

Wildlife Times

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Editorial

Many new policies and plans are being formulated to conserve wild animals by national governments and multinational organizations. Recent workshop in Thimpu to discuss recommendations on smart green infrastructures on tiger conservation landscapes came up with recommendations for planning and implementing smart infrastructure for tiger range countries. Likewise, Bangladesh is setting up special force to save tigers and other endangered animals from illegal poaching and intrusion. The custom officials and the police of Thailand have become more vigilant and strict in terms of import/export of wild animals from the country. Though many cases are still prevalent, the frequency of illegal trade has decreased to some extent.

While these countries are working on their strategies to save wildlife, many cases and instances of wild animals' illegal trades are still in news. United Arab Emirate (UAE) has become hotspot for illegal trade with more animals traded for use as pets. The sighting of endangered species at roads and buildings has made officials concerned about the illegal captivity of wild animals. Similar is the case for pangolins, which are highly traded. The pangolins are traded for their meat and scales. Last month saw huge rise in trade of pangolins. The pangolin trade is more seen in Indonesia and Vietnam. In international arena, the trading of turtles, antelopes, ivories and rhino has increased.

These contrasting global scenarios of wildlife status show that many countries are yet to move forward in regard to curbing illegal wildlife trade effectively. The people involved in illegal trades considers as the way for easy money rather than considering their ecological and aesthetical importance. The governments need to be more alert and aware to minimize illegal trade in global level.

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To control the illegal wildlife trade, one needs to control poaching at national park level. Though the government is doing its best and multinational organizations are giving its unprecedented support, if there is not adequate support of the communities residing in the peripheral of national park, the external effort to control poaching will not be successful. This notion has clearly been evident in the recent observation by Esmond and Chryssee Martin on the causes behind the reduction of rhino poaching in Nepal where the author due amply highlighted the enhanced community support in buffer zones of Chitwan and Bardia National Parks that resulted on the reduction of poaching.

Smart Green Infrastructure in Tiger Conservation Landscapes

On May 30 and 31, 2011, in Thimpu, Bhutan, representatives from diverse ministries, national experts from other Tiger Range Countries (TRCs) and civil society & private sector in Bhutan met to discuss how to ensure tiger conservation amid accelerating development pressures in tiger conservation landscapes (TCLs). The outcome of ‘Smart Green Infrastructure in Tiger Conservation Landscapes: A Practitioner’s Workshop’, which was jointly organized by the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Global Tiger Initiative, is a set of recommendations for planning and implementing Smart Green Infrastructure (SGI) tools with application to land use planning, hydroelectric power, roads and ecotourism development that can potentially impact TCLs. These recommendations have wide applicability in TRCs.

These recommendations were crafted and adopted by a group of more than 80 representatives from diverse government ministries, civil society, and the private sector of Bhutan, national experts from India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, and Thailand, together with international experts



Bhutan has committed to maintaining 60 percent of its land area permanently under forest as part of its Constitution. This is unique among countries of the world, and it has also pioneered the idea of measuring the nation's progress through 'Gross National Happiness' instead of traditional economic indicators, GNP or GDP.

from the World Bank, the Smithsonian Institution, and the US National Park Service. The forum considered how to privilege tiger conservation amid accelerating development pressures in tiger conservation landscapes in the Tiger Range Countries (TRCs).

The meetings in Bhutan's capital covered the theme 'Smart Green Infrastructure in Tiger Conservation Landscapes.' The goal was to address the multi-sector implications for planning and implementation of smart green infrastructure (SGI) principles with application to roads, hydroelectric projects, ecotourism development, and land-use planning that can potentially affect the tiger conservation landscapes. Operating SGI by design across the four sectors in Bhutan is the ultimate goal of the recommendations, and in fact may be applicable to the other TRCs.

Bhutan has long given priority to green growth to ensure that conservation is mainstreamed into development. It has committed to maintaining 60 percent of its land area permanently under forest as part of its Constitution. This is unique among countries of the world, and it has also pioneered the idea of measuring the nation's progress through 'Gross National Happiness'

instead of traditional economic indicators, GNP or GDP. For the Bhutanese, biodiversity and a healthy environment are critical components of Gross National Happiness. The Thimpu Recommendations build on Bhutan's experience with safeguarding its forest cover and implementing green land-use planning with its system of protected areas connected by green corridors.

The Thimpu Recommendations cover several infrastructure sectors, including Land-use planning, Roads, Hydropower, and tourism on policy and landscape levels.

The SGI workshop brought together representatives of diverse sectors to the tiger conservation table. GTI Program Director Keshav Varma remarked, "We will not succeed in saving tigers if we talk only to the converted; a country's minister of environment or minister of forestry alone cannot do all that must be done to protect biodiversity." Other public sectors as well as the private sector have an important role to play in safeguarding tigers and their habitats. Taking on this responsibility will help to ensure the future integrity of the ecosystem services—from carbon storage to watershed protection and food security—that tigers and their rich habitats provide.

Enhanced Community Support Reduces Rhino Poaching in Nepal

Rhino poaching in Nepal declined in 2008 and 2009 in contrast to the previous seven years. Among the primary reasons for this decrease were the improved law and order throughout the country and better anti-poaching efforts. NGOs allocated more resources to local communities living around Bardia and Chitwan National Parks, and an increase in tourism meant that the Parks' Buffer Zone Management Committees received more money and assistance from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC). Lower caste people who understand the needs of the poorest were elected to senior positions on the Management Committees and User Groups in the Buffer Zones. In turn, these developments encouraged the mostly poor people of the local communities to support more fully rhino protection. Improved co-operation amongst the NGOs, DNPWC, the Army and local communities helped reduce rhino poaching in 2008 and 2009.

The Buffer Zone concept was promulgated in Nepal in 1993 for certain protected areas in order to encourage the local communities to be more reliant



The greater one horned rhino carries a horn worth thousands of dollars on the black market in East Asia

on economic activities within such a zone rather than illegally exploiting the resources inside the parks. The purpose was to make the communities more aware of wildlife conservation since it is in their best economic interests to reduce poaching of rhinos and tigers, large animals that make tourism profitable. The Buffer Zones were to be funded from 30–50% of the revenue raised in the protected areas, later confirmed at 50%. This new, exciting concept was set up in Chitwan National Park in 1996 but did not really get going until around 1999. For Bardia National Park the concept was also set up in 1996.

In the initial years after the implementation of the Buffer Zone concept, it was not effective in protecting the rhino as the poorest people received too few benefits. From 2001 to 2006, at least 120 rhinos were poached in and around Chitwan NP, and in Bardia NP's Babai Valley the entire rhino population was eliminated by poachers with Bardia's total rhino number declining from 67 to 30 during this time. There were other reasons for the serious rhino poaching, including a breakdown in law and order throughout Nepal, but the local communities were not particularly helpful in preventing poachers and traders



Rhinos in Nepal prefer the grassy swamp areas and are less frequently seen feeding in the forests

from moving in and out of the Buffer Zone areas contiguous to the two Parks.

Fortunately, the Buffer Zone concept relevant to wildlife conservation was implemented more successfully in 2008 and 2009. This improved community concern for protecting rhinos has greatly helped to reduce poaching.

Rhino poaching in Nepal in 2008 and 2009 Chitwan National Park

In 2008 there were about 400 rhinos in and around Chitwan NP of which 7 rhinos were shot. All except one were killed inside the Park. The authorities retrieved only one horn. In 2009 10 rhinos were poached, seven inside the Park and 3 in the Buffer Zone; officials retrieved three horns. Poachers wounded two rhinos in July/August 2009, around the tourist area of Sauraha, but due to the quick response from the Park

staff, the poachers did not have time to remove the horns from the injured animals.

Poachers and middlemen who had been arrested in 2008 in 2009 gave information on prices. There was one exceptionally high price, when in 2009; a gang killed a rhino with .303 rifle. The gang removed the 1 kg horn and sold it to a trader in Kathmandu supposedly for NRs. 1,400,000 (USD 19,178).

Bardia National Park

There were only two rhinos known to have been poached in Bardia NP in 2008 and none in 2009, mainly because some Army and ex-Army people who had been directly involved in the poaching and selling of horn were arrested in 2008.

A businessman from Kathmandu paid NRs. 200,000 (USD 3091) to the poachers for a rhino horn which was split evenly amongst

the four gang members. Similarly, a woman of Tibetan origin, resident in the town of Nepalgunj, purchased the horn for NRs. 900,000 (USD 12,329) on behalf of a trader who may have been an ethnic Lama.

Increased security in Nepal

The signing of the Peace Accord in 2006 ended a 10-year civil war. Subsequently, fighting in the countryside decreased and security greatly improved in Nepal. Consequently, the Nepalese Army resident in Chitwan NP was able to re-occupy more former Army posts. In addition, in mid-2008 a company of troops was added to the battalion in the Park, which improved the frequency and effectiveness of anti-poaching activities.

In Bardia NP the Nepal Army occupied only seven posts in 2004, but by December 2007 six more were re-established (Martin and Martin 2006, Martin et al. 2009). By the end of 2009, Nepal Army personnel occupied 19 posts. During the insurgency, the Army could not move around the Babai Valley as it was diverted to counter insurgency operations. By 2008, Army personnel spent most of their time carrying out anti-poaching activities once more.

The buffer zone communities

Till 2005, the conservation efforts carried out by communities living in the Buffer Zones of Chitwan and Bardia NPs were not

particularly effective. This was due to a decline in the money paid into the Buffer Zones as a result in the drop in tourist numbers, and the fact that the Buffer Zone Management Committees received this money automatically whether they adequately protected rhinos or not. In addition, the communities within the Buffer Zones had not been well informed on how to deal with conservation issues nor motivated to implement a successful anti-poaching strategy. These problems continued in 2006 and 2007.

Chitwan National Park

There is 1 Buffer Zone Management Committee, 21 User Committees and 1,700 User Groups that are involved in deciding how the money earned by the Park will be allocated and spent by the local communities in the Buffer Zone.

The Buffer Zone Management Committee for Chitwan allocates 30% for conservation projects to protect wildlife, 30% for building schools and roads, 20% for income-generating projects such as poultry and pig farming, handicrafts, and tailoring enterprises, 10% for administration and 10% for education. The conservation and education expenditures are particularly relevant to rhinos.

The Buffer Zone User Committees

Groups spend more money on conservation projects



Esmond Martin meets some members of the Mrigakunja user committee at their office near Chitwan National Park

compared to educational ones, although the latter are probably equally important for rhino conservation.

In 2008 and 2009, the major conservation projects included erecting fences to protect crops from wild animals that stray out of Chitwan NP and improving the management of grasslands for rhinos. Other projects support the youths who voluntarily patrol in the Buffer Zone to arrest poachers and to report illegal weapons.

National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) increased its support in the Buffer Zone by improving the people's livelihoods, safeguarding people and crops from wild animals, and by helping to protect rhinos that wander into the Buffer Zone. NTNC set up a fund in 2005 and 2006 of NPR 5,000,000 (then worth USD 69,444), the interest on which is used to pay informers, to patrol outside the Park boundary and to help maintain anti-poaching vehicles.

NTNC, along with assistance from the Darwin Initiative, ZSL and the Parks' staff have erected fences to deter wild animals from going into farmers' fields. NTNC has also been encouraging local communities not to over-exploit the natural resources of the forest by encouraging other forms of economic activity and paying the start-up costs. These include supporting alternative energy sources such as biogas plants and supplying tree seedlings and setting up monitoring system for rhinos.

WWF Nepal works with the communities in the Buffer Zone to reduce human-wildlife conflict and aids income-generating projects such as goat keeping, pig farming and biogas plants, support eco clubs at schools and carryout awareness programmes on the importance of conservation to protect the rhino. WWF Nepal spent NRs. 800,000 (USD 12,365) in 2009 for informers and for intelligence gathering on potential poachers and

wildlife traders. The laymen coached by Ram Prit Yadav, who patrol on daily basis the community forests and collect information on poachers, are paid NRs. 700-2000 (USD 10-27 a month).

The Park staff members also have improved relations with the communities in the Buffer Zone. An assistant warden based at Chitwan NP headquarters at Kasara oversees the management and co-ordination of the Buffer Zone activities for DNPWC. The Park helps support the management of the Buffer Zone User Groups by employing staff, including a sub-engineer to estimate the cost of development works.

Bardia National Park

There is one Buffer Zone Management Committee, but 15 User Committees and at least 226 User Groups that are involved in deciding how the money is allocated.

NTNC has recently given greater assistance to Buffer Zone communities in order to ensure that the rhinos remain safe and thus continue to attract tourists to the Park. A rhino identification system was started in June 2008, with financial support from the Darwin Initiative and technical assistance from ZSL. The Darwin Initiative has helped fund NTNC to put a lot of effort into community education and the mentha processing plants.

WWF Nepal is increasing its help to the User Committees

in the Buffer Zone. Support is given to 104 youth volunteers who have been assembled by the User Group Committees since 2008 to gather information and patrol the outskirts of the Park, especially in the Karnali River area. In response, it has contributed to the construction of 34 km of electric fencing on the western bank of the Karnali River to prevent large mammals from leaving the Park. The Fund also helps to motivate the local community by implementing rhino conservation education projects and by supporting new forms of income, such as furniture making and the extraction of oils from plants to sell commercially.

Conclusion

The official decrease in the number of rhinos poached in Nepal in 2008 and 2009 compared to the number killed between 2000 and 2007 can be attributed to five main factors: improved security in the country, a system set up by the Darwin Initiative to monitor rhinos, more efficient use of informers, increased support for projects in Chitwan and Bardia NPs' Buffer Zones by the NGOs and DNPWC, and greater commitment by local communities to protecting rhinos.

This in turn has encouraged local people to put a higher priority on wildlife conservation. The Buffer Zone User Groups' decision-making process about how to use their revenue has become

more democratic and the relationships between the Parks' senior staff and the Buffer Zone Management Committees have become stronger. Furthermore, improved law and order in the Terai region has allowed the Buffer Zone volunteer anti-poaching units to become more effective. It has also encouraged the NGOs to put more resources into the Buffer Zones as there are now greater chances of success. Most notable has been the contribution of NGOs for scientific patrol-based monitoring, transparent monthly reporting and annual status reporting of rhinos; community education; problem animal work including fencing; strategically planting non-palatable crops and starting mentha processing; and initiating new APU systems involving over 100 community-based anti-poaching volunteers.

Effective cooperation and transparency amongst the DNPWC, NGOs, Army and the Buffer Zone Management Committees are essential. It is imperative that the communities living around Chitwan and Bardia NPs continue to receive significant benefits, for which they are accountable from the DNPWC and NGOs to sustain their motivation and efforts towards protecting rhinos.

(Based on the Esmond and Chryssee Martin's published research article in Pachyderm no 48, July-December 2010)

Need for Bear Conservation

By Sanjiban Maharjan



When looking for the first time, Chitra Bahadur Nepali looks like a character for a horror movie. On October 1994, he lost his eye when a bear attacked him while working in his field. Since then,

he has not been able to work by himself.

Remembering the incident, Chitra Bahadur said he was watering the crops when the bear came in front him and

attacked him on his head and scratched his eye.

There are other people in Madi region of Chitwan who have been victims of bear attacks. There are more than

fifty people who have been attacked by bear in Kalyanpur alone said 68 years old Baijnath Dhungana.

The number of bears has increased rapidly in the last 6-7 years in Chitwan. According to former secretary of Kalyanpur-6 Ram Mohan Adhikari, the relationship between the park and local people became problematic due to the bear attacks.

In 1994, the locals killed a bear when the bear killed a seven-year-old child. After the incident, the park authorities held the locals at gunpoint for two days.

The bears in Chitwan are sloth bear. Of the three species of bears found in Nepal, sloth bear is the species found in Terai. The other two species are himalayan black bear and brown bear.

Dr. Anup Joshi, who studied about sloth bear from University of Minnesota in USA says, "The sloth bear is found from Koshi Tappu in the East to Bardia National Park in the West." He also adds that there is no confirm statistic on number of bears in Terai, but there may be 250 to 300 bears in Chitwan area.

The bear has been considered as a gentle animal but sometimes it attacks as self defense mechanism while hunting for food. Dr. Joshi says that bear attacks on face with its paws and so people get scars for life.

According to experts, the sloth bear weighs around 125 kilograms. The mating season is during summer and the cubs are born in the winter. The bears have 2-3 cubs at one time. The female bear looks for a safe place during pregnancy. The young cubs hung themselves to their mothers at all time.

The sloth bear is an expert tree climber. It normally feeds on ants along with honey and fruits. It travels most of the time. During flooding and heavy rain, it migrates to Chure hill with its cubs for protection.

The other species of bear found in Nepal is Himalayan black bear. The Himalayan black bear is found in the higher mountain region. It has smaller mouth than Sloth bear. The main food for black bear is grained crops and fruits. Mahendra Shrestha, black bear specialist says "There is no inference on number of black bear but is estimated to be about 100-150 in Makalu Barun region. No count has been done on Himalayan black bear in the mountain regions."

Himalayan black bear feeds on both plants and animals and is omnivorous. The bear feeds on carcass of animals, especially small domestic animals. The Sherpas and Rai-Limbu have been poaching black bear for its bile. According to Mahendra Shrestha, the people set traps to catch black bear. After establishment of Makalu Barun National Park, he claims there has been decrease in poaching of black bears. The older traps

were found in Makalu Barun regions with no new traps which proves that poaching has decreased in this region.

Mahendra Shrestha adds that the black bear saves the energy it needs in its body as fat during hibernation. After hibernation, it becomes thin and looks for more foods.

The experts do not have enough information on brown bears. Shrestha says that brown bear which has been in CITES category as endangered species has not been much studied. The availability of brown bear in Nepal is suspicious. Many claimed to see brown bear in Annapurna region but it has not been proven.

Well-known hunter Tej Jung Thapa claimed to see brown bear in Langtang in 1941. He said that he has not seen brown bear since then and thinks it has been extinct.

Bear is an important but neglected animal in the field of conservation. Dr. Anup Joshi says, "The conservation of bear has not been started in Nepal. This animal has not been given significant importance as rhinos and tigers. The establishment of national parks for rhinos and tigers has benefited the bears as well"

This article was published in April 1999 in Nepali. We have published this article keeping in fact that if a journalist today would try to write article on the bear in Nepal the situation is same as it was in late 1990s.



UAE in Spotlight Over Animal Smuggling, says CITES

1 June 2011. CITES has asked the UAE to explain an alarming surge in incidents involving exotic animals.

Events including the discovery of a nine-month old cheetah roaming the streets of Abu Dhabi, and sightings of a tiger leaning from the window of a blacked-out vehicle in Dubai have raised fears the Gulf state is seeing a surge in trafficking.

“The CITES secretariat has contacted the management authority of the UAE and asked for its comments regarding a number of news items that suggest there is an illegal trade in live animals,” spokesperson Jonathan Barzdo said in a statement.

It is not the first time the UAE has fallen foul of CITES regulations. The Gulf country was suspended in 2001 over its part in illegal trading, but reinstated the following year.

Possible penalties include the UAE’s suspension from the Convention or a recommendation to member nations to ban related trade with the Gulf state.

“When problems arose ten years ago, the government took serious action to correct them,” Barzdo said.

The UAE, a global trade hub, is a known hotspot for contraband due to a high demand for exotic pets, which are seen as symbols of power. Also making the UAE an attractive market are good flight and shipping connections, which allow poachers to re-export the trafficked animals to other GCC countries such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar.

A 36-year-old Emirati man was arrested in May at Thailand airport for trying to smuggle baby leopards, panthers, monkeys and a bear in his luggage to Dubai. Noor Mahmood was charged with smuggling endangered species and released on a \$6,600 bail, but managed to flee Bangkok on a May 23 flight to the UAE, immigration police said.

Animal rights activists have condemned the practice of keeping exotic animals as pets as a serious threat to endangered species and called for tougher

penalties to deter would-be smugglers.

“Illegal trade of endangered wildlife is a serious threat and major contributor to the extinction of animals and plants in the wild,” said Lisa Perry, programme director for The Emirates Wildlife Society, which works closely with the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Similarly a cheetah found on an Abu Dhabi street proves that the menace of wildlife smuggling is like drug trafficking — however hard the governments try to stop it, the smugglers find a new way.

The owner of the cheetah violated at least three federal laws — the law prohibiting import of dangerous animals, the law related to CITES for illegally importing or trading endangered animals and a law on animal welfare for ill-treating the animal said Abdul Rab Al Hameri, scientific authority of CITES in Abu Dhabi.

However, he clarified that his office is working on scientific research and related aspects of CITES so he was not aware





of the investigations into the violations and the move to trace the owner of the cheetah.

Exotic animals

Al Hameri said there is a huge demand for exotic animals and plants, so the illegal wildlife trade remains the third largest illegal trade worldwide, after weapons and drugs.

Another ministerial decree prohibits import of primates into the country.

If anyone imports animals included in these two decrees illegally into the country, it becomes a violation of law related to CITES, the official said.

As Gulf News reported the 2002 Federal Law number 11 on Regulating and Controlling International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, (including big cats) prohibits the sale or display of the creatures in public, without the necessary legal paperwork.

Ministerial decision

Offenders could face fines of between Dh 5,000 and Dh 50,000 and a jail term ranging between three and six months.

Apart from the above mentioned two laws, the owner of the

cheetah violated the ministerial decision number 384 of 2008 on the executive bylaw of the federal law number 16 of 2007 concerning animal welfare.

Since the law prohibits ill-treating animals, the owner of the injured cheetah shall be punished with a fine of up to Dh 20,000.

The official said the offenders are referred to the court by the CITES management authority.

Permits issued

The CITES scientific authority office in Abu Dhabi issues about 1,000 to 1,200 certificates a year for importing exotic animals and plants into the UAE, said Abdul Rab Al Hameri, manager of the CITES office.

The certificates are issued mostly for importing falcons, parrots, some sort of corals etc, he said. "But that is not enough. Even if they have permission from the foreign country but the UAE law prohibits the import, we don't issue the permit," he commented. "For example, import of poisonous snakes and dangerous animals are prohibited under the UAE law. "And primates can be imported only for scientific research," the official explained.

Bangladesh plans special force to protect tigers





Sundarbans is home to about 400 tigers. Bangladesh is setting up a special force to save the critically endangered Royal Bengal Tiger and other animals.

The 300-member force will be deployed mostly around the Sundarbans mangrove forests, one of the last refuges of the tigers.

The decision came months after they seized three tiger skins and a large quantity of bones, the biggest haul of illegal tiger parts in decades.

The Sundarbans forests stretch between Bangladesh and India. Around 400 tigers still live in the area.

Until now, poaching has not been considered as the chief threat to the tiger population in Bangladesh. However, the arrest of a poacher with tiger skins and bones earlier this year raised fears that an organized poaching group was operating in the mangrove forests.

Officials admitted they did not have enough labor, resources and training to counter the poachers, whom they said was using increasingly sophisticated techniques to trap the tigers.

Minister of Environment and Forest Hasan Mahmud said that the setting up of the new wildlife force was long overdue. "The forest department staffs in Bangladesh need more training, because now the poachers are very sophisticated," he said.

"Their sophistication has been increased but the sophistication of the forest department has not been increased over the last couple of years. So, we have to train them and we have to equip them."

Most of the money to set up the new Wildlife Crime Control unit will come from the World Bank loan of \$36m. (See page 16-17 for detail)

The new force will also tackle a growing trade in the illegal trafficking of wild animals.

Recently, officials seized a number of protected wild animals from people who were keeping them illegally.

Earlier this month, customs officers at Bangkok airport in Thailand found hundreds of freshwater turtles and crocodiles packed in suitcases on a flight from Bangladesh.



Indonesia Seizes Haul of Pangolin Meat Bound for Vietnam

May 26, Jakarta. Tonnes of dead pangolins, an endangered scaly animal, were seized by Indonesian customs, foiling an effort by smugglers to ship the meat to Vietnam, officials said.

Indonesia's customs office found 309 crates each containing between six to 10 adult and baby pangolins, weighing a total of 7.5 tonnes, at the country's biggest port in Jakarta, said a customs official. It also found 65 kilograms of pangolin scales.

"The most outrageous thing here is they even exterminate the young pangolins, the ones that when curled up are about 20 centimeters long," Rahmat Subagio, said the head of the port's customs and excise office.

The exporting company had covered up the illegal shipment with frozen smelly fish, but customs received a tip-off and X-rayed the container to discover pangolin shapes.

Local media reported earlier this month that a customs office

in northern Sumatra island had also foiled an attempt to illegally smuggle about 1,700 pangolins to Vietnam, where eating the creature is believed to improve health.

Hundreds of rare antelopes die in Kazakhstan

May 30, Almaty. More than 440 endangered Saiga antelopes were found dead in western Kazakhstan last week, suspected victims of the same epidemic that killed 12,000 animals last year, officials said.

The horned animals, distinguished for the flexible snout-like noses, originally inhabited a vast territory stretching from Mongolia to Europe. However, the World Wildlife Fund now lists them as a critically endangered species, with an estimated population of 50,000. The 441 animals found dead last week included 364 does and 77 fawns.

"The fallen animals exhibited poisoning symptoms," the Interfax news agency quoted an emergencies ministry official as saying. The animals appear to have died from an infectious disease called pasteurellosis. The often-deadly infection

strikes the lungs and intestines, and needs to be treated with antibiotics. Kazakh authorities collected samples to help them determine what had caused the latest outbreak.

WB Finalizes \$36m Loan for Wildlife Conservation

2 June 2011. The government of Bangladesh signed a US\$ 36 million credit agreement with the World Bank (WB) for the "Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Wildlife Protection in Asia" project.

Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary M. Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan and WB Country Director for Bangladesh Ellen Goldstein signed the agreement at the ERD at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city.

Prime Minister's Adviser for Economic Affairs Dr. Mashiur Rahman, Secretary of Ministry of Environment and Forest Mesbah- Ul-Alam and Chief Conservator of Forests Ishtiaq Uddin Ahmad attended the programme.

"This project will be the entry point to regional cooperation for wildlife protection and conservation," Rahman said.

Ellen Goldstein said adopting and implementing a regional approach would be the most appropriate solution to ensure the effectiveness of interventions addressing illegal wildlife trade, habitat management and conservation of species.

The regional project will address cross-border illegal wildlife trade through regional cooperation and capacity building, and support the country's initiative for habitat protection and management for wildlife in general and tigers in particular.

Studies indicate that 4-5 percent of faunal species and about 10 percent of floral diversity have already become extinct over the last century.

The project will assist the governments of participating countries to build and enhance shared capacity to collaborate in improving the effectiveness of wildlife and habitat conservation, while promoting ecotourism. The credit from the International Development Association (IDA), the WB's concessional lending arm, has 40-year maturity, including a 10-year grace period; it carries a service charge of 0.75 percent.

Customs officials seize over 7,000 tortoises at Thai-Malaysian border

June 4, Songkhal- Thai customs officials arrested a Malaysian man and rescued over 7,000 tortoises from a container truck, expected to be smuggled for exotic diners in China.

Malaysian driver identified as Kholid bin Ab Raoff was apprehended at a customs checkpoint in Sadao district bordering Malaysia after Thai customs officials found Malayan Box Turtles contained in 595 plastic bags and Burmese Giant Tortoises in seven bags. Altogether, there were 7,190 turtles and tortoises weighing about 6,160 kilogram and worth more than Baht 15 millions.

After the arrest, he reportedly told customs officials that he was only hired to drive to the Thai border without knowledge of what was inside the container.

Customs officials believed that the rescued turtles and tortoises were destined to China, where they are considered a prized delicacy and believed eating them boosts health and prolongs life.

Customs officials also seized 451 tortoises, soft-shelled turtles and gharials smuggled into Thailand at Suvarnabhumi international airport by a suspected international smuggling syndicate dealing in endangered animals. All the confiscated animals were hidden in baggage from the Bangladesh capital of Dhaka to Bangkok.

Fine a slap on wrist, say officials

June 6 2011. The Game Rangers Association of Africa has voiced dismay over the "slap on the wrist" sentences imposed on

two former Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife field rangers who were caught trying to sell a rhino horn.

Sibusiso Ncube, 30, and Siyabonga Ndlela, 33, were fined R 15000 each in the Mtubatuba Magistrate's Court last week, after pleading guilty to trying to sell the horn from a dead black rhino they found while patrolling the Imfolozi Game Reserve.

In contrast, two Mozambican nationals, Frans Makamu and Solomon Makhobo, were both jailed for 16 years in the Nelspruit Magistrate's Court for illegal rhino hunting in the Kruger National Park.

Speaking at the annual KZN game auction, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife chief executive Bandile Mkhize said he was pleased to announce that Ncube and Ndlela had both been fined R15 000 (or two years' jail) after pleading guilty to trying to sell the horn to a friend in Ulundi, Senzo Sikhakane.

Sikhakane received a fine of R5 000 (or 12 months' jail).

Mexican billionaire arrested for illegal arms cache

June 6, 2011. The ex-mayor of Tijuana, one of Mexico's richest men, has been arrested in a military raid that uncovered an arsenal of 88 guns and more than 9,000 rounds of ammunition at his home.

Jorge Hank Rhon, 55, a

flamboyant casino mogul known for collecting exotic animals, was held after soldiers descended on his sprawling compound in the city before dawn.

He was held on suspicion of illegal weapons possession after 40 rifles, 48 handguns, 9,298 bullets, 70 ammunition clips and a gas grenade were discovered.

Tijuana lies close to the U.S. border, across from San Diego, and is on a major drug smuggling route.

Hank Rhon was mayor of the city, which has a population of 1.3 million, from 2004 to 2007.

The controversial self-proclaimed billionaire often wears a red crocodile skin vest and ostrich skin boots, and has 19 children. He owns the Tijuana football team, a racetrack and a giant casino in the middle of the city.

His vast compound includes a private zoo that is home to rare tigers, bears and elephants. It once had 20,000 animals, five times as many as the famous San Diego Zoo over the border.

Hank Rhon even brought the killer whale that starred in the Free Willy films to a marine park in Mexico.

East Africa: Tanzanian Govt, Fight Ivory Trade!

6 June 2011. Tanzania has been implicated as the source

of nearly 50% of the ivory seized worldwide. Poaching in Tanzania is common but in the end will cost in terms of wildlife and revenue thereof.

Recently, an investigation by a panel of international and local experts implicated senior government officials in the illegal ivory trade and the rise in elephant poaching in Tanzania.

According to a report, seizures involving Tanzania between 1989 and 2010 represent one third of all ivory seized globally, and Tanzania ranks first among African countries in terms of the total volume of ivory reported by large-scale seizures.

Cheetah owners club would increase smuggling, expert says

8 June, Dubai. A wildlife expert has criticized plans to set up a club for cheetah owners, warning it could lead to an increase in the number of cubs smuggled into the country.

Dr. Reza Khan, a member of the World Commission on Protected Areas, said, "We cannot have a club for cheetah owners because it is not a pet animal."

"It will encourage more smuggling. It is bound to open a mad race to become the proud owner of as many cheetahs as possible by club members."

Dr. Khan also questioned a suggestion that most captive

cheetahs in the country were well looked after. He quoted the case of the young animal recently found wandering the streets of Karama in the capital, with a heavy chain around its neck and a broken foreleg.

The idea for a cheetah club was raised by conservationist Dr. Mordecai Ogada, of Kenya, who is calling for a campaign in the UAE to raise awareness of the damage caused to wild populations by the illegal trade in cubs.

The club would raise funds for or sponsor conservation and research, and organize trips to see wild cheetahs in Africa.

Dr. Ogada, the East African coordinator of cheetah conservation programme, said most captive cheetahs in the UAE were loved and cared for at great expense.

But Dr. Khan, from Dubai, said, "The statement is totally wrong when you see the poor cheetah found roaming in Abu Dhabi with a huge chain locked around its neck and a portion dangling from it." He said some cheetahs in the UAE were kept in good conditions with huge areas of land in which to roam, but added, "No wild cats should be kept as a pet or in private collections, where most lead an imprisoned life as they are kept in below-standard cages."

The cheetah is listed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, as being threatened with extinction, and trade in the



Cheetah found in the streets of UAE

animals is illegal except in exceptional circumstances.

Dr Laurie Marker, the founder and director of The Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia, said: "I applaud Dr Ogada's plan to stem the illegal trade of wild cheetah cubs from Africa to the Middle East. Dr Ogada plans to educate private cheetah owners about the threat to wild cheetahs posed by the illegal pet trade."

Rhino kill after lull

12 June, Guwahati. An Assam reserve that staved off poachers for five years lost one of its rhinos as forest guards at a nearby camp tried to duck firing from an armed gang of illegal hunters.

The Pobitora wildlife sanctuary in central Assam is known for its rhino density — 84 by the 2009 animal census — when in larger reserves such as Kaziranga and Manas poaching are rampant. The last rhino death in Pobitora was reported

in February 2006.

Four poachers killed the rhino around 9 pm near the eastern boundary of the reserve. A forest official said though guards were present at the eastern boundary camp close to the spot, they could not do much because the poachers fired continuously. According to his version, by the time the guards started chasing the poachers, the rhino had been killed and its horn sawn off. The entire operation was over in 15 minutes.

A.303 rifle was used to kill the rhino that took six bullets.

S.K. Seal Sharma, the divisional forest officer of the Guwahati wildlife division, said the sanctuary guards had information that some outsiders were spotted in the area in the last four months.

He added, "The incident could not have happened without local support. Investigations are on and we will catch the culprits."

Six in court over theft

11th June 2011. Six people, including a businessman of Pakistani origin, have been brought before the Kilimanjaro Resident Magistrate's Court in connection with the theft and illegal export of protected wildlife.

Arusha-based trader Kamrani Ahmed and five others, including four officials working at the Kilimanjaro International Airport (KIA), have been indicted on charges of economic sabotage for their role in procuring and smuggling 136 animals of 14 different species outside Tanzania.

Other defendants are local businesswoman Hawa Mang'unyuka, zoo sanitary inspector Martin Kimati, Kenya national and KIA flight operator Jane Mbogo, KIA's chief security officer Veronica Beno and Locken Kimaro, a security officer for Kilimanjaro Development Company Limited (KADCO), which oversees the airport.

The loot included four giraffes, 68 Thomson's gazelles, 20 Grant's gazelles, two impalas, 3 elands, 10 dik-diks, two lappet-faced vultures, seven kori bustard, four ground hornbill and two serval cats, according to state attorney Mlay.

The other four defendants are charged with aiding and abetting wildlife poaching in violation of the Economic Sabotage Act. The prosecution claims that in the time

before and or after November 26, 2010, the accused helped the first defendant smuggle live wildlife outside the country knowing full well that their actions were against the law.

The Economic Sabotage and Crime Prevention Act stipulates that those accused of sabotaging the economy can only be tried before the High Court, according to state prosecutor Bajana.

35 Pangolins Worth RM 50,000 Seized

12 June, George Town. The Penang Department of Wildlife and National Parks has seized 35 pangolins worth RM50,000 in a raid at Mak Mandin in Butterworth.

A 40-year-old man was arrested when he was moving the pangolins from one car to another car.

State Wildlife enforcement chief Khairul Nizam Yahaya said today that the man was believed to be trying to smuggle the pangolins to neighboring countries by road.

"Wildlife smuggling is becoming more common due to the high black market demand. This is our second seizure this year," Khairul Nizam told reporters.

About 450 Tigers Died In Past 12 Years

16 June, New Delhi. Nearly 450 tigers have died in and around a number of natural habitats

in the last 12 years in India mainly due to poaching, reflecting the threats posed to the national animal, according to Press Trust of India's report.

According to Ministry of Environment and Forests, 447 wild cats were found dead between 1999 and March 2011, of which 197 were poached.

Besides, 250 wild cats died of natural causes including old age, in fighting, starvation, road and rail accidents, electrocution and weakness.

The Ministry also noted that poaching was the major cause behind disappearance of tigers from its reserves.

"The cases of local extinction of tigers were reported in Sariska, Rajasthan (2005) and Panna, Madhya Pradesh (2008). As reported, poaching of tigers was the major cause of their extinction," National Tiger Conservation Authority under the MoEF said.

Some 72 tigers were poached in 2001 and 2002 followed by 48 in 1999 and in 2010, it said. Two tigers were found killed between January and March 17 this year.

Whereas 20 wild cats were killed in 2003, 17 in 2009, 10 in 2007, nine each were killed in 2000 and 2008, and 5 fell prey to hunters in 2006, it said.

APPEAL

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