

**TRAFFIC**

NEWSLETTER

Issue 29  
MAY 2018

NEWSLETTER ON WILDLIFE TRADE IN INDIA

**SPECIAL ISSUE ON BIRDS**



**TRAFFIC** ***POST***

**Galliformes in illegal wildlife trade in India:**

**A bird's eye view**

**IN FOCUS**

# 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](mailto:trafficind@wwfindia.net)

All issues of TRAFFIC Post can be viewed at [www.trafficindia.org](http://www.trafficindia.org); [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)

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# From the Desk



Since sale of native wild bird species is prohibited under our national laws, traders display non-native bird species more openly while the trade in Indian birds species continues in the clandestine markets.

Dr Saket Badola, IFS  
Head of TRAFFIC's India Office

Dear Readers

Pet bird market is a lucrative business spread across the country. It is however believed that a significant number of the birds which are traded in these markets are sourced illegally; either collected unauthorizedly from wild or illegally smuggled into the country. This trade takes place openly in front of our eyes, but is rarely ever discussed because of involved complexities, both legal as well as practical. I take this opportunity to introduce this special and important issue of TRAFFIC Post focusing on poaching and illegal trade of birds in India, a serious conservation challenge today.



© Saket Badola

India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 protects nearly 1200 species of birds found in India, covering most of the wild bird species found in the country. Further to this, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an international agreement between governments to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival, prohibits international trade in many Indian wild bird species.

However, a single visit to any of these neighborhood bird markets is enough to convince that all is not well here. While, many non-native species such as budgerigar, lovebirds, Zebra Finch etc. are legally sold here, certain protected Indian species such as parakeets, mynas and munias are also traded in these markets. Frequently over stuffed cages with poor welfare standards for these birds are a sight of blatant violation of the laws that prevent cruelty on animals in our country.

Since, sale of native wild bird species is prohibited under our national laws, traders usually display these non-native species openly while the trade in Indian bird species also continues in the clandestine markets. However, at places where enforcement checks are lax and where there is lack of awareness about the wildlife laws, the traders openly display and sell the native bird species as well.

Unfortunately, there are no provisions in the current Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for regulating trade and breeding of the non-native bird species that come into India for sale. Import of non-native species require clearances from the CITES

management authorities and the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, India. However, seizure data show that not all birds that come into India follow the required protocol and are believed to be smuggled through illegal channels. We also lack a robust legal framework to regulate trade of non-native species once they have crossed the border points and entered the country.

Pet trade is the main driver of illegal bird trapping in India, followed by birds such as owls which are trapped for superstitious beliefs in the name of religion, black magic and others. Many a times bird parts and derivatives are used in local medicines and prescribed as cure for various ailments.

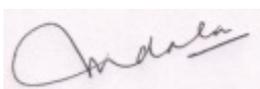
The bird trade markets in India have been flourishing for some time now. TRAFFIC is trying to map these markets and is in the process of putting together important information that will help enforcement agencies to take necessary actions. At least 70 bird markets have been identified by TRAFFIC as hubs for bird trade in India. These include: Galiff Street, Kolkata; Hill Cart Road, Siliguri; Crawford Market, Mumbai; Chiriya Bazar, Jama Masjid, New Delhi; Chirimar Mohala, Ambala; Nakhas Market, Lucknow; Lal Kurte, Meerut; Kabootar bazar, Bareilly; Lathiya Mohalla, Kanpur; Bhoor Choraya, Moradabad; Baheliya Toli, Varanasi; Nai Ki Mandi, Agra; Nakhas Kona, Allahabad; Mir Shikar Toli, Patna; Soneour Mela, Vaishali; Kozhi Market, Chennai; Sunday Market, Madurai; Murgi Chowk, Hyderabad; Russel market, Bangalore; Shikaribasti, Ramganj Jaipur; Dilli Darwaza, Ahmedabad; and Jehangirabad/Bhairagarh, Bhopal.

Of late, illegal wildlife trade has extended its wings to virtual market. Various social media forums have become important platforms for sellers and buyers to connect for their nefarious activities. Slowly this difficult to regulate virtual space is overtaking the physical markets making enforcement actions even more challenging.

The threat to the bird species from poaching and illegal wildlife trade is so grave that many species may be pushed towards extinction, from which there is little chance of return. Therefore, TRAFFIC decided to dedicate this issue of TRAFFIC Post to highlight the plight of birds in illegal wildlife trade in India and address related concerns. We hope that through this Issue we are able to bring to the forefront important aspects of illegal bird trade in India and actions needed to combat it.

Also available at the end of the newsletter is a snapshot of two important identification posters on Munias and Weaver Birds in India. These posters have been used extensively by enforcement agencies for identification of the species in illegal wildlife trade. Educationist have also used these during their awareness programmes on birds organized for children and youth. TRAFFIC has also produced a poster on parrots of India. All of these are available for distribution at TRAFFIC free of cost. Please write to us in case printed copies are required.

Happy Reading!



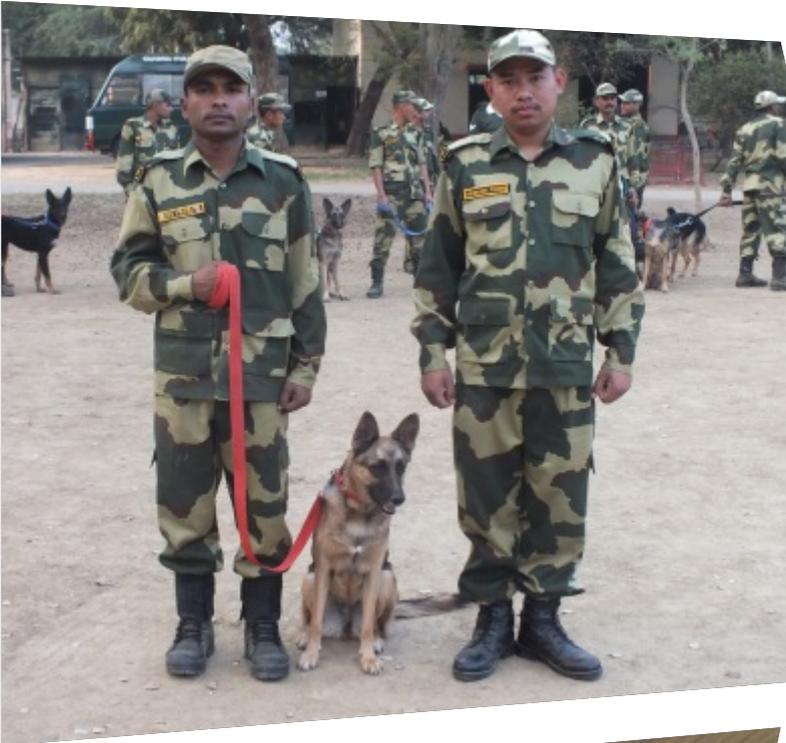
Dr Saket Badola, IFS  
Head- TRAFFIC, India Office

**About Dr Saket Badola:** Dr Saket Badola is an Indian Forest Service Officer from the Uttarakhand cadre, who joined TRAFFIC as the Head of TRAFFIC's India Office on 1 September 2017 on long term central deputation. He holds a Master's Degree in Veterinary Sciences from the Indian Veterinary Research Institute as well as an Advance Post Graduate Diploma in Wildlife Management from Wildlife Institute of India. He is also a Certified 'Master Trainer / National Level Resource Person' in the field of Forestry as notified by Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India. He can be contacted at 011-41504786 or you can email him at [sbadola@wwfindia.net](mailto:sbadola@wwfindia.net).



## **TRAFFIC Updates (India)**

- 1. TRAFFIC and WWF-India to co-host India's 2<sup>nd</sup> Zoonackathon in September 2018**
- 2. TRAFFIC's Super Sniffer Squad in India crosses half century mark; 13 more join the brigade and 12 new dog squads begin their training**
- 3. EARLY SUCCESS: Quarmy cracks her first wildlife case within a week of deployment**
- 4. Nearly 6,000 pangolins in illegal wildlife trade in India since 2009, finds TRAFFIC's latest study released on World Pangolin Day 2018**
- 5. TRAFFIC's wildlife law enforcement trainings focus on strengthening cyber surveillance and legal prosecution for curbing wildlife crime**
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## TRAFFIC and WWF-India to co-host India's 2<sup>nd</sup> Zoohackathon in September 2018

**Z**oohackathon, a tech challenge to find technology driven solutions for fighting wildlife crime, will once again be organised by the U.S. Embassy, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), TRAFFIC and WWF-India, at the WWF-India Secretariat in New Delhi in September 2018.

Zoohackathon brings together young developers, designers, project managers, and subject matter experts to create applications, systems, and tools to help reduce demand for illegal wildlife products. The participants are given two days to hack their way towards solutions to challenge statements solicited from conservation experts around the world. At the end of the hackathon, teams present their ideas and a panel of judges select a winner.

Illicit wildlife trade is an ever-evolving global crime that is increasingly getting more sophisticated and organised. Considered to be high profit and low risk, it is attracting organised criminals, who in turn pose a threat to national and global security, besides endangering the future of our wildlife. In light of this, Zoohackathon was conceptualised and organised to challenge participants to develop solutions that will help stop wildlife trafficking.

India's first Zoohackathon was held at the WWF-India Secretariat in New Delhi on 7–8 October 2017, coinciding with the Wildlife Week celebrations. The team “Geeksforgreen” won with their idea for a quantification tool (web application) that can be used to monitor social media for trafficking of wildlife articles on online platforms. The runners up team, “Zoodesign”, developed the concept of “Eagle Eye”—a tool to filter and analyse infra-red motion images from camera traps set up in protected forest areas to send an alert whenever there is any unauthorised human activity (by poachers).

Dr Saket Badola, Head of TRAFFIC in India; Ishita Anand, CEO- BitGiving; Sanjay Pathak, DIG- National Tiger Conservation Authority; and Isabella Detwiler, Deputy Minister Counselor for Economic, Environment, Science and Technology Affairs U.S. Embassy had judged the



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competition that witnessed 11 teams with nearly 70 participants working tirelessly for two days.

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General & CEO, WWF-India, had congratulated the US Embassy for leading on this initiative and said that awareness among consumers would be crucial to curbing illegal wildlife trade. He also said that the solutions developed would go a long way in helping to curb wildlife crime in India.

Dr Saket Badola, Head of TRAFFIC's India office said, “Zoohackathon is an interesting competition and we have had the privilege to be part of this initiative which brings together intelligent minds to develop new technology to curb wildlife trafficking. Smugglers and wildlife dealers are buying and selling illegal wildlife products and derivatives online and eluding the enforcement agencies with their ever changing *modus operandi*. TRAFFIC is confident that the tech driven ideas created through Zoohackathon will be adapted and further developed into solutions that will help end the wildlife trafficking of organised criminals in India and beyond”.

Mr Robert Garverick, the new Minister Counsellor, Economic, Environment, Science and Technology, U.S. Embassy said: “At the Zoohackathon we are embracing the idea of 'civic hacking.' We are doing this by soliciting your help in finding creative solutions to tackle the complex problem of how to combat illegal wildlife trafficking.”

# TRAFFIC's Super Sniffer Squad in India crosses half century mark; 13 more join the brigade and 12 new dog squads begin their training

**T**hirteen wildlife sniffer dog squads completed their training in December 2017 and joined India's 43 Super Sniffer dog squads already deployed to curb illegal wildlife trade, taking the total number of India's wildlife sniffer dog force to 56. Following hot on their heels are the 12 new dogs and their handlers that began their training in April 2018. On completion of their nine-month long training, these 12 dog squads will join their 56 counterparts deployed across the country, taking the total strength of India's wildlife sniffer dog squads to 68 in 2018.

The training of the 13 wildlife sniffer dogs that passed out in December 2017 was organised by TRAFFIC with support from WWF-India at the National Training Centre for Dogs (NTCD), BSF Academy, Tekanpur Gwalior. The 13 German Shepherd and Belgian Malinois dogs were between 6–9 months old when they and their handlers began their nine-month long training in April 2017. They passed out during a ceremony organised on 15 December 2017 at the NTCD where the dog squads showcased their learnt skills.

Of the 13 wildlife sniffer dog squads, West Bengal has deployed three; Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh have deployed two each and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Assam, Odisha and Kerala have deployed one each. It was the first time the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim had deployed wildlife sniffer dogs for curbing wildlife crime.

TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dogs popularly known as 'Super Sniffers' have been trained to sniff out Tiger and Leopard skins, bones and other body parts; bear bile and Red Sanders. However, special training was provided to the sniffer dog deployed in the state of Sikkim for tracking Yarsa Gumba *Cordyceps sinensis*, a heavily traded wildlife contraband in the region.



© Amar Nath Chaudhary/TRAFFIC

The latest 12 dogs and their handlers that began their training at the NTCD Gwalior in April 2018 are the seventh batch from TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dog training programme that was launched in 2008 with support from WWF-India. The young dogs, mainly German Shepherds and Labradors, will go through a rigorous training schedule that will instill focus, discipline and obedience much required to become a wildlife sniffer dog.

Of the new batch of 12 dogs, two dog squads each will be deployed by the Forest Departments of West Bengal, Telangana and Maharashtra; one each will be deployed by the Forest Departments of Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh and the Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru and by Customs Department at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi.

In Uttarakhand, the wildlife sniffer dog squad will be deployed at Pithoragarh, reported to be one of the most vulnerable locations for illegal wildlife trade. Wildlife

contraband passes through Pithoragarh *en route* to Nepal and may include Leopard skins, medicinal plants, *Cordyceps sinensis* among other wildlife. In Himachal Pradesh, the wildlife sniffer dog squad will be deployed in the Great Himalayan National Park, Kullu: the first time in such a high-altitude region. It will also be the first time for Telangana and the airports in Bengaluru and Delhi. Also beginning in April 2018 was the refresher course for seven previously trained and deployed wildlife sniffer dog squads that were chosen based on their years of deployment, physical fitness and capabilities. The squads belong to the states of Uttarakhand (3), Madhya Pradesh (3) and Maharashtra (1) and will go through a rigorous training schedule for a period of 45 days at NTCD.

Dr G.S Nag, CVO, Officer Commanding, NTCD said, “NTCD recognises wildlife crime as a major threat to

India's wildlife and considers deployment of wildlife sniffer dog squads as an adequate response. Therefore, NTCD has partnered with TRAFFIC to help train wildlife sniffer dogs for the country. The training of these wildlife sniffer dogs was designed after thorough deliberations with officials from TRAFFIC and from the various wildlife sanctuaries and tiger reserves, besides incorporating findings from field studies on the modus operandi of wildlife criminals”.

TRAFFIC's Super Sniffers have been successful in over 200 wildlife cases in India involving seizures, arrests of suspects and recovery of body parts including skins and bones of Tiger, Leopard, bear bile, ivory, Indian Star Tortoises, deer antlers, skins and meat, live birds, porcupines, pangolin scales, snares, traps and weapons.

## EARLY SUCCESS: Quarmy cracks her first wildlife case within a week of deployment



Quarmy was one of the 13 newly trained wildlife sniffer dogs, and, along with her handlers, cracked her first wildlife poaching case on 27 December 2017, merely a week after her deployment. She had been deployed by the Forest Department of Kaziranga National Park, Assam and was the first in her batch of dogs to have helped with a wildlife case.

Late one evening, after receiving information about an alleged wildlife poacher and a cache of hidden arms that were possibly meant for poaching, officials from the northern range of Kaziranga National Park along with Quarmy and her handler Laxmi Nandan Baruah set out to investigate. The team reached the house of the alleged poacher which was uninhabited at that time. The dog was given the scent of a shirt found inside the accused's house. Quarmy followed the scent and led the team for 2 km along a dark path through the forest to a pond. The officials searched the area around the pond but found nothing, while the dog kept indicating towards the pond. Finally, a team member went inside the water and recovered

weapons including—a .303 rifle and a silencer—from the bottom of the pond.

In parallel, the co-ordinating wing of the Forest Department had arrested the alleged poacher at another location and the dog squad was sent to confirm his identification. The dog immediately identified the accused from the scent of his shirt. Quarmy thus helped the forest officials in cracking this case, setting high standards for the use of wildlife sniffer dogs.



# Nearly 6,000 pangolins in illegal wildlife trade in India since 2009, finds TRAFFIC's latest study released on World Pangolin Day 2018



© Dushy Ranetunge [CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>], via Wikimedia Commons

On World Pangolin Day 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. However, this is a conservative estimate and as only a fraction of illegal wildlife trade is detected, the actual number is likely to be far higher.

TRAFFIC's findings were released in the form of a factsheet – **The Scale of Pangolin Trade in India: Nearly 6000 Pangolins poached between 2009-2017** – on 17 February, World Pangolin Day, celebrated on the third Saturday in February every year to raise awareness and garner support for pangolins globally.

Pangolins today are considered the most trafficked mammal species globally and are targeted mainly for their meat and scales. Pangolin meat is considered a delicacy and as a “tonic food” because of its unproven yet alleged medicinal properties. Pangolin scales are used as an

ingredient in traditional medicines as they are believed to cure various ailments. Most of the poaching and smuggling is believed to be targeted for international markets in China and Southeast Asia.

TRAFFIC's study recorded 90 cases of pangolin seizures involving India during the nine-year study period, of which the majority (83) were of pangolin scales, clearly indicating that scales are the main pangolin product trafficked in India. Manipur and Tamil Nadu emerged as the hotspots for pangolin smuggling, where the majority of seizures took place.

Between 2009 to 2013, most of the 46 seizures were in eastern or north-eastern parts of India, including Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, and West Bengal. While between 2014–2017, the majority of 44 seizures were from southern and central parts of India including Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu. This could indicate a regional shift in the poaching and smuggling of pangolins in India.

Hunting and trade in both the pangolin species—Indian Pangolin *Manis crassicaudata* and the Chinese Pangolin *Manis pentadactyla* – found in India is banned under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WPA 1972) while international trade is prohibited under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora). The Indian Pangolin is found across almost all of the country while the distribution of the Chinese Pangolin in India is restricted to the north-east.

Dr Saket Badola, Head of TRAFFIC's India office said that the number of pangolins in illegal wildlife trade in India is

of concern and without proper population estimates, the impact of such trade is unclear and could pose a significant threat to the species.

“There is no better time than World Pangolin Day to take urgent action for pangolins: enforcement agencies should redouble their efforts to curtail poaching and illegal trade in pangolins through improved inter agency co-operation and co-ordination, and collaborate with their colleagues in transit and destination market countries to secure an international crackdown on the criminal elements orchestrating wildlife trafficking,” said Dr Badola.

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General & CEO, WWF-India added: “The large number of pangolins in illegal wildlife trade is alarming, as a population decline of pangolins could lead to serious ecological imbalance. Pangolins, often called scaly anteaters, are considered farmer's friends as they help to keep a check on populations of ants and termites and help improve soil quality. Therefore, it is important that efforts are directed to stop poaching and smuggling of pangolins in India. More efforts to understand their status are necessary, simultaneously to plan future strategies for conservation of pangolins in the wild.”

Nearly 20 media agencies across India covered the various aspects of poaching and illegal wildlife in pangolins clearly signaling their interest in these poorly-known mammals.



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Through the social media outreach of TRAFFIC and WWF-India nearly 80,000 individuals were sensitised about World Pangolin Day 2018.

Download the factsheet at <https://www.wfindia.org/?17061/Nearly-6000-pangolins-in-illegal-wildlife-trade-in-India>.

Follow us on FACEBOOK at <https://www.facebook.com/TRAFFIC-India-Office-342774705910518/> and TWITTER: [https://twitter.com/TRAFFIC\\_India](https://twitter.com/TRAFFIC_India) to know more and support initiatives to curb illegal wildlife trade.

**SCALY FUTURE FOR INDIA'S PANGOLINS**

Hunted, trapped, electrocuted, pangolins in India are poached for their scales and other body parts that are smuggled in large numbers to other countries for use in traditional medicines.

**WILL YOU LEND YOUR HAND?**  
**Help Stop Pangolin Poaching And Trade**

Report poaching, smuggling, or illegal trade to the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau ([www.wccb.gov.in](http://www.wccb.gov.in)), local Forest and Police Departments.

Hunting, trapping and trade in pangolins is a punishable offence under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The international trade is restricted and illegal for conservation.

**TRAFFIC** **WWF** **#StopIllegalWildlifeTrade**

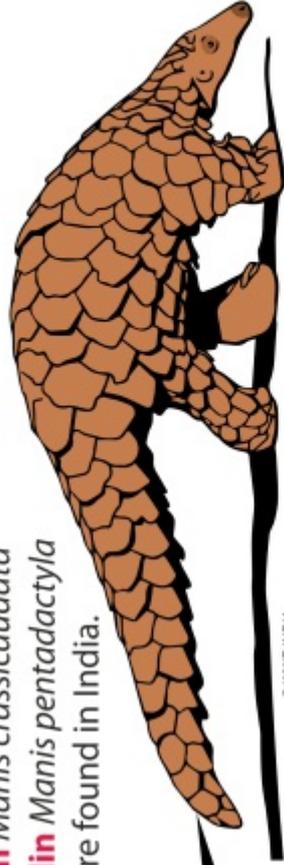
TRAFFIC is a global network of 12 national offices working to end the illegal wildlife trade. WWF is a global conservation organization working to protect the planet, its people and its future generations.

**AT LEAST 650 PANGOLINS POACHED IN INDIA EVERY YEAR**  
and this represents only a fraction of actual illegal wildlife trade

**Pangolins: the world's most trafficked mammals**  
Poached for scales, body parts and meat



**Indian Pangolin** *Manis crassicaudata*  
**Chinese Pangolin** *Manis pentadactyla*  
are found in India.



© WWF-INDIA

**Pangolin poaching and trade is prohibited**

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:  
Schedule I

CITES: Appendix I



© Rajesh Kumar Mohapatra

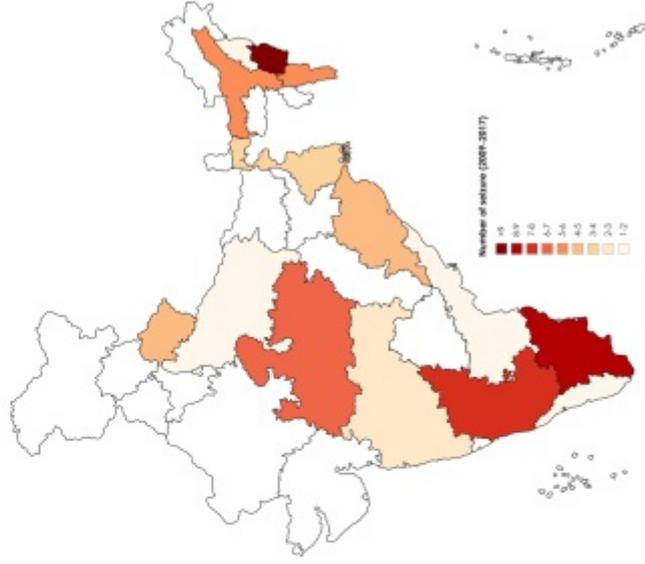
5765 kg of pangolin scales seized  
in India (2009- 2017) =

**5765\* pangolins in illegal wildlife trade**

\*Weight of pangolin scales per animal= 1kg

Assam, Manipur, Mizoram,  
West Bengal, Karnataka,  
Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and  
Tamil Nadu

are the **hotspots for pangolin smuggling in India**



# TRAFFIC's wildlife law enforcement trainings focus on strengthening cyber surveillance and legal prosecution for curbing wildlife crime

**T**RAFFIC's latest two training programmes in India have focused on significant components of wildlife law enforcement in India, in particular strengthening cyber surveillance to monitor wildlife crime on digital platforms and strengthening the legal capacity needed for effective wildlife crime prosecution and conviction. TRAFFIC plays a crucial role in identifying any gaps in wildlife law enforcement in India and works with the State and National Governments to bridge such gaps. TRAFFIC has regularly conducted training programmes on various other relevant aspects, such as forensics, legal procedures, species identification and more.

## Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve:

TRAFFIC, along with the Maharashtra Forest Department, organised a two-day wildlife law enforcement training at Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), Chandrapur, Maharashtra on 30 November–1 December 2017 where strengthening cyber surveillance to monitor wildlife crime on digital platforms and use of forensics for wildlife crime scene investigation dominated the discussions.

The workshop was attended by 40 enforcement officials from both the Forest and Police Departments. Besides cyber surveillance and use of forensics, other important aspects of wildlife law enforcement in India including the latest trends in illegal wildlife trade, implementation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and the latest tools and techniques available to curb wildlife crime were highlighted by experts from the field of law enforcement through classroom sessions as well as through hands-on and field exercises.

Shri Vijay Shirke, IFS, Chief Conservator of Forest (Territorial) Chandrapur in his workshop address emphasised the need to enhance protection measures not just in the Tiger Reserve but also in external periphery forest areas as these buffer zones are frequently inhabited by wildlife and thus attract poachers. He said that the training would help in enhancing the skills of the staff to counter wildlife crime in an efficient manner.



© TRAFFIC

Considering the fast-changing profile of wildlife crime, TRAFFIC regularly works with state Forest Departments to enhance the knowledge and skills of field foresters towards species identification, wildlife law, crime investigation

procedures and other related aspects of wildlife law enforcement. One of the recent areas of concern has been the growing markets in cyber space for trading in prohibited wildlife. TRAFFIC aimed to expose participants to the latest developments in the field of cyber surveillance.

TRAFFIC distributed 30 wildlife forensic kits to the TATR, Maharashtra. These kits will aid the forest officials to follow the required protocol for collection of wildlife samples for forensic analysis, crucial for effective wildlife crime conviction. TRAFFIC is hopeful that the skills gained during the workshop will be used efficiently to combat wildlife crime and curb illegal wildlife trade in endangered wildlife. TATR is Maharashtra's oldest and largest national park, home to significant numbers of Tigers and other wildlife.

### Chunakhan Ecotourism Centre in Ramnagar, Uttarakhand:



© TRAFFIC

The frontline staff of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh (UP) Forest Department including the range officers and forest guards underwent two days of inter state rigorous training to strengthen their legal capacity much needed for effective wildlife crime prosecution and conviction. The training workshop was organised by TRAFFIC in collaboration with the Uttarakhand Forest Department, WWF-India and LIFE (Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment) on 9–10 April 2017 at Chunakhan Ecotourism Centre in Ramnagar, Uttarakhand.

Forty-two participants from Corbett Tiger Reserve, Kalagarh Tiger Reserve, Terai West Forest Division, Ramnagar Forest Division, Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (UP) and Amargarh Tiger Reserve (UP) attended the workshop to understand the nuances of illegal wildlife trade and the implementation of wildlife laws for curbing it including



© TRAFFIC

the legal procedures to investigate and prosecute wildlife crime cases.

In India, extremely low conviction rates in wildlife crime cases are seen as a major gap in wildlife law enforcement. TRAFFIC's workshop focused on improving understanding of wildlife law, its implementation, filing of cases and other related legal issues. Many important and on-going wildlife cases were discussed and analysed to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the participants.

The training was conducted by Shri R K Singh from LIFE, who discussed the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, through group discussions, case laws and by referring to various case studies.

Mr Kapil Joshi, Chief Conservator of Forests, Kumaon Forest Division, Uttarakhand Forest Department said "The terai region of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh holds a very rich diversity of wildlife, because of which, these areas are often targeted by wildlife criminals. A strong mechanism for nabbing them and ensuring they receive an adequate quantum of punishment will prove to be a strong deterrent."

Shri Amit Verma, Deputy Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve and Smt. Neha Verma, Deputy Forest Officer, Ramnagar, thanked TRAFFIC and WWF-India for organising the unique and important workshop. They were hopeful that the enhancement of their staff's skills would lead to better wildlife conviction rates in future.

## TRAFFIC highlights the need to combat wildlife crime at Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) seminar

**S**ashastra Seema Bal (SSB) organised a seminar on the Role of Security Forces in Combating Wildlife Crime that took place on 22 September 2017 at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi. Dr Harsh Vardhan, Hon'ble Union Minister of Science and Technology, Earth Science, Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India, was the chief guest of the seminar that had been organised to sensitise Central Armed Police Forces and other stakeholders about the magnitude and impact of wildlife poaching and illegal wildlife trade, and to highlight the inevitable need for interagency co-operation for eradicating this threat to wildlife.

TRAFFIC participated in this important event by outlining the role of SSB and other agencies in curbing wildlife crime in India; showcasing TRAFFIC's wildlife sniffer dog training programme and its impact; and participating in a panel discussion on poaching and wildlife trade related issues.

Dr Harsh Vardhan, Hon'ble Union Minister, said the SSB had been assigned a challenging task of guarding and managing the open Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders but was discharging its duties very efficiently. He also congratulated the Director General of SSB for organising the seminar, which, together with other partners, marked a significant step towards the protection and preservation of wildlife. He requested the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) to organise frequent co-ordination



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meetings to increase co-operation and co-ordination among enforcement agencies.

Sm t Ar ch a n a Ramasundaram, Director General, SSB spoke about SSB's efforts to curb illegal In 2016, SSB arrested 62 suspects in 60 wildlife crime cases and saved a number of Tokay Geckos and Sand-boa snakes. In 2017, up to September 85 wildlife cases had been registered and 95

suspects arrested by SSB. SSB confiscations had included large quantities of body parts of endangered species including deer, turtles, and elephant tusks.

Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General & CEO of WWF-India participated in the panel discussion on the Role of Law Enforcement agencies in Combating Wildlife Crime and spoke about using the latest technology to detect wildlife crime. He also spoke about the wildlife sniffer dog training programme run by TRAFFIC and WWF-India and how more dogs need to be deployed for wildlife crime detection and prevention by enforcement agencies other than the forest departments. He spoke about the need to strengthen wildlife forensic capacity in the country and suggested that mobile forensic labs could be used to identify wildlife contraband in transit.

Key outcomes of the seminar that was attended by over 300 law enforcement officials from multiple agencies included: increasing awareness among the enforcement officials to prevent wildlife crime; extending the powers under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Indian Forest Act, 1927 to border

security agencies; collaboration between SSB and WCCB to set up an X ray facility and manuals for detecting wildlife contraband in transit; strengthening co-ordination between enforcement agencies to gather and share intelligence in order to prevent, detect and combat crime; creation of a common database of criminals to be shared among agencies; and conduct specialised training of the personnel manning border regions for wildlife crime detection and prevention.

TRAFFIC is thankful to SSB for acknowledging the grievous impact of wildlife crime and considering it a mainstream crime in India. TRAFFIC has previously

conducted specialised wildlife law enforcement training for SSB officials and will be happy to extend our knowledge and support for future collaborations too. TRAFFIC strongly recommends the use of wildlife sniffer dogs by border security agencies for detecting illegal wildlife contraband in transit.

Smt. Tilotma Verma, IPS, Additional Director General, WCCB and other dignitaries also attended the seminar and shared their expertise and experience in handling wildlife crime.

## MEET THE TEAM: Pramod K. Yadav joins TRAFFIC's India Office



**P**ramod K Yadav joined TRAFFIC's India office in New Delhi in April this year as Senior Project Officer to assist TRAFFIC programmes and research work especially with reference to trade in floral species.

Before joining TRAFFIC, Pramod was responsible for team management and co-ordination with project stakeholders and fundraisers to implement a project to integrate conservation, governance and livelihoods for caterpillar fungus collectors in the Himalayas.

Pramod was honoured to receive the Future Conservationist Award - 2015 under the Conservation Leadership Programme (partnership programme of BirdLife International, Fauna & Flora International and Wildlife Conservation Society) to implement a project "Conserving *Ophiocordyceps sinensis* in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, India". In order to implement these assignments, Pramod led a team to monitor the harvest of the species, understand the market dynamics, and analyse the sustainability of trans-boundary trade for caterpillar fungus in the Himalayas.

He has diverse experience in the field of biodiversity conservation including environmental impact assessment, climate change and wildlife trade assessment. Pramod has a master's degree in Biodiversity and Conservation from Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi, with expertise in geospatial technology; mapping and modelling landscapes and habitats. He has also undertaken a professional certificate course on Governance of Landscape, Forest and People from Wageningen University, the Netherlands.

Pramod can be contacted at 011-41504786 or you can email him at [pyadav@wwfindia.net](mailto:pyadav@wwfindia.net)

# B

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## Outpost

- 1. Leading tech companies unite to stop wildlife traffickers**
- 2. World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) joins fight against illegal wildlife trade**
- 3. Songbird trade is the straw breaking the Straw-headed Bulbul's back, says new paper**

## Leading tech companies unite to stop wildlife traffickers

The world's leading e-commerce and social media companies are joining forces with Tencent, TRAFFIC, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) to render online platforms and apps inoperable for wildlife traffickers to trade in endangered and threatened species.

On 7 March 2018, 21 tech companies from North America, Asia, Europe, and Africa came together as the first-ever Global Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online. The founding members of the Global Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online are Alibaba, Baidu, Baixing, eBay, Etsy, Facebook, Google, Huaxia Collection, Instagram, Kuaishou, Mall for Africa, Microsoft, Pinterest, Qyer, Ruby Lane, Shengshi Collection, Tencent, Wen Wan Tian Xia, Zhongyikupai, Zhuanzhuan and 58 Group, convened by TRAFFIC, WWF and IFAW.

As members of this coalition, tech companies pledge to work together to reduce wildlife trafficking across platforms by 80% by 2020. In collaboration with WWF, TRAFFIC, and IFAW, each company will develop and implement policies to help end wildlife trafficking online.

“Bringing these industry giants together is the best shot at systematically closing the open web to wildlife traffickers,” said Crawford Allan, Senior Director, Wildlife Crime



© Jamie Cotten IFAW / WWF-US

at TRAFFIC. “These sites are unwittingly being abused by criminals that are making a killing from selling rare species and products made from their parts. These companies see the problem and are uniting to ensure an internet where traffickers have nowhere left to turn.”

It takes just minutes to find dubious wildlife for sale online, including everything from trinkets like elephant ivory carvings to live animals like tiger or cheetah cubs. These sales are generally illegal and in breach of a site's rules. However, the Internet's global connectivity and relative anonymity of sellers, combined with rapid transport, enable wildlife traffickers to buy, sell, and ship animals and wildlife products with just a few clicks. As more traders and consumers move

online globally and traditional physical markets for wildlife trade become more obsolete, it is a critical time to ensure that social media and e-commerce platforms cannot be exploited by the loopholes to detection created by wildlife traffickers.

“Tencent has always adopted a zero tolerance towards illegal wildlife trade on its platform and a direct portal enables users to report suspected wildlife trafficking on Tencent's WeChat platform under our 'Tencent for Planet' project,” said Shu Mengying, Manager of Tencent Security Management Department.

TRAFFIC's facilitation of the establishment of the global internet companies' coalition was supported by the UK Government through the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund.

## World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) joins fight against illegal wildlife trade

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has launched a new initiative for the Travel & Tourism sector to join the global fight against illegal wildlife trade. The “Buenos Aires Declaration on Travel & Tourism and Illegal Wildlife Trade” sets out specific actions that the sector can take to address this challenge.

Speaking at WTTC's Global Summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Gloria Guevara, WTTC President & CEO said “WTTC is proud to be undertaking this new initiative which aims to ensure that our sector is fully engaged in the fight against illegal wildlife trade. This challenge has been identified by our Members as a priority for our sector. Wildlife tourism is a significant generator of income for communities around the world, particularly in least developed countries (LDCs) and the illegal wildlife trade puts at risk not only the biodiversity of our world, but also the livelihoods of these communities. The Buenos Aires Declaration provides a framework for the Travel & Tourism sector to co-ordinate and consolidate actions to address it.”

The Declaration consists of four pillars: 1. Expression and demonstration of agreement to tackle the illegal wildlife trade 2. Promotion of responsible wildlife-based tourism 3. Awareness raising among customers, staff and trade networks 4. Engaging with local communities and investing locally.

Specific activities within the pillars include selling only wildlife products that are legal and sustainably sourced, and that meet CITES requirements; promoting only responsible wildlife-based tourism; training staff to detect, identify and report suspected illegal trade in wildlife; and educating consumers as to how they can tackle the problem, including by not buying illegal or unsustainably sourced wildlife products.

Fundamental to the declaration is the role Travel & Tourism can play in providing sustainable livelihoods for those who live and work alongside endangered flora and fauna, and at risk of being illegally traded. This includes promoting the benefits of wild-life tourism and ensuring that wildlife-based tourism positively impacts its local communities, while identifying and encouraging opportunities for investment in local infrastructure, human capital and community development.

Gerald Lawless, immediate past chair of WTTC said: “As a long-term member and former Chair of WTTC I am delighted that this initiative is underway. I would like to thank those more than 40 Members who have signed the Declaration so far. WTTC research shows that Travel & Tourism accounts for over 9% of GDP in countries such as Kenya and Tanzania, generating jobs for 1 in 11 people. As global Travel & Tourism

companies, we can play a substantial and active role to tackle illegal wildlife trade. However, we cannot do this alone and I call on other organisations, both public and private sector, and NGOs already engaged in this fight, to join us by signing the Declaration as we work together to grow wildlife-tourism sustainably and use our reach to stem both the supply and demand for illegal wildlife products around the world.”

Signatories to the Declaration at its launch include: WTTC, Abercrombie & Kent, AIG, American Express, Amex GBT, Best Day Travel Group, BTG, Ctrip, Dallas Fort Worth Airport, DUFY, Emaar Hospitality, Emirates, Europamundo, Eurotur, Exo Travel, Google, Grupo Security, Hilton, Hogg Robinson, Hyatt, IC Bellagio, Intrepid, JLL, Journey Mexico, JTB, Mandarin Oriental, Marriott, Mystic Invest, National Geographic, Rajah Travel Corporation, RCCL, Silversea Cruises, Swain Destinations, Tauck Inc, Thomas Cook, Travel Corporation, TripAdvisor, TUI, Value Retail, Virtuoso, V&A Waterfront, City Sightseeing, Airbnb, Grupo Puntacana, Amadeus.

Read more at:

<https://www.wttc.org/about/media-centre/press-releases/press-releases/2018/wttc-members-join-fight-against-illegal-wildlife-trade/>

## Songbird trade is the straw breaking the Straw-headed Bulbul's back, says the new paper



Straw-headed Bulbul

© D.Bergin / TRAFFIC

The beautiful, melodious song of the Straw-headed Bulbul may very well be the reason for its downfall, as trapping for the Indonesian songbird trade is driving populations to critically low levels.

A newly-published paper in Bird Conservation International “**The final straw? An overview of Straw-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus* trade in Indonesia**” shows that the species is still very much in demand for the songbird trade.

Market inventories in Kalimantan and Java between July 2014 and June 2015 recorded a total of 71 individuals in 11 markets in eight cities; this includes five birds that were kept as pets and were not for sale. Comparing this against historical literature, researchers found that as numbers in markets decreased, prices soared to over 20 times those recorded in 1987. This availability-to-price relationship

suggests that the inflation in prices is linked directly to the rarity of the birds in the wild.

The Straw-headed Bulbul's IUCN Red List conservation status was revised from Vulnerable to Endangered in 2015, but the authors believe that a Critically Endangered status more accurately reflects the situation.

“Just 71 animals over a year seems miniscule when compared to tens of thousands of birds traded in the Indonesian market. However, each animal taken is one too many for a rare species that has disappeared from most of its original range, and whose survival is now hanging by a thread,” said Kanitha Krishnasamy, TRAFFIC's Acting Regional Director for Southeast Asia.

The species has most likely vanished from Myanmar, Thailand and Java, but small pockets remain in Sumatra, where there has been only one recent reported sighting since 2009. Populations in Borneo and Peninsular Malaysia have also greatly declined.

While most of the birds observed were said to be sourced from within Indonesia (Kalimantan and Sumatra), traders also openly

admitted to importing birds from neighbouring countries. Although the species has been listed in CITES Appendix II since 1997, no imports into Indonesia have been reported since 1999. This indicates that if birds were imported, they were done so illegally.

“The Straw-headed Bulbul is currently not listed on the protected species list in Indonesia, one of the countries where it is most heavily traded,” said Serene Chng, co-author of the paper and TRAFFIC's Programme Officer in Southeast Asia. “According to its protected species status in the new national wildlife legislation could enable stronger action against traders illegally selling this species.”

Although some of the birds are said to be captive-bred or ranched, traders indicated that wild-caught individuals were considered superior because of their song quality. There was therefore an incentive to stock wild-caught birds over captive-bred individuals if traders could acquire them. The paper also recommends listing the species in CITES Appendix I to protect it further from illegal international trade.

Read more at <http://www.traffic.org/home/2017/11/21/trade-is-the-straw-breaking-the-straw-headed-bulbuls-back-sa.html>



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## **CITES Update**

- 1. Sri Lanka to host the next CITES CoP18 in May 2019**
- 2. CITES latest initiative to improve regulation of trade in captive-raised animals**

# Sri Lanka to host the next CITES CoP18

## May 2019



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**Black-necked Stork**

The next meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 23 May to 3 June 2019. The offer from Sri Lanka was accepted at CoP17 held in October 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

CITES Secretary-General, Mr. John E. Scanlon said: "The next World Wildlife Conference will be hosted by an island country, the first time since CoP8 in Japan in 1992, and it is only the second time a CITES CoP is being held in South Asia, with the last occasion being 36 years ago in India. Sri Lanka is a beautiful country with diverse and truly unique wildlife both on land and at sea. It has a blossoming wildlife-based tourism industry and can boast some 'Top 7' wildlife species—Asian Elephant, Sloth Bear, Leopard, Black-necked Stork, Saltwater Crocodile, Leatherback Turtle and Blue Whale, six of which are listed under CITES. As one can see, Sri Lanka is an ideal location for a

World Wildlife Conference and it will be a wonderful host of CoP18".

Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, said: "As a country with rich biological diversity, Sri Lanka is fully committed to the implementation of the CITES provisions to ensure sustainable trade that takes into account the conservation of wild fauna and flora essential for a healthy and prosperous economy. Recent actions taken by Sri Lanka in fulfilling its commitment under the Convention include the seizure of illegally traded blood ivory, which was publicly destroyed in 2016, as well as the initiatives taken to list the genus *Alopias* namely all the three thresher shark species under CITES Appendix II as a protected species. The offer to host the Conference was made as Sri Lanka is mindful of the challenges that remain to be overcome at national and international levels".

Parties to CITES are reminded that any draft resolution and any document submitted for consideration at CoP18 and any proposed amendment to Appendix I or II, i.e. the CITES species listings must be communicated to the Secretariat at least 150 days before the meeting, i.e. by 24 December 2018.

However, if a Party intends to submit a proposal to amend Appendix I or II that concerns a species or a population of a species that occurs partly or totally outside of the territory under its jurisdiction, and if it does not intend to consult the other range States before the submission of its proposal, the Party, will have to submit its proposal to the Secretariat by 27 June 2018.

[https://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/CITES\\_CoP18\\_will\\_be\\_held\\_in\\_Colombo\\_Sri\\_Lanka\\_in\\_May\\_2019\\_14122017](https://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/CITES_CoP18_will_be_held_in_Colombo_Sri_Lanka_in_May_2019_14122017)

## CITES initiative to improve regulation of trade in captive-raised animals



© Abrar Ahmed

The CITES Secretariat is making strides in improving the regulation of trade in captive-raised animals and artificially propagated plants with the publications of two guides for inspecting facilities producing such animals and plants, as well as guidance on the use of source codes.

The two guides, namely the *Guidelines for inspection of captive-breeding and ranching facilities* and the *Guide to the application of CITES source codes* can be found on the CITES website and have been translated into several Asian languages (Chinese, Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Malay, Thai and Vietnamese) to assist CITES officials in their work.

The Secretariat will use these two guides in a training workshop it is organising in May 2018 in Indonesia, the first of a series around the world aimed at improving the implementation of the Convention for captive-raised animals and artificially propagated plants.

Read more at [https://cites.org/eng/news/cites-initiative-to-improve-regulation-of-trade-in-captive-raised-animals-and-artificially-propagated-plants\\_23032018](https://cites.org/eng/news/cites-initiative-to-improve-regulation-of-trade-in-captive-raised-animals-and-artificially-propagated-plants_23032018)

# D

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## **TRAFFIC Alert**

**1. Diwali, festival of lights, sparks trade in owls in Uttar Pradesh**

**2. Poacher held with dead migratory birds near Chilika lake in Odisha**

**3. 1,782 Rose-ringed and Plum-headed Parakeets, 80 Hill Mynas and 892 munias seized in West Bengal**



# 1

## Diwali, festival of lights, sparks trade in owls in Uttar Pradesh

Last year, as Diwali approached, bird markets in Uttar Pradesh saw a seasonal trade in owls. The superstitious belief that if an owl is sacrificed in a house during Lakshmi puja, the goddess is forced to “stay” with the family has been fuelling illegal owl trade in the region. A lot of the trade is routed through Agra, according to wildlife activists. In the city, the birds have been home delivered and sometimes, the trader sacrifices it for the buyers. Places like Korai-Karavili village, near Fatehpuri Sikri, and Kosi Kalan in Mathura are also infamous for owl trade.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

TRAFFIC has been warning of an increase in illegal owl trade and sacrifices around Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights, for many years. TRAFFIC's report **“Imperilled Custodians of the Night”** released in November 2010 was an investigation into the illegal trade, trapping and utilisation of owls in India. The report found the use of owls in black magic and sorcery driven by superstition, totems and taboos as prime drivers of the covert trade.

The Indian subcontinent is home to 35 species of owls, 32 of them are recorded from India. Forest Owlet *Heteroglaux blewitti* is listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 of India while all the other owl species in India are listed under Schedule IV of the Act, under the family names Tytonidae and Strigidae. The Act prohibits hunting and domestic trade in the species. The international trade in owls is further regulated by CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). Forest Owlet is placed in Appendix I of CITES while all other owl species found in India are listed in Appendix II, restricting the international trade in owls from India.

Owls are sacrificed on auspicious occasions such as Diwali and their body parts are used in ceremonial pujas and rituals, when Shaman or black magic practitioners, also referred to as *tantriks*, prescribe various uses for owls and their body parts, including the skull, feathers, ear-tuffs, claws, heart, liver, kidney, blood, eyes, fat, beak, tears, eggshells, meat and bones. While the exact number of owls traded each year countrywide is unknown, it certainly runs into thousands of individuals and there are anecdotal reports of owls becoming rare throughout India due to loss of suitable habitat especially old growth forests.

Of the total number of owl species recorded from India, 15 were recorded by TRAFFIC in the domestic live bird trade. Owl species most highly sought after by traders are large species, especially those with false “ear-tufts” (actually feather extensions on the head), believed to have greater magical properties. However, trade includes both large (e.g. Rock Eagle-Owl *Bubo bengalensis*) & small (e.g. Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*) owl species inhabiting areas as varied as urban settings and forest or riverine tracts with the main centres for the illicit trade located in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bihar.

TRAFFIC has been advocating for strong enforcement action—such as regular raids and taking legal action against the perpetrators—by forest departments, railway staff, customs and police to monitor and control the illegal bird trade. There is also a need for establishment of rescue and rehabilitation centres for seized owls and strong adherence to proper release protocols once the seized owl is deemed fit for release.

### Sources:

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# 2

## Poacher held with dead migratory birds near Chilika lake in Odisha

In December 2017, wildlife officials arrested a poacher and seized 10 dead migratory birds from his possession near Chilika lake in Odisha. The poacher was caught in Ujad Gopinathpur while trying to flee after hunting 10 Purple Swamphens *Porphyrio porphyrio*. This was the second incident of poaching near the lake during the migratory season that winter. Poachers hunt migratory birds for their meat after the winged guests arrive at the lagoon to spend the winter. The meat is in high demand in Balugaon, Bhubaneswar and Berhampur

### TRAFFIC adds.....

This is not an isolated case of poaching of migratory birds and many others have been reported across the country. For example, in October 2017, forest officials caught a person with 38 migratory and local birds poached from a local village pond situated on the outskirts of Nalsarovar, the only Ramsar site in Gujarat. In November 2017, 35 migratory birds were poached for smuggling meat in Jhajjar. The district of Jhajjar in Haryana hosts thousands of migratory birds every year due to several water bodies present in the area.

As the winter season sets in each year, large numbers of migratory birds visit all kinds of wetlands, including man-made and natural area, across India. During this period, they may become victims of poaching for meat.

In order to protect the migratory birds that visit India, the government of India has notified some of the wetlands frequently visited by these birds as wildlife sanctuaries under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. Rare and endangered birds, including some migratory species, are listed in the Act, to accord them protection against hunting, trade and others forms of exploitation. Stringent punishments have been provided for under the Act for violation of its provisions. Important habitats, including those for migratory birds, have been notified as Protected Areas under the Act, to improve the conservation and protection measures for birds. India is a contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention (Convention on Wetlands) and 26 wetlands in the country have been notified as Ramsar sites. India is also a contracting party to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (also known as CMS or Bonn Convention) which aims to conserve terrestrial and aquatic migratory species. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, has notified the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010, for better protection of wetlands in the country.

Despite the protection, migratory birds continue to be poached for their meat for sale in local and neighbouring markets. TRAFFIC recommends enhanced enforcement actions on the ground, including patrolling of wetlands on a regular basis. Educating villagers living around wetland areas is also crucial to protect migratory birds in India.

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3

## 1,782 Rose-ringed and Plum-headed Parakeets, 80 Hill Mynas and 892 munias seized in West Bengal

In mid-January 2018, hundreds of brightly coloured wild birds flew out of their iron cages in a burst of colours into the freedom of the sky. The release followed the biggest ever seizure of wild birds in West Bengal in the preceding week. The birds were set free in the forest of Nayagram in Pashchim Medinipur district, where it was anticipated the additional bird population could be sustained. The seizure included 1,782 Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* and Plum-headed Parakeets *Psittacula cyanocephala*, 80 Hill Mynas *Gracula religiosa* and 892 munias species. They were stuffed into cages and were being transported to a local fair in two vehicles when they were intercepted by forest officials. According to investigators, the birds were trapped along Uttar Pradesh's border with Nepal. They were transported by short train journeys to ensure that the maximum number could be kept alive. The forest officials tracked the birds from the time they arrived in West Bengal's Bardhaman Station, following a tip-off.

### TRAFFIC adds.....

Despite the blanket ban on trade in all Indian bird species since 1990–91, parakeets, Hill Mynahs, munias and others are collected from the wild and traded in large numbers every year.

Parrots have been the most visible sign of illegal bird trade in India. They are taken from the wild and smuggled to various parts of the country and beyond and the bulk of the trade is in three- to four-week old chicks. Adult parrots are traded throughout the year, with chicks arriving in trade between December and June. For every bird that reaches the market place, several are believed to die en route. Of the 12 native species, eight are regularly found in illegal trade including the Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Plum-headed Parakeet, Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*, Malabar Parakeet *Psittacula columboides*, Himalayan Parakeet *Psittacula himalayana*, Grey-headed Parakeet *Psittacula finschii* and Vernal Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus vernalis*.

For centuries, parrots have been kept as pets as they are easy to keep and easy to replace because of the large numbers in trade. This has in turn created demand that has led to an organised illegal trade in parrots in India. While parrots are believed to be the most popular pets in terms of their prevalence in trade in India, munias rank number one in terms of their sheer volume (Ahmed 2001).

India is home to eight species of munias—Green Avadavat *Amandava formosa*, Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*, White-throated Munia or Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica*, Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti*, White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*, Tricoloured Munia *Lonchura malacca*, Spotted Munia *Lonchura punctulata* and Chestnut Munia *Lonchura atricapilla*.

Munias are commonly dyed to pass them off as a more preferred species in illegal wildlife trade. For example, the Red Avadavat is often dyed light green and pale yellow and sold as the endangered and endemic Green Avadavat. The White throated Munia or Indian Silverbill is dyed with a vegetable-based orangish-red coloured dye and sold as the Red Avadavat and is sometimes declared as a juvenile Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata*.

Traders stand to benefit in two ways—one by selling the otherwise drab coloured birds at a higher price; and second by avoiding prosecution for trading in a rare and protected species.



### TRAFFIC adds..... (Continued)

Sharing an important position with parakeets and munias in illegal bird trade in India are the mynahs and starlings. The "Common" Hill Myna is one of the most traded species, owing to it being an accomplished mimic (Menon 1993; Ahmed 2002).

Excessive trapping of wild Indian birds could have a serious impact on the conservation of species. Illegal bird trade has been a major concern and more efforts in terms of stringent on the ground wildlife law enforcement is crucial from agencies across India. Since the majority of birds are destined for the pet trade, awareness among buyers about the legality of engaging in such trade is also important. TRAFFIC has previously produced several identification posters on various bird species in illegal wildlife trade in India in order to help enforcement officials recognise those in illegal trade.

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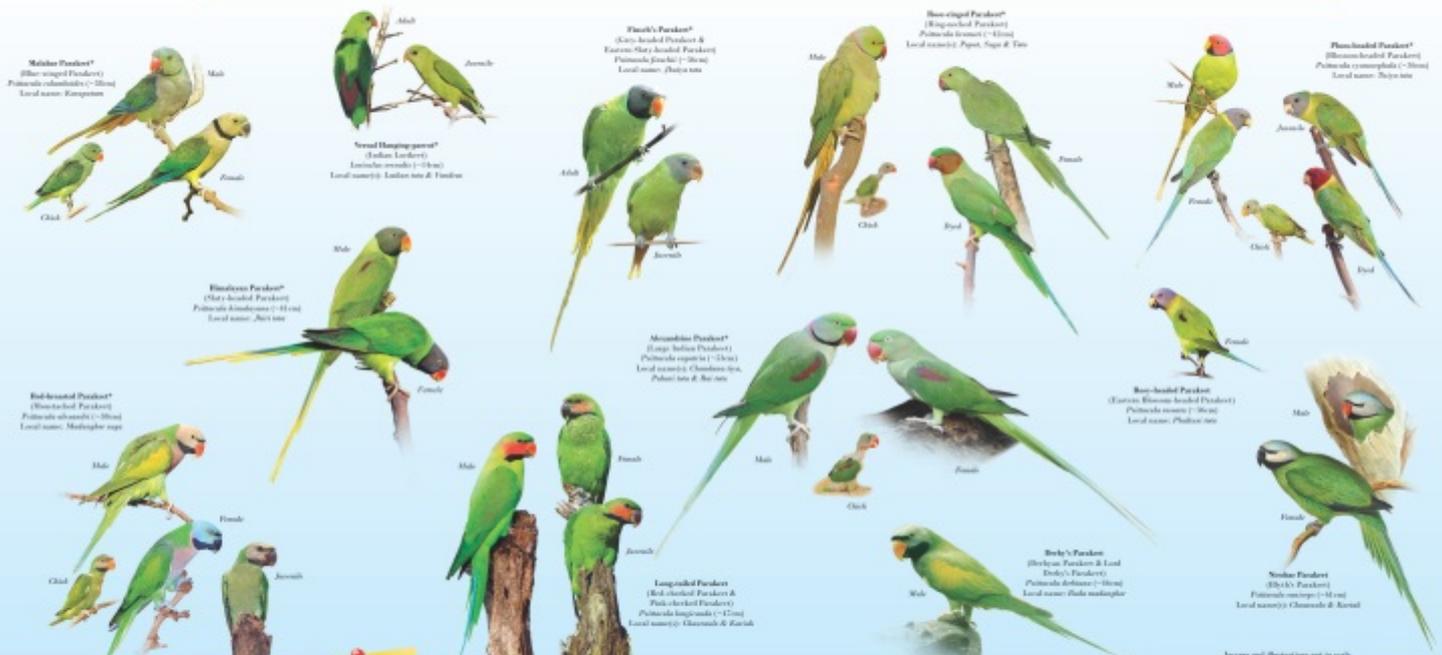
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## Parrots of India in Illegal Trade

India is home to 12 species of parrots - 11 parakeets and one hanging-parrot. Two of the parakeet species, the Malabar Parakeet *Psittacula columboides* and Nicobar Parakeet *Psittacula caniceps* are endemic to India.



**Illegal trade in Parrots**  
For centuries, parrots have been kept as pets exactly because of their beautiful colours. Long life spans and their astonishing ability to "talk". This has in time created demand that has led to an unregulated illegal trade in the species. Despite the ban that has since 1990, it is still in all Indian bird species, hundreds of parrots are collected and traded annually in India. The adult parrots are traded throughout the year with chicks arriving in trade between December and June. Parrots are caught using nets and bird-lures.

**WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) Act, 1972** (Provision) Art. 31(1) Prohibits all or trade in all Indian parrot species as prohibited in India. Schedule I, Part III, India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 Schedule I: All other species of parrots.

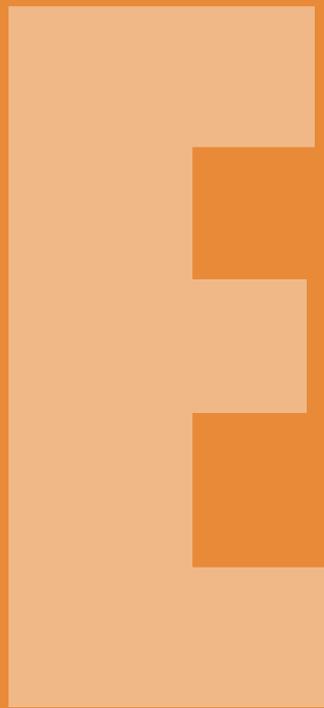
**CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)** All Indian species of parrots are in Appendix II of CITES except for the Rose-ringed Parakeet that is not listed in CITES.

**Identification Tips**  
Blue-headed Parakeet: This species is common and available in pet trade. It has a blue head and a black breast band. Blue-headed Parakeet: This species is common and available in pet trade. It has a blue head and a black breast band. Blue-headed Parakeet: This species is common and available in pet trade. It has a blue head and a black breast band.

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**TRAFFIC** is a programme of the wildlife trade monitoring network. TRAFFIC India carries out research and provides analysis, support and encouragement to efforts aimed to ensure that wildlife trade is not a threat to the conservation of nature. In India, TRAFFIC operates as a programme of WWF India.

TRAFFIC's poster on parrots of India, printed copies of which are available free of cost at TRAFFIC's India Office for educational purposes.



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## **In Focus**

**Galliformes in illegal wildlife trade in India:  
A bird's eye view**

**By Merwyn Fernandes, Co-ordinator: TRAFFIC, India Office  
IUCN - Species Survival Commission: Galliformes**



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## Galliformes in illegal wildlife trade in India: A bird's eye view

**G**alliformes, commonly referred to as “Gamebirds”, are ground feeding, heavy bodied birds that have had the closest relationship with humans of any bird species. For example, the domestic chicken originating from Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus* found in India has been long in demand for its meat and other products. Similarly, all over the world, Galliformes like turkeys *Meleagris* sp., Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*, pheasants Phasianidae and quails *Coturnix* sp. are unrivaled among other birds for their use by humans. The birds and their eggs are a protein rich meal for which the birds are domesticated or wild birds snared, shot or otherwise caught. Some species, such as pheasants, are also popular ornamental birds due to their spectacular colours.

The order Galliformes is represented by 85 genera and 290 species (Madge *et al* 2002) and are found worldwide. In India, there are only two families namely Megapodiidae represented by only one species endemic to the islands of Nicobar, the Nicobar Megapode *Megapodius*

*nicobariensis*, and Phasianidae represented by 22 genera and 46 species, of which seven are endemic while the global status of 12 species is threatened. They include the “Critically Endangered” Himalayan Quail *Ophrysia superciliosa*. This family is represented by partridges, francolin, quails and snowcocks accounting for 27 species and pheasants accounting for 18 species (Madge *et al.*, 2002).

### Distribution:

In India, Galliformes occur from coastal areas to high altitudes, including mangrove forests in West Bengal and Odisha to the alpine forests of the Himalayas. Some are highly localised to a particular habitat, such as the Manipur Bush-quail *Perdica manipurensis* while a few species have the margins of their geographical distribution in India, such as the Tibetan Eared-pheasant *Crossoptilon harmani*, White Eared-pheasant *C. crossoptilon*, Sclater's Monal *Lophophorus sclateri*, Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus*, Buff-throated Partridge *Tetraophasis szechenyii* and Chinese Francolin *Francolinus pintadeanus* (Ali and Ripley 1983, Rasmussen and Anderton 2005).

### Legal Status:

All Galliformes species in India are listed under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, including 18 pheasant species listed in Schedule I of the Act, one species Grey Junglefowl *Gallus sonneratii* listed in Schedule II and all the remaining species listed in Schedule IV. The Act provides protection against hunting, trade and other forms of exploitation including destruction of nest sites.

In the case of bird species listed in various schedules of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972., trade of live birds, meat, eggs and even destroying their habitat is punishable with a maximum punishment of 3–7 years rigorous imprisonment.

### Threats:

India has a rich diversity of francolins, partridges, pheasants and quails found throughout the country. However, habitat degradation and loss, combined with poaching for illegal wildlife trade, has pushed 11 species into a threatened category of the IUCN Red list. India was one of the largest exporters of wild birds in the world from

S.No	Common Name	Scientific Name	WPA, 1972	CITES	IUCN
1	Blood Pheasant	<i>Ithaginis cruentus</i>	I	II	Least Concern
2	Blyth's Tragopan	<i>Trogon blythii</i>	I	I	Vulnerable
3	Cheer Pheasant	<i>Catreus wallichii</i>	I	I	Vulnerable
4	Grey Peacock-Pheasant	<i>Polyplectron bicalcaratum</i>	I	II	Least Concern
5	Himalayan Monal	<i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>	I	I	Least Concern
6	Himalayan Quail	<i>Ophrysia superciliosa</i>	I		Critically Endangered
7	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	I	III	Least Concern
8	Kalij Pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	I	III	Least Concern
9	Mountain Bamboo Partridge	<i>Bambusicola fytchii</i>	I		Least Concern
10	Mrs Hume's Pheasant	<i>Syrmaticus humiae</i>	I	I	Near Threatened
11	Nicobar Megapode	<i>Megapodius nicobariensis</i>	I		Vulnerable
12	Satyr Tragopan	<i>Trogon satyra</i>	I	III	Near Threatened
13	Sclater's Monal	<i>Lophophorus sclateri</i>	I	I	Vulnerable
14	Temminck's Tragopan	<i>Trogon temminckii</i>	I	I	Least Concern
15	Tibetan Eared-pheasant	<i>Crossoptilon harmani</i>	I		Near Threatened
16	Tibetan Snowcock	<i>Tetraogallus tibetanus</i>	I	I	Least Concern
17	Western Tragopan	<i>Trogon melanocephalus</i>	I	I	Vulnerable
18	White Eared-pheasant	<i>Crossoptiloncrossoptilon</i>	I	I	Near Threatened
19	Grey Junglefowl	<i>Gallus sonneratii</i>	II	II	Least Concern
20	Black Francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	IV		Vulnerable
21	Blue-breasted Quail	<i>Synoicus chinensis</i>	IV		Least Concern
22	Buff- throated Partridge	<i>Tetraophasis szechenyii</i>	IV		Least Concern
23	Chestnut- breasted Partridge	<i>Arborophila mandellii</i>	IV		Vulnerable
24	Chinese Francolin	<i>Francolinus pintadeanus</i>	IV		Least Concern
25	Chukar	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	IV		Least Concern
26	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	IV		Least Concern
27	Green Peafowl	<i>Pavo muticus</i>	IV	II	Endangered
28	Grey Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	IV		Least Concern
29	Hill Partridge	<i>Arborophila torqueola</i>	IV		Least Concern
30	Himalayan Snowcock	<i>Tetraogallus himalayensis</i>	IV		Least Concern
31	Japanese Quail	<i>Coturnix japonica</i>	IV		Near Threatened
32	Jungle Bush Quail	<i>Perdica asiatica</i>	IV		Least Concern
33	Koklas Pheasant	<i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>	IV		Least Concern
34	Manipur Bush-quail	<i>Perdica manipurensis</i>	IV		Endangered
35	Painted Bush Quail	<i>Perdica erythrorhyncha</i>	IV		Least Concern
36	Painted Francolin	<i>Franco linuspictus</i>	IV		Least Concern
37	Painted Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix lunulata</i>	IV		Least Concern
38	Rain Quail	<i>Coturnix coromandelica</i>	IV		Least Concern
39	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	IV		Least Concern
40	Red Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix spadicea</i>	IV		Least Concern
41	Rock Bush Quail	<i>Perdica argoondah</i>	IV		Least Concern
42	Rufous- throated Partridge	<i>Arborophila rufogularis</i>	IV		Least Concern
43	Snow Partridge	<i>Lerwa lerwa</i>	IV		Least Concern

1970–1980, with nearly 14.8 million birds exported prior to an export ban, including nine species of Galliformes (Inskipp 1983).

Land-use changes for large infrastructure projects and agriculture, including shifting cultivation or *jhum* cultivation in forested areas, are some of the major drivers affecting habitats for Galliformes species. Accompanied by these changes are forest management practices (Datta 2000, Fernandes 2015), anthropogenic pressures on habitat such as livestock grazing and fuel and fodder collection, which are known negatively to affect Galliforme populations (Khaling *et al.*, 1998; Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2009; Kidwai 2013).

Every year a large number of Galliformes enter illegal trade in India. For many years they have been trapped for food, the pet trade, sport (cock-fights), their feathers, taxidermic reasons, medicinal purposes and for aviculture across the country. Sometimes the eggs of smaller quails and francolins are collected from the wild, either for consumption or to raise chicks that are then hatched under domestic hens/domestic pigeons (Ahmed 2004). It is a common practice among many tribes of central and northeast India to trap wild male junglefowls to enhance the vigor of the local domestic breeds (*Pers. Obs.*).

Decoy call birds (birds trained to lure other birds into a snare by repeated calling), drive nets, a variety of nooses and bamboo-traps are all used for capturing Galliformes for the organised bird trade. Furthermore, many local people in hill states capture, hunt and snare Galliformes for their local consumption and for sale in village markets (Aiyadurai 2011; Bhupatiet *et al.*, 2013; Chutia and Solanki 2013; Longchar *et al.*, 2013; Velho and Laurance 2013).

The effects of direct exploitation of Galliformes are high and common across India although few authors have detailed its intensity (Hilaluddin *et al.*, 2005; Aiyadurai 2011; Gubbi and Linke 2012). Field surveys and secondary information suggest that hunting and snaring of Galliformes are common practices across India (Kaul *et al.*, 2004; Velho *et al.*, 2012).

Galliformes in zoos and other captive breeding facilities also face issues. One of the areas of concern has been the non-maintenance of stud-books for Galliformes despite

them being used for captive breeding purposes and the keeping of hybrid junglefowls in enclosures used in breeding programmes (Mukesh *et al.*, 2013). Aside from native Galliformes, a number of exotic (non-native) pheasants, such as Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*, Lady Amherst's Pheasant *C. amherstiae* and Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera*, are bred in captivity and traded for aviculture collections in India. This reflects traders becoming more aware about the legal implications of engaging in trade and displaying protected India bird species. Other farm bred non-native galliformes such as Helmeted Guineafowls and turkeys are also traded as poultry by bird and meat sellers in several Indian bird markets.

Despite 18 Galliformes species being given the highest status of protection (Schedule I) in India, there have been few seizures of quails, partridges and francolins, while most Indian Peafowl seizures and cases are related to the feather trade. This has been an area of contention due to a provision within the Act whereby domestic trade is permitted for naturally shed tail feathers of this species. It is widely believed that many wild birds are killed for extraction of their tail feathers taking advantage of this clause. The protection level of Grey Junglefowl was raised due to excessive trade in their hackle feathers. Previously, trapping for meat was considered sustainable for self-consumption and as a means to meet protein requirements, while there was no commercial trade of the species. In the recent past there has been a gradual shift whereby illegally captured birds are being sold in a clandestine manner in local markets and villages.

Little emphasis has been given to illegal trade in Galliformes, with few offenders apprehended and prosecuted: most attention has been given to more charismatic species.

In light of this, there a strong need to understand and highlight the extent of illegal trade in Galliformes species in India. Enforcement agencies and the judiciary need to be sensitised about this issue while parallel efforts need to be made with local communities especially in the hilly areas where poaching is considered widespread.

UTILISATION PATTERN OF GALLIFORMES IN INDIA

Utilisation pattern	Group	States
Pet trade	Quails, Partridges, Pheasants, francolins	Haryana, Punjab, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
Meat	Quails, Partridges, Pheasants, Francolins	All states in India; highly prevalent in all northeastern states, Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Bihar
Sport (bird fights)	Partridges, Francolins, Pheasants	Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Assam
Feathers	Pheasants	Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Sikkim

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## **Wild Cry**

**Exotic birds in wildlife trade in India:  
An overview of the growing phenomenon**

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## Exotic birds in wildlife trade in India: An overview of the growing phenomenon



African Grey Parrots

### Background

The exotic pet trade in India has grown with the main demand for birds, particularly those belonging to the parrot family including macaws and cockatoos. Since there is a complete ban on trade in all wild Indian bird species, interest has shifted to exotic birds, which has led to some serious conservation concerns.

India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WPA), is only applicable to wild Indian bird species and nearly 1,200 species are included in Schedules I to IV of the Act. The Act does not include any foreign or exotic (non-native) bird species. Since trade in non-native species does not come under the ambit of the WPA, it allows traders and breeders to own, breed and trade in rare exotic bird species with ease in India.

This article highlights some worrying aspects concerning the exotic bird trade in India and stresses the need to formulate policies to manage and regulate the exotic bird trade so it doesn't impact on wild populations in their native countries.

## Legal Status: Indian bird species

India's Wildlife (Protection) Act (WPA), 1972, prohibits the hunting, trapping, trade or any other forms of exploitation of all wild Indian bird species, excluding the House Crow *Corvus splendens* which is listed as "Vermin" under the Act and an exception for domestic trade in naturally shed tail feathers of the Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*. In 1990, India banned the export of all live native birds and a year later, in 1991, the ban was further imposed on domestic trade in wild Indian birds (Ahmed 1997). Therefore today, except for the House Crow and naturally shed tail feathers of the Indian Peafowl, no other native wild bird species can be trapped or exploited in any form including utilisation of eggs or feathers. This protection is further extended under the WPA to migratory bird species that visit India every year.

## Legal Status: Exotic bird species

Exotic or non-native bird species refers to any avian species that is not found in the wild within the geographical limits of India and therefore is not recognised as part of the country's avifauna.

The import or export of any exotic bird or any other wild animal may be subject to CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) regulations if the species concerned is listed within the Convention's Appendices. Import of species listed in Appendix I is generally not allowed, but an individual, organisation or zoo is permitted to import other CITES species listed when there is an import licence along with a recommendation letter and a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Chief Wildlife Warden of the concerned State Government fulfilling the provisions of CITES and the EXIM policy enforced through the DGFT (Director General of Foreign Trade). In addition to Indian rules governing import of birds, a CITES certificate from the country of origin of the consignment along with a Veterinary and Legal Procurement Certificate (LPC) is also required. In the case of non-CITES listed species, only export clearance from the country of origin is required. These checks are only at international entry points i.e. at airports and land customs and very rarely is any documentation examined once the exotic species enters the Indian market.

However, analysis of published CITES reports showed that less than 110 exotic bird species were recorded as being imported to India over a whole decade. (Ahmed 2004)

## Understanding the origin of exotic bird species in India

Exotic bird species found in India can be assigned to three broad categories:

**1. Exotic species that have been breeding within the country from the time before India became a party to CITES:** This includes those species that may have been bred in captivity for several generations in countries other than those in their native range. These may have been selectively bred for colour mutations, varieties and hybrids that may or may not be found in the wild elsewhere in the world.

This category may further be extended to include those bird species which have now been listed under CITES protection and continue to be bred in captivity. For example, Eclectus *Eclectus roratus* and Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* in trade are both from captive bred and wild caught sources.

Some of the commonly found bird species under this category are Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*; Lovebirds *Agapornis* (barring a few species, which are not present in Indian aviculture); Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus*; Zebra Finches *Taeniopygia guttate*; Java Sparrow *Lonchura oryzivora*; White Dove (Barbary Doves) *Streptopelia risoria*; and Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata*.

**2. Species brought into the country with adequate clearances and documentation through legal channels:** This category involves birds that have entered India after the importer obtained a CITES permit along with a no-objection certificate from the Chief Wildlife Warden of the concerned state, in accordance with the Wildlife (Protection) Act and EXIM policy. The birds may be domesticated, captive bred or wild caught.

**3. Species that are brought into the country through illegal channels and without adequate permits:** This category includes species that are largely wild caught in their country of origin and have been smuggled into India. For example, the Pesquet's Parrot *Psittrichas fulgidus*, despite being a prohibited species for international trade under CITES, is smuggled directly from the country of origin due to its extreme rarity in the wild and difficulty in breeding in captivity. Other examples include various Turacos Musophagidae; Toucans Ramphastidae; Cockatoos Cacatuidae; Macaws Psittacidae; Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*; Lories and lorikeets Loriinae; Whydah Finches Viduidae; Cardinals Cardinalidae and several African finches.

## Exotic bird trade in India: The Current Scenario

Ever since the blanket ban on trade in all wild Indian bird species, the scenario of bird trade in India has slowly shifted focus. For instance, there was negligible export of domesticated exotic birds from India as exporters were trading in wild Indian birds that fetched higher prices in international markets, following the ban, not only has interest revived in the exotic bird species trade and traders have also started displaying exotic birds to cover up illegal trade in Indian bird species.

As per the personal observation of the author, based on surveys since 1992, the total trade in exotic birds in India is not more than an estimated 50–60% of all bird trade taking place (excluding the poultry trade). The majority of the exotic bird trade is in (Category 1) domesticated birds and the remaining trade is in wild caught or captive-bred exotic birds.

The main hubs of the exotic bird trade are Kolkata, Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad. These are supported by several breeding farms all over the country which supply exotic species. Unlike the illegal trade in Indian birds, which is primarily handled by local and traditional communities specialising in hunting and trapping of indigenous bird species, the exotic bird trade is handled by those who have the finances, space and access to captive breeding farms.

During surveys undertaken from 1992, the author visited more than 150 bird dealers, breeders, hobbyists and bird keepers involved in exotic bird trade and breeding. They included at least 10 private farms with collections exceeding 50 exotic species holding up to 100 or more breeding pairs. The birds bred at such establishments form the backbone of the exotic bird trade in India. The author found negligible trade from zoo-bred exotic birds and most exotic birds in Indian zoos were apparently mostly derived following seizures from illegal trade.

The following six exotic bird species dominate the exotic bird trade in India:

**1. Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus*:** The most popular cage bird in the world, the Budgerigar is a parrot from Australia. This species is traded commonly and is



Budgerigar and cockatiels on sale in Kolkata

easily available throughout India in several colours. According to the author's surveys around 300,000 Budgerigars are sold each year within the country, all bred in India. They cost as little as INR100–150 a bird, a clear indicator of their abundant availability. On any given Sunday at the “*chiriya haat*” (bird market) in Kolkata more than 5,000 Budgerigars can be found for sale.

**2. Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata*:** A common finch from Australia that is bred in good numbers in India and available in several colour varieties. The author estimates an average 20,000–30,000 Zebra Finches are traded each year within India.

**3. Lovebirds *Agapornis* sp:** Three species of lovebirds, namely Rosy-faced lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis*, Fischer's Lovebird *A.fischeri* and Masked Lovebirds *A. personata*, are available in 60 different colour varieties/types. Although these birds are originally from Africa, all the birds recorded during the author's surveys were bred in India, with an estimated captive population of more than 150,000 lovebirds within the country.

**4. Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus*:** These parakeet-sized Australian parrots occur in several colour morphs and breed prolifically. New bird fanciers who may not be able to afford a cockatoo often buy this species instead as it also has a beautiful crest. An estimated average of 10,000 to 15,000 Cockatiels are bred and sold each year in India and their population there is estimated to be more than 100,000. Occasionally, some new colour type or variety is imported, otherwise all birds of this species are bred within India.

**5. Java Sparrow *Lonchura oryzivora* (*Padda oryzivora*):** A small finch originating from the islands of Java and Bali in Indonesia, where it is threatened in the wild, this is a popular cage bird in India and elsewhere. Ali & Ripley (1983) report that the bird was introduced into the wild in South India, however, there have been no recent sightings. It is bred in captivity in fair numbers in India and is also in CITES Appendix II, although there are no import records. The species is available in various colour morphs and costs more than a Budgerigar or other finches mainly because the species is a slow breeder and usually breeds seasonally according to climatic conditions. Current study estimates indicate a captive-population of at least 100,000 Java Sparrows in India with an annual production of between 8,000 to 10,000 chicks.

Apart from the species above, the Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata*, Barbary Dove *Streptopelia risoria*, Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* and Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera* are also bred in increasing numbers. There are very few Island Canaries *Serinus canaria* in India, despite this being a popular pet bird in other parts of the world.

In recent years, there has been an apparent increase in smuggling of wild-caught exotic bird species, especially large parrots. Traders find it more lucrative to smuggle certain wild species into the country than breed them in captive conditions that may need a specialised set up and several individuals to establish a breeding population.

The lifespan of some species may be extremely low in captivity (e.g. Cordon-bleu, Whydah Finches and toucans) or many may only breed occasionally (e.g. macaws, lorries, large parrots and cockatoos). The wild counterparts are much cheaper compared to the captive bred individuals in trade. For some species difficult to breed in captivity, including Amazon parrots, cockatoos, macaws, Grey and Eclectus Parrots, high demand for chicks means some traders collect and trade in wild sourced chicks smuggled into India.



Domesticated Barbary Doves

The author's investigations suggest that many birds are smuggled into India through Patna in Bihar by traders operating from neighbouring Nepal. Consignments reach Nepal by air and are then sent by road to Bihar via the Raxaul border. Similarly, traders from Kolkata, West Bengal, use the same *modus operandi* to operate via Bangladesh. A new route via Myanmar may have emerged in recent years as can be seen from the latest seizure reports.

## Conservation Concerns

**1. Smuggling of prohibited wild Indian birds under the garb of the exotic bird trade:** It is not uncommon to find traders passing off cleverly disguised Indian bird species or look-alikes as exotics in the illegal bird trade in India. For example, the juveniles of all munias are very similar to juveniles of Zebra and Bengalese Finch also called Society Finch making their identification difficult and sometimes native birds are falsely declared as being (legal) exotics (Ahmed 1999).

**2. Increased smuggling of wild caught exotic birds into India raising conservation concerns in the country of origin:** The author rarely found instances of captive breeding of macaws, cockatoos, and lorries in India and it is believed the majority of these species in circulation are smuggled wild caught birds. The smuggling of exotic species from Bangladesh to Kolkata in West Bengal, India and from Nepal to Patna in Bihar, India has flourished since the 1990s with shipments said to arrive from Dubai, Bahrain via Pakistan or from Southeast Asia. Shipments of Grey Parrots from Africa were seized at Mumbai airport in the late 1990s. In 2011, exotic bird consignments were seized *en route* to West Bengal from Bangladesh.

The exotic pet trade can pose a conservation threat to species in the wild in their country of origin. Birds, often juveniles, are often taken from the wild, and are smuggled, stuffed in constricting spaces, with only a few reaching the eventual destination. Furthermore, indiscriminate hunting and capture of targeted species can diminish populations and sometimes lead to a skewed male:female ratio.

Many traders also falsely claim their animals have been sourced from captive breeding facilities when actually they are from the wild. This is a serious issue since wild animals often carry zoonotic diseases which could potentially be transmitted to humans and other animals.



Scarlet Macaw

In some cases, species are released by owners into habitats without understanding the impact of their actions on the ecology of the area. Species may become problematic invasives or transmit diseases to wild populations.

According to a study by Bush *et al.*, 2014 : *“International trade in exotic pets is an important and increasing driver of biodiversity loss and often compromises the standards required for good animal welfare; one-fifth of recent wildlife trade reports were driven by demand for pets or animals for use in entertainment; unsustainable harvest of wild animals for the pet trade has already led to population decline and collapse for many species; animal welfare is compromised to some extent at all stages of the exotic pet trade; legality of trade does not guarantee its sustainability; many of the species traded as pets are threatened.”*

**Important seizures of exotic birds in India and on the borders with Bangladesh:**

DATE	SPECIES SEIZED (Number in bracket)	LOCATION	SOURCE
27 August 2017	Turquoise Parrots <i>Neophema pulchella</i> (43 individuals)	Nadia, West Bengal	<a href="http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/aug/27/43-australian-turquoise-parakeets-worth-rs-1462-lakh-seized-in-west-bengal-1648898.html">http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/aug/27/43-australian-turquoise-parakeets-worth-rs-1462-lakh-seized-in-west-bengal-1648898.html</a>
1 April 2017	Several species (75)	Putkhali, West Bengal	<a href="http://en.prothomalo.com/environment/news/144001/75-birds-of-various-species-seized-at-Benapole">http://en.prothomalo.com/environment/news/144001/75-birds-of-various-species-seized-at-Benapole</a>
16 January 2017	“Australian Cockatoos” (10)	Nadia, West Bengal	<a href="http://sb.bsf.gov.in/pressrelease/201701/003-2017.pdf">http://sb.bsf.gov.in/pressrelease/201701/003-2017.pdf</a>
23 March 2015	African Grey (30) and Amazon parrots	Kolkata, West Bengal	<a href="https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/BSF-seizes-exotic-birds-from-Indo-Bangla-border/articleshow/46667254.cms">https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/BSF-seizes-exotic-birds-from-Indo-Bangla-border/articleshow/46667254.cms</a>
28 February 2011	Macaws (4)	West Bengal	<a href="https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/The-North-24-Parganas-police-seized-four-Macaws-from-Amdob-village-under-Badgah-police-staion-neat-the-Bengal-Bangladesh-border-The-birds-will-be-handed-over-to-the-forest-department/articleshow/7594863.cms">https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/The-North-24-Parganas-police-seized-four-Macaws-from-Amdob-village-under-Badgah-police-staion-neat-the-Bengal-Bangladesh-border-The-birds-will-be-handed-over-to-the-forest-department/articleshow/7594863.cms</a>
15 April 2006	500 exotic birds	Kolkata, West Bengal	<a href="https://www.telegraphindia.com/1060416/asp/bengal/story_6104968.asp">https://www.telegraphindia.com/1060416/asp/bengal/story_6104968.asp</a>
8 January 2004	Macaws (2), various other parrots including cockatoos (43)	Kolkata, West Bengal	<a href="https://www.telegraphindia.com/1040109/asp/bengal/story_2767951.asp">https://www.telegraphindia.com/1040109/asp/bengal/story_2767951.asp</a>



**Red-lored Amazon**



**Blue and Gold Macaw**

## CITES-listed exotic bird species recorded in Indian bird trade

S.No	Common Name	Scientific Name	Origin	CITES
1	Yellow-headed Amazon	<i>Amazona oratrix</i>	Middle America	I
2	Hyacinth Macaw	<i>Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus</i>	South America	I
3	Scarlet Macaw*	<i>Ara macao</i>	South America	I
4	Military Macaw*	<i>Ara militaris</i>	South America	I
5	Moluccan or Salmon-crested Cockatoo*	<i>Cacatua moluccensis</i>	Moluccas and Indonesia	I
6	Goffin or Tanimbar Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua goffiniana</i>	Moluccas and Indonesia	I
7	Yellow-crested Cockatoo or Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo*	<i>Cacatua sulphurea</i>	Sulawesi and Indonesia	I
8	Red-and-blue Lory*	<i>Eos histrio</i>	Indonesia	I
9	Blue-headed Macaw*	<i>Primolius couloni</i>	South America	I
10	Blue-winged Macaw or Illiger's Macaw	<i>Primolius maracana</i>	South America	I
11	Palm Cockatoo	<i>Probosciger aterrimus</i>	New Guinea and Australia	I
12	African Grey Parrot*	<i>Psittacus erithacus</i>	Africa	I
13	Timneh Grey parrot	<i>Psittacus erithacus timneh</i>	Africa	I
14	Kakapo (only one stuffed specimen)	<i>Strigops habroptilus</i>	New Zealand	I
15	Fischer's Lovebird*	<i>Agapornis fischeri</i>	Africa	II
16	Yellow-collared or Masked Lovebird*	<i>Agapornis personatus</i>	Africa	II
17	Australian King Parakeet*	<i>Alisterus scapularis</i>	Australia	II
18	Orange-winged Amazon*	<i>Amazona amazonica</i>	South America	II
19	Yellow -crowned Amazon parrot	<i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>	South America	II
20	Red-winged Parakeet*	<i>Aprosmictus erythropterus</i>	Australia, Irian Jaya to Papua New Guinea	II
21	Blue-and-yellow Macaw*	<i>Ara ararauna</i>	South America	II
22	Red-and-green or Green-winged Macaw*	<i>Ara chloropterus</i>	South America	II
23	Peach-fronted Parakeet*	<i>Aratinga aurea</i>	South America	II
24	Jandaya Conure*	<i>Aratinga jandaya</i>	Brazil	II
25	Nanday Parakeet*	<i>Aratinga nenday</i>	South America	II
26	Sun Conure*	<i>Aratinga solstitialis</i>	South America	II
27	Mallee Ringneck or Barnard's Parakeet*	<i>Barnardius barnardi</i>	Australia	II
28	Port Lincoln Parrot*	<i>Barnardius zonarius</i>	Australia	II
29	Umbrella or White-crested Cockatoo*	<i>Cacatua alba</i>	Moluccas and Indonesia	II
30	Greater Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>	Australia and Indonesia	II
31	Pink or Major Mitchell's Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua leadbeateri</i>	Australia	II
32	Blue-eyed Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua ophthalmica</i>	Papua New Guinea	II
33	Little Corella	<i>Cacatua sanguinea</i>	Australia	II
34	Gang-gang Cockatoo	<i>Callocephalon fimbriatum</i>	Australia	II
35	Black Lory	<i>Chalcopsitta atra</i>	New Guinea	II
36	Duivenbode's Lory or Brown Lory*	<i>Chalcopsitta duivenbodei</i>	New Guinea and Irian Jaya	II
37	Patagonian Conure or Burrowing Parrot*	<i>Cyanoliseus patagonus</i>	South America	II

## CITES-listed exotic bird species recorded in Indian bird trade

38	Blacknecked Swan*	<i>Cygnus melanocorypha</i>	Australia	II
39	Red-shouldered Macaw or Noble Macaw	<i>Diopsittaca nobilis</i>	South America	II
40	Eclectus Parrot*	<i>Eclectus roratus</i>	Australia, New Guinea and Indonesia	II
41	Galah or Rose-breasted Cockatoo*	<i>Eolophus roseicapilla</i>	Australia	II
42	Red Lory*	<i>Eos bornea</i>	Indonesia	II
43	Violet-necked Lory*	<i>Eos squamata</i>	Indonesia	II
44	Pacific Parrotlet*	<i>Forpus coelestis</i>	South America	II
45	Luzon Bleeding Heart Pigeon*	<i>Gallicolumbaluzonica</i>	Philippines	II
46	Western Crowned- pigeon	<i>Goura cristata</i>	Papua, Indonesia and New Guinea	II
47	Yellow-bibbed Lory	<i>Lorius chlorocercus</i>	Solomon Islands	II
48	Purple-naped Lory*	<i>Lorius domicella</i>	Moluccas	II
49	Chattering Lory*	<i>Lorius garrulus</i>	Indonesia	II
50	Black-capped Lory*	<i>Lorius lory</i>	New Guinea	II
51	Violet Touraco	<i>Musophaga violacea</i>	West Africa	II
52	Monk Parakeet*	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>	South America	II
53	Elegant Parrot*	<i>Neophema elegans</i>	Australia	II
54	Turquoise Parrot*	<i>Neophema pulchella</i>	Australia	II
55	Scarlet-chested Parrot*	<i>Neophema splendida</i>	Australia	II
56	Bourke's Parrot*	<i>Neopsephotus bourkii</i>	Australia	II
57	Blue-bonnet Parakeet*	<i>Northiella haematogaster</i>	Australia	II
58	Red-bellied Macaw*	<i>Orthopsittaca manilata</i>	South America	II
59	Java's Sparrow*	<i>Padda oryzivora</i>	Indonesia	II
60	Adelaide Rosella*	<i>Platycercus adalaidae</i>	Australia	II
61	Mealy or Pale-headed Rosella*	<i>Platycercus adscitus</i>	Australia	II
62	Green Rosella	<i>Platycercus caledonicus</i>	Tasmania	II
63	Crimson Rosella*	<i>Platycercus elegans</i>	Australia	II
64	Eastern or Gold-mantled Rosella*	<i>Platycercus eximius</i>	Australia	II
65	Yellow Rosella	<i>Platycercus flaveolus</i>	Australia	II
66	Western or Stanley Rosella*	<i>Platycercus icterotis</i>	Australia	II
67	Brown's or Northern Rosella	<i>Platycercus venustus</i>	Australia	II
68	Long-tailed Finch*	<i>Poephila acuticauda</i>	North Australia	II
69	Black-throated Finch*	<i>Poephila cincta</i>	Australia	II
70	Meyer's Parrot*	<i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>	Africa	II
71	Senegal Parrot*	<i>Poicephalus senegalus</i>	West Africa	II
72	Princess of Wales Parakeet*	<i>Polytelis alexandrae</i>	Australia	II
73	Regent Parrot *	<i>Polytelis anthopeplus</i>	Australia	II
74	Barraband's Parakeet (Superb Parrot)*	<i>Polytelis swainsonii</i>	Australia	II
75	Yellow or Golden-collared Macaw*	<i>Primolius auricollis</i>	South America	II
76	Red-rumped Parrot*	<i>Psephotus haematonotus</i>	Australia	II
77	Mugla Parrot or Many-coloured Parrot*	<i>Psephotus varius</i>	Australia	II
78	Dusky Lory*	<i>Pseudeos fuscata</i>	New Guinea	II
79	Goldie's Lorikeet or Red-capped Streaked Lorikeet	<i>Psitteuteles goldiei</i>	New Guinea	II
80	Pesquet's Parrot	<i>Psittichas fulgidus</i>	New Guinea	II
81	Maroon-bellied Parakeet*	<i>Pyrrhura frontalis</i>	South America	II
82	Maroon-faced Parakeet*	<i>Pyrrhura leucotis</i>	South America	II
83	Green-cheeked Parakeet*	<i>Pyrrhura molinae</i>	South America	II

## CITES-listed exotic bird species recorded in Indian bird trade

84	Toco Toucan	<i>Ramphastos toco</i>	South America	II
85	Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	<i>Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus</i>	Australia	II
86	Rainbow Lorikeet*	<i>Trichoglossus haematodus</i>	Indonesia and Australia	II
87	Ornate Lorikeet*	<i>Trichoglossus ornatus</i>	Indonesian and New Guinea	II
88	Black-throated Finch*	<i>Poephila cincta</i>	Australia	II
89	Cut-throat Finch*	<i>Amadina fasciata</i>	Africa	III
90	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	Africa	III
91	Lavender Waxbill*	<i>Estrilda caerulescens</i>	West Africa	III
92	Orange-cheeked waxbill	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>	West Africa	III
93	Red-billed Fire finch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	Africa	III
94	Green-backed Twin-spot	<i>Mandingoanitidula</i>	Africa	III
95	Melba finch or Green-winged Pytilia*	<i>Pytilia melba</i>	Africa	III
96	Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu*	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>	Central Africa	III
97	Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	Africa	III
98	Long-tailed Paradise Whydah	<i>Vidua paradisaea</i>	Central Africa	III

**Note: Species marked with (\*) were recorded breeding in captivity in India during surveys.**

## Recommendations

Since trade in non-native species does not come under the ambit of the WPA, it leaves room for traders and breeders to introduce non-native species into the pet trade. Many of these include CITES-listed species but implementing CITES provisions for trade in wild animal species involving India has not been robust and adequate, although a proposed amendment is seeking to introduce a CITES component into the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The nature of the new statute and its implementation currently remains unclear and ambiguous. CITES is enforced through the Customs Act 1962, the EXIM Policies of the Government of India, and the Export Import Control Orders 1992, often these Acts or legal instruments are rendered ineffective once wildlife contraband is seized within the territories of the country. Such loopholes need to be closed so as to monitor and regulate the exotic bird trade in India.

Better awareness among buyers of birds concerning the legal status of native and exotic species is also crucial. Bird identification posters like those published by TRAFFIC on munias, parakeets and weavers birds also aid enforcement agencies to identify Indian species in illegal bird trade and to differentiate them from exotic species.

Welfare standards at breeding farms, during transportation and also while on display at shops/exhibitions need better enforcement. Checking birds for zoonotic diseases is also important to control the spread of such diseases from wild caught birds.

Overall the exotic bird trade in India is a huge sector that needs conservation oversight.

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Blue and Gold Macaw

# Munias of India in the illegal bird-trade

India is home to eight species of munia, belonging to the family Estrildidae. All are protected in the wild in India. Their small size ( $\leq 10$  cms), beautiful colouration, melodious calls and easy upkeep make them highly sought after cage birds, often resulting in their illegal capture for the pet trade in India.



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TRAFFIC India carries out research and provides analysis, support and encouragement to efforts aimed at ensuring that wildlife trade is not a threat to the conservation of nature in India.

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Weaver birds are highly gregarious, small, sparrow-sized birds (±15 cm), popularly known for their excellent nest-weaving skills. During the monsoon season these birds build a vertical oval nest with a side entrance (tunnel). All weaver birds have a breeding and non-breeding plumage. The males acquire a distinctive breeding plumage with a yellow crown, head and breast ornamentation. However, non-breeding males are brown and streaky similar to females and juveniles.

India is home to four species of weaver birds, belonging to the family Ploceidae. However in India, the Baya Weaver is represented by two sub species.

1. a. 'Indian' Baya Weaver (Common Baya or Indian Weaver) *Ploceus philippinus philippinus*  
b. 'Eastern' Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus burmaricus*
2. Streaked Weaver *Ploceus manyar*
3. Black-breasted Weaver (Black-throated Weaver Bird) *Ploceus benghalensis*
4. Finn's Weaver (Finn's Baya or Yellow Weaver) *Ploceus megarhynchus* (Endemic to India & Nepal)

**Threat:** Although protected as native species, weaver birds are illegally traded in India - breeding males are caught for the cage bird trade during summer, while the females and non-breeding males are sold for food and also as release birds throughout the year. Often, the breeding male birds are dyed in various colours by traders to make them look attractive and exotic and for deceiving the enforcement agencies.

**Legal Status:** Hunting, trapping or trade of weaver birds is prohibited in India and is a punishable offence.

**Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972:** Schedule IV

**CITES:** None of the species are listed

**IUCN:** Finn's Weaver-Vulnerable

Other three species/sub-species-Least Concern

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**TRAFFIC**  
The wildlife trade monitoring network

is a strategic alliance of



TRAFFIC is a strategic alliance of WWF and IUCN and is a leading specialist on wildlife trade issues. In India, TRAFFIC operates as a programme division of WWF-India. TRAFFIC carries out research and provides analysis, support and encouragement to efforts aimed to ensure that wildlife trade is not a threat to the conservation of nature.

