Bears - threatened by bile trade: Wild Cry feature.....
TRAFFIC Post

TRAFFIC Post is TRAFFIC’s newsletter on wildlife trade in India. It was started in September 2007 with a primary aim to create awareness on rampant poaching and illegal wildlife trade in India and how it affects the endangered flora and fauna. Since then it has covered not only issues related to illegal wildlife trade but also highlighted policies and trends related to legitimate wildlife trade especially in timber and medicinal plants.

The newsletter began as a quarterly e-newsletter available only for online distribution. However after a few issues it was converted into a printed edition with three issues coming out every year. The response to the newsletter over the years has been overwhelming and the subscribers continue to increase with every issue.

Besides carrying updates on TRAFFIC’s work in India in a given period, the newsletter focuses on the plight of various species in illegal wildlife trade. It also provides early warning through its various sections on illegal wildlife trade trends. The CITES section and the OUTPOST section especially is meant to keep its readers updated on global news related to wildlife trade.

Managing Editor:
Dilpreet B. Chhabra
dchhabra@wwfindia.net

Editorial team:
Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj
sniraj@wwfindia.net
M K S Pasha
kpasha@wwfindia.net
Shubhobroto Ghosh
sghosh@wwfindia.net

Designed by:
Dilpreet B. Chhabra
dchhabra@wwfindia.net

Front cover: Sloth Bear by WWF-UK / WWF
TRAFFIC POST

TRAFFIC INDIA UPDATE

• South Asia clamps down on wildlife crime and illicit Tiger trade

• MP Police and Forest Department train to combat wildlife crime

• Transitions at TRAFFIC in India

• Chinese medicine Congress highlights sustainable use of wild medicinal plants

• New study seeks to implement regulations on shark trade

• Consortium assists Sri Lanka in investigating latest ivory seizure

TRAFFIC ALERT (Latest news on illegal wildlife trade in India):

• One hundred and fifteen turtles seized near Indo-Bangladesh border

• One hundred and eighty rare birds rescued; four people held in Kolkata

• Big cat poaching gang busted after 20 years

• Forest Department seizes 55 snakes in Andhra Pradesh

• Seventy kg of pangolin scales seized in Bengal

• On a wing and a prayer: Amur Falcon in India

CITES UPDATE

IN FOCUS

WILD CRY

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

Bears-threatened by bile trade
South Asia clamps down on wildlife crime and illicit Tiger trade

The Integrated Investigative Capacity Development and Operational Planning Meeting for scaling up collaborative law enforcement action to curb illegal wildlife trade in the South Asia region was held from 1-5 July 2013 in New Delhi. Jointly organized by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in India, TRAFFIC, INTERPOL, the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) of India, the meeting was attended by senior delegates from various enforcement and intelligence agencies of eight South Asian countries.

Illegal wildlife trade, a major transnational organized crime, is often high-profit and low-risk. TRAFFIC’s 2012 report on Leopard poaching and illegal trade in India stated that at least four Leopards were poached every week for illegal wildlife trade between 2000 and 2010. The persistent poaching and trafficking of wildlife is further illustrated by the more than 40 Tigers reported dead in India in the first half of 2013.

Given the nature of illegal wildlife trade, regional collaboration between the SAWEN member countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) along with international support and cooperation is needed to address wildlife crime more effectively.

The meeting in Delhi focused on specialized capacity development and operation planning including intelligence-led approaches such as controlled deliveries, interrogation techniques, risk management and ethics and professionalism in building wildlife cases.

Ms Jayanthi Natarajan, Hon’ble Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Environment and Forests the Chief Guest at the meeting said: “Illegal wildlife trade is one of the most urgent threats to wildlife. It undermines the country’s efforts to protect and conserve nature. To combat this, we need to have stricter enforcement of CITES [The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora], India’s Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 is not enough. There is a need for specific legislations to fight wildlife crime.”

“The contribution of various agencies and the support of TRAFFIC/WWF-India in strengthening law enforcement measures in India is laudable. This collaborative effort will surely help to bring regional cooperation that is much needed for eradicating this menace,” added Ms Natarajan.

Mr Ranjeet Sinha, Director, CBI stressed the importance of intelligence collection and collation among the wildlife enforcement agencies in the SAWEN countries for controlling wildlife crime. He advocated for critical policy changes in order to empower premier investigating agencies in order to curb the trade. This sentiment was echoed by Dr Maheshwar Dhakal of the SAWEN Secretariat.

INTERPOL’s Environmental Crime Programme focuses on enhancing enforcement effectiveness for the conservation of wild Tigers and other Asian big cats under Project Predator (see http://www.interpol.int/Crime-areas/Environmental-crime/Projects/Project-Predator). The development of common operational planning frameworks allowed participants to work together on building effective investigative capabilities in source, transit and end-use market locations.

This meeting also helped strengthen SAWEN as an institution by seeking to connect national focal points and the SAWEN Secretariat with other government agency representatives. Officials present represented a multiplicity of enforcement agencies, including national police agencies housing INTERPOL National Central Bureaus, Customs, wildlife departments, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, environmental agencies and India’s Wildlife Crime Control Bureau helped to bring agencies together with a common mandate.

Continued on page 5
Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India said: “TRAFFIC is delighted to see that our long-term efforts to support SAWEN are bearing fruit. India was instrumental in bringing all the eight nations together on issues of critical importance for combating illegal wildlife trade and poaching as well as having boosted SAWEN’s potential as a best-practice law enforcement network.”

Generous financial support from both the US Department of State, through a grant implemented by TRAFFIC, and USAID’s support to INTERPOL’s Project Predator, helped bring about the landmark training event.

“Strengthening SAWEN is an objective of INTERPOL’s Project Predator, but support from partners such as TRAFFIC is essential for enhancing cohesion between countries in the region to improve wildlife law enforcement,” said Ioana Botezatu, representing INTERPOL’s Environmental Crime Programme.

MP Police and Forest Department train to combat wildlife crime

TRAFFIC in India organized a specialized capacity-building and sensitization programme for the senior Police and forest officials of Madhya Pradesh (MP) on wildlife crime investigation, prosecution and law enforcement.

Madhya Pradesh has the largest population of wild Tigers in India and is rich in biodiversity. There is a constant threat to the wildlife in the State because of the regular reports of poaching incidents. It is, therefore, important to strengthen enforcement intervention so as to nip the wildlife trade nexus in the bud. Poachers are persistent in honing their poaching skills while smugglers find ingenious ways to avoid detection and the authorities. This makes it imperative for enforcement agencies to keep reviewing and upgrading their investigative skills using state-of-the art technologies so as not to be blindsided.

The training workshop was attended by more than 60 senior and middle level officials and held at Indore on 30-31 July 2013. The participants were given an overview of the illegal wildlife trade scenario both in India and globally. There were sessions on wildlife intelligence collection, identification of specimens, wildlife crime mapping and the use of GIS systems for tracking such crimes, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, legal provisions with a focus on management of wildlife cases, the emerging need for strengthening wildlife forensics, DNA-based techniques for wildlife crime investigations, sample collection and use of forensic kits with an emphasis on Tigers and ivory identification; Tiger protection management in a Protected Area, Tiger conservation in India, monitoring of Tiger Reserves using satellite-based systems, case investigations, interrogation of the accused, importance of intelligence networking, bird trade hotspots in Madhya Pradesh, species in trade and identification skills.

The programme was inaugurated by Mr K C Verma, IPS, Additional Director General of Police, Narcotics, Madhya Pradesh and attended by Mr Sudhir Sahi, IPS, Additional Director General of Police, Special Task Force, Madhya Pradesh; Mr Varun Kapoor, IPS, Inspector General of Police, Police Radio Training School, Indore and Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, IFS, Head of TRAFFIC in India, along with other senior officials from the Police and Forest Department.

Mr K C Verma expressed his willingness to work with the Forest Department for combating wildlife crime in the region. He especially emphasized the need to create awareness among the general public on wildlife conservation and illegal trade.
Mr Varun Kapoor said “This type of joint workshop has been conducted for the first time and will immensely help participating officials to understand the legal implications of this trade”.

At the valedictory, Mr R S Negi, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Head of Forest), MP said that this type of training programme will help in bringing together various agencies because without multi-agency cooperation it is impossible to fight wildlife crime. He thanked TRAFFIC/WWF-India for organizing the workshop and asked for continued support in organizing these trainings in the State.

Dr MKS Pasha, Associate Director at TRAFFIC in India has now joined the WWF Tigers Alive Initiative of WWF. He will be based in Malaysia and look after the CATS programme in 12 Tiger range countries. Dr Pasha joined in 2006 and has worked with great acumen on a wide variety of issues for TRAFFIC, including Asian Big Cats, medicinal plants, law enforcement assistance and regional work supporting the development of the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN). TRAFFIC in India wishes him good luck and a bright future. He can be contacted at khalid.pasha@gmail.com.

There are two new personnel on board the TRAFFIC team in India – Aishwarya Maheshwari and Amit Kotiya.

Mr Aishwarya Maheshwari joined TRAFFIC to focus on the Snow Leopard trade, as part of the project with WWF-US funded by USAID. Aishwarya completed his Masters in 2006 in the Wildlife Sciences with specialization on Leopards in the Gir Lion Sanctuary and worked with the Wildlife Institute of India from 2006 to 2008. He is fascinated by mountains and always wanted to explore the Snow Leopard habitats across Central and South Asia. Aishwarya led the Snow Leopard conservation programme at WWF-India in 2008 with support from Rufford Small Grants till 2013 and has recently joined the TRAFFIC team in India. He can be contacted at amaheshwari@wwfindia.net.

Dr Amit Kotiya has joined TRAFFIC as a consultant for the project “Biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods: medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) of India.” This project mainly supports implementation of the FairWild Standards, sustainable harvesting and trade of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) in India’s North-Western Ghats region. The project will increase the capacity of local communities to engage in biodiversity conservation through the improved management of MAP resources and the adoption of ecologically sound livelihoods.

Dr Kotiya completed his M.Sc. and PhD from the University of Rajasthan on plant taxonomy and ecology. He has been engaged in research on ecological monitoring of flora and fauna since 1999. He has been associated with various organizations including the Wildlife Institute of India (Dehradun), WWF-India, TRAFFIC, Care Earth Trust (Chennai), ERDS-Rajasthan (Jodhpur), University of Rajasthan (Jaipur) and Miranda House, University of Delhi (Delhi). He can be contacted at akotiya@wwfindia.net.
TRAFFIC Alert

One hundred and fifteen turtles seized near Indo-Bangladesh border

On 19 September 2013, the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) seized 115 turtles which were being smuggled into Bangladesh near the Tentulberia Border Outpost in North 24 Parganas in West Bengal. On a Thursday evening, the BSF spotted a man with a haversack moving towards the unfenced international border. On being challenged, he dropped the haversack and fled through jute fields across the international border. On opening the sack, the officials found 72 Spotted Pond Turtles and 43 Narrow-headed Softshell Turtles.

TRAFFIC in India adds......

The above seizure, like many previous ones, highlights the threat faced by various turtle species in the wild. On 1 September 2013, the BSF seized 952 Star Tortoises while they were being smuggled into Bangladesh. A patrolling party seized the reptiles from near Tentulberia Border Outpost in West Bengal’s North 24 Parganas after intercepting two smugglers who were walking towards the Bangladesh border with the consignment packed in gunny bags.

TRAFFIC in India has repeatedly reported on the threat to chelonians, specifically softshell turtles over the years. It has also produced an identification guide to Indian turtles and has been working with enforcement agencies to raise awareness on the nature of trade in turtles.

There are currently 28 species of tortoises and freshwater turtles in India, protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, of India under which trade and exploitation is prohibited. Despite this, many species are traded across borders where they are sold as pets or for meat. They are also used as an ingredient in traditional Chinese medicines.

Continued on page 8

TRAFFIC in India adds......

More than 1000 scholars, experts and practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) met in October 2013 in Santa Clara, California, USA at the 10th World Congress of Chinese Medicine (WCCM) for the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies (WFCMS).

Themed “Co-operation between Eastern and Western Medicine, better health services for people around the world”, WCCM 2013 celebrated the global growth and development of TCM. Participants exchanged experiences in medicine development, including the latest updates in relevant legislation, education, clinical practice and research.

Introducing a discussion on the sustainable sourcing of TCM ingredients, Mr Huang Jianyin, Vice Secretary-General of WFCMS noted: “This topic is of the highest importance to the WFCMS and its constituency, with the production and quality of TCM products reliant on both ecologically and socially acceptable production of medicinal plant ingredients.”

Sustainability in the sourcing of wild medicinal plants was also highlighted at the 5th Forum of the Trade Union of Genuine Regional Materia Medica (TUGRMM), which took place concurrently. TRAFFIC is a founder organization of TUGRMM, established under an EU-funded project in 2010.

Speaking at the opening event as a representative of the China Medical Pharmaceutical Material Association (CMPMA), Mr Liu Zhongliang, President of Weecome Pharmaceutical Ltd., noted that it was the responsibility of CMPMA’s 3,800-member companies to ensure their medicines were prepared in a safe, efficient and controlled manner.

He also spoke about the European Union (EU)-funded Environmental Governance Programme (EGP) project to develop sustainable supply chains for medicinal products and emphasized the responsibility to protect the environment that lies with TCM companies.

Ms Chenyang Li, a Medicinal Plant Project Manager with TRAFFIC’s China Programme, spoke about TRAFFIC’s experiences in promoting the sustainable use of wild medicinal plants through implementation of the FairWild Standard.

Continued on page 8
TRAFFIC Alert

New study seeks to implement regulations on shark trade

OUTPOST:

New study seeks to implement regulations on shark trade

TRAFFIC, together with its partners, WWF, WFCMS and Wecome Pharmaceutical Ltd, the major sponsor and CMPMA member, have been working with TCM industry representatives in Zhejiang and Hunan provinces to create and manage sustainable supply chains as part of an EGP project on “Engaging the Private Sector in sustainable management of medicinal plants – the multiplier effect”.

Read more at http://www.traffic.org/home/2013/10/21/sustainable-use-of-wild-medical-plants-highlighted-at-trad.html

OUTPOST:

New study seeks to implement regulations on shark trade

TRAFFIC study examines how implementation of trade controls through CITES regulations can ensure that seven species of sharks and manta rays are only sourced sustainably and legally. The study includes the Oceanic Whitetip shark, Porbeagle shark, three species of hammerhead shark (Scalloped, Great and Smooth) and manta rays, all of which are subject to continued over-exploitation. The species are all slow growing due to nature and produce few young, making them highly susceptible to extinction.

The top 20 shark-fishing nations/territories in descending order are Indonesia, Spain, India, Argentina, Mexico, United States of America, Malaysia, India, Spain, Italy, United States of America, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, Thailand, France, South Korea, Netherlands, Japan, Portugal and Brazil. Indonesia and India were alone responsible for over 40% of global catches between 2002 and 2011. These EU Member States – Spain, France, Portugal and Greece – are responsible for less than 12% of global catches and, collectively, the 26 EU Member States are the largest shark-catching conglomeration.

TRAFFIC is concerned about the ongoing trade in softshell turtles and encourages the introduction of effective measures to reduce the demand and smuggling of turtles within the country, including the monitoring and control of cross-border transactions.

Source:

TRAFFIC Alert

TRAFFIC Alert

In recent years, many of the species have appeared in urban markets in China. Reports suggested that turtles are easily captured by collectors who use nets, fences, sometimes spears, or even catch them by hand (Rashid and Swingland 1997). Since China is believed to have depleted its native turtle species populations, the reptiles are now sourced from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. Most of the trade occurs through porous international borders.

TRAFFIC is concerned about the ongoing trade in softshell turtles and encourages the introduction of effective measures to reduce the demand and smuggling of turtles within the country, including the monitoring and control of cross-border transactions.

O ne hundred and eighty rare birds rescued; four people held in Kolkata

At least 180 species of rare birds were recovered on 15 September 2013 in Kolkata during a joint operation by the Police and Forest Department personnel. Four people were arrested in connection with the raid. 151 munia birds and 30 birds of rare species were recovered. The four people arrested were attempting to traffic the birds from West Bengal to neighbouring States.
The study, *Into the deep: Implementing CITES measures for commercially-valuable sharks and manta rays*, was commissioned by the European Commission and written in the wake of the shark and manta ray species being listed within the Appendices of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) at a meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand, in March this year.

The study aimed to identify those countries among the 178 CITES Parties that will mainly be affected by the listings: the relevant existing international, regional and domestic regulations; the main challenges facing implementation of the measures; and any additional capacity building that would be needed to ensure those Parties catching and trading in the products of these species could validate their sustainability and legality before issuing permits.

The study revealed a lack of basic information regarding levels of catch and population status of the newly listed marine species, with an urgent need to improve the identification of the species in trade, reporting of trade; and for further research, assessment and monitoring to determine the impacts of trade on populations. The study also highlighted the need to ensure domestic regulatory frameworks and administrative structures to support the implementation of CITES trade controls.

The study also examined the different dynamics influencing the trade in the species concerned—manta rays are chiefly traded for their gill rakers, used in traditional Asian medicines, while the Porbeagle is mainly caught for its meat. Hammerhead sharks are caught both for consumption of their meat and international trade of their fins. The larger Oceanic Whitetip is caught for its highly-valued fins, destined for markets in East Asia, particularly Hong Kong.

Some of the species examined are specifically targeted by fishing operations, while other species such as the tuna are a secondary, but valuable catch. The study aims to break down the complex trade nexus involved in this operation.

“There was great elation when these sharks and manta rays were listed in CITES this March. But the CITES listing does not take away the need for comprehensive fisheries management. They represent one critical part of that management through trade controls and prevent international trade in products of these species sourced from unsustainable or illegal fisheries,” said Glenn Sant, TRAFFIC’s Marine Programme Leader.

The new listings will come into effect only on 14 September 2014, to give CITES Parties adequate time to prepare for their implementation, including guiding range States on how to determine what levels of trade are sustainable for the species concerned—a requirement under CITES for trade to be permitted.

The European Union has already banned the practice of shark fishing by EU vessels entirely in response to the devastating impact over-fishing is having on some shark species. Brunei recently announced a ban on catching and landing of all shark species and several airlines, including Air New Zealand, Cathay Pacific, Korean Air, Qantas and the Seoul-based Asian Airlines, have recently announced bans on the carriage of shark fin.

Download the report at [http://www.traffic.org/home/2013/7/30/new-study-gets-its-teeth-into-shark-trade-regulations.html](http://www.traffic.org/home/2013/7/30/new-study-gets-its-teeth-into-shark-trade-regulations.html)

**TRAFFIC in India adds........**

There are seven species of munias found in India and, according to TRAFFIC’s country-wide study on the illegal bird trade, munias or avadavats comprise nearly 40% of the total bird numbers traded in India (Ahmed 1997, 2002). Munias are small, beautifully adorned, have melodious calls, and are low-cost to maintain with a simple diet, making them easy to care for in captivity. They are commercially exploited throughout their range.

Despite being listed in Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and one species, the Green Avadavat, listed in Appendix II of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), under which both domestic and international trade in the species is restricted, munias continue to be traded in the clandestine market.

TRAFFIC has been highlighting the danger posed to Indian birds for almost two decades. Beginning with surveys of birds in northern India, TRAFFIC has published literature on threats to Indian birds including “Imperilled Custodians of the Night: A Study on the illegal trapping and trade in owls of India”, and prepared posters raising awareness of the illegal trade in munias and parrots, and regularly emphasized that trade in all Indian birds is illegal under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

India banned the export of indigenous birds in 1991. Currently non-native (‘exotic’) birds are legally sold in the market and some traders use this lacuna in the law to deal in indigenous birds.

**Source:**
TRAFFIC Alert

Big cat poaching gang busted after 20 years

Following a major operation against Tiger and Leopard skin and body parts traders, Delhi Police on 8 September 2013, claimed to have rounded-up the “biggest gang of poachers and smugglers” who had evaded arrest for more than 20 years. Over 18 kg of Tiger skulls, bones, nails and teeth were recovered from three people arrested.

TRAFFIC in India adds........

TRAFFIC congratulates the efforts of the enforcement agencies involved in this operation and continues to call for stronger measures to pursue others in this clandestine business. TRAFFIC has always stressed the need for stronger prosecutions. To this end, TRAFFIC regularly conducts workshops across India and collaborates with government agencies of neighbouring countries to improve action on the ground for better investigation, apprehension and conviction of wildlife criminals, especially those dealing with big cats protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. In October 2013 the Seema Suraksha Bal (SSB) seized Tiger bones in Valmiki Tiger Reserve shortly after TRAFFIC had conducted a training workshop for SSB officials there. The case of Sansar Chand and the possibility of him getting away free due to inadequate evidence presented against him in court, points to the fact that better prosecution cases and evidence are need to convict wildlife criminals.

Source:
http://www.deccanherald.com/content/356173/poaching-gang-busted-20-years.html;
http://www.telegraphindia.com/1131010/jsp/bihar/story_17441918.jsp;

OUTPOST:
Consortium assists Sri Lanka in investigating latest ivory seizure

The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), at the request of Sri Lanka, deployed its first Wildlife Incident Support Team (WIST) to help enforcement officials investigate a major ivory seizure.

The WIST, led by INTERPOL on behalf of ICCWC, collected DNA samples from 359 elephant tusks that were seized by Sri Lanka Customs authorities in the port of Colombo. The action was in response to a Resolution adopted by the Conference of the Parties to CITES at its 16th meeting (CoP16), held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 3 to 14 March 2013 that called for the forensic examination of all large-scale (>500 kg) ivory seizures. WISTs, consisting of enforcement staff or relevant experts, can be dispatched at the request of a country that has been either affected by significant poaching of CITES specimens, or that has made a large-scale seizure of such specimens. The role of the WISTs is to assist, guide and facilitate appropriate follow-up actions in the immediate aftermath of such an incident.

The DNA samples will help relevant national authorities to determine the origin of the seized ivory through the use of forensic technology. Identifying where large-scale ivory seizures originate is vital for the design of efficient law enforcement responses and interventions. This will ensure that resources are directed to those areas where the most significant poaching activities occur. Determining the origin of seized ivory will also make a significant contribution towards ensuring that the entire crime chain, from countries of origin and transit to the countries of destination, is brought into focus.

The samples have been sent for DNA analysis to the Center for Conservation Biology at the University of Washington in the United States to identify the origin of the ivory and also to the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation for chemical isotope analysis, to determine the age of the ivory. John E. Scanlon, Secretary-General of CITES, stressed that the successful deployment of the WIST team in Sri Lanka demonstrated the hands-on support now being delivered to CITES Parties through ICCWC.

ICCWC is a collaborative effort by the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank, and the World Customs Organization (WCO) to bring coordinated support to the national wildlife law enforcement agencies and to the sub-regional and regional networks that, on a daily basis, act in defence of natural resources. The deployment of the WIST was generously funded by the European Commission.
TRAFFIC Alert

Forest Department seizes 55 snakes in Andhra Pradesh

Authorities seized 55 live snakes, including Russell vipers, cobras and pythons, from snake charmers at Kachiguda, Uppal, Medipally, Chappal Bazaar and Dhooppet in the first week of August 2013. These snakes were handed over to Nehru Zoological Park for veterinary care and were later released into the wild by the Forest Department.

TRAFFIC in India adds...........

Snake charmers have been using a variety of species of snakes, trade of which is illegal under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Generally, snakes do not command the level of interest that Tigers and elephants do, but are nonetheless important to ecosystems. Although many people fear snakes, they are also revered and used as animals for worship during occasions like “Nagpanchami”. TRAFFIC has already highlighted the trade of Red Sand Boas in India.

Seventy kg of pangolin scales seized in Bengal

On 31 July 2013, Forest Department officials, acting on intelligence inputs, arrested seven people with 70 kg of pangolin scales from Debidanga, Siliguri, West Bengal. This suggests the Siliguri corridor may continue to be a preferred route for animal smugglers. At least 280 pangolins could have been killed to obtain that weight of scales. Those arrested came from different parts of the country and Nepal. Investigations revealed that the scales, brought from Haryana, were to be smuggled out to Nepal from where they would be transported to China, where pangolin scales are in high demand for use in aphrodisiacs and other medicines.

TRAFFIC in India adds...........

India has two species of pangolins, the Indian Pangolin Manis crassicaudata and the Chinese Pangolin Manis pentadactyla, both protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Both species are listed in Appendix II of CITES, with a zero quota for international trade.

Although pangolins are traded locally throughout India, the main threat to their survival is due to the high demand from international markets in China and South-East Asia, both for their meat, considered a delicacy and also as a “tonic food” because of its alleged medicinal properties and for their scales.

Until recently, it appears that most illegal pangolin trade was focused in South-East Asia, but now there seems to be a growing international trade from India, with traders targeting areas as far as the interior peninsular region. Netting, trapping, snaring and shooting are common methods of poaching. Pangolins are also smoked out from their nests by people who capture them for their meat. The odd appearance of pangolins makes people rather indifferent towards their fate.

Source:

http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-08-06/flora-fauna/41131043_1_scales-pangolin-siliguri;
http://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/enablers/traffic/cites_update/species_in_focus/;
http://pangolins.org/category/india/;
http://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/enablers/traffic/cites_update/species_in_focus/
IN FOCUS:
On a wing and a prayer: Amur Falcon in India

After the mayhem reported last year, Amur Falcons have been safe in India so far this year, thanks to the determined efforts by the Government of Nagaland and the conservation fraternity.

In 2012, the killing of around 120,000 Amur Falcons over a one week period in the State of Nagaland raised alarm across India. The bird stops over in Nagaland for a brief refueling halt during its long migration flight. However, the catastrophe may not be repeating itself this year largely due to the efforts of the Forest Department, NGOs and local communities.

The Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* is a small raptor in the falcon family that is an exceptional long distance flyer. It breeds in north-east Asia (China, North Korea and Russia) and in winter migrates to south-east Africa, undertaking one of the longest over-sea flights known for a bird of prey (of over 4000 km). The total distance covered during migration is 22,000 km, among the longest migrations recorded.

Amur Falcons on migration stop over for a few weeks in north-eastern India, concentrating in the Wokha district of Nagaland, resting and feeding on insects to prepare for the next leg of their long journey. At such times the State may host a very large percentage of the global population for a few days during this time. This gathering of falcons is a significant and spectacular natural phenomenon, much like the arribada of the nesting Olive Ridley Sea-turtles in Orissa.

Conservation India and Nagaland Wildlife & Biodiversity Conservation Trust (NWBCT), the NGOs who discovered and documented the Amur Falcon massacre in October 2012 have been working closely with the Nagaland Government, local communities and other NGOs to stop the killings this year. They reported, “The migrating falcons spend the day on the transmission wires (almost entirely inaccessible to hunters) and descend to forested patches along the banks of the Doyang reservoir to roost. The hunters ruthlessly exploit this particular roosting behaviour and set-up huge fishing nets (30-40m long, 10-12m tall) all over the roosting sites”.

Continued on page 13
Mr Ravi Singh, Secretary General & CEO of WWF-India adds, “The Amur Falcon migrates through Nagaland or aggregates in such huge numbers only during its winter migration. It uses a different route during the spring migration. Thus a short period of two weeks or so, in October-November, spent in Nagaland has become the greatest threat to the species. It is true that the species still exists in large numbers and is not considered threatened, but recurring large-scale removal of individuals can diminish the largest of populations. The fate of the Passenger pigeon of the U.S.A (extinct in 1896) is a grim reminder that the largest of bird populations cannot sustain mass-scale hunting”.

“India being a signatory to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, has a moral responsibility to protect the Amur Falcon from the large-scale destruction threatening to endanger the species” he further added.

Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India further commented, “Amur Falcons have arrived in India again this October and so far no birds are reported to have been killed in Nagaland. TRAFFIC is elated to see the efforts undertaken by the Forest Department and the support it has received from NGOs and local communities to stop the annual hunting becoming a conservation crisis. It is a great example of what determined government action can achieve for conservation”.

Mr Vikhweno Meratsu, Under Secretary to the Government of Nagaland said, “The forest officials along with other enforcement agencies like the Police and District Administration have set up committees in all the districts where the Amur Falcon passes through and is working round the clock to prevent any untoward activity that may disturb and threaten these beautiful birds. Awareness campaigns are being undertaken to make the communities understand the role of these birds in agriculture and the environment. The village authorities have also been encouraged to pass resolutions for the conservation of the Amur Falcon with a view to let common people participate in the safe stay and passage of these birds”.

©Ramki Sreenivasan / Conservation India

TRAFFIC POST

NOVEMBER 2013
(Illegal wildlife trade threatens the future of many species in the wild. This section highlights the plight of one such species in trade.)

**Bears—threatened by bile trade**

Baloo, Rudyard Kipling’s bear, has been a target for illegal wildlife traders and it is little surprise that the illegal bear bile trade is threatening the future of bears in the wild.

Not so long ago, dancing bears were a common sight on the streets in India, despite the animals being protected under Indian law. Thankfully this threat has abated due to sustained public campaigns and government action. However, illegal trade in bears for their bile has taken its place.

There are four species of bears found in India—Himalayan Brown Bear *Ursus arctos isabellinus*, Asiatic Black Bear *Ursus thibetanus*, Sun Bear *Helarctos malayanus* and Sloth Bear *Melursus ursinus*.

**Distribution:**
- **Asiatic Black Bear**—Found in the Himalayas from Jammu and Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh and in the hills of north-east India.
- **Sun Bear**—Found in the States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Manipur.
- **Sloth Bear**—Found throughout India except in Jammu and Kashmir, high Himalayas and arid/desert areas of Gujarat and Rajasthan.

**Status:** All the above species are protected in India under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The Himalayan Brown Bear, Sun Bear and Sloth Bear are listed under Schedule I of the Act while the Asiatic Black Bear is listed in Schedule II. This prohibits hunting, trade or any other form of exploitation of the species. International trade is further restricted under CITES wherein all the species are placed in Appendix I.

**Threats:** Poaching and illegal trade of bears is driven largely by the demand for their bile that is used in traditional medicine and folk remedies across Asia. Bear bile is a digestive juice produced by the liver of the bear and stored in its gall bladder. Poachers kill the bears to obtain the gall bladder. The bile is traded either as complete gall bladders or as crystallized bile extract. In 2011, TRAFFIC conducted a study on bear bile trade and found that there is a large demand for bear bile products that are sold in traditional medicine outlets in mainland China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Myanmar and Viet Nam. The most frequently encountered products were whole bear gall bladders and pills—found in half the outlets surveyed.

*Continued on page 15*
TRAFFIC’s research suggested a complex and robust trade in bear products. Several of the countries/territories are either producers or consumers of bear bile products, while in some cases they acted as both. Mainland China was the most commonly reported place of origin for these products across the region.

Gall bladders and bile extracts are often smuggled under the guise of frozen food. Bear gall bladders cannot easily be distinguished from those of cows, sheep or pigs thus making detection extremely difficult. Bear paws, meat, and fat are also traded alongside the bile, though the biggest threat to bears comes from the trade in bear bile.

Nandini Velho who studies bushmeat hunting in Andhra Pradesh said in her Pioneer article in 2012 that, “Time will tell whether the demand for the gall bladder of the Asiatic Black bear outdoes its supply. Rinchin (a local hunter) says that if hunters are skilled enough, they can hunt up to 10 bears a year. Another hunter said that in his village of 100 houses alone killed 35 bears last year. For every one bear killed almost, six are injured and can't be found”.

It was further reported by Nandini that hunters use their keen natural history skills to track bears in the forest. Bears are hunted between October and December. Around the same time, people from Bhutan and Tibet come down to buy gall bladders, a sign that market links are well established.

“While internationally this illegal trade in bear bile and other bear products has been highlighted in the past there is limited information regarding its status in India. Although seizure data clearly indicate demand for bear bile from India, there is a need for more field-based research to understand the hunting practices and trends. Enforcement agencies must stay alert as currently much of this trade appears to be undetected”, adds Dr Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Head of TRAFFIC in India.

References:
A field guide to Indian Mammals- Vivek Menon ;
http://www.dailypioneer.com/sunday-edition/sundayagenda/travel-agenda/93156-hunting-remains-a-threat.html (originally);
Handbook on wildlife law enforcement in India, Samir Sinha;
http://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/enablers/traffic/cites_update/species_in_focus/bears/ ;