

The shipment, crammed into two wooden crates, originated from Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. The value of the shipment was declared to be \$13,000, based on a unit price of \$65. The species is known, however, to fetch from \$300 to \$400 each in the United States, so it may be possible that the shipment was deliberately under-invoiced. The tortoises were eventually sent to the United States and placed in zoological parks with breeding programs.

Conservationists are becoming increasingly concerned over the rising demand for and export of this native Indian species.

The tortoises, known for their peculiar black star-shaped markings, are also popular as pets in Germany, France, and the United States. Although the star tortoise is not considered endangered at this time, it is listed on CITES Appendix II and protected in India under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.

(United Press International, 13 September 1996; *Turtle Trade in India*, TRAFFIC India, 1993)

#### INDIAN RHINO THREATENED BY POACHING

The Indian or greater one-horned rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) continues to face threats in



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**Although greater one-horned rhino populations are increasing, poaching continues to threaten the survival of the species.**

India, where investigators have discovered that poachers are employing new killing methods—including electrocution. TRAFFIC India has released a new report, *Under Siege: Poaching and Protection of Greater One-horned Rhinoceroses in India*, the culmination of a five-year investigation. The report reveals that while shooting remains the method of choice, rhinos are also electrocuted by dangling wires connected to high tension powerlines across rhino paths, or die by starving to death after falling into pit traps lined with sharp bamboo.

Due to management and law enforcement efforts, greater one-horned rhino populations have steadily increased from 30 years ago, when only a handful remained in existence. The species is still listed on Appendix I of CITES and remains one of the most critically endangered on earth, with fewer than 2,000 surviving in India and Nepal. All rhinos, including the two species in

Africa and the three in Asia, have been hit hard by poaching for illegal trade over the last 20 years. An increase of poaching in the 1980s caused the loss of almost 500 rhinos in India; in the 1990s, 200 more were killed.

Rhino horn is highly valued for its use in traditional Asian medicines to treat fever, delirium, and other ailments. Horn taken from Asian rhinos is believed to be more potent and far more valuable than African rhino horn. It is reported-

edly smuggled out of India via trade routes through Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, and then transported to markets in East and Southeast Asia.

(WWF Press Release, 9 September 1996)

#### RECORD RHINO HORN SEIZURE IN U.K.

On 3 September 1996, 105 rhino horns, valued at approximately \$4.7 million, were seized by authorities from two garages located in a fashionable West London district. The seizure was the result of a successful joint undercover operation carried out by police and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). This represents the largest confiscation of rhino horn ever reported. All but one of the horns were taken from white rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum*); the remaining horn was from a black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*). The largest horn in the haul