

Rhino horn stockpile management improvements witnessed in east and southern Africa

by Simon Milledge, Deputy Director, TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa

Rhino horn stockpiles continue to grow in most African rhino range States, accumulating from a range of causes including natural mortalities, dehorning programmes and seizures. In addition to imparting an increasing financial burden to wildlife departments responsible for their management, they also present a security risk to ongoing law enforcement efforts. Rhino horn stockpiles continue to grow in most African rhino range States, accumulating from a range of causes including natural mortalities, dehorning programmes and seizures. In addition to imparting an increasing financial burden to wildlife departments responsible for their management, they also present a security risk to ongoing law enforcement efforts.

Whilst the focus of preventing illegal horn trade in Africa has traditionally focused on ensuring adequate field protection of rhino populations and infiltrating illegal trade syndicates, the potential exists for illegal trade involving horns collected from the field and on their way to strong rooms. However, encouraging results are now being witnessed in east and southern Africa, where TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa has been working with governments to improve rhino horn stockpile management practices.

Stockpiles grow in line with increasing rhino populations

Whilst some subspecies remain at critically low numbers, both African rhinoceros species continue to increase in number, with some 11 000 White Rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* and 3600 Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis*

at the end of 2003. The largest rhino populations are found in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Kenya, along with correspondingly the largest horn stockpiles.

TRAFFIC has now documented a total of 18 tonnes of rhino horn in east and southern Africa, representing a significant increase from that documented and reported in March 2001 (*TRAFFIC Dispatches* No. 16). Almost 80% is comprised of only four individual stockpiles, whilst those in South Africa constitute two-thirds of the total volume. Thus, not only do significant quantities of rhino horn already occur within east and southern Africa, but they are likely to carry on increasing in volume so long as wild populations continue to prosper.

Development of management tools

Horn stockpile management includes all the necessary measures to ensure that every horn is properly marked, registered and secured. Appropriate auditable documentation, protocols and responsibilities are also needed to help ensure all horns collected from the field do indeed end up in the central strong room. TRAFFIC has played a major role in facilitating improvements to stockpile management through ongoing monitoring and advocacy, the development and training in a specialized management database, and the promotion of best practices.

Buy-in to use the freely-available Access-based *Rhino Horn Stockpile Database* now includes 13 conservation agencies from seven countries, and work is ongoing to install and conduct the necessary training. In May 2005, TRAFFIC produced the report *Rhino horn stockpile management: Minimum Standards and Best Practices from East and Southern Africa*. This consolidates available knowledge from six countries in the SADC region including all the largest stockpiles in Africa, and is aimed at those government officers directly responsible for managing stockpiles.

TRAFFIC's work on the *Rhino Horn Stockpile Database* is also now part of an active CITES process. The recent 53rd Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee in June requested TRAFFIC to analyse the data on rhino horn stockpile volumes, seizures, poaching and variables. The results of this analysis will be

discussed at the next meeting of the Standing Committee in 2006. The Standing Committee also called on Parties to support TRAFFIC financially in undertaking these tasks.

Improved management and transparency

Improvements to various rhino horn stockpile management practices have now been recorded by nine management authorities in five countries including the three largest African rhino range States. Overall, this translates into a reduced risk of horn reaching illegal markets.

Building on three years of awareness-raising activities, the seventh meeting of the IUCN/SSC African Rhino Specialist Group held in June 2004 was the first time that African rhino range States formally declared their rhino horn stockpile volumes, levels of seizures and poaching incidents, and is testimony to improved transparency, management and increased knowledge at the national level.

Future priorities

One of the greatest remaining concerns with respect to horn stockpile management is the level of compliance within the South Africa private sector, an increasingly important stakeholder in rhino conservation. TRAFFIC continues to engage with government and private bodies at national and provincial levels to press for greater controls over not only private sector horn registration, but also the sale, movement and hunting of live rhinos on private property.

Ongoing efforts will also focus on assisting governments throughout the region to apply minimum standards and best practices. Further, TRAFFIC intends to offer the tools developed and tested in east and southern Africa (*Rhino Horn Stockpile Database and Minimum Standards and Best Practices*) elsewhere in the world where significant horn stockpiles are known to exist, such as India, Nepal, Yemen, China and Taiwan.

Current work is funded by WWF Netherlands, through the WWF African Rhino Programme. For more information, contact TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa - Tanzania office. A full copy of the report can be downloaded from http://www.traffic.org/news/TESA_Rhino.pdf



WWF-Camero/Michel Gnaether

DISPATCHES

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Illegal trade in orang-utans and gibbons continues in Indonesia

by Julia Ng, Programme Officer, TRAFFIC Southeast Asia

Orang-utans and gibbons are still traded and kept as pets in Java and Bali despite having been legally protected in Indonesia since 1931, according to a new TRAFFIC Southeast Asia report. It calls for action to create greater awareness among the judiciary, enforcement agencies and general public to ensure that trade in the endangered primates is treated a serious crime.

The report titled *In Full Swing, An Assessment of Trade in Orang-utans and Gibbons on Java and Bali, Indonesia* analysed data from 1994-2003 based on information collected from 35 wildlife markets in 22 cities across the two islands. TRAFFIC investigators found a total of 559 orang-utans and gibbons during the surveys, many on sale or being illegally traded in "bird markets" locally known as *pasar burung*.

The actual numbers of animals sold from the "bird markets", however, are largely unknown. "Better monitoring of wildlife markets would enable more accurate analysis of the trade in primates as well as other wildlife species that continue to be sold in these markets," said James Compton, Director of TRAFFIC Southeast Asia. "This would definitely help increase the efficiency of law enforcement."

Orang-utans and gibbons are listed in Appendix 1 of CITES, prohibiting any international trade in these animals. Under Indonesian law, orang-utans and gibbons are classified as "protected", which forbids

capturing, killing, possessing and trading these species. Penalties for breaking the law can total up to IDR100 million (USD10 455) in fines and up to five years of imprisonment.

However, the TRAFFIC report found that people who hunt, keep and trade in orang-utans and gibbons are rarely punished. In all, fewer than 10% of all persons that had specimens confiscated from them were actually prosecuted. It appears that many law enforcement personnel, including judges and prosecutors do not see trade in or possession of protected species as pets as a serious offence.

The report found that from the estimated 40 000 wild population of the Borneo Orang-utan, trade on Java and Bali alone may be contributing to an annual loss rate which corresponds to up to some 1000 individuals a year, or one to three orang-utans a day. This does not necessarily include loss due to habitat destruction.

Adi Susmianto, the Director of Biodiversity Conservation at PHKA, Indonesia's CITES Management Authority, said: "Indonesia is fully committed to step up enforcement at major exit and entry points which is clearly needed to ensure that species are not smuggled out of Sumatra and Kalimantan to other countries or within Indonesia, to Java and Bali. Most importantly, the habitat of the orang-utans and gibbons must be protected to stop such endangered species from being poached."



TRAFFIC Southeast Asia
Julia Ng

Both orang-utans and gibbons are hunted and traded to satisfy persistent demand for pets. Orang-utans are the most expensive primates for sale in the markets of Indonesia and are kept in households as status symbols. Orang-utans are also in trade for the entertainment industry. In November 2003, the Thai Authorities seized 115 orang-utans from the premises of Safari World in Bangkok and the source of these great apes was reportedly from Indonesia. The case is ongoing, and the Government of Indonesia has requested the repatriation of the remaining orang-utans from Thailand on a number of occasions.

"Also, the general public needs to understand that buying and keeping an orang-utan or gibbon as a pet is contributing to the depletion of wild populations," added Compton. "Not only is it against the law to purchase and keep these animals in Indonesia, but it is destroying the country's precious natural heritage."

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