



ENV

**Reducing the amount of
poaching in Asia**

YIDA WANG

Forum: Environment Commission

Issue: Reducing the amount of poaching in Asia

Student Officer: Yida Wang

Position: Chair of Environment Commission

Introduction

During the 1970s and 1980s, a major poaching crisis swept through Asia, decimating the populations of elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, and other animals. The poaching was mainly caused by the global demand for ivory, and the horns and bones of the animals. The bones of an Asian rhinoceros and tiger were, (and still remains) highly valued ingredients in traditional Chinese medicine, and almost all parts of the Asian tiger could be used for some purpose, thus, the popularity among these animals grew in Asia. The poaching crisis worsened in the 1990's by declining economies and political instabilities, severely impacting the lives of the animals. The Asian elephant population declined by 80% during the 1980's, from around 1 million to 50,000 elephants. The statistics for tigers in Asia are even more horrifying, just 20 years ago, in the 1990's there were 100,000 tigers, now only 3,200 remain in the world. Rhino poaching in Asia are also becoming more problematic; about 10 rhinos have been poached in India and at least seven in Nepal since January alone, out of a combined population of only 2,400 endangered rhinos.

There are many private NGO's working internationally for years to help reduce this issue such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and also international treaties and agreements such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) but due to the vagueness and flexibility of apathetic governments the international organizations have not been most effective in resolving the poaching issue in Asia. Even worse, markets for ivory are reemerging in Asia. Last July, Taiwanese authorities confiscated more than 5 tons of ivory originating in Tanzania, and in May 3.9 tons from Cameroon were confiscated in Hong Kong. The establishment of the Rhino and Tiger Conservation Fund (RTCF) lead to well-targeted grants in Africa, and there have been signs of improvement in the Status of Tiger populations in Russia, but the endangered species in Asia have received invaluable assistance.

Tigers and rhinoceroses in Asia are representing some of the most endangered large mammals on Earth, and both are literally on the verge of extinction, hence something must be done rapidly in order to preserve these endangered species.

Definition of Key Terms

Poaching

To illegally hunt or catch game or fish on land that is not ones own, or in contravention to official protection.

General Overview

Origin of the Issue

The issue of animal poaching in Asia was first taken account of as an issue in the 1970's and 1980s. The major poaching crisis swept through Africa and Asia, decimating the population of African and Asian elephants, rhinoceroses, and tigers. The percentage of these animals fell rapidly, thus in 1989 the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) banned the trade of ivory in 1989 in efforts to stop the illegal trade of rhino horn and tiger parts. Along with this ban, the US stepped in and Congress passed the African Elephant Conservation Act in 1988 to provide grants the help African countries preserve their endangered elephant population. In 1994, the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act, which lead to a steady improvement in the status of endangered animal populations in Africa and Russia, however none of these acts seemed to effect the poaching in Asia. The rhinos, and tigers, are especially at risk in Asia since ivory markets are reemerging and there seems to be no effective solution in force to reduce poachers in Asia.

CITES and other International Organizations

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species has played a major role for the past decades to reduce poachers and preserve the endangered animals in Asia, and in the world. CITES is an international agreement between governments, its aim is to ensure that international trade of wild animals does not threaten their survival. The agreement is adhered voluntarily, and is legally binding but it is very important to know that it does not take the place of national laws and their domestic legislation for the punishments are quite light. China is one its parties (joined by its agreement) but is acquainted with rhino and tiger parts. Traditional Chinese medicine is popular in Asia and the bones of the tiger are used for it. Almost every part of the tiger is valuable in Asian believes, hence poachers in Asia are killing an ever increasing amount of rhinos and tigers (an estimated 2-3 a week) to meet the growing demand for them in medicines.

Government Cooperation

Almost all rhino species are listed in CITES, meaning that any international trade of any rhino part for commercial purposes is illegal, but in Asia with the increasing demand for rhino horn, and tiger parts, the animals of Asia are being decimated by poachers and literally on the verge of extinction. One of the main issues of why the poaching issue in Asia has not significantly resolved compared to Africa is the lack of law and government enforcement. There is a low level of persecution for poachers. Government enforcement with the cooperation and support of international organizations just might lead to the key to the reduction of poachers in Asia.

Introduction

People's Republic of China

In recent years, China has announced multiple initiatives to reduce poaching and protect endangered species, pledging to protect precious habitat and wildlife. Some of these government programs have succeeded in reducing poaching. However, due to the phenomenally high demand for species such as rhinoceros and tiger (due to their uses in Chinese medicine), poaching in many rural areas of China has continued, if not increased. The vast areas of wildlife habitat that exists in China also presents other challenges for the government.

India

India too has pledged to reduce poaching by significant amounts. But as the trade of endangered animals is highly lucrative, some have accused government officials of supporting poachers. A bigger problem, however, is the fact that India lacks the infrastructure and institutions to successfully monitor and take action against poaching. International experts have been brought in to help species protection, though poaching still remains a major problem.

Russia

The alarming decline in the number of tigers that still exist in the wild have been attributed to Russia's lack of political will to protect such an hidden and lucrative trade. However, Russia has initiated desperate measures to try and prevent species such as the Siberian tiger from becoming extinct, increasing sharp fines and other legal consequences for those who poach. How effective these policies may be after the devastating poaching that has occurred already remains a key question.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN's wildlife trade agency backed the proposal on the ban of international trade in bluefin tuna made by CITES, on February 2010. The UN has also been following up on the issue of the illegal trade and poaching of tigers in Asia, interviewing with John Sellar, Chief of Enforcement for CITES in December 2009.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
July 1, 1975	CITES resolution agreed upon and goes into force.
1989	CITES banned the international trade of ivory, and strengthened efforts to stop the illegal trade of rhino horn and tiger parts
2020	Indian Rhino Vision 2020 Plan- Establish another population of rhinos in India by translocating individuals from Kariranga National Park.

Bibliography

Environment News Service. "Asian Demand for Rhino Horn Fuels Poaching Crisis." *Environment News Service*. Environment News Service (ENS), 2009. Web. 26 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/jul2009/2009-07-16-02.html>>.

Black, Richard. "BBC News - Ivory Bids Fall on Poaching Fears." *BBC News - Home*. BBC News, 22 Mar. 2010. Web. 26 Dec. 2010. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8580245.stm>>.

Klenzendorf, Dr. Sybille. "Testimony of Dr. Sybille Klenzendorf Director of Species Conservation, World Wildlife Fund Legislative Hearing on "Multinational Species Conservation Funds Reauthorization Act of 2007" and "Asian Elephant Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2007" House Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans." *Worldwidelife.org*. WWF, 13 Mar. 2007. Web. 11 Nov. 2010. <<http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/howwedoit/policy/WWFBinaryitem11360.pdf>>.

The Associated Press. "U.N.: Tiger on 'verge of Extinction' - World News - World Environment - Msnbc.com." *Breaking News, Weather, Business, Health, Entertainment, Sports, Politics, Travel, Science, Technology, Local, US & World News - Msnbc.com*. The Associated Press, 15 Mar. 2010. Web. 26 Dec. 2010. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35873771/ns/world_news-world_environment/>.

Sellar, John. "United Nations Radio: Combating Tiger Poaching." *United Nations Multimedia, Radio, Photo and Television*. United Nations Radio, 15 Dec. 2009. Web. 26 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/detail/87487.html>>.

WWF. "WWF - Poaching Crisis as Rhino Horn Demand Booms in Asia." *WWF - WWF*. WWF, 9 July 2009. Web. 26 Dec. 2010. <<http://wwf.panda.org/?169862/Poaching-crisis-as-rhino-horn-demand-booms-in-Asia>>.