

## REPTILES / AMPHIBIANS

**BANGLADESH:** On 15 February 2012, 16 gecko smugglers were gaol for up to two years after they were arrested by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in Dhaka the previous day. They were tried and sentenced on the spot by a magistrate. [The animals are understood to be Tokay Geckos *Gekko gecko*]. In August 2011, a man was fined BDT1000 (USD12.00) after attempting to sell two Tokay Geckos in Dighinala Upazila, Khagrachhari district.

It is reported that Bangladesh has emerged as a key source of Tokay Geckos for other Asian nations. Experts have said a lack of law enforcement has turned that country into a key wildlife trafficking corridor in the region, with its porous land border and ports being used for the smuggling.

[www.haveeru.com.mv/south\\_asia/40284](http://www.haveeru.com.mv/south_asia/40284), 15 February 2012; [www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=198271](http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=198271)

**COSTA RICA:** On 30 November 2011, Limón fisherman Javier Fallas lost his home, was fined USD79 286 and sentenced to one year in gaol, reduced to three years' probation, for illegally harvesting eggs of Green Turtles *Chelonia mydas* (CITES I and protected in Costa Rica). He was found in possession of over 10 000 eggs at his home for the purposes of selling.

[www.fjatevos.com/latest-articles/the-nation/1225-fisherman-fined-for-turtle-egg-harvest.html](http://www.fjatevos.com/latest-articles/the-nation/1225-fisherman-fined-for-turtle-egg-harvest.html), 6 January 2012

**INDONESIA:** On 1 March 2012, the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) in Merauke released into the wild 1967 confiscated Fly River Turtles *Carettochelys insculpta* (CITES II and totally protected in Indonesia). The turtles were from two seizures that took place at Mopah Airport, Merauke, in Papua province. The first, on 25 January, involved some 1500 live specimens found in two suitcases en route to Jakarta. On 8 February, 690 juvenile Fly River Turtles were detected in a suitcase. In total, 2185 turtles were seized, 218 of which died in quarantine. The cases are under investigation.

"The deaths in quarantine are indicative of the high mortality levels incurred in illegal wildlife trade," said Chris R. Shepherd, Deputy Regional Director of TRAFFIC Southeast Asia. "Often far fewer, if any, animals survive to be returned to the wild."

This species is reportedly being smuggled out of Indonesia by the thousands. Sources allege that shipments such as this are common, with dealers in Jakarta buying the turtles from hunters/agents in Papua, and selling them on to contacts abroad. Many are destined for the pet markets of East Asia, to places such as Hong Kong where demand for this species is reportedly rising; they are also possibly consumed as meat in some countries.

It was reported on 12 March 2012 that 19 Indian Star Tortoises *Geochelone elegans* (CITES II) seized at Jakarta's Soekarno Hatta airport in November 2011 had been returned to India, their country of origin, the first time that Indian Star Tortoises seized in Indonesia have been repatriated. Some 47 specimens and various snakes had been found in the possession of an

Indonesian woman returning to the country from Bangkok. Twenty-eight specimens had already died or subsequently perished.

"Although the number of tortoises represents a tiny fraction of those being trafficked, their repatriation is symbolic of the growing commitment, dedication and co-operation between enforcement officers within Asia to tackle rising wildlife crime in the region," said Chris R. Shepherd, Deputy Regional Director of TRAFFIC Southeast Asia.

The care and return of the tortoises was coordinated in Indonesia by Customs, Quarantine and the Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation. The reptiles have been sent to Arignar Anna Zoological Park (AAZP), Chennai, from where it is anticipated they will be released into the wild.

[www.traffic.org/home/2012/3/2/almost-1500-turtles-crammed-like-sardines-into-suitcases.html](http://www.traffic.org/home/2012/3/2/almost-1500-turtles-crammed-like-sardines-into-suitcases.html); [www.traffic.org/home/2012/3/13/indian-star-tortoises-sent-home.html](http://www.traffic.org/home/2012/3/13/indian-star-tortoises-sent-home.html)

**MALAYSIA:** On 12 October 2011, the Marine Operations Force (MOF) thwarted an attempt to smuggle 5000 turtle eggs into Sabah after detaining a boat in waters off Kampung Forest. The boat's skipper evaded capture. Possession or sale of turtle eggs in Sabah is an offence under the State's *Wildlife Conservation Enactment 1997*. The eggs were surrendered to the Sabah Wildlife Department.

On 22 December 2011, over 600 Indian Star Tortoises *Geochelone elegans* (CITES II) were repatriated to India. These included specimens seized after the bags in which they were travelling remained unclaimed at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in August, as well as 100 Indian Star Tortoises seized a month later by the country's Wildlife and National Parks Department, Perhilitan, in Malacca. The owner was given a "very stern warning".

On 22 February 2012, Anson Wong Keng Liang was released from gaol after the Court of Appeal in Putrajaya allowed his appeal to have his gaol sentence for illegally exporting Boa Constrictors *Boa constrictor* (CITES I/II) reduced. The Court held that the 17 months and 15 days served since his sentencing on 7 September 2010 would serve the interests of justice. It allowed Wong's appeal to set aside a High Court's decision in enhancing his gaol term from six months, imposed by the Magistrate's Court on him, to five years' gaol. The panel also affirmed the High Court's decision in setting aside the RM190 000 (USD62 000) fine imposed on Wong as it was beyond the ceiling of RM10 000 which the Sessions Court could legally impose.

Wong was in Kuala Lumpur International Airport en route from Penang to Jakarta when the snakes were found in his suitcase. The High Court imposed the five-year gaol term on Wong after allowing the prosecution's appeal for a heavier sentence, but set aside the RM190 000 fine.

*New Straits Times (Malaysia)*, 13 October 2011: [www.nst.com.my/inst/articles/MOFseizes5\\_000turtleeggs/Article/#ixzz1ahDkIPIu](http://www.nst.com.my/inst/articles/MOFseizes5_000turtleeggs/Article/#ixzz1ahDkIPIu); TRAFFIC Southeast Asia; [www.nst.com.my/local/general/rescued-indian-star-tortoises-sent-home-1.24246#ixzz1hjhGVMz](http://www.nst.com.my/local/general/rescued-indian-star-tortoises-sent-home-1.24246#ixzz1hjhGVMz), 27 December 2011; <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/2/22/nation/20120222193558&sec=nation>

**PHILIPPINES:** On 12 October 2011, three men were arrested at a police checkpoint in Quiapo, Manila, after the van in which they were travelling was found to contain 11 geckos that allegedly were to be sold to a buyer in Quezon City. The lizards, reportedly from Cavite, were to be handed over to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

[www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/metro-manila/10/12/11/3-tuko-traders-nabbed-quiapo](http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/metro-manila/10/12/11/3-tuko-traders-nabbed-quiapo)

## RHINOCEROS

**All rhinoceroses Rhinocerotidae are listed in CITES Appendix I.**

The following cases highlight the growing number of rhinoceros horn thefts from museums and other establishments throughout Europe over the past 12 months. The UK's National Wildlife Crime Unit has warned all British zoos with rhinoceroses of the threat of thefts. As a consequence, Colchester Zoo has strengthened its security. Some museums have replaced their rhinoceros horn stock with fake specimens to deter robbers. Examples of cases are recorded below:

**AUSTRIA:** On 8 November 2011 it was reported that a rhinoceros horn had been snatched from an auction house in Vienna by two men; a second horn was dropped. The stolen horn (5.68 kg) was part of a collection on show before a sale at the city's Dorotheum auctioneers and was from a rhinoceros shot in Sudan in the 1930s.

Days later, a rhinoceros horn was stolen from a taxidermist shop in Margareten, Vienna, by two men who showed interest in the horn that the taxidermist had purchased at an auction at the Dorotheum the previous day. They grabbed the horn when the shop owner was on the 'phone.

A 'rhinoceros' head stolen from a pub in Weisskirchen, Styria, was a fake. Four Polish nationals were arrested in connection with the incident the following day when they tried to break into Schloss Rastenberg at Gmünd in Waldviertel. Police found the wooden rhinoceros horn stolen in Styria in their car.

[http://viennatimes.at/news/Panorama/2011-11-08/27707/Rhino\\_horn\\_stolen\\_from\\_Dorotheum\\_auction\\_house](http://viennatimes.at/news/Panorama/2011-11-08/27707/Rhino_horn_stolen_from_Dorotheum_auction_house), *Austrian Times*, 9 November 2011; <http://bikyamasr.com/61421/rhino-thieves-arrested-in-austria/>

**GERMANY:** On 12 March 2012 it was reported that police in Munich had arrested one woman and two men after a routine check of their vehicle indicated that it had been stolen in the UK. The trio was thought to be part of a group that has been operating in the UK, Sweden, France and the Czech Republic, responsible for stealing rhinoceros horns, including the theft of horns from a museum in Offenburg on 18 February. On that occasion, a couple distracted museum staff while two men climbed onto a display case, took the head from where it was hanging on the wall and knocked its horns off with a sledgehammer. They then fled with the horns concealed in their coats.

[www.thelocal.de/society/20120312-41279.html](http://www.thelocal.de/society/20120312-41279.html), 12 March 2012; [www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g18bUyW5xUkTa0niUp\\_g4GZdjiw?docId=CNG.3191dc24cc5938d2422343290ecaad45.7c1](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g18bUyW5xUkTa0niUp_g4GZdjiw?docId=CNG.3191dc24cc5938d2422343290ecaad45.7c1)

**UK:** On 20 February 2012, four men were prevented from stealing the mounted head of a rhinoceros from Norwich Castle Museum after forcing open the display case in which it was held. After snatching the head, they were foiled in their attempt to leave by two staff members who recovered the specimen; the men ran off. The museum said it would replace the horn with a replica, so that it would no longer be a target for thieves.

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-17112582](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-17112582), 21 February 2012

#### OTHER RHINOCEROS CASES:

**SOUTH AFRICA:** On 14 December 2011, at Germiston Magistrates' Court, Hsu Hsien Lung was sentenced to six years' imprisonment following his arrest in May in possession of almost 10 kg of rhinoceros horn.

On 10 January 2012, the dehorned carcasses of eight adult rhinoceroses were discovered in Kruger National Park; a further three were found two days later following an aerial search. The animals had been shot. Two suspected poachers were arrested.

On 12 January 2012, in North West province, enforcement officials arrested five suspected rhinoceros poachers following a year-long investigation. One suspect evaded capture and remains at large. The group was allegedly on route to carry out a poaching attack.

On 31 January 2012, at Phalaborwa Regional Court, Mozambican nationals Aselmo Baloyi, Jawaki Nkuna and Ismael Baloy were each sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment after being found guilty of poaching rhinoceroses in Kruger National Park in July 2010, as well as of possessing weapons and ammunition. They were caught with two freshly removed rhinoceros horns, an axe and other weapons.

"This is an indication that, as a country, we are taking more stringent measures in the fight against rhino poaching," said SANParks CEO David Mabunda.

On 2 March 2012, a former police officer alleged to be one of the most wanted masterminds in the rhinoceros poaching underworld was arrested in Hazyview, Mpumalanga. Four horns, found behind a seat in his vehicle, were suspected to be from two rhinoceroses killed in Kruger National Park the previous week. Four park staff, including two game guides, were arrested in connection with that incident. The suspect was taken into custody.

On 3/4 March 2012, two farmers from KwaZulu-Natal, and a game ranger were arrested after a poaching attempt at Mkhuzi Falls private game reserve.

On 12 March 2012, at Makhado Magistrates' Court, Jaques Els, a Limpopo game farmer, was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for his involvement in rhinoceros poaching and fined R1 million (USD132 000). Els was granted bail pending his intention to lodge an appeal and will appear in court again on 2 June.

[www.eyewitnessnews.co.za/Story.aspx?id=79288](http://www.eyewitnessnews.co.za/Story.aspx?id=79288); [www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/3-more-rhino-carcasses-found-20120112](http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/3-more-rhino-carcasses-found-20120112); [www.eyewitnessnews.co.za/Story.aspx?id=80677](http://www.eyewitnessnews.co.za/Story.aspx?id=80677); [www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/2-poachers-shot-dead-in-Kruger-Park-20120112](http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/2-poachers-shot-dead-in-Kruger-Park-20120112); [www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/trio-sentenced-for-rhino-poaching-1.1224523](http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/trio-sentenced-for-rhino-poaching-1.1224523); [www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/syndicate-broken-in-midnight-blitz-1.1234815?showComments=true](http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/syndicate-broken-in-midnight-blitz-1.1234815?showComments=true), 15 February 2012; [www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global\[\\_id\]=77616](http://www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global[_id]=77616); [www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/farmers-ranger-ex-cop-in-poaching-net-1.1249815](http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/farmers-ranger-ex-cop-in-poaching-net-1.1249815); <http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/farmer-sentenced-for-rhino-poaching-1.1255909?showComments=true>

**ZIMBABWE:** On 14 March 2012 it was reported that Munhuhaashati Bungumupeye of Bikita had been sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment for tracking a rhinoceros's spoor in the Chipangayi Intensive Rhino Protection Zone with the intention of poaching. On 5 March, Bungumupeye and an accomplice tracked down a rhinoceros to a watering hole before being spotted by rangers. Bungumupeye was arrested; his accomplice escaped. Bungumupeye was found in possession of a rifle fitted with a silencer and three rounds of live ammunition. His sentence comprised three years' imprisonment for unlawful possession of a gun and 11 years for unlawful possession of ammunition and for hunting an endangered species.

[www.newsday.co.zw/article/2012-03-14-14-years-for-rhino-poaching/](http://www.newsday.co.zw/article/2012-03-14-14-years-for-rhino-poaching/), 14 March 2012

#### TIMBER

**CHINA:** In March 2012, Customs officials at Beijing Capital Airport arrested a passenger in possession of undeclared Red Sandalwood *Pterocarpus santalinus* (CITES II) (23.5 kg). This was the first case involving a seizure of this species at the airport.

[www.customs.gov.cn/publish/portal0/tab39267/info361015.htm](http://www.customs.gov.cn/publish/portal0/tab39267/info361015.htm) [in Chinese]

**INDIA:** On 28 October 2011, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized 17 t of Red Sandalwood *Pterocarpus santalinus* (CITES II) from a container at Vallarpadam International Container Trans-shipment Terminal (ICTT), thus foiling a bid to export the timber to Hong Kong, via Dubai. The wood had reportedly been brought from Andhra Pradesh by road.

The DRI are reported to have identified the kingpins of a sandalwood smuggling racket who are stationed in Dubai and said to have been shipping the timber to Hong Kong and China after receiving it in Dubai from India. The DRI has learned that the scheme involves operations in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Dubai, Hong Kong and China and it has sought the assistance of INTERPOL to return the suspects to India.

On 16 February 2012, it was reported that Customs officials at Nhava Sheva port, Maharashtra, near Mumbai, recalled a shipment of 40 000 kg of Red Sandalwood *Pterocarpus santalinus* (CITES II), declared as paperboard and shipped to Dubai. A tip-off led officials to act before the timber had reached its destination. A duplicate Central Excise department seal had been used to avoid scrutiny by Customs officials.

An official is reported to have said that the smugglers bring Red Sandalwood from the border of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka to the outskirts of Mumbai where it is kept illegally in warehouses.

"The syndicate members then bring containers which contain legitimate goods stuffed in factories in the presence of Excise officials," the official said, adding that the legitimate goods are replaced with Red Sandalwood by opening the Central Excise seal. "They then put on a duplicate seal," the official said.

<http://dailypioneer.com/nation/17231-red-sandlewood-racket-kingpins-based-in-dubai.html>; [www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/MumbaiCustoms-seize-40-000kg-of-red-sanders/Article1-812129.aspx](http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/MumbaiCustoms-seize-40-000kg-of-red-sanders/Article1-812129.aspx)

**GUATEMALA:** Between November and December 2011, authorities seized three shipping containers, each holding 58.28 m<sup>3</sup> of rosewood *Dalbergia* (CITES I/II) which were due to leave from the port of Santo Tomas de Castilla. A further 3.5 m<sup>3</sup> of illegally logged wood was seized in national parks across the country.

<http://insightcrime.org/insight-latest-news/item/2242-seizures-point-to-timber-trafficking-ring-in-guatemala>

**MALAYSIA:** On 13 February 2012, at Butterworth Sessions Court, Nguyen Van Tien of Viet Nam, was sentenced to six years in gaol and fined RM200 000 (USD65 000), after pleading guilty to felling agarwood *Aquilaria* trees. Two others remain at large. The trees were taken from the Bukit Panchor Forest Reserve in Nibong Tebal.

[www.thestar.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/2/13/nation/2012021314854&sec=nation](http://www.thestar.my/news/story.asp?file=/2012/2/13/nation/2012021314854&sec=nation)

#### OTHER SEIZURES/PROSECUTIONS

**CANADA:** On 9 December 2011, Jason Daeninck of Winnipeg was found guilty of 18 charges under the *Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act* in relation to the smuggling into the city from Indonesia of protected coral, sea horses and Giant Clams *Tridacna gigas* (CITES II). A court hearing is pending.

Daeninck was arrested in 2007 after Customs officials intercepted a shipment of 9000 kg of Stony Coral Scleratinia (CITES II) in British Columbia. Investigators linked the shipment to Daeninck and executed a search warrant at his home and business. They learned that he had been involved in other illegal shipments of CITES-listed sea horses and Giant Clams. However, none of those items were recovered and officials believe they were brought into Canada and subsequently sold on the black market.

[www.thestarphoenix.com/Coral+wildlife+smuggling+fine+could+reach+million/5840193/story.html#ixzz1g9H2M0B5](http://www.thestarphoenix.com/Coral+wildlife+smuggling+fine+could+reach+million/5840193/story.html#ixzz1g9H2M0B5), 10 December 2011

**CHINA:** On 21 November 2011, Customs officials at Huanggang port seized 104 python *Python* spp. (CITES II), gallbladders, eight Lion *Panthera pardus* (I) teeth, one Gorilla *Gorilla gorilla* (I) claw, one pangolin *Manis* (II) and two frogs following x-ray examination of a passenger's luggage.