

INDONESIA: On 22 January 2015, Fish Quarantine and Inspection (BKIPM) officers in Timika and Denpasar foiled an attempt to smuggle 6500 baby Pig-nosed Turtles *Carettochelys insculpta* (CITES II). Some 1226 animals were seized from a suitcase being loaded onto a flight to Denpasar.

Further investigations revealed that two more suspect suitcases were on the same flight which resulted in the seizure of an additional 5284 turtles in Denpasar.

BKIPM: <http://bit.ly/1FFzxl> (in Bahasa Indonesia), 26 January 2015

PHILIPPINES: In December 2014 and January 2015, some 186 endemic Palawan Forest Turtles *Siebenrockiella leytensis* (CITES I) were seized by authorities during five raids in Manila and in Taytay. The species occurs only on the island of Palawan.

TRAFFIC: bit.ly/1zMKeNC, 2 February 2015

SPAIN: On 6 November 2014 it was reported that officials of the Guardia Civil had seized 8300 tanned skins of various species of snake, lizard and crocodile from a warehouse in Manises, Valencia. The skins were to be made into belts, bags and wallets. The trader, a Spanish national, lacked the documentation proving the legal origin of the skins.

Levante El Mercantil Valenciano: <http://bit.ly/1N45XUc>, 6 November 2015

UK: On 25 March 2015, it was reported that Border Force officers at Heathrow Airport had seized 165 Turquoise Dwarf Geckos *Lygodactylus williamsi* (EU Annex B and classified by IUCN as Critically Endangered). The geckos had been imported in February from Tanzania where the species is found in only two locations. They are now being cared for at a secure facility.

According to Grant Miller, head of the Border Force CITES team, "this was a highly significant seizure. This particular species of gecko is incredibly rare and there are strict laws against its capture in Tanzania".

Other animals were seized from the same consignment and included 136 Bearded Pygmy Chameleons *Rieppeleon brevicaudatus*, 66 Yellow-headed Dwarf Geckos *Lygodactylus luteopicturatus*, 112 Peacock Tree Frogs *Leptopelis vermiculatus* and 192 whip scorpions Thelyphonida. The case is under investigation.

UK Border Force: <http://bit.ly/1NlxCyj>, 25 March 2015; in litt., 12 April 2015

VIET NAM: On 19 November 2014, authorities seized a record haul of over 1000 dead marine turtles (mostly Green *Chelonia mydas* and Hawksbill *Eretmochelys imbricata* turtles (CITES I)) during raids on a warehouse in the coastal resort of Nha Trang. All the specimens were being processed into handicrafts, reportedly for illegal export to China. The case is under investigation.

Times of India (India): bit.ly/1zp9wMV, 25 November 2014

RHINOCEROSSES

All species and populations of Rhinocerotidae are listed in CITES Appendix I except the South African and Swaziland populations of *Ceratotherium simum simum* which are listed in CITES Appendix II.

CZECH REPUBLIC: On 7 January 2015, three Vietnamese nationals were charged with the illegal export of rhinoceros horns. The suspects have been in custody since July 2014. A shipment of two horns of White Rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum* was discovered at Vaclav Havel Airport, Prague, in December 2013 after attempts were being made to export the horns to Viet Nam. The rhinoceros had been killed by a Czech national in South Africa. The three Vietnamese had reportedly acted in collusion with an organized group operating in several States. During home searches the police carried out in two Czech towns and in Prague's Sapa market place, further items and documents were seized.

Prague Monitor (Czech Republic): bit.ly/1zp9wMV, 8 January 2015

MALAYSIA: In January 2015, the convicted leader of a rhinoceros poaching network in Nepal was arrested by the Royal Malaysian Police and deported to Nepal. The suspect had reportedly fled Nepal after authorities requested that INTERPOL issue an international wanted persons alert for him. In 2013, the Nepal police, with the support of the Nepalese Army and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, arrested a network of more than a dozen poachers suspected of killing 19 rhinoceroses in Chitwan National Park, including the suspect, who managed to escape. INTERPOL National Central Bureaus in Nepal and Malaysia exchanged information that eventually resulted in the arrest of the suspect.

Environment New Service: bit.ly/1Eyt3OE, 23 February 2015

SOUTH AFRICA: On 1 November 2014, at Johannesburg airport, Customs officials seized 41 kg of rhinoceros horns—34 large pieces—reportedly the largest-ever seizure of

rhinoceros horns in the country. The luggage of two Vietnamese citizens on a brief stopover from Maputo, Mozambique, bound for Hanoi via Doha, was searched after an official on the aeroplane became suspicious of the cargo and reported his concerns to the South African authorities on landing at the airport.

It was reported on 15 December 2014 that security staff and other officials at Maputo international airport were under investigation for their alleged involvement in the case; the luggage of the two suspects had evaded scanning controls usually undertaken on all consignments.

E. Cooper Environmental Consulting: bit.ly/1CAGNLj, 16 December 2014

USA: On 14 January 2015, at Miami District Court, the president and owner of an auction house in Florida pleaded guilty to selling illegal rhinoceros horns (and elephant ivory). He will pay a fine of USD1.5 million and also faces imprisonment.

The suspect pleaded guilty to an illegal wildlife trafficking and smuggling conspiracy in which the auction house sold rhinoceros horns and objects made from rhinoceros horn (as well as elephant ivory and coral) that were smuggled from the USA to China. He was caught as part of Operation Crash—an investigation that has netted numerous criminals in the rhinoceros horn trade in recent years. The defendant and his company sold six Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* horns; two were sold to a Texas resident involved in smuggling the horns to China. Undercover USFWS agents bought two more, and another undercover agent consigned two horns for auction.

Malay Mail online: bit.ly/1BTx9zT, 15 January 2015

VIET NAM: On 27 October 2014, police and Customs officials at Noi Bai International Airport, Hanoi, arrested a Vietnamese national flying in from Bangkok, Thailand, and seized six kilogrammes of rhinoceros horn from her bag, after they were detected by scanners. The suspect said that a person in Bangkok had paid her to carry the horns.

ThanhNien News (Viet Nam): bit.ly/1wDrOcl, 28 October 2014

TURQUOISE DWARF GECKO FROM TANZANIA, SEIZED IN UK.



UK BORDER FORCE

It was reported on 18 March 2015 that a Vietnamese national had attempted to smuggle through Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Ho Chi Minh City, 1.39 kg of rhinoceros horns which had been cut into small pieces and hidden in lobster heads held in a freezing container.

Thanh Nien News (Viet Nam bit.ly/1MNEUwj, 18 March 2015)

FLORA

HONG KONG SAR: On 26 November 2014, Customs officials detected 92 t of “Honduras rosewood” logs being smuggled in four containers at Kwai Chung Customhouse Cargo Examination Compound. The shipment had been declared to contain “rubber waste”, and had arrived from Guatemala via Mexico. Two people were arrested and released on bail pending further investigation.

Hong Kong Information Services Department (news.gov.hk): http://bit.ly/1xd6kYD, 17 December 2014

INDIA: On 27 November 2014, the Srikalahasthi police and Special Task Force (STF) acting on information seized some 60 (1.5 t) logs of Red Sanders (Sandalwood) *Pterocarpus santalinus* (CITES II) and arrested 84 people near Srikalahasthi who were in the process of transporting the contraband in seven vehicles.

In a separate incident the following day, Forest Department officials recovered Red Sanders dumps at two locations near Rangampet, Tirupati. The logs were found during operations in the Seshachalam forests undertaken by five teams of the Forest Department. A total of 1.8 t of logs was recovered.

The Hindu (India): bit.ly/1ttPxcd, 28 November 2014

On 2 February 2015, Bengaluru Rural police acting on information raided the house of a convicted criminal in Kattigenahalli in Hoskote Taluk and seized some four tonnes of Red Sanders. The suspect was reported to have planned to export the timber to China.

The New Indian Express (India): bit.ly/1z7zjd4, 3 February 2015

MALAYSIA: On 19 November 2014, Sarawak forestry authorities announced the seizure of 22 306 illegally felled logs in Bintulu, one of the largest such seizures recorded in the State. No arrests. Enforcement officers backed by police were dropped by helicopters into an area in Tatau, Bintulu, to carry out raids, the culmination of two weeks surveillance in Bintulu and Miri.

The Malaysian Insider: bit.ly/1F3oRoh, 19 November 2014

OTHER / MULTI SEIZURES

CAMEROON: Two people have been arrested in Djoum–South in possession of the skulls of three Gorillas *Gorilla gorilla* and one Chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes* (both CITES I). One of the suspects was reported to be a high profile trader in apes, belonging to a large illegal network.

Eagle network, January 2015

The body parts of a dead adult Chimpanzee were found in a bag at the gendarmerie in Campo Ma’an, close to the border with Equatorial Guinea. A number of people—believed to be residents of the area—were arrested on 13 March. The case was to be transferred to the tribunal at Kribi. The seized meat (leg and parts of the torso) was burned.

Sonja Metzger, in litt. to R. Melisch, TRAFFIC, 16 March 2015.

MEXICO: On 10 March 2015, it was reported that an investigation by authorities into the purchase and sale of wildlife via the internet had led to a raid on a storage site in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, where some 40 dead animals were found in a freezer including: a Cotton-top Tamarin *Saguinus oedipus* (CITES I), a Common Squirrel Monkey *Saimiri sciureus* (CITES II), 17 Ball Pythons *Python regius* (II), two Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* (II), three Water Monitors *Varanus salvator* (II), four Burmese Pythons *Python bivittatus* (II) and Red-eyed Leaf Frogs *Agalychnis callidryas* (II). Also recovered were 12 animals that were being kept in poor conditions, including a Sun Parakeet *Aratinga solstitialis* (II), two Blue-and-gold Macaws *Ara ararauna* (II) and two Monk Parakeets *Myiopsitta monachus* (II), as well as Sugar Gliders *Petaurus breviceps*, Eastern Grey Squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis*, Black-tailed Prairie Dogs *Cynomys ludovicianus*, Swamp Crocodiles *Crocodylus moreletti*, a chinchilla *Chinchilla*, and a corn snake *Pantherophis guttatus*. The live animals were taken to La Pastora Zoo Park, where they were to be assessed by veterinarians.

Fox New Latino: http://bit.ly/1FJ67OH, 10 March 2015

SENEGAL: On 31 October 2014, authorities arrested four Nigerians and seized 2600 skins and animal parts, including those of Lions *Panthera leo* (CITES I), Leopards *P. pardus* (I), hyaenas, antelopes and pythons. These dealers were involved in the illegal importation of animals from African countries, for export overseas as well as to supply local sellers.

At the court in Dakar, the four received gaol terms of between one and three months’ imprisonment and fines ranging from 100 000 CFA francs to 1.2 million CFA francs (USD900–9000).

Dakaractu.com: http://bit.ly/1FcwWb, 14 November 2014

THAILAND: Two tourists were arrested at Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok, as they tried to smuggle 144 animals out of the country to Japan in their luggage. These included 110 Pig-nosed turtles *Carettochelys insculpta* (CITES II), groundhogs *Marmota*, snakes and geckos (species not reported). The animals had been purchased at the city’s Chatuchak weekend market.

The Daily Mail (UK): http://dailymail.com/1Ha2yTs, 20 February 2015

UK: On 24 November 2014, at Newport Crown Court, Sun Liu, of Pontypridd, was fined GBP2250 (USD3330) in total (GBP750 for each of three offences), and has to pay GBP1500 costs.

In July 2012, she was stopped by officers as she arrived on a flight from Beijing via Amsterdam. Three boxes held medicines purportedly containing ground rhinoceros horn (CITES I); one had eight portions of a medicine containing bear (I/II) bile and two contained *shenrong weisheng wan* (which includes extracts of Desert Living Cistanche *Cistanche deserticola* (II), *Aquilaria* (II) and Ginseng *Panax ginseng*). Liu was arrested at her home in Pontypridd five months later and charged with three counts of trying to smuggle the items into the UK.

BBC: http://bbc.in/1Ha4M5e, 25 November 2014

On 9 December 2014, at Croydon Crown Court, Peter Prineas of Orpington received a suspended gaol sentence of 10 months after being found guilty of purchasing animal body parts from online auction sites and private sellers. The sentence was suspended for 18 months.

When Scotland Yard’s Wildlife Crime Unit searched his home, they seized the skins of a Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* and a Leopard *Panthera pardus*, the skulls of a Drill *Mandrillus leucophaeus* and four Chimpanzees *Pan troglodytes* (all CITES I), a langur *Trachypithecus* (I/II), and other specimens of protected species.

BBC News: http://bbc.in/19Mtv1G, 10 December 2014; Robin des Bois, On the Trail No. 7: http://bit.ly/19CJGi0

USA: On 25 March 2015, antiques dealer Tony Guan from Richmond, British Columbia, Canada, pleaded guilty in New York to smuggling rhinoceros horn, elephant ivory and coral to Canada. He was sentenced to 30 months in gaol.

Bao Antiques bought nine items online from an auction house in Florida. Owner Xiao Ju (Tony) Guan was arrested in New York in March 2014 by US Fish and Wildlife Service agents. He purchased two horns of Black Rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* (CITES I) from undercover officers and shipped them to Point Roberts, Washington, a short drive from Richmond, falsely labelling the box as containing “handicrafts”. A search of his shop by Canadian police uncovered ivory, coral and other wildlife items purchased in the USA.

The Canadian Press: http://bit.ly/1bBxQWI, 25 March 2015