

**TRAFFIC**  
NEWSLETTER

March 2015

# TRAFFIC POST

Standard Certification  
Systems for Boosting  
Medicinal and Aromatic  
Plant Trade in Transiting  
Economies  
**WILD CRY  
FEATURE.....**

TRAFFIC's NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA

ISSUE 22 & 23  
MARCH 2015

# TRAFFIC Post

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

Illegal wildlife trade is reportedly the third largest global illegal trade after arms and narcotics. It has evolved itself 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**

## Managing Editor:

**Dilpreet B. Chhabra**  
*dchhabra@wwfindia.net*

## Editorial Team:

**Shekhar Kumar Niraj**  
*sniraj@wwfindia.net*  
**Shubhobroto Ghosh**  
*sghosh@wwfindia.net*

## Design:

**Vandana Singh**  
*vandanasingh.c@gmail.com*  
**Dilpreet B. Chhabra**  
*dchhabra@wwfindia.net*

## Photo Credit: Front cover

*Gloriosa superba* : **Amit Kotia**

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# From the Desk



On one hand we have good news of a 30% increase in the Tiger population in India, which is phenomenal. On the other, rhino poaching has returned with a vengeance since 2013, at least it seems that way.

**Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj,  
Head of TRAFFIC India Office**

I do not take pride in reporting that the New Year does not start on a good note as far as wildlife crime is concerned, more so globally, but also in India. What worries me the most is the state of confusion at policy levels. On one hand we have good news of a 30% increase in the Tiger population in India, which is phenomenal. On the other, rhino poaching has returned with a vengeance since 2013, at least it seems that way.

In an editorial a few issues ago, I reported that leopards are fast substituting Tigers in illegal trade and an associated elasticity was recorded in increasing demand of leopard as the demand for tiger went increasing, which was in turn associated with an increasing per capita income in countries of resource and in destination countries. This followed a sharp increase in leopard poaching, manifested by an increased frequency of seizures of leopards' parts and derivatives during recent months stand true to this prediction.

This is indeed a difficult situation. The effect of substitution may be affecting several other species we currently do not know about. If this is true, where is the opportunity to rejoice at the phenomenal growth rate achieved for Tigers since 2010?

Describing flagship species, such as Tiger and leopard, and the poaching association between them certainly does not complete the story by any means. There is a large number of species, smaller entities, whose life histories are not so well-known that are speedily being lost to the illegal trade.

There appear to be bleak chances that many of them will survive for a reasonable length of time. The list of such species is long, but to name a few that top the list, they include pangolins, Bengal, Yellow Monitor and Spiny-tailed Lizards, freshwater otters, civets, cats including Jungle, Fishing and Rusty-spotted, Slender and Slow Lorises, Jackal, the Red Sand Boa among snakes, and Hill Mynah and owls among the birds. Many of these species are taken from the wild for feeding a rising domestic trade

in bushmeat and an apparently ever rising black magic trade involving wildlife in this country.

What is paradoxical is that as the country ascends into a "new and modern India", which is also supposed to be economically better off, individual greed for making it to big and rich in the quickest possible time is taking its own heavy toll on those smaller species. Apparently, science has taken a distant back seat in many minds. Some example will exemplify the happenings.



© GS Bhardwaj

In Tamil Nadu State certain communities trap the endemic Slender Loris, make it bite a coin, which is then kept as a charm around the neck of the child to stave off ill omens. Well, this sounds less sordid than what certain other communities practice: extracting the eyes of a Slender Loris to sell to people who keep them near their sleeping children in the belief that this will sharpen their eyesight and make them brighter.



There are also certain communities in North India who sacrifice an owl by cutting it limb by limb, expecting in return for this sacrifice a prosperous windfall for their families. There is a belief that sacrificing a heavier owl will fetch a greater fortune, hence may traders make the birds heavier by infusing mercury or other metals into them. A phenomenal growth in the price of Red Sand Boas in illegal wildlife markets is driven by a deep belief in black magic, particularly among certain people who want to believe themselves destined to be rich or powerful. The result is that we find a distortion in the socio-economic fabric within India when young students having passed out from premier engineering, medical and other professional colleges end up indulging in trading of high priced species, such as Red Sand Boas, Star Tortoises and Tokay Geckos.

The emerging situation obviously calls for stronger planning and greater inputs of resources to match the upcoming challenges. The “new and modern India” is going to pose several new challenges not only for flagship species, but for several other lesser known species too. But where are we? The beginning of the financial year 2015-16 has somewhat dampened the thoughts if we look closely at the current budget statement of the Union government. There has been a cut of budget allocated to the Union Ministry for Forest, Wildlife and Climate Change of nearly 25% compared with the fiscal year of 2013-14. The government also announced a budget cut of 15% for Project Tiger, one of India's historically most prestigious umbrella conservation programmes.

Nonetheless, the TRAFFIC network in India has risen to the occasion with a deeper understanding of the ground realities and has been instrumental in conducting a historic high of 119 enforcement interventions for the year 2014 at roughly 10 interventions per month, which also led to aversions of several poaching cases and seizures of several live species and

animal body parts, including ivory, skins, claws, scales and bones. Various TRAFFIC assisted raids have led to the arrest of over 100 poachers and illegal wildlife traffickers.

In the first six months of 2014 TRAFFIC assisted with classified information on 51 interventions, a huge rise of 700% compared to the second half of 2013. The momentum was kept up for the second half of 2014, which has recorded a 33% rise compared to the first half of 2014. TRAFFIC took a special pride in providing an outstanding contribution for protection of rhinos in Assam with significant information management and field level assistance leading to a 25% decrease in poaching of One-horned Rhinos in 2014 compared to 2013.

The year 2015 has begun with new challenges, new paradoxes, and a strong resolve. But enhanced resource allocation is required to control a globally and locally rising illegal wildlife trade.

# 01

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## TRAFFIC India Update

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2. TRAFFIC breaks new grounds at Coimbatore wildlife law enforcement training workshop
3. South Asia strengthens co-operation, moves a step closer to eradicating wildlife crime
4. TRAFFIC rolls out social media campaign on illegal trade in lesser known non-charismatic species
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7. Meet the team: TRAFFIC's new members in the India office



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## India to double its wildlife sniffer dog brigade

India's wildlife sniffer dog brigade will soon get a major boost with the addition of 14 new dogs and 28 handlers that will join the ranks of the Forest Department of Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Karnataka in 2015. The dogs have been procured and are being trained under TRAFFIC's sniffer dog training programme at the Dog Training Centre, 23rd Battalion of Special Armed Forces, Bhopal.

TRAFFIC's dog training programme has had many early successes. Twelve sniffer dogs – German Shepherds – attached to the forest departments of Haryana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand have become leading examples of the use of sniffer dogs in wildlife crime prevention and detection in India. Use of the dogs has led to nearly 80 wildlife seizures in recent years and several have been widely acclaimed, including Jimmy, one of TRAFFIC's sniffer dog that was accorded a Certificate of Merit by the Governor of Madhya Pradesh in 2013. Jimmy has helped bust at least 25 wildlife poaching and smuggling cases.

Even though trained for sniffing out products such as Tiger and leopard bones and skins and bear bile, these sniffer dogs are also detecting other wildlife contraband such as ivory, deer meat, live bird species, Red Sand Boa, Blackbuck, hare, python, rat snake, porcupine and even weapons. They have been playing a huge role in wildlife investigation and prosecution.

India's wildlife is under grave danger from the ever increasing illegal wildlife trade. Poachers and traders are employing new tools and technologies to expand their illicit business and this is proving to be a major challenge for the forest department and other enforcement agencies. Use of sniffer dogs for wildlife crime prevention and detection has been employed as an effective tool and TRAFFIC has had experience in handling this in many countries across the globe”.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC, India office adds “India has a huge forest cover and with only 12 trained sniffer dogs and another 14 in training, pressure for protecting

India's wildlife will remain immense on these four legged creatures. It is our vision that at least four to five dogs are deployed in each State in the next few years for boosting wildlife conservation and protection efforts.”

“It is our vision that at least four to five dogs are deployed in each State in the next few years for boosting wildlife conservation and protection efforts.”

Dr. Shekhar Niraj

To find out more about TRAFFIC's sniffer dog training programme in India, please visit [www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org).



## TRAFFIC breaks new grounds at Coimbatore wildlife law enforcement training workshop

A wildlife law enforcement capacity building training workshop organized by TRAFFIC in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Forest Department and WWF-India on 21-22 November 2014 at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu was a roaring success and the latest in a series of workshops spanning seven years.

For the first time, enforcement officials from the three adjoining States in the south-west of the country (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala) came together to receive hands-on training in detecting wildlife poaching and controlling wildlife crime scenes. One hundred and twenty officials from the departments of Police, Forests, Customs, Railway Protection Forces, Special Task Force, and the Postal Department, participated in the training workshop clearly indicating the wide interest in wildlife protection and conservation.

“The threat from poaching for illegal trade in this region is largely due to its geographical location at the junction of three States where poachers have the opportunity to operate across provincial borders,” said Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India

“This capacity building programme was organized with a specific view to strengthening protection of animals including the Tiger, Leopard, Elephants, bears plus several lesser known species that inhabit this rich yet vulnerable biodiversity hotspot of the Western Ghats. Together, the three States are home to seven Tiger Reserves,” he further added.

Almost 80 participants took part in a half-day field session, during which four mock crime scenes were investigated in the forested campus of the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy where the workshop took place.

Participants also received training on the detection of crime relating to plant and timber species, learning, for example, how to detect illegal felling and how to assess plant diversity using a quadrant method, while further practical training was given on the use of modern technology such as deep search metal detectors for locating snares.

Training sessions were also conducted on the use of cyber forensics, intelligence collection and collation, species identification, DNA fingerprinting and wildlife forensics, and sessions on legislation and jurisprudence toward achieving higher conviction rate.

Experts assisting with the crime scene simulations included trained officials from the Special Task Force from Tamil Nadu, scientists from Madras Forensic laboratory and a Madras High Court lawyer.

The novel approaches introduced during the latest meeting have led to a flood of requests for similar training programmes to be conducted elsewhere in the country, including a special request from the Commissioner of Police, Coimbatore, Mr A. K. Vishwanathan, for a training programme for senior police officials from districts in the Western Ghats region. TRAFFIC also organized similar training programmes at:

**Amravati, Maharashtra** on 9-10 May 2014 for the Forest Department of Melghat Tiger Reserve, Police, Special Task Force and Intelligence Department (DRI). The total number of participants at this workshop was 75.

**Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh** on 11-12 June 2014 for the Forest Department of Achanakmar Tiger reserve, Civil administration, Territorial Forest Department, civil administration and Judiciary. The total number of participants at this workshop was 91.

## South Asia strengthens co-operation, moves a step closer to eradicating wildlife crime

The eight South Asian countries met in August 2014 at the second annual meeting of the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) in Kathmandu, Nepal to finalize the SAWEN Statute and update their collaborative roadmap for fighting wildlife crime in South Asia.

“Strengthening transboundary co-operation and collaboration for intra-country law enforcement initiatives through intelligence sharing on poaching and trade trends, along with exchanging knowledge and skill for fighting wildlife crime across South Asia” was the unequivocal concern of the representatives of the South Asian countries at the meeting that was held from 26-29 August 2014.

The meeting was particularly successful in adopting the SAWEN Statute and beginning an intense process for developing an action plan for the next six years. The Statute clearly details the vision, goal, objectives and the crucial role that SAWEN will play in combating wildlife crime in the region. The Statute, endorsed by member country delegates to the meeting, will now await the final endorsement from the Governments of the eight South Asian countries.

Delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, joined various inter-governmental organizations, international and regional organizations working on matters of wildlife trade and international policies at this important meeting. A number of international donors including the World Bank, USAID and the US Department of State also participated.



Useful inputs were provided by the global conservation communities in support of the eight member countries and the SAWEN Secretariat. This included INTERPOL, the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), The World Bank, TRAFFIC, WWF Tigers Alive Initiative and WWF-Nepal.

The meeting provided a practical platform for sharing experiences, discussing common issues, reviewing performances, and enhancing collaboration with various partners and donors for combating wildlife crime in the region. This included lessons learned by the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network and suggestions from the CITES Management Authority of China in terms of collaboration and support to SAWEN.

**“Strengthening transboundary co-operation and collaboration for intra-country law enforcement initiatives through intelligence sharing on poaching and trade trends, along with exchanging knowledge and skill for fighting wildlife crime across South Asia” was the unequivocal concern of the representatives of the South Asian countries”.**



Mr Megh Bahadur Pandey, Chief Enforcement Coordinator of SAWEN said at the meeting: “Minimizing illegal wildlife trade from South Asia is crucial to the conservation of wildlife in the region. Countries cannot fight highly organized and globalized wildlife criminals in isolation and need to collaborate and co-operate with other countries and partners”.

He further added: “We are overwhelmed to see the support that has come from all South Asian countries and international partners to strengthen the initiatives of SAWEN and help it achieve its mandate. The approved Statute will allow it to work as an independent institution working in tandem with the goals and objectives of the eight South Asian countries for fighting wildlife crime”.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC, India office also said at the meeting, “ The push from the SAWEN member countries places the region firmly in the spotlight of a growing international commitment to dealing with increasingly organized illegal wildlife trade networks as part of a broader strategic approach to combat trans-national organized crime”.

He further emphasized the role that NGOs like TRAFFIC can play in collecting targeted information to assist law enforcement agencies to dismantle poaching networks, as illustrated by TRAFFIC's assistance in breaking rhino poaching rings and to prevent poaching and trade in endangered species in India.

The Second Annual Meeting was jointly organized by the SAWEN Secretariat in collaboration with the Government of Nepal, with the support of INTERPOL (through financial support from USAID), TRAFFIC (through financial support from US Department of State), Nepal's National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), and WWF Nepal.

# TRAFFIC rolls out social media campaign on illegal trade in lesser known non-charismatic species



The growing demand for wildlife from India has been threatening the future existence of not only the Tiger, Elephant, Rhino and various other flagship species but also of pangolins, monitor lizards, Tokay Gecko, turtles and tortoises, birds, corals, sea cucumbers and many more such species whose plight has remained largely under the radar. Credible studies have indicated that the global illegal wildlife trade is worth at least USD 19 billion per year.

In February 2015, TRAFFIC, in partnership with WWF-India and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) launched a social media campaign to create awareness and divert efforts towards curbing illegal trade in three lesser known non-charismatic wildlife species – pangolins, owls and mongoose.

The one-month campaign by TRAFFIC's India office on Facebook and Twitter, was successful in reaching out to a large audience that visit social media forums for information, networking and recreation.

The campaign was initially launched with a target to reach out to 10,000 individuals however this was successfully achieved within the first few days of the launch. On Facebook the campaign helped in reaching out to 13 00 000 individuals while on Twitter we reached over 23 000.

The campaign titled “**Preserving the future: Stop illegal wildlife trade**” carried a serious message regarding unabated poaching and smuggling in species that are lesser known and could silently become extinct one day due to their poaching and illegal trade.

On World Pangolin Day, 21 February 2014, the Indonesian National Police, WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society), and TRAFFIC shared a video of one of the largest pangolin seizures ever in Indonesia that took place in 2008 when the Indonesian National Police Criminal Investigation Bureau Police raided the warehouse of a suspected illegal wildlife trader in the city of Palembang in South Sumatra and recovered more than 14 tonnes of Malayan Pangolins *Manis javanica*.



The pangolins were later burned by the authorities in August 2008, as seen in the video.

Every year in India, hundreds of pangolins, lizards and tortoises are poached, an estimated 700,000 birds are illegally trapped, and about 70,000 tonnes of sharks are caught, yet the levels of exploitation of these species are rarely reported. This large scale exploitation along with minimal information about their population status and poaching and smuggling trends has put the future of these lesser known species in doubt.

Pangolins are highly threatened because they are subject to a colossal illegal trade internationally, yet their plight is little publicized in conservation or media circles. Others, like the monitor lizard, mongoose, Star Tortoises, Spiny-tailed Lizards, freshwater and marine turtles also need immediate attention.

Monitor lizards, especially the Bengal Monitor, were once commonly seen across the country but appear to have declined markedly, apparently after becoming a target of unabated poaching and illegal trade.

“TRAFFIC has flagged its concern about these lesser known species for some time, highlighting our concerns in our newsletter—TRAFFIC Post—and now through this social media campaign. TRAFFIC is also working toward bringing together various stakeholders including enforcement agencies and NGOs to divert attention and focus towards conservation of such species,” adds Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj.



## TRAFFIC highlights illegal shark trade at CITES workshop in Chennai

**T**RAFFIC participated at the Bay of Bengal Capacity Building Workshop on CITES Appendix II Listings of Shark and Manta Ray Species held in Chennai, India from 26- 28 August 2014 and highlighted the illegal trade in shark and ray species in India and the protection provided to these species under Indian legislation.

The workshop was hosted by the Indian Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, in co-operation with the C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre, Chennai, and Humane Society International. Government representatives from CITES and fisheries authorities from the entire Bay of Bengal region (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand), which constitutes a significant shark-fishing area, engaged in active discussions at the meeting. The representatives from a number of coastal States of India were also present to learn about the CITES measures in place and to discuss their challenges and needs in implementing the new CITES listings at the sub-national level.

Shubhobroto Ghosh from TRAFFIC's India office delivered a presentation on Overview of protections afforded to shark and ray species under Indian legislation and highlighted the existing legislation

“According to a joint study conducted by TRAFFIC and PEW, India is the world's second largest shark fishing nation”.

He stated that the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 offers protection to 10 species of sharks, rays and sawfishes. According to a joint study conducted by TRAFFIC and PEW, India is the world's second largest shark fishing nation. Further, he stated that despite these protections there is a discernible growth in shark trade.

He pointed out that the need for stronger legislation in India for sharks in the absence of adequate data on shark fisheries, absence of a comprehensive NPOA (National Plan of Action) for sharks and lack of a CITES component in India's Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

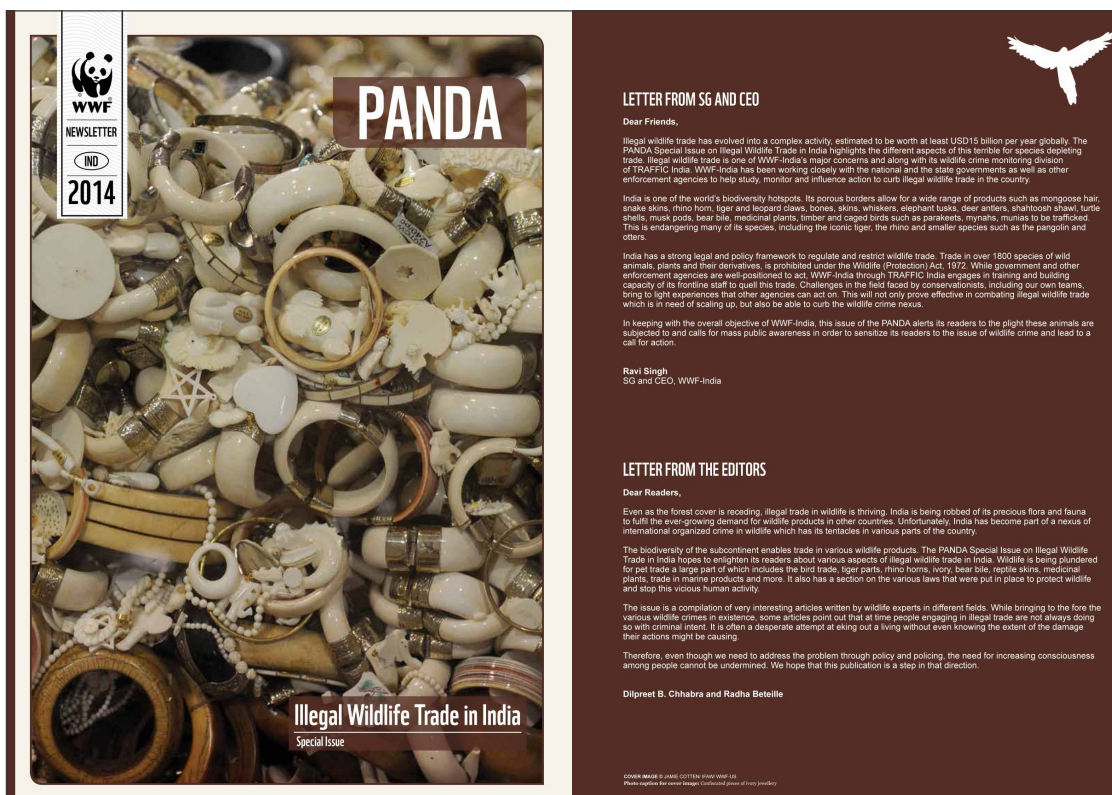
He stressed the urgent need for creation of the NPOA for all the neighbouring member countries which would take care of concerns over shark listings and their protection.

Read more at

[http://cites.org/eng/chennai\\_sharks\\_workshop](http://cites.org/eng/chennai_sharks_workshop)



# WWF-India's latest PANDA magazine illuminates illegal wildlife trade



**I**llegal wildlife trade has evolved into a complex activity and India being one of the world's biodiversity hotspots has emerged as a potential source country. The porous borders of India along with various gaps in wildlife law enforcement allow various protected species of wildlife and their parts to be trafficked.

In order to highlight this grave threat to endangered wildlife, WWF-India in partnership with TRAFFIC published a PANDA Special Issue on illegal wildlife trade. The publication was a composition of articles from wildlife experts across India on the various aspects of illegal wildlife trade.

The issues covered included an overview of pet trade in India, bird trade, marine trade, trade in medicinal plants, live elephant trade, hunting in north-east India, role of

forensics in curbing illegal wildlife trade, use of sniffer dogs in court of law, introduction to wildlife laws in India and TRAFFIC's initiatives to curb illegal wildlife trade in India.

The guest authors for the publication included –Manoj Sarkar – an Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest Tamil Nadu, Jose Louies from Wildlife Trust of India, Neha Sinha from Bombay Natural History Society, Mukesh Thakur from Wildlife Institute of India, Saurabh Sharma – a High Court and Supreme Court lawyer, Deepak Samuel from the United Nations Development Programme, Sonali Ghosh – Deputy Director Manas Tiger Reserve, Shekhar Kumar Niraj- Head of TRAFFIC in India, Shubhobroto Ghosh and Dilpreet B. Chhabra from TRAFFIC in India. To download the copy of the PANDA Special Issue, please visit

[http://www.wwfindia.org/news\\_facts/wwf\\_publications/panda/?12101/Panda-Special-Issue#](http://www.wwfindia.org/news_facts/wwf_publications/panda/?12101/Panda-Special-Issue#)

## Meet the team: TRAFFIC's new members in the India office



### **Mohnish Kapoor – Senior Programme Officer**

Mohnish's main role is to co-ordinate and implement TRAFFIC's programmes in India. He will also be responsible for developing new projects under TRAFFIC's strategic vision in India and will assist in identifying and

building human resource capacity for various projects and tasks. He will remain involved in technical reporting, publications and enhancing capacity building training modules.

Mohnish obtained his Masters of Science (Biodiversity and Conservation), from Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Delhi, where he was a Gold Medalist. Subsequently, he has undertaken a short-term professional training course on Species Conservation and monitoring - "Terrestrial Mammals" at the Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation, Virginia, USA. He possesses over two years of experience working with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Indian Wildlife Business Council (CII-World Bank partnership) and Cities International. Additionally, he has eight months of Masters internship experience in the Chilla and Shyampur range of Rajaji National Park with the Wildlife Institute of India. Mohnish can be reached at [mkapoor@wwfindia.net](mailto:mkapoor@wwfindia.net)



### **Shaleen Attre – Programme Officer, Research and Communications**

Shaleen's primary role will be to help TRAFFIC work on India's position in CITES as well as build a repository of CITES and policy related matters. She

will also be in charge of designing and compiling a new newsletter focused on wildlife laws and policy matters. She will also be in charge of designing and compiling a new newsletter focused on wildlife laws and policy matters. She will also be responsible for creating an online interactive repository/forum for enforcement officials as an extension of TRAFFIC's capacity building initiatives.

She will work on TRAFFIC presence on social networking sites and assist in building awareness campaigns. Liaising with the media is also part of her profile.

Having lived in different places for half her life as an army child, Shaleen finished her schooling from New Delhi – the city she was born in – and did her Bachelors and Masters in English Literature at the University of Delhi. Shaleen has volunteered and worked with various animal welfare/conservation organizations, over the past decade, along with being a copywriter and content strategist in the new media sector. Prior to joining WWF-India, she was working as a Project Officer, Awareness for Conservation (Communications) with the Wildlife Trust of India. Shaleen can be reached at [sattre@wwfindia.net](mailto:sattre@wwfindia.net)



### **Amar Nath Choudhary – Programme Officer (Data Analysis)**

Amar Nath has been working with TRAFFIC since March 2014 as a part-time consultant conducting data compilation on wildlife offences, including poaching and seizures, and conducting scientific analysis of raw

and field data collected by TRAFFIC on wildlife crime in India. He was taken on as a full time staff member in October 2014 and since then he has been responsible for conducting scientific analyses of field information using multiple software packages and also has been maintaining the database for TRAFFIC in India. He will also assist in technical reporting & publications as well as work on developing and improving the analysis component of projects.

He has obtained his BCA from IGNOU and is currently pursuing a MCA through a distance learning mode. He has an experience of 3.5 years in managing & maintaining databases and analytical & graphical reporting. Amar Nath is proficient in STATA, SQL, Oracle, MS Access databases and Visual Basic 6.0, .net, C, C++, Core Java languages, besides others. Amar Nath can be contacted at [amar@wwfindia.net](mailto:amar@wwfindia.net)

# 02

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## Outpost

- 1: Myanmar, a gateway for illegal trade in Tigers and other wild cats to China
- 2: TRAFFIC's latest study sounds the alarm on Asia's ongoing widespread bear trade

## Myanmar, a gateway for illegal trade in Tigers and other wild cats to China

All Asian big cat species are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and by national laws in their native countries.



© Adam Oswell / TRAFFIC

**L**atest studies conducted by TRAFFIC and Oxford Brookes University have found that the trade in Tigers and other wild cat parts from Myanmar into China has grown in recent years while the same trade into Thailand has diminished.

Trade in Tigers and other wild cats in Mong La and Tachilek, Myanmar – a tale of two border towns, published in Biological Conservation in December 2014, studied information gathered from 19 separate surveys of wild cat trade in Tachilek between 1991 and 2013 and seven surveys between 2001 and 2014 in Mong La.

Through the surveys it was found that in Tachilek on the Myanmar-Thailand border, shops selling wild cat parts including Tiger and Leopard skins and skulls, fell from 35 in 2000, to just six in 2013. However in Mong La, at the China border, such shops more than trebled from six in 2006, to 21 in 2014. Mong La caters almost entirely to customers from China.

The two markets are situated on international borders and serve as sources for illegal cross-border trade. Most of the cat parts on sale were claws, skulls, canine teeth and skins. In total, over 2,000 wild cat parts, the majority of them skins, were recorded during the surveys.

Although the dynamics of the trade in wild cat parts differed in the two border towns, in both Clouded Leopard *Neofelis nebulosi* parts were the species most often seen in trade. Clouded Leopard parts were observed in all but two of the surveys, representing at least 482 individuals. Other wild cat species commonly found in trade over the decades included Leopard Cat *Prionailurus bengalensis*, Leopard *Panthera pardus*, Tiger *Panthera tigris* and the Asiatic Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii*.

Traders in both towns claimed that Tiger and Leopard products were mainly sourced from Myanmar and India.

Previous studies reported that large cat skins and bones on sale in Tachilek also originated from Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Smaller species were said all to be sourced from Myanmar.

Authors Dr Chris R. Shepherd Regional Director for TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia, and Dr Vincent Nijman, Professor of Anthropology at Oxford Brookes University argue that the decrease in Tachilek could be due to greater enforcement action in Thailand while the increase in Mong La may be linked to the rising buying power of China's consumers.

The authors urged more effective enforcement and prosecution of wildlife criminals in Myanmar and called on neighbouring source and consumer countries to allocate more resources to ramp up existing efforts to clamp down on illegal wildlife trade.

Read more at

<http://www.traffic.org/home/2014/12/22/myanmar-a-gateway-for-illegal-trade-in-tigers-and-other-wild.html>

## TRAFFIC's latest study sounds the alarm on Asia's ongoing widespread bear trade

2,800 bears were poached in  
Asia for illegal wildlife trade in  
a 12-year period, finds  
TRAFFIC



**T**RAFFIC's study on illegal trade in bears and their parts over a 12-year period has found that at least 2,800 bears were poached in Asia. The study, released in August 2014, was based on analysis of close to 700 seizures and revealed that a minimum of 2,801 individual bears would have been traded for their parts and derivatives between 2000 and 2011.

The findings have been published in *–Brought to Bear: an Analysis of Seizures across Asia (2000-2011)* which studied bear seizures made over a 12-year period in 17 countries and territories across Asia and found that a staggering illegal trade in bears and their parts persists in the region. The majority of reported seizures involved Cambodia (190), China (145), Viet Nam (102), Russia (59), Malaysia (38), Thailand (29), Lao PDR (29) and India (23).

Bears are traded for a wide range of reasons including live bears to stock bile farms and for the pet or dancing bear trade. Bears are also trafficked for their parts, meat, skins and trophies while their gall bladders and bile are used to manufacture traditional medicines.

The cross-border trade in live bears and their parts and derivatives violates national laws throughout the region as well as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Russia and China alone accounted for 69% of the trade volume equating to a minimum of 1,934 bears, primarily due to the seizure of over 6,000 bear paws. Such significant seizures in Russia and along the border with China suggest a prolific trade in bears and their parts between the two countries. Important cross border trade routes identified by the analysis

include Nepal to India, Lao PDR to Viet Nam and China, Myanmar to China and Thailand and Viet Nam to Japan and Singapore. The confiscation of live bears accounted for 15% of all seizures, making it the second most commonly seized bear parts after paws.

“The number of seizures are a credit to the enforcement agencies, but they undoubtedly only stop a fraction of the overall trafficking because bear products are still widely and easily available across Asia,” said Dr Chris R. Shepherd, Regional Director of TRAFFIC in Southeast Asia.

The report recommends improved regional law enforcement efforts, the consistent submission of seizure reports to CITES and for the closure of bear farms stocked with illegally-sourced wild bears.

Read more at  
<http://www.traffic.org/home/2014/8/21/parts-of-2800-bears-seized-in-asia-over-a-12-year-period.html>

# 03

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## CITES Update

**1: New shark fin identification tool released**

## New shark fin identification tool released

The Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), has welcomed the release of a new software package for the identification of shark fins. The software application called **iSharkFin** is an innovative system that uses machine learning techniques to identify shark species from shark fin shapes.

The software has been developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the University of Vigo with financial support of the Government of Japan and the CITES Secretariat – using funds provided by the European Union.

The iSharkFin is an interactive process where users take a standard photograph, select some characteristics of a fin and choose a few points on the fin shape, iSharkFin will automatically analyse the information, and identify the shark species from which the fin originated. iSharkFin is available for the identification of 35 shark species from dorsal fins and 7 species from pectoral fins, all from species commonly seen in international trade, including some species listed in the CITES Appendices. Further species will be added to the system. You can download the software and the accompanying manual at <http://www.fao.org/fishery/ipoa-sharks/iSharkFin/en>

**New CITES rules for sharks and manta rays:** From 14 September 2014, international trade in specimens of five shark species and all manta ray species, including their meat, gills and fins, needs to be accompanied by permits and certificates confirming that they have been sourced legally. These new controls adopted by CITES will apply to the Oceanic Whitetip Shark *Carcharhinus longimanus*, Scalloped Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna lewini*, Great Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna mokarran*, Smooth Hammerhead Shark *Sphyrna zygaena*, Porbeagle Shark *Lamna nasus* and Manta rays *Manta* spp. as they are now included in CITES Appendix II.



© Brian J. Skerry / National Geographic Stock / WWF



© HSI



# 1

## Peacock feathers seized from a passenger in Kerala

**O**n 16 September 2014, peacock feathers weighing 29.8 kg were seized by Customs officials from a Singapore-bound passenger at Kochi airport, Kerala. The feathers were found concealed inside towels in the checked in baggage of the man hailing from Chennai, just as he was about to board the flight early that morning.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

In India, the Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. However, there is an exemption for domestic trade in peacock feathers and the animal articles or trophies made therefrom as per Sec. 43 (3)a of the Act. Export of Indian peacock feathers is prohibited under the Export Import policy of the Government of India as well as under the WPA 1972.

Tail feathers of the male Indian Peafowl are in high demand for use for religious and ornamental use in domestic markets in India and also as a decorative item / handicraft in international markets. The high visibility of peacock tail feathers in domestic markets across the country has occasionally raised questions about the possible source of such feathers. Peacock feathers are shed annually at the end of their breeding season and it is generally considered it is these feathers that enter into trade – however this assumption has been questioned at various levels. The scenario is further complicated by periodic reports of peafowls being killed, many at a time, for their meat but also possibly for their feathers.

As a result, there is a considerable debate regarding the nature of this activity and whether on-going trade has any implication for the conservation of the species. TRAFFIC is currently conducting field-based trade research on the dynamics of the peacock feather trade in India. The organization regularly provides its findings to the concerned government agencies for policy reviews.

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# 2

## Twenty two poachers arrested in two years in Mizoram

**A**t least 22 persons have been arrested for poaching in Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram over the last two years. This includes seven people from the Bru community and six from the Chakma community. Seventeen people have been convicted and punished under the relevant sections of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Forest officials have seized 26 guns, including 11 indigenous firearms, 9 SBBL guns and two .22 rifles from the poachers. The Dampa Tiger Reserve's Field Director Laltlanhlua Zathang said that the Chakma poachers mainly hunted pangolins for their scales, while Bru hunters hunted wild animals for food.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

TRAFFIC congratulates the efforts of the enforcement agencies including the Forest and the Police departments for cracking down on the poaching gangs in the State. Mizoram, a north eastern State of India preserves a wide variety of rare species of flora and fauna. It is unfortunate to see the involvement of the local community in illegal wildlife trade in the region. Pangolins are a protected species in India and are in great demand for their scales and meat in international markets. Reports indicate that these scaly anteaters are being smuggled out of the country through Mizoram in large numbers.

Poaching continues to be a major threat to the existence of not only big cats but also other wildlife in India. TRAFFIC has identified various gaps in the enforcement initiatives across India for effective wildlife law enforcement. For this, TRAFFIC works with enforcement agencies in and around Tiger reserves and wildlife sanctuaries to strengthen protection and prosecution. To date, more than 3,000 individuals have been trained through TRAFFIC's capacity building programmes. TRAFFIC also helps in gathering intelligence from the field and after thorough vetting, passes it on to relevant enforcement agencies for requisite action. With help from TRAFFIC there have been 119 interventions to deal with poaching cases across the country in 2014. TRAFFIC continues to push for more effective enforcement measures across the country and has helped to tackle poaching of big cats and rhinos in Kaziranga.

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# 3

## Three hundred and sixty Star tortoises seized in West Bengal

The Border Security Force (BSF) has seized 360 Indian Star Tortoises from West Bengal, while they were being smuggled to Bangladesh. They were seized on 23 August 2014 from Gunrajpur border outpost in North 24 Parganas district by troopers of the BSF 40th battalion. Noticing movement of a suspicious person carrying two small haversacks and going towards Bangladesh, the troopers challenged him. While the man managed to flee by jumping into a river, the tortoises were recovered on checking the haversacks.

### TRAFFIC adds.....



The trade in Star Tortoises has been continuously monitored by TRAFFIC. At least 1,487 Star Tortoises were found in illegal wildlife trade in 2014, approximately 953 in 2013 and 483 in 2012.

In a report titled “Demand driven: The trade of Indian Star Tortoises *Geochelone elegans* in Peninsular Malaysia” published in 2004, TRAFFIC pointed out the Star Tortoise trade links between Malaysia and India.

Investigations undertaken by TRAFFIC at wildlife trade markets in Thailand and Indonesia also indicated that the Indian Star Tortoise is in the top three tortoise species traded. In India, the species is included in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and trade in it is banned. Its international trade is also restricted as the species is listed in Appendix II of CITES. Despite its legal protection, trade in the species apparently continues at a large scale.

Most of the Star Tortoises being smuggled are believed to be wild caught. However, a few reports indicate illegal captive breeding of the animals to augment the trade. TRAFFIC calls for more action in dealing with this trade, including tightening of security at smuggling points.

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 Unpublished TRAFFIC report on Star Tortoises

# 4

## Man arrested with 10 kg of pangolin scales

The Wildlife Crime Control Unit of Kohima police arrested one person for smuggling pangolin scales on 20 February 2015 at Peducha Check Gate, Kohima. The seized pangolin scales were smuggled into Nagaland from Assam and were supposed to be delivered to a client in Manipur for export to Myanmar. Pangolin scales are used in the manufacture of traditional medicine, for which there is high demand in international markets.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Ten kilogrammes of pangolin scales account for at least six pangolins poached. Seizure reports from 2009-2013 in India have revealed that around 3,350 pangolins were poached in the country during this period. However, this may only be a conservative estimate as a large part of this trade presumably remains undetected.

In India, pangolins, are trapped not just for local trade but also to supply international markets in China and Southast Asia. Pangolin meat is considered a delicacy and as a “tonic food” because of its alleged medicinal properties. Pangolin scales are used as an ingredient in traditional Asian medicines to help breast feeding women lactate and cure ailments ranging from asthma and psoriasis to cancer, although there is a lack of evidence suggesting they are effective.

TRAFFIC is trying to raise awareness about the plight of this species in illegal wildlife trade in India. It is leading the initiative to bring together various enforcement and conservation organizations in India for diverting research and enforcement towards this lesser known wildlife species. TRAFFIC has recently run an awareness campaign that had helped in reaching out to over 13 00 000 individuals on Facebook and Twitter.

### Sources:

<http://www.morungexpress.com/local/128658.html>



# 04

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## In Focus

**Sonepur Fair once again on the wrong side of the wildlife law**

In  
Focus



**Sonepur Fair  
once again on the  
the wrong side  
of the wildlife  
law**

**T**he world famous Sonepur Cattle Fair organized in the month of November every year in Sonepur, Bihar and believed to be the largest cattle fair of Asia, has become an open field for illicit trade in wildlife. Held on the full moon day (Kartick Poornima), the fair extends to 30 days and during this period traders from far and near come together to sell various species of endangered and legally protected birds and animals.

TRAFFIC's investigation of the Sonepur Fair in the year 2013 was published earlier in Issue 20 of this newsletter, TRAFFIC Post and was an eye opener for many agencies working in the field of wildlife conservation and protection. The findings had revealed several incidents of wildlife trade against the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India (WPA) clearly indicating that the renowned fair was on the wrong side of the law.

In the year 2014, TRAFFIC's investigation of the Sonepur Fair was further disheartening. Not only the illegal activities continued throughout the period of the Fair but the number of species recorded in trade at the Fair increased from the year 2013.

TRAFFIC investigators found 39 elephants including five tusked and five calves in 2014, a marginal increase from 2013 when TRAFFIC observed 37 elephants including six tusked and six calves. The capture and transportation of Asian Elephants to Sonepur appears to be a regular occurrence and a tradition that has been carrying for a while. As a Schedule I animal under Section 40 (2) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (WPA), it is prohibited to possess, acquire, dispose of or transport a captive elephant without the written permission of the Chief Wildlife Warden or the Authorized Officer under the WPA. Section 43 of the WPA restricts the sale, purchase or transfer of captive elephants from one person to another for monetary considerations or any other profitable gain (MoEF, 2010; Bist et al., 2001).

Besides the illegal trade in elephants at Sonepur Fair, there was another aspect that was in clear violation of the WPA. This was the on-going trade of indigenous birds at the bird market or Chiriya Bazaar at Sonepur Fair. In addition to the illegal trade of indigenous bird species at the bird market, many non-native (exotic) birds were also being sold.

In 2014, TRAFFIC observed trade in at least 26 species of Indian bird, which is prohibited under the WPA. In 2013 18 species of Indian bird were found in trade at Sonepur Fair.

Shubhobroto Ghosh, the principal investigator of the Sonepur Fair from TRAFFIC said, "Despite the increase in the number of species traded at the Fair in 2014, there seemed to be more awareness among the traders regarding their illicit activities. Traders of indigenous bird species were extremely hostile, covering their cages and physically obstructing views to prevent cameras from obtaining a clear view of the animals on display. We found at least 20,000 indigenous birds on display at any point of time at the Fair."

The table below presents a comparison between 2013 and 2014 for protected Indian bird species sold at the Fair-

SPECIES	Number observed in 2014	Number observed in 2013	WPA (SCHEDULE)
<b>Rose-ringed Parakeet</b> <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	<b>7000</b>	<b>3000+</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Alexandrine Parakeet</b> <i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	<b>2500</b>	<b>1500+</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Plum-headed Parakeet</b> <i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>	<b>500+</b>	<b>300+</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Red-breasted Parakeet</b> <i>Psittacula alexandri</i>	<b>300+</b>	<b>50+</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Spotted Dove</b> <i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>	<b>150+</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Hill Mynah</b> <i>Gracula religiosa</i>	<b>200</b>	<b>30+</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Gold-fronted Chloropsis</b> <i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Himalayan Bulbul</b> <i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Red-vented Bulbul</b> <i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	<b>600</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>White-rumped Shama</b> <i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Red Munia</b> <i>Amandava amandava</i>	<b>3000</b>	<b>1000+</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Black-headed Munia</b> <i>Lonchura atricapilla</i>	<b>6000</b>	<b>3000+</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>White-throated Munia</b> <i>Lonchura malabarica</i>	<b>1000</b>	<b>600+</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Spotted Munia</b> <i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1500+</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Common Myna</b> <i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	<b>1000</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Bank Mynah</b> <i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	<b>1000</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Shikra</b> <i>Accipiter badius</i>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Yellow-footed Green-pigeon</b> <i>Treron phoenicopterus</i>	<b>50</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Yellow-browed Bulbul</b> <i>Acritillas indica</i>	<b>20</b>		<b>IV</b>
<b>Brahminy Myna</b> <i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>	<b>50</b>		<b>IV</b>
<b>Chestnut-tailed Starling</b> <i>Sturnia malabarica</i>	<b>50</b>		<b>IV</b>
<b>Peregrine Falcon</b> <i>Falco peregrines</i>	<b>7</b>		<b>I</b>
<b>Black-shouldered Kite</b> <i>Elanus axillaris</i>	<b>2</b>		<b>IV</b>
<b>Brown Fish Owl</b> <i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>	<b>2</b>		<b>IV</b>
<b>Red-whiskered Bulbul</b> <i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	<b>300</b>		<b>IV</b>
<b>Baya Weaver</b> <i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	<b>5</b>		<b>IV</b>

Just days before the Fair, on 26 October 2014, an advertisement published in a prominent newspaper on behalf of Bihar Tourism and the tutelage of the Tourism Minister and the Chief Minister highlighted the presence of elephants and indigenous birds at the Fair. This advertisement included a photograph of indigenous birds being sold, species that are prohibited for sale under the WPA. The sale and display of indigenous bird species was also exhibited on the official Sonapur Fair website. The advertisement received a lot of criticism from enforcement agencies and conservation groups.

Later, on 10 November 2014, the organizers put up two signboards on the premises of Sonapur Fair warning about the illegal trade in 18 species of birds (those highlighted by TRAFFIC in their newsletter last year), elephants, monkeys and langurs. The signboard warned against buying prohibited species of wildlife and the legal implications of doing so. However, minimal enforcement actions were seen at the Fair to stop this blatant illegal wildlife trade.

Besides, the elephants and birds, TRAFFIC investigators also observed 25 Rhesus Macaques *Macaca mulatta* and 15 Hanuman Langurs *Semnopithecus entellus* for sale as well as a Neelgai and Indian Porcupine on display.

Reports suggested that most of the birds were sourced from Mir Shikar Toli market on Sher Shah Road in Patna, Bihar. TRAFFIC investigators also visited this place and found approximately 10,000 indigenous birds on display on 9th November 2014. Species offered for sale included Hill Mynahs, Rose Ringed Parakeets, Alexandrine Parakeets, Baya Weavers and non-native species like Cockatiels, Budgerigars, Gouldian Finches, Sun Conures, African Grey Parrots and many more. Trade in non-native bird species is allowed only if the trader has obtained the species through proper permits.

Sonapur Fair, one of the most popular fairs of Asia appears to have become a hub of illegal trade in protected wildlife species. Various investigations like the one conducted by TRAFFIC and raids by organizations have exposed the Fair but have failed to stop the dubious activities.

Advisories have gone to the Bihar Forest Department from different environment and wildlife enforcement agencies from the Wildlife Trust of India, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, People For Animals and TRAFFIC. Media agencies have also played a significant role in exposing this trade. The bird market was even shut down temporarily by the police for a few days.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India who led the Sonapur Fair investigation in 2013 said, "It is appalling to see blatant repeated violation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 at the Fair. Protected species of animals and birds are being sold openly without much fear of prosecution. It is even worse to see visitors buying such protected species clearly indicating a need to strengthen awareness efforts about illegal wildlife trade."

"Sonapur Fair seems to be a major hub for illegal wildlife trade and there is a need for enforcement agencies to crack their whip on activities at the Fair."



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# 05

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## **Wild Cry**

**Standard Certification Systems for Boosting  
Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Trade in  
Transiting Economies**



# Standard Certification Systems for Boosting Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Trade in Transiting Economies

Shekhar Kumar Niraj and Mohnish Kapoor  
TRAFFIC India Office  
WWF India Secretariat,  
172-B, Lodi Estate  
New Delhi 110003

*Terminalia chabula* © Amit Kotia

## Introduction

**M**edicinal and aromatic plants are useful resources but like many other forms of biodiversity, many of them suffer from various degrees of threats as per IUCN threat categories because of overexploitation and unsustainable usage. Despite a prominent history of medicinal plants in India, the industry has not been able to develop an ecologically and socially responsible representation owing to growing demand of these plants and lack of systematic management plan and appropriate policy in place. The total global herbal drug market is estimated at USD62 billion and is expected to grow to USD5 trillion by 2050 (Joshi *et al.* 2004). The Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (PEPCI) estimated the export value in 2011-12 for herbals and finished dosage forms belonging to the systems of Ayurveda, Homeopathy and Siddha, stood at USD 348 million, showing a growth of 16.5%. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that approximately 70-80% of people worldwide rely on traditional herbal-based medicines to meet their primary health care needs. Approximately 25% of drugs are acquired from plants and many others are synthetic analogues built on prototype compounds isolated from plant species in modern pharmacopoeia (Rao *et al.* 2004). Approximately 25,000 plant based formulations are available in indigenous medical texts (Gupta *et al.* 2004) while around 7,500 species of plants are known to be used medicinally (Pushpangandhan 1995), some 44% of the total floral diversity within India.

Most of the medicinal plants used by the Indian industry are collected from forest ecosystems and other natural habitats that are mostly government-owned land except for a few that are privately owned. The increases in trade and resulting indiscriminate harvesting and export have put a large number of India's medicinal plants under the threat of extinction. As a result, in India around 315 of the 7500 known medicinal species are threatened with extinction (Sharrock *et al.* 2014, CBD 2014). The resource custodian has no material stake in the trade, either in terms of revenue, or in terms of surveillance of what is exported from the forest and other wild areas (Sarkar, 2012) and lack of scientific knowledge and awareness related to medicinal plant conservation leads to exploitative collection that takes place without giving any importance to the replacement rate and threshold collection quantity. In such a scenario, which also includes a dearth of scientific monitoring tools, indiscriminate collection from the wild is depleting the plant sources and threatening survival of many plant species. Due to improper storage facilities and procedures, the quality of the product deteriorates, which further leads to unsustainable economic losses. Clandestinely driven exploitative marketing has deprived Medicinal Aromatic Plant (MAP) gatherers from obtaining appropriate remuneration (Verma 1998). The majority of trade from the wild is done by collectors having meager sources of alternate income, thus without proper knowledge of the market rate of the finished product and supply chain management, the raw material is procured at a relatively low cost, which is a major challenge for attaining equitable economic benefit sharing.

## Standard and certification schemes in medicinal plants

Traditional users lay emphasis on good practices of collection, storage and maintenance for better quality of medicine prepared from plants. However, with growth of the pharmaceutical industry and mounting inclination for herbal and organic products, rapid diminution of natural MAP resources necessitates development and implementation of sustainability standards and certification procedures (Bhattacharya *et al.* 2008). In the absence of a standard system of certification, including verification and quality control, the source, trade routes and harvesting procedures are unclear. This issue is further accentuated by non-uniform transit formalities and tax structure across different States and major wholesale markets. In recent times, a number of organizations have endeavored to develop standards and good practices for MAPs. The WHO *Guidelines on Good Agricultural and Collection Practices* (GACP) for Medicinal Plants provides a model for guiding national and regional strategies.



Other examples include guidelines developed by the Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO) for collection of wild plants to be marketed as 'organic' (Muller and Durbeck 2005, Bhattacharya *et al.* 2008). In order to strengthen stakeholder engagement and safeguard medicinal plant resources, ISSC-MAP (International Standard for Sustainable Wild Collection- Medicinal and Aromatic Plants) was developed from 2004-2007 by a joint initiative of the Bundesamt für Naturschutz (BfN) (German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation), TRAFFIC, WWF and IUCN. In October 2008, the four founding institutions of ISSC-MAP signed an agreement to endorse global implementation of the Standard through the FairWild Foundation. ISSC-MAP has become the ecological module of the FairWild Standard, which also measures social and economic components of the harvest and trade of wild plants via a framework of principles and criteria (TRAFFIC 2010). In India, applying certification to MAPs is a relatively recent phenomenon. In 2001, WWF-India studied applicability of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) principles to three medicinal plants on forest land in Himachal Pradesh (Rastogi and Pant 2004). A project sponsored by the National Medicinal Plant Board (NMPB) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in one district of Chhattisgarh developed some broad standards for good collection practices, including specific collection and harvesting standards for 10 species (Katiyar 2007). However, sustainability of these 10 species with their regeneration process needs to be ensured.

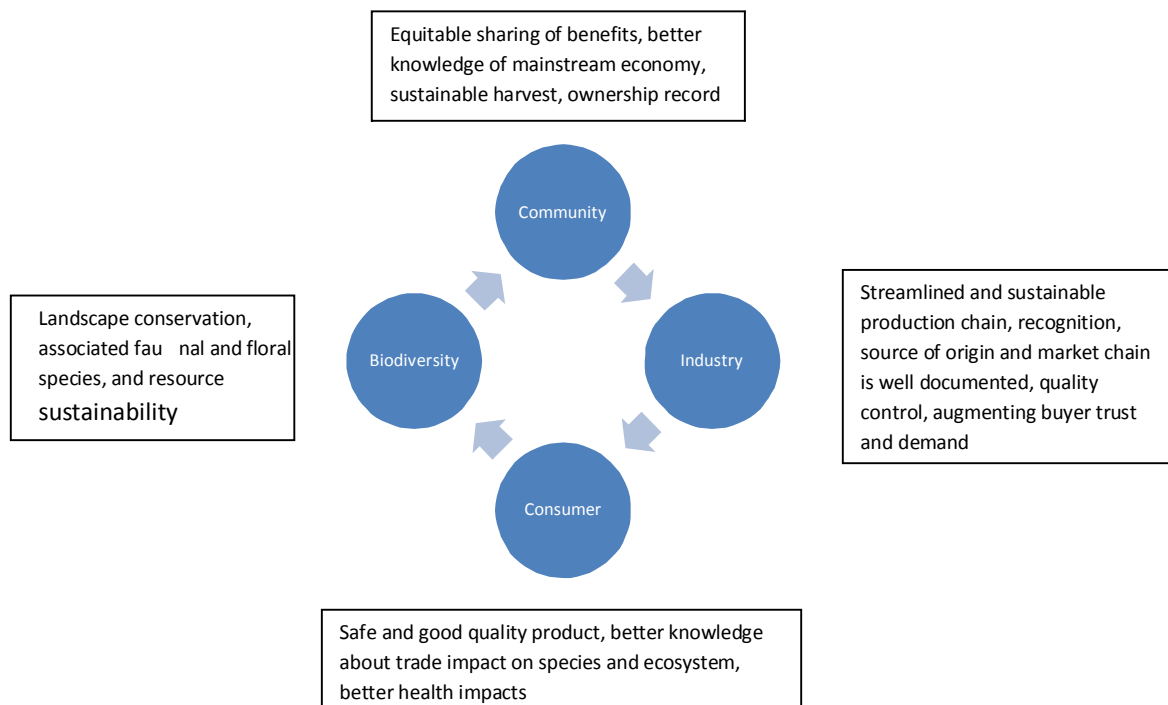
## Implementation of FairWild standards in the Western Ghat

TRAFFIC has been associated with co-partners Applied Environmental Research Foundation (AERF) for the assessment and preparation of resource inventory of the species and development of the resources map of the targeted medicinal plants (*Terminalia chebula*, *Terminalia bellirica* and *Tinospora cordifolia*). In 2007, AERF offered financial incentives to economically weaker farmers by the way of signing conservation agreements for not logging forests for a time period ranging between five to ten years. Through this approach, AERF secured almost 2,000 acres of forests till 2020. But in order to address socio-economic security to sustain the initiative, a revenue model was needed for promoting sustainable collection. The incentive for the study was provided by the dynamic involvement of Pukka Herbs Ltd, a UK manufacturer of herbal teas and medicinal health products, whose interest in purchasing organic and FairWild-certified primary processed fruits of *Terminalia bellirica* and *T. chebula* helped AERF to shortlist two sites for possible implementation of the FairWild certification.

After assessing the potential benefits to conservation and rural livelihoods in these areas, AERF started initial work towards FairWild certification using available resources. In June 2013, TRAFFIC and AERF collaborated on promotion of the FairWild approach in the Western Ghats with monetary support from the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) at the University of Kent, and Pukka Herbs Ltd., followed by a grant from the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF), to promote the FairWild approach. To date, several capacity building programmes involving the community have been conducted along with a situation analysis. To substantiate sustainable collection, a technological gap was filled by purchasing solar dryers for drying fresh harvested fruits and de-stoning machines. The first FairWild certification audit in India for the project is scheduled in 2015. To expand the revenue cycle, domestic engagement was made with a leading export company; PHALADA Agro Research Foundation Pvt. Ltd. which issued a letter of intent for purchase of 1 tonne of certified fruits of *Terminalia chebula* and *Terminalia bellirica* each in July 2014.

## Project impacts

The project has been significant in achieving positive economic and ecological outcomes. The people belonging to Mahadev Kohli tribe are now aware about the true potential and scale of mainstream economy associated with these plants. Capacity building programmes as well as documentation required for FairWild and organic certification has stimulated the communities to maintain official records of their lands and claims to the ownership of the trees on their land. As for the supporting industry, Pukka Herbs won the prestigious 2degrees Champions Sustainability Award in July 2014, helping build a positive brand value for the company apart from becoming a pioneering model for FairWild certification in India. The project has been beneficial for safeguarding significant nesting sites of Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthraceroceros coronatus* and Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis* by promoting economic benefits associated with the collection of fruits rather than cutting down *Terminalia bellerica* trees in the study area. The project showcases the importance of certification systems in supporting and involving stakeholders throughout the supply and demand chain (Fig. 1). While the communities benefit from better remuneration and sustainable harvest, the industries gain recognition and a sustainably streamlined production chain while the consumers obtain superior quality products as well as garner knowledge about the sustainability parameters and their impact on the community, livelihoods and biodiversity.



**Figure 1. Stakeholder benefits arising due to standards and certification schemes for MAPs**

## Management implications

The medicinal and aromatic plants industry is poised to grow locally and globally. Any enterprise that looks at a projected growth rate will have to adopt universally accepted standards, one possible way for that is through application of a standard certification system that is promoted for symbolizing ecologically safer practices. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has followed certification system (Pendry *et al.* 2006) that not only insures legality in international trade, but also promotes sustainability. Use of a globally standard certification system, promoted by the International Timber Trade Organization (ITTO), has long promised sustainability in international timber trade. While support from major global industries on promotion of standards and certificates can be beneficial for long-term conservation of medicinal plants, it is also important to involve domestic producers and pharmacies dealing with plant-based products. The State and central government agencies will have to utilize principles, criteria and guidelines enshrined in global standards, such as FairWild, in strategic planning and policy development related to MAPs. Research and monitoring organizations must evaluate success, challenges and feasibility of application of certification schemes at the regional level and prepare domestic guidelines on collection depending on species, trade dynamics, status and regional level socio-economic linkages. The existing legal and policy measures must be reviewed in detail eventually to build a multi-stakeholder consensus on development and utilization of standards and certification schemes to promote social security as well as documentation and sustenance of available MAP resources.

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