyers and sellers. Wildlife criminals operate from the comfort of their homes, in a faceless and traceless manner, making it difficult for authorities to curtail their activities.

India has strong laws in place for curbing wildlife crime, but understanding their application and implementation is a challenge, mainly due to limited enforcement staff capacity and the highly dynamic nature of this trade. Consequently, wildlife traders are found using various internet-based platforms to expand their illicit business.

Studies conducted by International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) in Europe and TRAFFIC in South-East Asia have found how popular social media platforms and instant messenger sites are used by wildlife traders. In India, a recent study by TRAFFIC also found a similar trend towards the use of social media sites for illegal wildlife trade in South Asia. The details of this study are presented in this issue of TRAFFIC Post.

The problem of wildlife cybercrime featured prominently during the 2018 London Conference as well as during CITES CoP18 held in Geneva last year. Recognising the growing threat to wildlife conservation, CITES adopted a strong Resolution as well as Decisions on combating wildlife cybercrime, and created an international Wildlife Cybercrime Working Group.

Globally, various internet companies have recognised the problem and have shown their commitment to curb wildlife crime by joining the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online, launched jointly by TRAFFIC, WWF and IFAW with a mission to activate the private sector in being the frontline to preventing illegal wildlife sales on major, global platforms.

Although some actions and decisions are being undertaken at the global level to solve this problem, it still requires a more national level approach. Therefore in India, TRAFFIC with support from WWF-India decided to organise a “*Stakeholders meeting to find measures to help curb illegal wildlife trade on cyberspace in India*” in September 2019. The meeting brought together for the first time in India wildlife law enforcement agencies, internet-based companies, policy makers and market leaders to highlight and discuss problems and solutions for curbing online wildlife crime and build and strengthen mutual co-operation and collaboration.

Last year in India, TRAFFIC also launched a special programme called CyberClaw to build the capacity of wildlife enforcement officials especially from the Forest Departments to monitor and curb online wildlife crime. Field level staff of Tiger Reserves were trained to identify, investigate and finally stop trade of illegal wildlife products over the internet.

Zoohackathon, a technology-based challenge and a unique initiative of the U.S. Department of State, entered its 3rd year in India with partners (US Embassy, TRAFFIC and WWF-India) organising the event in Delhi and Kolkata in 2019. As in the past, Zoohackathon succeeded in creating plenty of interest among the tech professionals who came together to develop solutions to deal with wildlife crime related issues.

Additionally, a specialised two-day meeting at the Mumbai Judicial Academy was organised to discuss wildlife crime related issues with senior officers of the Maharashtra Judiciary.

This Issue of TRAFFIC Post also covers an update on discussions held during CITES CoP18 in Geneva last year. We hope that India's successful proposals for upgrading the listing of important species like the Indian Star Tortoises and two other species will help in establishing a better protection profile for these species in the country.

Owl poaching during Diwali was once again brought into focus by TRAFFIC through a vernacular language poster produced to enhance understanding about the species by local communities. The effort was widely appreciated by enforcement agencies as well as the general public.

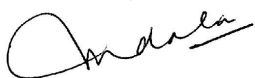
TRAFFIC's latest study on the plight of tortoises and freshwater turtles in India received nationwide attention. This was further supported by the release of identification (ID) cards and posters on tortoises and freshwater turtles to facilitate identification of these species, whose illegal trade is known to be a major wildlife law enforcement gap in India. The study created widespread interest and was featured in many national and international media outlets. The ID tools were appreciated for their design and usability by all the stakeholders and have been requested by several organisations working in this field.

Another feather in our cap was the display of TRAFFIC's poster on curbing elephant poaching and illegal trade, part of our longest running campaign in India—Don't Buy Trouble—at the current “Elephants and Us: Considering Extinction” exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington D.C. The exhibition opened on 1st November 2019 to the general public.

Overall, 2019 was a successful year in terms of the quality and diversity of interventions made by TRAFFIC in the field of combating illegal wildlife trade in India; it once again made us realise the quantum of work needed to ensure a safe world for wildlife.

With your enthusiastic support, we wish to keep forging ahead to fulfill our mission of ensuring that trade in wild flora and fauna is not a threat to the conservation of nature.

Happy Reading!



Dr Saket Badola, IFS
Head- TRAFFIC, India Office



TRAFFIC Updates (India)

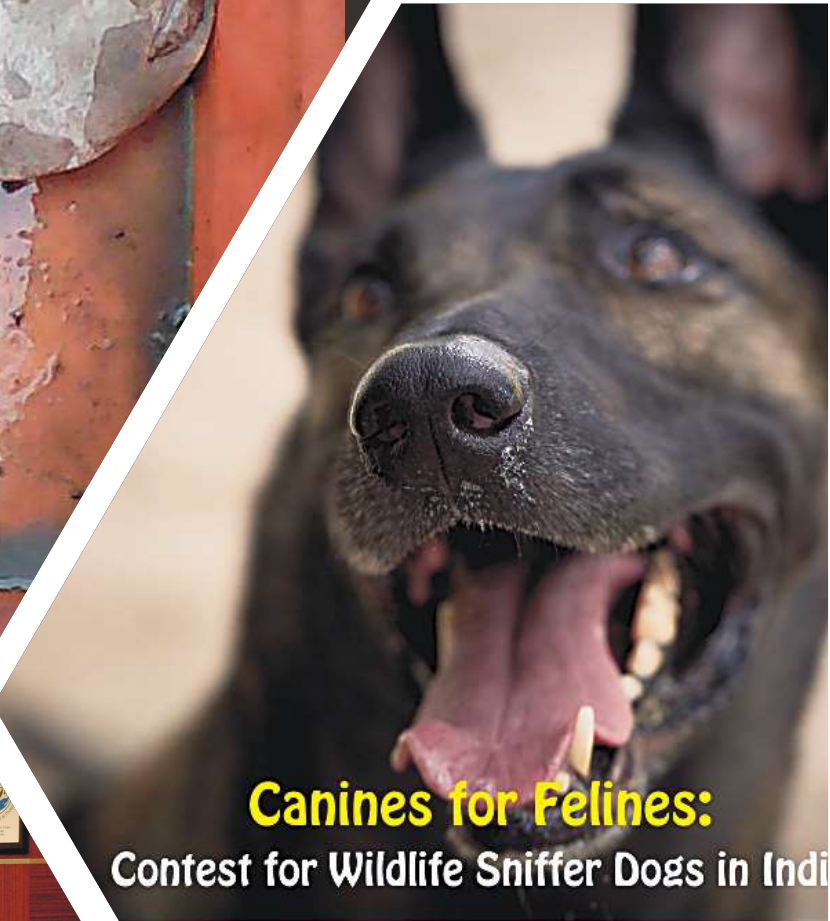
- 1. “TORTOISES AND FRESHWATER TURTLES UNDER SIEGE”:
11,000 found in illegal wildlife trade every year in India since
2009**
- 2. New ID tools to help curb poaching and illegal trade of tortoises
and freshwater turtles in India**
- 3. CANINES FOR FELINES: A special contest for SUPER
SNIFFERS on GLOBAL TIGER DAY held**
- 4. Decoding solutions to end online wildlife crime in India:
TRAFFIC organises stakeholders meeting**
- 5. Zoonackathon generates winning ideas to end wildlife
trafficking in India**
- 6. Combating wildlife cybercrime: Rajasthan Forest Department
hones its skills**
- 7. TRAFFIC sounds alert on Diwali: Releases poster on illegal
trade and sacrifice of owls in India**
- 8. TRAFFIC's elephant poster showcased at Smithsonian's
National Museum of American History**
- 9. Engaging Judiciary for enhancing wildlife crime conviction rate
in India**



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Canines for Felines: Contest for Wildlife Sniffer Dogs in India

Participate!

Canines for Felines is special contest for wildlife sniffer dog squads trained under TRAFFIC's programme in India, to celebrate their contribution towards curbing tiger poaching and illegal trade on Global Tiger Day, 29 July 2019



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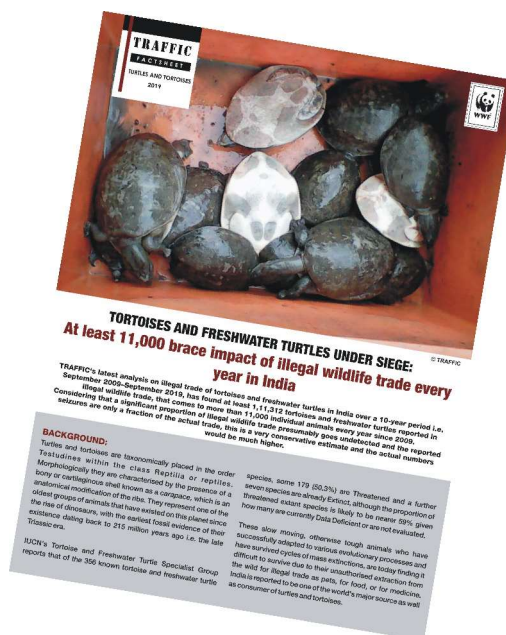
“TORTOISES AND FRESHWATER TURTLES UNDER SIEGE”: 11,000 found in illegal wildlife trade every year in India since 2009

Research by TRAFFIC's India Office revealed that a minimum of 1,11,310 tortoises and freshwater turtles entered illegal wildlife trade in India over a 10-year study period from September 2009–September 2019. This equates to more than 11,000 individuals every year or at least 200 per week since 2009. Considering that an unknown proportion of illegal wildlife trade goes undetected, the actual numbers in trade could be much higher.

Unauthorised extraction from the wild for illegal trade as pets, and for food and medicine, were found to be the main drivers of this trade. The findings were revealed through a factsheet “*Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Under Siege*”.

Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal emerged as the two major hotspots in terms of total number of animals seized, accounting for more than 60% of all reported seizures from 19 States and 2 Union Territories of the country indicating the wide expanse of this illegal trade.

In total, 14 Indian species of tortoises and freshwater turtles were found to be traded, of which Indian Star Tortoise *Geochelone elegans* accounted for 49% of the total identifiable individuals seized, followed by Indian Softshell Turtle *Nilssonina gangetica* (26%), Indian Flapshell Turtle



Lissemys punctata (15%) and Black spotted or Spotted Pond Turtle *Geoclemys hamiltonii* (9%).

At the 18th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP18) held in August 2019, Indian Star Tortoise was up-listed to Appendix I from Appendix II owing to its over exploitation.

Dr Saket Badola, Head of TRAFFIC's India office and author of the study said that tortoises and freshwater turtles in India are probably the most traded wildlife species in terms of their numbers in illegal trade and expressed his concern over the scale

of the illegal domestic market for these species for the pet trade and for meat consumption. He said that immediate action, both in terms of law enforcement initiatives as well as awareness about the species concerned, was needed.

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General & CEO, WWF-India added, “Tortoises and turtles are mainly scavengers and keep aquatic ecosystems clean while some species help keep populations of snails and insects in check. It is important that they are conserved in their natural habitat”.

Dr Shailendra Singh, Director of Turtle Survival Alliance India Program said that training wildlife law enforcement agencies in identifying the species in trade is crucial to combating poaching and illegal trade.

DOWNLOAD the factsheet “*Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Under Siege*” at <https://www.traffic.org/site/assets/files/12464/traffic-factsheet-tortoises-freshwater-turtles-india-2019.pdf>

Most turtle and tortoise species of India are protected under various Schedules of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, under which hunting, trade or any other form of utilisation of the species or their body parts and derivatives is prohibited. All turtle and tortoise species found in India are also listed in CITES, which helps regulate their international trade.

New ID tools to help curb poaching illegal trade of tortoises and freshwater turtles in India

TRAFFIC, the Turtle Survival Alliance India (TSA-India) and WWF-India have created new identification (ID) tools in the form of pocket-sized *Identification Cards* and a foldable *Poster* on 28 species of tortoises and freshwater turtles found in India to help enforcement officers identify the species encountered in illegal wildlife trade.

The ID tools' release followed that of "*Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Under Siege*", TRAFFIC's study on poaching and illegal trade of tortoises and freshwater turtles in illegal wildlife trade in India.

Fundamental to understanding the dynamics of illegal tortoise and freshwater turtle trade and ensuring prosecution cases are dealt with appropriately is sound knowledge of the species involved. The ID tools provide details about each species of tortoise and freshwater turtle found in India, including their area of distribution, legal protection status, identification tips and immediate threats. TRAFFIC is distributing these to relevant enforcement agencies that help to curb wildlife crime including officials of the Forest Department, Police, Railways, paramilitary forces; Customs and others.



The tools were unveiled on 5th October during the Wildlife Week celebrations by Shri Siddhanta Das, IFS, Director General & Special Secretary, MoEF&CC and Shri Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, Director General, National Mission for Clean Ganga at a function organised at the WWF-India Secretariat, New Delhi on the occasion of Ganga River Dolphin Day.

CANINES FOR FELINES: A special contest for SUPER SNIFFERS on GLOBAL TIGER DAY held

In the lead up to Global Tiger Day on 29th July 2019, TRAFFIC announced *Canines for Felines*, a special contest for wildlife sniffer dogs (popularly called Super Sniffers) trained under a TRAFFIC and WWF-India programme in India, working to curb poaching and illegal trade of Tigers.

The contest was open for all wildlife sniffer dog squads trained under the programme and currently deployed by the

forest departments. The winners were announced on 26th July 2019, just ahead of Global Tiger Day and helped acknowledge and bring visibility to the contribution of wildlife sniffer dog squads who work tirelessly to curb crime related to tigers in India.

Nirman, a wildlife sniffer dog from the Tiger Strike Force, Satna, was the overall winner of *Canines for Felines* while

Myna, a wildlife sniffer dog from Tiger Strike Force, Indore, was adjudged second. Both the dog squads belong to Madhya Pradesh Forest Department.



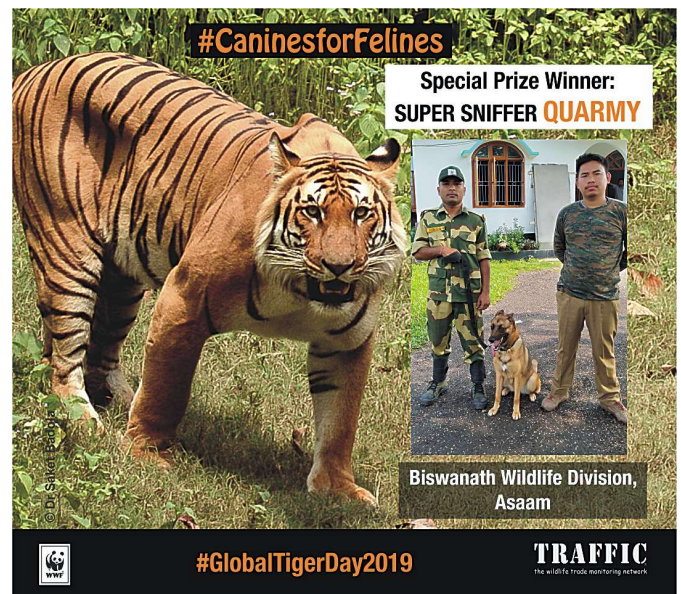
Since his deployment, Nirman and his handlers Mr Raj Kishore Prajapati and Mr Ashok Kumar Gupta, have helped in solving 35 wildlife cases including six tiger-related cases leading to the arrest of several wildlife criminals along with recovery of poached tiger carcasses and seizure of tiger body parts. To become such an ace sniffer and tracker dog, Nirman along with his handlers underwent a rigorous nine-month training programme in 2016 at the National Training Centre for Dogs (NTCD), BSF Academy, Gwalior.

The runner up sniffer dog Myna and handlers Mr Dinesh Aneja and Mr Ter Singh were trained in 2015 at the 23rd Battalion of Special Armed Forces, Bhopal. They have so far



assisted in 18 wildlife cases including three tiger cases involving the arrest of several wildlife criminals and seizures of tiger claws, teeth and other body parts.

Along with these two, wildlife sniffer dog Quarmy from Biswanath Wildlife Division, Assam won a special prize for combating wildlife crime. He and his handlers Mr Lakhmi Nandan Baruah and Mr Johnson Teron were trained at the NTCD, BSF Academy, Gwalior in 2017. In a period of merely two years of deployment, Quarmy has helped in solving several wildlife crime cases and provided crucial leads to enforcement agencies.



The inaugural *Canines for Felines* competition received 12 entries from across India. Between them, the 12 Super Sniffer contestants have helped enforcement agencies in solving 131 wildlife cases. The winners were chosen based on their impact on tiger-related cases while the Special Prize was awarded based on the wildlife sniffer dog's overall contribution towards curbing wildlife crime.

To help curb poaching and illegal wildlife trade, TRAFFIC with support from WWF-India launched the wildlife sniffer dog training programme in India in 2008. Since then it has trained 66 wildlife sniffer dog squads deployed in 19 states across India. These dogs have helped in solving over 350 wildlife crime cases involving the seizure of wildlife products and derivatives, thus acting as strong deterrents against wildlife crime in India.

Global Tiger Day, also called International Tiger Day, is celebrated every year on 29th July globally to raise awareness about tiger conservation. It was started in 2010 at the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit.

Decoding solutions to end online wildlife crime in India: TRAFFIC organises stakeholders meeting

An important “Stakeholders meeting to find measures to help curb illegal wildlife trade on cyberspace in India” took place on 12th September 2019 and was organised by TRAFFIC and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Government of India in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy, New Delhi and WWF-India at the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEF&CC), New Delhi.

The meeting aimed to create a common platform for wildlife law enforcement agencies, internet-based companies, policy makers and market leaders to highlight and discuss problems and solutions for curbing online wildlife crime and build and strengthen mutual co-operation and collaboration.

More than 50 senior officials from various wildlife law enforcement agencies—State Forest Department, paramilitary forces (SSB, ITBP, CISF, BSF and Assam Rifles), police—plus internet companies including Google India, Quickr, Flipkart, IndiaMART and representatives from FICCI and CII; CZA, NTCA, GTF, IUCN and WTI, attended the meeting.

Participants recommended extending current Information and Technology legislation to include wildlife crime, raising consumer awareness to influence buying choices, capacity building for law enforcement officials and creating a common forum that will bring all stakeholders on one platform to help find and implement ways to curb online illegal wildlife trade.

Ms Tilotama Varma, IPS, Addl Director, WCCB said, “Everything from turtles and tortoises to Red Sand Boas, monitor lizards, Red Sanders, body parts of elephants, tigers, leopards etc. are being traded on various websites and mobile applications. Therefore, it has become imperative to engage with internet companies and find solutions with them to curb online illegal wildlife trade.”

Ms Isabella Detwiler, Acting Minister Counselor for Economic, Environment, Science and Technology Affairs, U.S. Embassy, New Delhi added: “The web is the biggest marketplace for the illegal trade of wildlife. Wildlife is being trafficked from the comfort of people’s homes. We applaud the work and dedication of international, regional and local organisations who are deeply committed to ending wildlife trafficking in cyberspace and recognise the need to co-ordinate and intensify our global efforts.”



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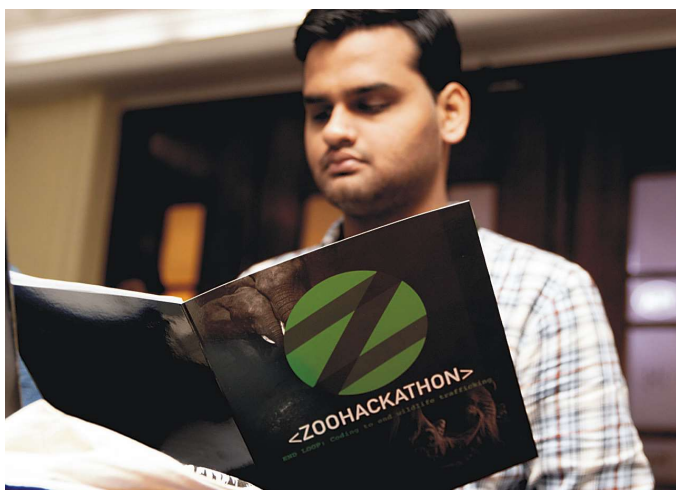
Dr Saket Badola, IFS, Head of TRAFFIC's India office said: “This meeting has provided us with an opportunity to sensitise and interact with various internet companies, industry leaders and enforcement agencies to understand the scale and extent of problems related to wildlife crime in cyberspace. TRAFFIC aims to provide a common platform for these companies and industry leaders to enable them to find a permanent solution to the problem.” He also shared insight into the global “Coalition to end wildlife trafficking online” which was launched in 2018, jointly facilitated by TRAFFIC, WWF, and IFAW, as a ground-breaking partnership of some of the world's leading online and tech companies.

Mr M. S. Negi, Addl Director General (Wildlife) termed this meeting as a well-timed effort and said: “I am really happy to see all stakeholders such as industry leaders, internet companies, wildlife law enforcement agencies and NGOs coming together to solve this crisis.”

Mr Siddhanta Das, IFS, Director General & Special Secretary, MoEF&CC as the Chief Guest of the meeting said: “India is unique as it conserves its wildlife for the sake of conservation and not in lieu of making any benefits out of it. The threat to wild species mainly in the form of illegal wildlife trade on online platforms needs an immediate response to curb it.

The participating internet companies have shown their interest in learning more about online illegal wildlife trade on various digital platforms and explore ways to work together to find solutions.”

Zoohackathon generates winning ideas to end wildlife trafficking in India



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Coders, wildlife enthusiasts, and designers participated in Zoohackathon, a two-day technology-driven challenge to help find solutions to curb wildlife trafficking and organised in Kolkata on 9–10th November 2019 and on 16–17th November 2019 in New Delhi.

Wildlife trafficking is one of the world's most nefarious challenges, decimating populations of iconic animals such as elephants, rhinos, and tigers and the associated organised criminal activities impacting negatively on local communities as they strive for survival. New technology driven solutions provide a means of response.

ZOOHACKATHON 1.0: KOLKATA

Date: 9–10th November 2019

Venue: The Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCC&I)

Organisers: U.S. Consulate General in Kolkata, WWF-India, TRAFFIC, and the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCC&I)

Problem statements: Use of blockchain technology for tracking supply of forest-based products; It costs how much?? Monitoring the changing price of wildlife online; Broadening the net: Targeted scanning of media to enrich counter wildlife trade intelligence efforts; Tracking captive elephants of India.

Participation: 16 teams and 95 participants

Judges: Mr Ravi Kant Sinha, IFS – PCCF (Wildlife) and CWLW, West Bengal; Dr Pradeep Vyas, Former PCCF and CWLW West Bengal; Ms Kasturi Bhattacharjee, CEO,

Datacore Pvt Ltd and AI LABS Academy; Mr Kalyan Kar, Co-founder and Director, InQube Innoventures Pvt Ltd.; Mr Krish Das, Assistant Public Affairs officer and Deputy Director, American Centre.

Winners: Team Pineapples won the Kolkata Zoohackathon with a solution titled “Zooskersky” which can help track prices of wildlife species on sale on various internet platforms and create a dashboard with the values for the enforcement agency to follow and take necessary actions. The runners up were Team Data-Sutram, who also developed a dashboard with basic metrics for monitoring species in trade and with an alert to enforcement agencies. A special mention was made for Team Corbett's solution, which involved alerting stakeholders to the presence of elephants in their vicinity and helping reduce human-wildlife conflict.



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ZOOHACKATHON 3.0: NEW DELHI

Date: 16-17th November 2019

Venue: WWF-India Secretariat, New Delhi

Organisers: U.S. Embassy, New Delhi; TRAFFIC; and WWF-India.

Problem statements: Establishing a path for local communities to report illegal wildlife activities to appropriate authorities; Using blockchain technology for tracking supply of forest based products; Tracking CITES-listed e-commerce in plants; Avoiding compromise in Counter-Wildlife Trafficking (CWT) Investigations; and Tracking captive elephants of India.

Participation: 16 teams and 75 participants

Judges: Ms. Isabella Detwiler, Deputy Minister Counselor, Economic Environment, Science and Technology Affairs, U.S. Embassy; Mr Jeffrey Watts, Energy Officer, US. Embassy, New; Mr. Vinayak Godse Vice President Data Security Council of India (DSCI); Mr Anup Kumar Nayak, Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority; Mr Yogendra K Srivastava, Blockchain Solution Architect, India Software Lab, IBM India Pvt Ltd and Dr Dipankar Ghose, Director, Species and Landscape Program, WWF – India.

Winners: Team “Error: Error not Found” from the University of Delhi were the winners while Team “Kyros” from Indraprastha University achieved the runners up position at the Zoohackathon in New Delhi. Team “Error: Error not Found” developed a simple cost-free text-based application to alert any untoward activities related to wildlife trade taking place in virtual space. The tool also provides an opportunity to bring together various agencies and share sensitive information related to poaching and wildlife criminals. Team “Kyros” developed an application that allows comparisons of available medicinal plant products for sale on e-commerce platforms with CITES-listed medicinal plant species to assess their legal status and send out email alerts of potential infringements to enforcement agencies.



© US Embassy

WHATS NEXT? The winners of Zoohackathon from Kolkata and Delhi will compete for the global prize along with the winning teams from all host countries. A panel of judges will decide the international winner based on the presentations and codes that the teams will upload for the global competition. Last year's New Delhi winners won second place in the global competition.

WHAT THEY SAID? U.S. Embassy Minister Counselor J. Robert Garverick said the Zoohackathon is helping connect young people around the world to wildlife conservation issues and is a vital tool to create awareness about the scale of illegal trade in wildlife and the ways technology can help in wildlife conservation.

Dr Saket Badola, IFS, Head of TRAFFIC's India office, added, “India's internet usage has registered an exponential growth in recent times and with it illegal wildlife trade over virtual space has also expanded. It is hence important to innovate and develop new strategies that will help to end wildlife trafficking over the internet. We congratulate the winners of Zoohackathon 3.0 and also all the participants who came forward to join us in these efforts to curb wildlife crime.”

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, WWF-India said, “Zoohackathon is a unique challenge that helps find technology-based solutions to the growing threat from illegal wildlife trade. The programme encourages young citizens to understand broader issues of the subject and be a part of the solution. Zoohackathon is also an opportunity to reach out and raise awareness about the need to counter wildlife crime.”

Combating wildlife cybercrime: Rajasthan Forest Department hones its skills

With India's wild Tiger population touching nearly 3,000, it becomes crucial that the best protection and wildlife law enforcement measures are in place to extinguish any threat from wildlife crime.

In the last few years, the internet boom has allowed illegal wildlife trade to expand into cyberspace adding to the already existing pressure on wildlife. Keeping this in mind, TRAFFIC, alongside WWF-India, National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Police Radio Training

School (PRTS), has been organising specialised training workshops for the Forest Department on curbing online wildlife crime under its programme “CyberCLAW.”

In Sariska Tiger Reserve, located in the northern section of the rugged Aravalli Hills of Alwar, Rajasthan, a two-day capacity building workshop on curbing wildlife-related cybercrime was organised on 21-22nd July 2019 and was attended by 36 officials from Rajasthan Forest Department.



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Mr S. R. Yadav, Deputy Director of Sariska Tiger Reserve who helped organise the workshop noted his concerns about cyberspace emerging as a prominent medium for illegal trade in wildlife and becoming a huge enforcement challenge.

Mr Ghashyam Sharma, Field Director of Sariska Tiger Reserve further added that there is an urgent need to equip the Forest Department with modern tools and techniques to combat wildlife cybercrime in the state.

Mr Varun Kapoor, Additional Director General, Madhya Pradesh Police; Mr Malay Mahant, Incharge Training, PRTS Indore; Mr Afzal Khan, Incharge Technical Cell, PRTS Indore along with Mr Pramod K. Yadav, Senior Project Officer, TRAFFIC and Dr Abhishek Bhatnagar, Landscape Coordinator, Western India Tiger Landscape, WWF-India conducted the training that included important sessions on intelligence, investigation, and search and seizure techniques; communication device investigation; social media investigation; cybercrime scene management; digital forensics, digital intelligence collection; wildlife forensics; telecom surveillance and CDR analysis and IPDR—(CDR of IP address) analysis.

During the training Mr Varun Kapoor from Madhya Pradesh Police said: “Smart monitoring of social media can reveal useful information to the enforcement agencies regarding activities of wildlife criminals. Hence, considering the fast-changing dynamics of cyberspace, there is an urgent need to understand the phenomenon and challenges of wildlife cybercrime in order to take appropriate actions to combat it. This capacity building workshop aims to enhance the knowledge and skills of its participants for this purpose.”

The workshop in Sariska was the fourth in the series of capacity building workshops organised under TRAFFIC’s “CyberCLAW” initiative for combating wildlife cybercrime.

TRAFFIC sounds alert on Diwali: poster on illegal trade and sacrifice of owls in India for curbing poaching

Every year the festival of Diwali becomes a distressing reminder of poaching and smuggling of owls for use in black magic and sorcery linked with superstition, totems, and taboos across the country.

This year, in order to raise awareness about the plight of these birds, TRAFFIC produced and circulated an informative poster in Hindi on illegal trapping, trade and utilisation of owls in India. The poster was sent out to enforcement agencies, conservation organisations, educationists and others in the field for display at strategic locations a few weeks ahead of Diwali that took place on 27th October in 2019.

Owls are protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, making it illegal to poach, trap, or trade in owls or their body parts. Of more than 30 species of owls found in India, Rock Eagle-owl, Brown Fish-owl, Dusky Eagle-owl, Collared Scops-owl and Mottled Wood-owl are most commonly found in trade. Black magic practitioners especially in smaller towns and villages, frequently referred to as *tantrics* in India, prescribe the use of owl parts such as the skull, feathers, ear tufts, claws, heart, liver, kidney, blood, eyes, fat, beak, tears, eggshells, meat, and bones for ceremonial *pujas* and rituals and such practices peak around Diwali.

सावधान!

किसानों का मित्र मुसीबत में है।

हर दिवाली तंत्र-मंत्र तथा काला जादू संबन्धित अंधविश्वास हेतु हजारों उल्लूओं की बलि दी जाती है। कुछ उल्लूओं का शिकार उनके अंगों से देसी दवाईयां बनाने हेतु भी किया जाता है।

सावधान! उल्लूओं को पकड़ना, पालना, शिकार करना, खरीद फरोख्त करना तथा उसके अंगों से बनी दवाईयां में व्यापार करना दंडनीय अपराध है जिसमें 7 साल तक की जेल तथा जुर्माना, दोनों हो सकता है।

उल्लू किसानों के मित्र हैं। यह पक्षी फसलों को तुकसान पहुँचाने वाले जानवर जैसे चूहा इत्यादि का शिकार कर फसलों को विनाश से बचाता है।

किसानों के इस मित्र को आपकी सहायता की आवश्यकता है। इनके संरक्षण में मदद करें तथा इनसे संबन्धित अपराध का संज्ञान मिलने पर इसकी सूचना तत्काल निम्न को दें।

प्रभागीय वनाधिकारी, वन्यजीव अपराध निवृत्तन ब्यूरो (WCCB), स्थानीय पुलिस विभाग, 011-26182484, 26713223 (वह दिल्ली)



Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Uttarakhand have been the hotspots for this trade.

Dr Saket Badola, IFS, Head of TRAFFIC's India office said: "Owls have a patchy reputation in India—on the one hand they are respected as the carrier of Lakshmi, the Deity of Wealth, on the other hand, owls are also feared as a symbol of ill omen.

"There are many superstitions about owls in India, often spread amongst a gullible public by black magic practitioners, whose prescription of owl body parts has been a driving force behind this illicit trade. Education, awareness alongside strong wildlife law enforcement measures are needed to secure the future of owls in India."

"Make peace this Diwali and allow owls to thrive in their natural environment without any threat from poaching and illegal trade" is the main message of the TRAFFIC poster available for free download, use and circulation. Visit www.trafficindia.org for more information.

TRAFFIC's elephant poster showcased at Smithsonian's National Museum of American History

TRAFFIC's poster on curbing elephant poaching and illegal trade from its longest running campaign in India—Don't Buy Trouble—is showcased at the on-going "Elephants and Us: Considering Extinction" exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington D.C.

The exhibition opened on 1st November 2019 and is timed to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the African Elephant Conservation Act of 1988–89 that will explore Americans' relationship with elephants as it has evolved over time. Visitors to the museum's Albert H. Small Documents Gallery can explore ideas related to the extinction of elephants through two perspectives: the role that humans have played in the history of ivory consumption and the most recent efforts at species conservation.

"Elephants and Us: Considering Extinction" aims also to educate visitors about the effects of poaching on elephant populations and human encroachment on elephant habitats. On an average 25–30 million people visit the Smithsonian Museums every year.



© Smithsonian's National Museum of American History

The showcased TRAFFIC's poster was launched under the campaign—Don't Buy Trouble—by TRAFFIC's India Office and WWF-India in 2017, appealing to help curb illegal wildlife trade in some of the most traded wildlife species in India including the Asian Elephant. The poster's message—*In danger of becoming just words in history. Don't let their future be just a memory*—came with a clear warning against buying illegal wildlife products.

Dr Saket Badola, Head of TRAFFIC's India office said: “We are very excited to see TRAFFIC India's poster at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. With thousands of visitors coming into the Museum every day, this opportunity will help to raise awareness about the threat

to Asian Elephants and influence behaviour of wildlife consumers, encouraging them to refrain from buying ivory products.”

Asian Elephants were once widely distributed throughout India, including in States such as Punjab and Gujarat. Currently, due to significant loss of their habitat they are found in four fragmented populations in South, North, Central and North-east India. They are poached both for revenge, often as a consequence of conflicts with people, and for their tusks, used to make bangles, rings, name seals (known as *hanko* in Japan), statues, chess pieces and many other items. Large numbers of elephants become victim to poaching and illegal wildlife trade every year in India.

Engaging Judiciary for enhancing wildlife crime conviction rate in India

Against a backdrop of low prosecution and conviction rates related to wildlife cases in India, TRAFFIC along with WWF-India, Maharashtra Judiciary Academy and Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE) organised a special orientation programme for the judicial officers of Maharashtra, Goa and Daman on 13–14th July at Maharashtra Judiciary Academy, Mumbai.

The workshop aimed to sensitise judicial officers on issues related to wildlife poaching and crime in India and also provided updated information on national and international legislations dealing with wildlife, forest and environmental crimes. Forty five judges representing Maharashtra, Goa and Daman together with the Forest Department, represented by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF)-Wildlife and Chief Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra; Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (APCCF)-Wildlife, Western Region Maharashtra; and the Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF), Thane. Mr Rajendra Dhongde (retired) Forest Officer; Mr Kartik Shukul (Advocate); Mr Ritwick Dutta (Advocate) along with TRAFFIC and WWF-India staff contributed as resource personnel for the programme.

Justice Nitin M Jamdar, Judge, High Court of Bombay in his address talked about how conservation and protection of charismatic wildlife species can lead to ecological preservation in an area. He also spoke about the critical linkages between various species and how it becomes imperative during judicial proceedings to consider the impacts of non-charismatic species as well on the entire ecosystem.

Justice B.P. Dharmadhikari, Judge, High Court Bombay and Director, Maharashtra Judicial Academy said, “Over a period of time, Maharashtra has taken steps and passed several

resolutions in the prevailing legal systems to protect and better manage the environment and forests. Most of the judges present here may be dealing with such cases—therefore this orientation programme is very apt, timely and necessary.”

Justice (retired) Madan Lokur in his address said that it is the moral responsibility of all judges to contribute towards protecting the environment. He highlighted various landmark judgements and principles propounded by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India to strengthen environmental jurisprudence.

Dr Saket Badola, Head of TRAFFIC's India office said: “For any law in force, it is often not only the level of punishment but the surety of timely conviction, which acts as a crime deterrent. Timely and adequate orientation of judicial officers will ensure better implementation of wildlife, forest and environmental laws and subsequently crime control.”

Mr Nitin Kakodkar PCCF(WL) and CWLW, Maharashtra spoke about the pivotal role of the judiciary in guiding conservation and protection of the environment and forests.

Ms Moulika Arabhi, Consultant, Centre for Environmental Laws, WWF-India summed up the key issues discussed and covered during the orientation which included an overview of wildlife crime in India with a special focus on Maharashtra; challenges in implementing current wildlife laws; the crucial role of judges in strengthening wildlife cases; the Wildlife (Protection) Act and environmental jurisprudence.

Feedback from the participants was encouraging, with high level of interest expressed in each session.

B

Outpost

- 1. Hornbills losing their heads to online trade in Thailand**
- 2. Wildlife crime linked to the internet: TRAFFIC report highlights experiences from China**

Hornbills losing their heads to online trade



A new study released in August 2019 to coincide with the 18th Conference to the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP18) found hundreds of Helmeted and other hornbill parts and products offered for sale on Thai social media.

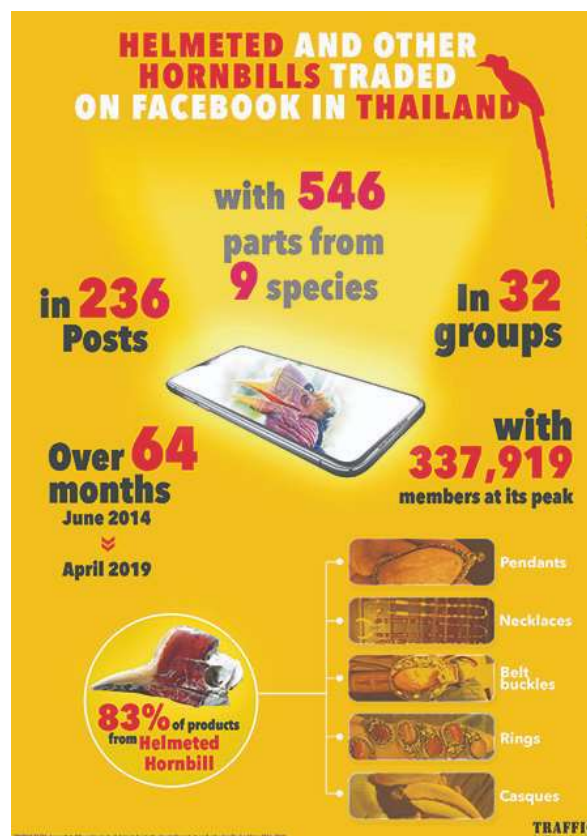
The six-month online survey found a minimum of 236 online posts offering a minimum of 546 hornbill parts and products in 32 of the 40 groups surveyed on Facebook. These were posted over a period of 64 months, spanning June 2014 to April 2019.

“This is the first systematic study providing evidence that the trade in Helmeted Hornbill parts and products exists in Thailand—a range state and outside previously documented open trade in China and Lao PDR,” said Maethinee Phassaraudomsak, TRAFFIC’s lead author of the report.

Helmeted Hornbill *Rhinoplax vigil* parts and products constituted 452 (83%) of all hornbill commodities recorded. This finding was of particular concern because trade in this species has risen over the past decade, driven by demand for its solid bill casque, carved and used as an alternative to elephant ivory, particularly in China and increasingly in other Asian markets.

Populations of the rare Helmeted Hornbill, whose charismatic call epitomises the sounds of rainforests across Southeast Asia, have declined in recent years as a result of illegal hunting and trafficking. All hornbill species are listed in CITES Appendix I or II, prohibiting or regulating international trade while the Helmeted Hornbill was recently uplisted on the IUCN Redlist of threatened species to Critically Endangered—facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

Although online research commenced in October 2018, TRAFFIC researchers observed that posts offering Helmeted Hornbills went as far back as 2014, with peaks recorded in 2016 and 2018, ranging from 162 to 171 individual Helmeted Hornbill products offered for sale.



Although Thai government authorities have successfully carried out enforcement action in at least five known online cases involving hornbills, trading activity is difficult to halt altogether. cursory checks on the 32 target groups in August 2019 showed that Helmeted Hornbill products were still being offered. However, upon sharing the findings with Facebook enforcement staff, a number of pages and posts have since been deleted. But continued monitoring and investigations in these, other groups and beyond the Facebook platform would be important to ascertain the status of the online trade in Helmeted and other hornbills in Thailand.

As part of its continued engagement with the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online, Facebook introduced a policy in April 2019 to ban the trade of all live animals on their platform from non-verified physical businesses, as well as all

endangered species and their products across the platform including Helmeted Hornbill. They have since also launched reporting workflows specific to live animal and endangered species sales so that users can directly flag listings that violate these new policies, in real time.

TRAFFIC has urged Thai authorities and Facebook to continue their vigilance and work closely to develop joint strategies to track and tackle the issue of online trafficking in one of Southeast Asia's emblematic bird species. Social media users can continue to do their part and report suspicious posts to social media sites reporting tools or law enforcement.

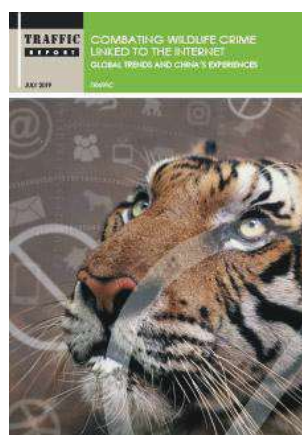
<https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/hornbills-losing-their-heads-to-online-trade-in-thailand/>

Wildlife crime linked to the internet: TRAFFIC report highlights experiences from China

A study released by TRAFFIC highlights China's experiences in addressing wildlife crime linked to the internet across the online and courier business sectors. *Combating Wildlife Crime Linked to the Internet: Global Trends and China's Experiences* notes how, over the past decade, China's law enforcement authorities, in particular the Forest Police, have been increasing efforts to crack down on wildlife crime linked to the internet, including a number of targeted operations and co-operation with internet service providers such as Tencent, Alibaba and Sina Weibo.

The study also reviews the policies and measures used to address wildlife cybercrime in the EU, Kenya, the US, and several key international associations and provides suggestions of strategies going forward.

The document was particularly relevant to the discussions during the CITES conference that took place in Geneva in 2019, where TRAFFIC, WWF and IFAW drew Parties' attention to the creation of *The Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online*, launched in March 2018 to unite online technology companies globally. The Coalition currently has 34 partner companies, including some of the most recognised names from e-commerce, social media and online



search engines including Alibaba, Baidu, eBay, Facebook, Google, Instagram, Microsoft, and Tencent.

Other online initiatives include the Global Wildlife Cybercrime Action Plan, launched at the Illegal Wildlife Trade conference hosted by the United Kingdom in October 2018.

The role of INTERPOL in supporting law enforcement efforts was also highlighted, although the limited funding and capacity available to support this work was noted as issues of concern.

Government Parties attending the CITES meeting were urged to support fully such initiatives to counter the ongoing scourge of online wildlife trade. Download the report at

<https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/combating-wildlife-crime-linked-to-the-internet/>



CITES Update

- 1. CITES CoP18 ended with progress on key wildlife trade related issues**

CITES CoP18 ended with progress on key wildlife trade related issues

Representatives from more than 170 governments worldwide gathered in Geneva, Switzerland from 17–28th August 2019 for the 18th Conference of the Parties (CoP18) to CITES. The meeting ended with intense and occasionally heated debate over key issues related to the trade in wild animal and plant species.

Delegates considered a number of species listing proposals, whereby countries proposed individual species or groups of species to be included in one of the Convention's appendices—an Appendix I listing effectively prohibits international commercial trade in wild specimens, and Appendix II means it is allowed but regulated using a system of permits.

Key outcomes from the meeting were as follows:

- Steps were put in place to ensure wildlife trade issues are reflected when world governments formulate a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and Strategic Plan to reverse the decline in nature during the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) meeting that took place in October in China.

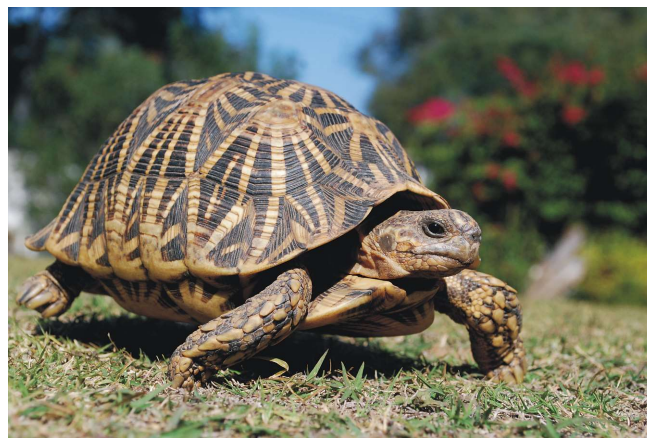


© Mikaaíl Kavanagh / WWF

- Proposals relating to two Asian species of otters—the Small Clawed Otter *Amblonyx cinereus* and the Smooth Coated Otter *Lutrogale perspicillata*—were both accepted, with Parties voting to uplist them to Appendix I, which effectively prohibits their commercial international trade in wild specimens. Alongside leading to improved enforcement actions for these species, TRAFFIC hopes it will lead to closer oversight of operations purportedly captive breeding these species for trade.

- Several proposals to list marine species received support within the Convention —mako sharks, guitarfishes, wedgefishes and sea cucumbers. Prior to the successful listing of all these species, a debate took place concerning the merits of managing trade in marine species through regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) and the role these bodies play in assisting with CITES provisions for those species that are listed.

- A suite of Sri Lankan reptile species were also listed in the Appendices, although some original proposals were amended during the debate and listed in Appendix II rather than the originally proposed Appendix I, and one proposal was withdrawn.



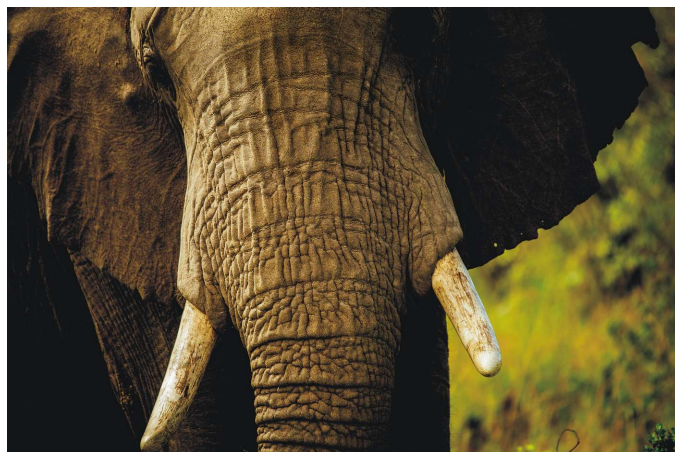
© Dr Saket Badola / TRAFFIC

- A number of Asian turtle species were uplisted to Appendix I, as was the Indian Star Tortoise, which is popular as a pet and regularly seized in illegal trade from its range states, particularly to Southeast Asia.

- It was also proposed to include all species of arboreal and ornamental tarantula in the genus *Poecilotheria* in Appendix II. Eight species are endemic to India, five are endemic to Sri Lanka, and two species can be found in both countries. The proposal was accepted.

- There were further listings including one snake (the Spider-tailed Horned Viper *Pseudocerastes urarachnoides*, recently discovered in Iran), and amendments to a number of timber species including

Cedrela spp. and one plant—*Aloe ferox*, the Bitter Aloe from southern Africa.



© Greg Armfield / WWF-UK

- Elephant ivory was behind three listing proposals relating to African Elephant—and it was the fractious nature of some of the exchanges that revealed the deep divide between African nations on this issue. In essence it relates to those countries, largely in west and east Africa who are deeply opposed to any resumption of the ivory trade, which they fear will stimulate demand and lead to increased poaching of elephants, and countries of southern Africa, who pay the high costs for protecting their substantial elephant populations and wish to offset these costs to fund conservation measures through the sale of elephant ivory. The deadlock has lasted for years, with neither side apparently prepared to give way. In the end, all three African Elephant proposals were rejected, meaning the stalemate continues.

- Similarly proposals to reduce the trade restrictions relating to White Rhinos, put forward by Eswatini and Namibia respectively, were both defeated.

- Similar arguments from both sides were heard during the ultimately successful debate on whether the Giraffe warranted listing in Appendix II of the Convention.

- A new issue on the agenda was the worldwide trade in songbirds, and the detrimental impact on some species caused by over-harvesting. Nowhere is this of more concern than in Southeast Asia, where dozens of species have disappeared across huge parts of their former range. Ahead of the debate on this topic, TRAFFIC released a report into the trade in one of the most popular songsters—the White-rumped Shama—which illustrated the nature of this trade, with some two-thirds of the individuals seized in Southeast Asia between 2008 and 2018 destined for international trade. While concern was expressed that the sheer number of songbird species potentially involved might make this too big an issue to address for CITES Parties, a way forward was

established with the meeting agreeing to undertake a scoping study and report the findings at a later meeting of the Convention.

- Other issues with significant positive progress included measures to improve protection measures for marine turtles and improved oversight of tiger trade, including specific attention to monitoring captive tiger facilities and their relationship to overall dynamics of supply and demand. During the meeting, TRAFFIC released *Skin and Bones: Unresolved*, a report which found there has been no respite for the heavily hunted tiger, with an estimated average of over 120 individuals seized each year over the past 19 years.

- Pangolins, which featured prominently at the last CITES CoP held in South Africa in 2016, when all eight species were uplisted to Appendix I, were also discussed. Despite these protection measures, there are few signs of a let up in the trafficking of pangolins with record hauls of pangolin parts, particularly scales being made in recent months. Delegates agreed to ramp up their collective efforts to protect pangolins.

- Measures on implementation of CITES such as traceability of products in trade also received a boost during the meeting, while there was movement on the use of new technology to assist with this process and there was also an examination of the difficult issue of how to manage stockpiles of wildlife products.

- Another critical factor, which had received far too little attention in the past but was related to captive breeding operations, was that of legal acquisition findings—the mechanism by which the legal origin of any animals in trade or used as breeding stock, should be determined. This issue was prevalent during the meeting, with TRAFFIC producing two case studies of Southeast Asian parrots and endemic Caribbean reptiles to support this.

- Online trade, and in particular that involving cybercrime, was also prominent during the meeting, with a side event held on enforcement issues where TRAFFIC and IFAW presented on the work of the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online.

TRAFFIC participated in a number of side events on a range of topics from achieving consumer behaviour change to elephant conservation, determining Non-Detriment Findings for plants, and the African vulture crisis: the latter held alongside other partners in the Restore Species Partnership. During the wrap up session, Costa Rica offered to host CoP19, which will take place in 2022, an offer that was warmly welcomed.

D

TRAFFIC Alert

- 1. Online trade route for pangolin smuggling detected in Odisha**
- 2. Lion claw parcel blows lid off online inter-state wild animal organ smuggling racket**

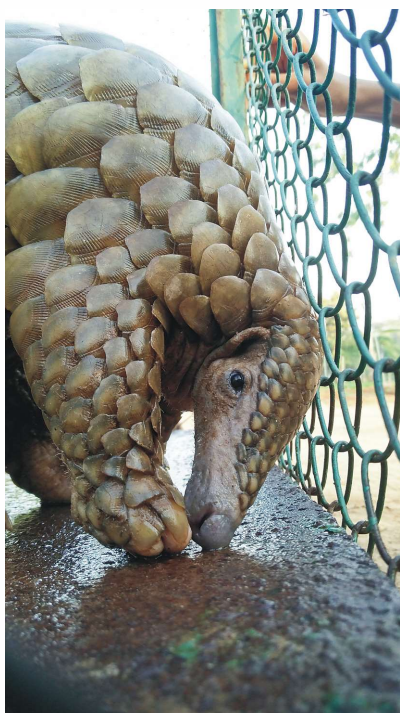


1

Online trade route for pangolin smuggling detected in Odisha

In December 2019, officials from Odisha Forest Department arrested several people after detecting an online trade link for pangolin smuggling in the region. The Athagarh Divisional Forest Officer said that the accused were believed to be involved in the inter-state syndicate that deals with smuggling of wild animals and were in contact with dealers and customers through online portals.

They had formed WhatsApp groups and were also using websites to send videos to their customers with codes and dealer names. If the customer was satisfied with the sample, they sent it to the middlemen, operating clandestinely from different parts of the state, especially Dhenkanal and Mayurbhanj, who then transported the animals to the person concerned outside Odisha or abroad.



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TRAFFIC adds.....

Pangolins are reported to be the most trafficked wild mammal globally. In India, two species of pangolins are found—Indian Pangolin *Manis crassicaudata* and the Chinese Pangolin *Manis pentadactyla*. Poaching and trade of pangolins is banned under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 while international trade is prohibited under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

In 2018, TRAFFIC revealed that at least 5,772 pangolins were found in illegal wildlife trade in India during the period 2009–2017; close to 650 pangolins every year since 2009. Pangolins are targeted for their meat which is considered a delicacy and consumed as a “tonic food” and their scales, used as an ingredient in traditional medicines. Most of the poaching and smuggling are believed to be destined for international markets in China and Southeast Asia.

It is not surprising to learn of online syndicates for pangolin smuggling and trade in India. With an internet boom and most having access to online applications and portals, consumers are moving online for commercial and day to day activities. Following close on their heels are wildlife smugglers and illegal traders who engage with wildlife consumers. Growing online wildlife crime has become a major issue and unless cyber patrolling and monitoring tools are in place, curbing online wildlife crime may be difficult. We congratulate the Forest Department for following up on this pangolin case diligently and exposing the actions of wildlife criminals in cyberspace.

Sources:

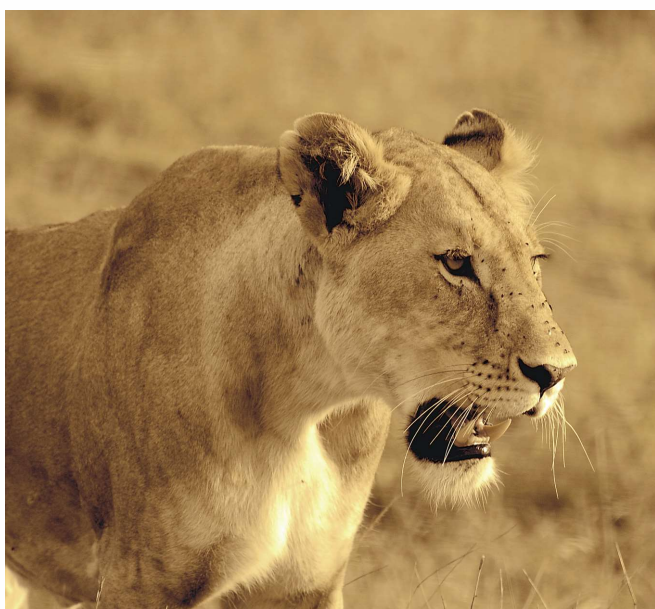
<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2019/dec/01/online-trade-route-for-pangolin-smuggling-detected-in-odisha-2069738.html>



2 Lion claw parcel blows lid off online inter-state wild animal organ smuggling racket

A single parcel of suspected lion claws received by a villager in Junagadh district in December 2019 has led to the exposure of a massive inter-state racket involving the online sale of animal organs in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The arrest of a Sultanpur village resident in Rajasthan's Jhunjhunu district led to the raid at a shop where a huge stock of animal organs was found. Officials recovered 908 claws, many of them suspected to be from lions, 818 sea fans (soft corals), and 1,255 organs of monitor lizards. Gujarat forest officials strongly suspect that the sea fans and monitor lizard organs were smuggled from Gujarat. The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, which has the power to investigate inter-state crimes, has been alerted.

TRAFFIC adds.....



© Dr Saket Badola / TRAFFIC

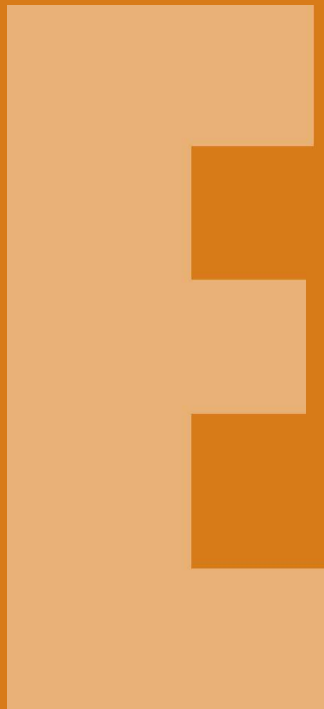
The internet provides new tools and a medium for illegal wildlife traders and smugglers to find and lure customers. Similarly, consumers are able to reach out to the sellers of illegal wildlife and exotic species more easily. The anonymity provided by the internet to both buyers and sellers may actually be expanding the pool of illegal wildlife traders and consumers who earlier may not have engaged in this unlawful activity in physical markets due to the fear of law enforcement and prosecution. Reports indicate a shift towards online wildlife trafficking.

The above seizure of lion claws, organs of wild animals, and sea fans shows how the internet can be exploited to run an organised inter-state and multi-dealer network for sale of illegal wildlife products in India from any location. Therefore, it becomes imperative that illegal wildlife trade is monitored on online platforms and that enforcement officials are trained to carry this out.

Sources:

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In Focus

- 1. COALITION TO END WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING ONLINE:
An Overview**
- 2. Curbing wildlife cybercrime in India: The legal lacunas
Dr Karnika Seth**

Cyberlaw expert & Founding Partner, Seth Associates law firm, India
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COALITION TO END WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING ONLINE: An Overview

With more technology and connectivity across the world due to the internet boom and mobile applications, wildlife traffickers have increasingly shifted from physical to online markets for the trade of endangered species and their parts. Today, it is easy to buy and sell products such as elephant ivory, tiger cubs and pangolin scales with more anonymity than ever before, through the many e-commerce, social media and technology platforms that have a global network and audience. Because of this, wildlife traffickers are able to reach new consumers, and expand their consumer base. This is something that law enforcement cannot tackle alone, and with the leadership of WWF, TRAFFIC and IFAW, the world's largest and most influential tech companies have joined forces to ensure that the open web is not a place for illegal wildlife products.

The Coalition publicly launched in 2018 and has since grown to become a group of 34 companies including Google, Microsoft, eBay, Etsy, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Tencent, Baidu, Sina Weibo, and Alibaba. In an industry-wide approach, the Coalition works together to ensure that the open web becomes a more difficult and less profitable space to sell wildlife products, pushing bad actors to the dark web where the stakes are much higher, and where the international law enforcement community monitor wildlife alongside drug and human trafficking.

With each of the companies, WWF, TRAFFIC and IFAW develop an action plan that measures progress towards becoming wildlife trafficking free. Of the core activities, each Coalition company works with wildlife experts at WWF, TRAFFIC and IFAW to develop a clear, comprehensive and enforceable wildlife policy for both content and advertisement. Concurrently, company enforcement and policy staff undergo detailed training on how to identify illegal wildlife products online and suspicious seller behaviours. In addition, Coalition companies engage internet users to be part of the solution by initiating user awareness campaigns, mobilising the public to do their part to avoid illegal wildlife products, and to report wildlife trafficking online. Coalition companies also participate in the Wildlife Cyber Spotter Program, which trains citizen scientists continuously to monitor each participating platform for suspicious wildlife activities year-round. Throughout all of these activities, Coalition companies share best practices and trends with other Coalition members, amplifying the Coalition's collective efforts in developing automated, advanced detection of endangered species content through machine learning and AI.

In less than two years since its public launch, 76% of all US based partners have adopted comprehensive prohibited wildlife content policies. Over 200 company staff have received training on wildlife trafficking and wildlife product identification. From an enforcement standpoint, eBay has removed 165,000 illegal wildlife listings in the past two years and over 6,000 accounts selling illegal wildlife products have been blocked by partner companies in China. Tencent's support for law enforcement has also contributed to a criminal network being uncovered and dismantled, with 129 suspects arrested and 216 pangolins and other wildlife products being seized, alongside the confiscation of over 18 million Chinese yuan transaction funds. Recent joint Global Tiger Day Coalition communications campaigns have reached over 700,000 social impressions within 24 hours.

By the end of 2019, internet users in India were reported to have reached 627 million, driven by the dramatic internet growth in rural regions. Additionally, by the end of 2019, the estimated number of social media users was expected to grow to 351.4 million, and e-commerce sales to grow by over 24%. With India a key range state for endangered species such as tigers, and a major transit hub for people and goods globally, the Coalition appreciates the importance of engaging with India-based companies to develop a regional, company-centric approach for combatting wildlife trafficking online. For additional information on the work of the Coalition, please visit www.endwildlifetraffickingonline.org. If you are a company that would like to work with the Coalition to help keep endangered species offline and in the wild, please contact WWF/TRAFFIC or send an email to endwildlifetraffickingonline@wwfus.org.



CURBING WILDLIFE CYBERCRIME IN INDIA: THE LEGAL LACUNAS

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Information technology is mostly seen as a boon but can prove to be a bane as cyber criminals rampantly misuse the internet due to the anonymity inherent in it. One such crime growing at an alarming rate is wildlife trafficking on the internet. With the proliferation of B2B (Business to Business) and B2C (Business to Consumer) enterprises online; and rampant use of social media and bitcoins; law enforcement teams are challenged by rising wildlife cybercrime rackets. The technical complexity, ease of camouflaging real Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, use of onion routing, the dark web, easy to change identities and location details all make tracking and monitoring of cyber space extremely difficult.

In India, a special law protects its wildlife, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WPA). The Act contains provisions that prohibit trafficking and trade of wildlife and prescribe punishments and penalties therefor. Hunting of wild animals listed under Schedule I to VI of the WPA and trade in their body parts and derivatives is prohibited under the Act. Section 51 of the said Act prescribes punishment of up to three years that can extend up to seven years and a fine of up to INR25,000 (USD350) or both for contravening provisions prohibiting wildlife trafficking.

Though the WPA is a special law, it does not carry any special provision to deal with wildlife related cybercrime. It is imperative that either the Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act, 2000) is amended in India to incorporate a new provision to deal with wildlife cybercrime or a new law/provision is enacted/introduced in the WPA specifically for curbing online wildlife crime.

To deal with cyber wildlife crime, extant provisions under the IT Act are not adequate. For instance, enforcement bodies can seek co-operation from internet service providers to investigate cybercrimes, or monitor traffic data and block illegal content under Section 69A and Section 69B of the IT Act, 2000. However, the IT Act 2000, has no express provisions to deter and prohibit wildlife cybercrimes.

Another hurdle in curbing wildlife cybercrime is sale of illegal animal parts on social media or on websites as it becomes difficult to differentiate between legal and illegal advertisements on these platforms. To sell illegal animal parts, hackers or cyber poachers post advertisements on social media and on websites that have misspelled names, or use a homepage that looks like it hasn't been updated for a very long time so it is not easily tracked down by government authorities.

Illegal traders and poachers use fake identities to sell illegal animal parts online, which in itself is a crime. Under the IT Act, 2000 any person who garbs a false identity of a person for example to commit wildlife cybercrime, would be guilty of identity theft and be punishable with imprisonment of up to three years and a fine. A person guilty of cheating by personation would be is punishable with imprisonment of up to three years, a fine of INR100,000 (USD1400) or both.

Certain other laws are also relevant to combat wildlife cybercrime in India such as the Foreign Trade Development Act, 1992. Under Section 11(2) of the said Act any person who exports or imports in contravention to the export and import policy (EXIM policy) shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding INR1000 (USD14) or five times the value of the goods in respect of which any contravention is made.

Through the Foreign Trade Policy, the Ministry of Commerce periodically announces the wildlife products and wildlife which can either be exported from or imported into India along with compliance with Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) provisions, which governs international trade of permissible species of wildlife and products thereof. The trade of wildlife is also governed by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) (import policy) which grants licences for import of animals and their parts and products for zoological parks and circuses or for research purposes subject to the provision of CITES and on

recommendations of the Chief Wildlife Warden of the States and Union Territories. The import of other derivatives of Wildlife is restricted and can be made only with prior permission of the DGFT, subject to the conditions prescribed. Import of wild animals as pets in the personal baggage of a passenger is also subject to the provisions of CITES in accordance with the Ministry of Commerce's Public Notice No. 27/ITC(PN) 180.

The Customs Act, 1962, under Section 117, imposes a penalty of INR10,000 (USD140) if any person contravenes any provision of this Act or abets any such contravention or who fails to comply with any provision of the Act. The central government is empowered under Section 11 of the said Act to prohibit export or import of any goods of any specified description.

India's enforcement mechanisms to combat wildlife cybercrime mainly consist of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) established under the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF), wherein trained officers along with police take necessary steps to curb this menace. It is important to note that cases of wildlife cybercrime are adjudicated by the general criminal courts and no fast track courts are specially set up to hear the cases. A need to train forest and police officers in gathering electronic evidence, use social engineering techniques to investigate and detect and punish scamsters and organised groups running hidden operations to export, import or sell such banned items, is crucial.

On the international front, India has been a signatory to CITES since 1976 and there are 183 Parties to the convention. There are new developments in this sphere wherein the International Consortium for Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) has been set up. The importance of forming coalitions and alliances to curb this problem cannot be underestimated. The Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online is yet another initiative that is helping to bring together various internet companies for combating online wildlife crime.

Like China, India needs to conduct proactive surveillance of suspicious websites or social media websites by searching keywords for specific illegal wildlife products and record the number of new wildlife product advertisements every month.

As a positive step, UNEP-WCMC developed, with funding from the European Commission, the Electronic Permit Information eXchange (EPIX) system to enable different countries to share wildlife trade permit information electronically and in near-real time with each other, and to share with the world better and more timely statistics on the global trade in plants and animals. It provides a global mechanism for countries to verify legal permits and more easily detect illegal permits for international trade in species listed in CITES.

In order to strengthen the Indian legal framework for combating wildlife cybercrime, it is pertinent to introduce essential amendments to the IT Act, 2000 and/or WPA to prescribe punishments for cybercriminals who indulge or engage in any kind of wildlife trafficking. Also, reporting to law enforcement agencies ought to be made mandatory. The law enforcement teams must deploy more trained manpower and create fast track courts to investigate and adjudicate such cases.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and photo DNA technology to detect, analyse and curb cybercrime can lead to promising results. This is particularly useful as image mapping can help check shapes, photos and depiction of prohibited/restricted wildlife and items made therefrom.

AI can gather select keywords that cybercriminals use to sell or advertise prohibited wild animals and their products.

The terms of use and privacy policy of online shopping platforms must contain legal provisions that allow the website to suspend or terminate a user's account in cases where the site is used for illegal activities. The terms must clearly declare and prohibit advertising and sale of items that are illegal and prohibited on their website. Also, it must have a local officer to take down immediately illegal content when it is reported.

It is important to encourage more research and development in this area and proactive patrolling on the internet to deal with this issue. The police can be supported by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations that work towards this cause. Some NGO that have worked extensively in this area include IFAW, TRAFFIC, and WWF.

To conclude, a multi stakeholder approach is the way forward to combat wildlife cybercrime in India. With active co-operation from government agencies, industry leaders, internet companies, NGOs, civil society organisations, IT law experts, and IT professionals, this problem can be effectively curbed in India. However, all steps, legal, technical and from an industry point of view and enforcement measures ought to be adopted simultaneously both from national and global standpoint in order to combat rising wildlife cybercrimes effectively.

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Wild Cry

Use of social media for live bird trade: A case study on Facebook

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Use of social media for live bird trade: A case study on Facebook



Illegal trade of animals for luxury goods, traditional medicine, cultural ceremonies, pets, and entertainment is a major threat to wildlife conservation (Baker *et al.*, 2013). Poachers and illegal traders use highly sophisticated and rapidly changing techniques to avoid detection.

Previously, wildlife trade activities took place in physical markets (Cheung and Dudgeon, 2006; Nijman and Shepherd, 2007; Regueira and Bernard, 2012), but recent studies demonstrate that the internet is increasingly being used for illegal trade of various wildlife species, including birds (Alves *et al.*, 2012), mammals (Harrison *et al.*, 2016), orchids (Hinsley *et al.*, 2015), and others. The internet has facilitated wildlife trafficking by providing various social media and e-commerce platforms for communication and exchange of information, as well as reconfiguring relations among suppliers, intermediaries and buyers (Lavorgna, 2014). Today cyber space is emerging as the preferred marketplace for illegal wildlife trade, as it provides vast outreach to the traders along with effective anonymity (Hastie & McCrea-Steele 2014).

Social media and e-commerce sellers in India

Ever since the rise of the digital age, social media and online marketing has grown at a rapid pace with the internet permeating into every sphere of life. However, this has given rise to the phenomenon of wildlife cybercrime, which impacts

biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. It is estimated that there will be around 376.1 million social network users in India by 2020. The most popular social media networks in India are YouTube and Facebook, followed by WhatsApp. Facebook is projected to reach close to 444.2 million users in India by 2023² (Source: Statista).

Methodology: Case study on Facebook

This study was conducted for about 40 days for an hour daily on weekdays plus two extra hours to compensate for weekends. Live bird trade over Facebook Groups from India and its two neighbouring countries, Pakistan and Bangladesh was monitored. The Indian groups were monitored from 20th May to 30th June 2019 and the groups in Bangladesh and Pakistan between 1st June to 10th July 2019. In order to identify relevant Groups, different English language keywords were used in the Facebook Search facility (Table #1). A total of 10 relevant Groups were identified—eight from India, and one each from Pakistan and Bangladesh—where posts relating to live bird trade were encountered regularly. The bird species advertised in the post were identified based on the photographs available in these posts. These groups had a joint membership of 1,45,671 members ranging from 1,392 to 93,955 members in a single group with the exception of one group having only 12 members. The eight groups from India were selected to ensure they provided regional coverage across India.

Every Post (status update in the form of a comment, picture or other input on a Users' page or wall) in each Group was recorded and reviewed to minimise the risk of double counting. Care was taken to review every advertisement and eliminate all duplicates, including those that appeared with different dates. The number of animals and species were counted based on the text and/or the images that sellers provided. If the same seller offered a product that was previously posted, the duplicates and any subsequent post were disregarded from data collection. As online sellers sometimes repeatedly use the same image to advertise different products, duplicate pictures or texts that were similar were also eliminated from this study to avoid overcounting. Thus, the numbers presented represent the minimum number of animals/species for sale over the survey period. A conversion rate of 1 Bangladeshi taka (BDT) = 0.84 INR, 1 Pakistani rupee (PKR) = 0.46 INR was used, as on 17th December 2019 on www.xe.com. The minimum number of birds counted from every Post based on the following criteria:

- user mentioned the available quantity,
- by counting the individuals in pictures available in the post
- a minimum of one individual was counted where both of above criteria were missing

Table 1: Search keywords used during the study period

SN	Keywords used	SN	Keywords used
1	Live bird	5	Pet trade
2	Exotic bird	6	Pet shops
3	Exotic animal	7	Pet sale
4	Exotic pet sale	8	Bird market

Findings

A total of 1,062 Posts were recorded of which 408 were for hybrids (cross of two different species) and were excluded from analysis. Of the remaining 654 posts, all were for birds except three posts — for Ball Python *Python regius*, Indian Softshell Turtle *Nilssonia gangetica*, Hog Deer *Axis porcinus*, and Blackbuck *Antilope cervicapra*, which were also excluded from the analysis. Of these, 295 posts were of budgerigar, lovebirds (except Fischer's Lovebird), and cockatiel, which were further removed from the analysis as these birds are mainly bred in captivity for pet trade.

Of the remaining 356 live bird Posts, India had 251 Posts in eight Groups, Pakistan had 82 Posts in one Group and Bangladesh had 23 Posts in one Group. On an average, 44 posts for bird species were advertised per week during the study period with an average of 31 Posts per Group in India.

Some 75% (n=266) of the Posts advertised only one or two individuals per advertisement while 6% (n=21) advertised three individuals, 4% (n=15) advertised four individuals and 15% (n=54) advertised more than four individuals. In these 356 Posts, some 22,141 individual birds were advertised for trade.

Species found in trade

Advertisements were mostly for parrots Psittacidae and cockatoos Cacatuidae, including species like the (African) Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*, Amazon parrots, together with a variety of parakeets, conures, macaws, lorikeets, and rosellas (Table 2). Post also advertised a variety of finches, francolins, partridges, pheasants, and eagles advertised for sale (Table 3).

Top species advertised in Posts

Of these 356 Posts recorded during the study period, 85% advertised parrot species that may have been wild-sourced, plus 9% finches, 3% francolins and remaining 3% were other species. Of the total number of individuals recorded in the 356 Posts (n=22,141), 98.79% (n=21,872) were parrots, of which the majority were conures (98.22%) followed by parakeets (0.65%, n=142), macaws (0.29%, n=64), (African) Grey Parrot (0.27%, n=60), Fischer's Lovebird (0.21%, n=47) cockatoos (0.13%, n=29) and others (Table 4).



Table 2: Parrot species and their protection status			
Parrots	WPA 1972	CITES	IUCN
Conures		II	LC & EN
Parakeets	IV	II	NT & LC
Macaws		I and II	LC & VU
(African) Grey Parrot		I	EN
Cockatoos		I and II	
Amazon parrots		I and II	LC & EN
Rosellas		II	
Eclectus Parrot		II	
Blue-headed Parrot		II	LC
Red-winged Parrot		II	LC

WPA- Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; LC- Least Concerned; EN- Endangered;
NT- Near Threatened; LC- Least Concern; VU- Vulnerable

Table 3: No. of Posts and individuals recorded for sale		
Species	No. of Posts	No. of individuals on sale
Parrots – possibly wild-sourced	303	21,872
Finch	33	148
Francolin	11	41
Myna	2	3
Partridge	2	45
Eagle	1	2
Guinea Fowl	1	8
Pheasant	3	22
	356	22141

Table 4: Parrot species and number of individuals recorded	
Parrot Species	No. of Parrots
Conure	21,482
Parakeet	142
Macaw	64
(African) Grey Parrot	60
Love Bird-Fisher	47
Cockatoo incl. Corellas	31
Amazon parrot	13
Lorikeet	12
Rosella	12
Eclectus parrot	4
Blue headed parrot	3
Red-winged Parrot	2
Grand Total	21872



CITES-listed species

The study found 33 different species advertised in the Posts that were listed either in Appendix I, II or III of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The majority of these (73%) were listed in Appendix II, 24% in Appendix I and 3% in Appendix III (Table 5). Of these CITES listed species, 85% were parrots.

Figure: Number of species (%) listed in CITES Appendices

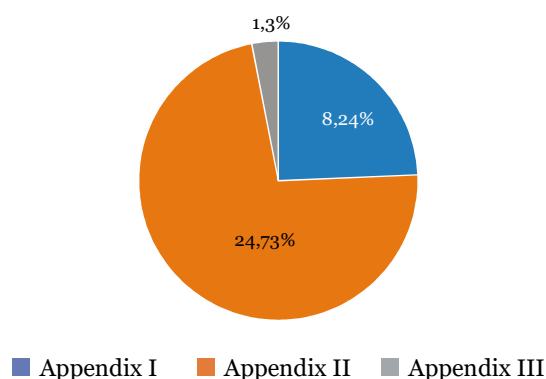


Table 5: CITES listed species found in Facebook posts

CITES Appendix I	CITES Appendix II	CITES Appendix III
Parrot	Eagle	Peafowl
(African) Grey Parrot	Changeable Hawk-eagle	Indian Peafowl
Hyacinth Macaw	Myna	
Scarlet Macaw	Hill Myna	
White Cockatoo	Parrot	
Salmon-crested Cockatoo	Alexandrine Parakeet	
Palm Cockatoo	Plum-headed Parakeet	
Tanimbar Corella	Red-breasted Parakeet	
Red-crowned Amazon	Blue-and-yellow Macaw	
	Chestnut-fronted Macaw	
	Green-winged Macaw	
	Blue-fronted Amazon	
	Crimson-bellied Conure	
	Green-cheeked Conure	
	Jandaya Conure	
	Peach-fronted Conure	
	Pearly Conure	
	Sun Conure	
	Eastern Rosella	
	Eclectus Parrot	
	Galah	
	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	
	Blue-headed Parrot	
	Red-winged Parrot	

Valuation of species in advertisements

Price data were available in 69 out of 356 Posts (19%) in which the highest priced species were the (African) Grey Parrot and the Orange-winged Amazon costing INR 60,000 each. Prices quoted range widely within species e.g. a finch was quoted from as low as INR115 to INR1,800, an (African) Grey Parrot INR12,420 to INR60,000, conures from INR433 to INR24,000 and parakeets from INR345 to INR16,000.

Conclusion

This short study gives a glimpse into the ongoing live bird trade in India for native and non-native species on the social media platform Facebook owing to the ease with which such platforms can be used to connect interested buyers and sellers locally, regionally and between countries.

In order to regulate this rapidly growing cybermarket, better collaboration is needed between enforcement agencies, e-commerce and social media companies, NGOs and other relevant agencies for monitoring and sharing information of such activities.

Traders on social media platforms use different codewords and terminologies, making it extremely difficult to trace their activities. A central repository of such keywords should be created both in English and regional languages for future monitoring. This will be useful in enabling the development of automated alert systems to detect potentially illegal activities in real time. Awareness about wildlife trade, especially illegal wildlife trade, on social media platforms could be enhanced through a “Report Back” button for internet users to report suspicious activity. An alert tool could be made a mandatory feature for all such social media platforms.

The findings from this study were shared with Facebook through the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online to which Facebook is a member. It was encouraging to learn that all Posts from the study related to species listed in Appendix I and II of CITES were immediately removed by Facebook.

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Signpost

Other significant news stories

12 kg elephant tusks, tiger teeth worth ₹1.14 cr seized

Kolkata: About 12 kg of elephant tusk and five pieces of tiger tooth, valued at ₹1.14 crore, have been recovered here, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) officials said.

Three persons were arrested in this connection, the agency said in a statement on Tuesday.

Acting on a tip-off, the DRI sleuths nabbed Muslima Begum and her husband Habibullah, suspected kargin of the racket, at Sealdad Railway Station on Sunday and recovered two elephant tusks weighing 4.27 kg from Begum, it said.

DRI said that she had brought the items from Assam

and was passed to deliver the consignment to her husband, before which both were nabbed.

Habibullah was wanted in several cases booked by the agency's Kolkata, Siliguri and Guwahati units, where he had attempted to smuggle around 48.79 kg elephant tusks and ivory statues with a total worth of ₹6.01 crore, a DRI official said.

He was involved in smuggling of elephant tusks, ivory items, tiger teeth and other animal body parts to neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar, the official said.

Interrogation of the couple led to the arrest of their son-in-

law Adil Hussain from a flat in Park Circus area on Monday.

A total of 31 pieces of ivory items and five pieces of tiger tooth were recovered from the flat, the agency said.

DRI said they also found tools and ₹1.48 lakh in cash from Habibullah's residence at Karaya Road.

While elephant tusks fetch lucrative prices in Nepal and Bangladesh, tiger teeth are in demand in China and Myanmar, the DRI said.

Animal body parts are prohibited from export under the provisions of Foreign Trade Policy, Customs Act, 1962 read with Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, it added. **PTI**

Crackdown on wildlife online traffickers

Enforcement agencies join hands with internet firms to help stop wildlife crime based on 'click, pay and ship' policy

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With wildlife traffickers switching from physical market to virtual ones as India's internet user population reaches 500 million, enforcement agencies are joining hands, among others, with internet firms to help crack down on wildlife cybercrime based on 'click, pay and ship' policy.

Everything from turtles and tortoises to Red Sand Boa, monitor lizard, Red Sanders, body parts of elephants, tigers, leopards etc. are being traded on various websites and mobile applications.

Tilottama Varma, Additional Director, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) under the Union Environment Ministry rings the alarm bell.

She added, therefore, it becomes imperative to involve internet companies and find solutions with them to curb online illegal wildlife trade.

In this connection, a meeting was held recently here at the Ministry with companies providing online platform like Google India, Quickr, Flipkart, IndiaMART besides representatives from business chambers such as FICCI and CII, Central Zoo Authority, National Tiger Conservation Authority, Global Tiger Forum, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), IUCN and Wildlife Trust of India among others.



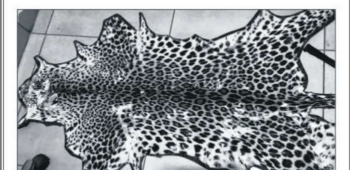
Stressing on intensifying global efforts to end wildlife trafficking, Jadhava Dewlwar, acting Minister counselor for economic, environment, science and technology affairs, US Embassy, New Delhi added, "The web is the biggest marketplace for the illegal trade of wildlife. Wildlife is being trafficked from the comfort of people's homes."

Dr Saket Babala, head of TRAFFIC's India said illegal wildlife trade is a significant threat to wildlife conservation today and in recent years has increasingly moved into cyberspace. With India's internet user population reaching nearly 500 million, cybercrime has become a mounting concern.

Large numbers of wildlife species and their parts and derivatives have been found on sale online, among them skins and body parts of tiger, leopard and snow leopard, elephant ivory, rhino horn, pangolin scales, marine species, birds, reptiles. Their timely detection and subsequent enforcement action are fast becoming con-

TELLING NUMBERS

388 wildlife crime cases last year, over 20% were about leopards



A leopard skin seized in Ballabgarh (Haryana) in 2018. Express Archive

In 2018, 388 cases of wildlife-related crimes were registered under the Wildlife Protection Act, according to a reply tabled in Parliament by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

In nearly one in every three cases—123 of the 388—the species involved was leopards or tigers. Leopards alone accounted for over one in five cases, at 81, while 42 cases involved tigers. In between the two big cat species were scheduled birds, which accounted for 61 cases, or a little over than one in seven.

Just five species accounted for two in every three cases—259 of 388—with leopards (21%), scheduled birds (16%) and tigers (11%) being followed by star tortoises or turtles (10%) and deer (9%). Ten species accounted for over 90% of the cases, the other five being elephants (7%), snakes (5%), rhinos (4%), mongooses (4%) and monkeys (a little under 4%). The remaining 10% were cases that involved 10 other species, including Tokay geckos and monkeys.

Overall, the number of cases of wildlife crime has come down since 2016, when 565 were registered, and risen slightly since 2017, when 342 were registered.

The ministry said a Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been set up to gather intelligence about poaching and unlawful activity in wildlife trade in wild animals and animal articles. Under centrally sponsored schemes such as "Development of Wildlife Habitats," "Project Tiger" and "Project Elephant", funds are provided to the governments of states and Union Territories, it said.

SPECIES	CASES	SHARE
Leopard	81	20.9%
Scheduled birds	61	15.7%
Tiger	42	10.8%
Star tortoise/turtle	39	10.1%
Deer	36	9.3%
Elephant	27	7.0%
Snake	19	4.9%
Rhino	16	4.1%
Mongoose	15	3.9%
Pangolin	14	3.6%
Others	38	9.8%
Total	388	100%

Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

The Pioneer, Delhi; 1/8/2019

Arms exchanged for animal parts

West Bengal, a transit route

West Bengal has been identified as a transit route for wildlife parts, according to a report by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB). The report says that a large number of wildlife parts, including tiger teeth, leopard skins, and elephant tusks, are being smuggled through the state. The WCCB has set up a task force to investigate the matter and has also launched a public awareness campaign.

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The Pioneer, Delhi; 17/9/19

The Indian Express, Delhi; 7/12/19

524 PARAKEETS RESCUED, 2 HELD



In one of the largest reported seizures of parakeets in Bengal in the recent times, 524 rose-ringed parakeets—protected under wildlife protection act—were rescued and two persons were arrested by officials of Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), eastern region, at Burdwan on Saturday morning. The two accused have been identified as Sakhi Akhtar and Raisakhi Mohammad, both residents of Dubrajdighi, Burdwan. Both the accused were travelling in a Patra-Kolkata route bus with 11 cages full of parakeets. "The duo have been handed over to Burdwan forest division, which is registering a case and will take up further investigation. After taking permission from the court, the birds that are fit will be released back into the wild," said an official.

Hunting grounds

Wildlife Trade District Hotspots

Animals targeted by traffickers

- Tiger
- Leopard
- Elephant
- Rhino
- Wild boar
- Sambar deer
- Wild dog
- Jackal
- Wild cat
- Wild pig
- Wild rabbit
- Wild bird
- Wild fish
- Wild reptile
- Wild amphibian
- Wild invertebrate

Main consumer markets

- China
- USA
- UK
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Spain
- Japan
- South Korea
- India
- Malaysia
- Singapore
- Brazil
- USA
- UK
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Spain
- Japan
- South Korea
- India
- Malaysia
- Singapore
- Brazil

Transit countries

- China
- USA
- UK
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Spain
- Japan
- South Korea
- India
- Malaysia
- Singapore
- Brazil

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)

10,139 cases in the Northeast

2,649 cases in the West

219 cases in the South

10,139 cases in the Northeast

2,649 cases in the West

219 cases in the South

Deccan Herald, Bangalore; 4/8/2019

Sunday Times, Kolkata; 15/9/2019

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#StopIllegalWildlifeTrade

