

# Newsletter

May 2019



Customs workshop team building group photo, Credit: TRAFFIC

**The UK government hosted an international conference about the illegal wildlife trade from 11 to 12 October 2018. The conference brought together global leaders to help eradicate illegal wildlife trade and better protect the world's most iconic species from the threat of extinction.**

**Find out more [here](#) or follow [#endwildlifecrime](#) on social media for the latest news and information.**

The Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) is a serious criminal industry worth up to £17 billion each year, threatening both wildlife and people. Funded by the UK Government, the IWT Challenge Fund tackles the illegal wildlife trade and, in doing so, contributes to sustainable development in developing countries. It funds projects which address one or more of the following themes:

- developing sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by IWT
- strengthening law enforcement
- ensuring effective legal frameworks
- reducing demand for IWT products



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



**#endwildlifecrime**

**[gov.uk/government/collections/  
illegal-wildlife-trade-iwt-challenge-fund](https://gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-wildlife-trade-iwt-challenge-fund)**





*Protectors of the ploughshare tortoises in Madagascar, Credit: Chris Scarffe*

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Participants at a customs workshop Credit: TRAFFIC

## Publicity and information about the IWT Challenge Fund

For more information about the IWT Challenge fund, please visit [gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-wildlife-trade-iwt-challenge-fund](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-wildlife-trade-iwt-challenge-fund)

If you would like any further information about the IWT Challenge Fund, please email the team at [IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk)

If you would like to submit an article about your project for a future edition of the IWT Newsletter, please email an article of no more than one side of A4, alongside any pictures, to [IWT-Newsletter@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:IWT-Newsletter@ltsi.co.uk)

### Publicity and referencing IWT Challenge Fund

We kindly remind project leaders that if they are publicising their work then it is important that they make every effort to recognise UK Government support through the IWT Challenge Fund. This is important as it helps us to ensure the IWT Challenge Fund retains a high profile and to secure continued Government funding.





*Customs workshop lecture presented by Chen Hin Keong, Credit: TRAFFIC*

## Introduction

Endangered Species Day is an annual event that highlights the importance of protecting species around the world that are under significant threat and are classified as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List. Endangered Species Day was originally established in 2006 by the National Wildlife Federation and emphasizes the importance of wildlife conservation and restoration efforts.

This edition of the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Challenge Fund Newsletter celebrates the effort that projects funded under the scheme put towards protecting wildlife that are facing decline. The articles featured in this newsletter highlight the importance of everyday actions done by everyday people, and emphasizes that small actions can make a big difference to preserve the future for an endangered species.

We would also like to commend those projects that have been successful under the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund's 5th funding round. We received 98 applications at Stage 1, with 35 of those being invited to submit an application at Stage 2. We would like to extend a warm welcome and congratulations to those 14 projects that were successful and look forward to working together, and hearing from you in future editions of the newsletter.

The latest application round for the IWT Challenge Fund is now open! In recognition of the severe threat that IWT poses to plants as well as animals, in this round we have opened up applications to all species of flora threatened by IWT. The deadline for applications to Stage 1 is 25th June 2019. For more information on how to apply please click [here](#).

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter!





Meeting in Mozambique on January 2019, Credit: WCS

## Vietnam – Mozambique law enforcement collaboration: Way forward to save African elephants from extinction

A **report** published in 2016 by Save the Elephants revealed that the Vietnamese illegal ivory trade is now one of the largest in the world. The majority of ivory products coming into Vietnam today are from Africa and between 2015-2018 WCS Vietnam recorded a total seizure of 26,440kg of ivory. The role that Vietnam plays in this illegal trade is as both a destination and a transit country. WCS Vietnam has dedicated years of monitoring trade routes and firmly believes that Vietnam has a major part in the global wildlife trafficking supply chains.

Growing Asian demand for elephant ivory continues to drive poaching pressure on the species across the African continent. Among these, Mozambique remains a key country in the ivory trafficking network. In Mozambique the cooperation of local poachers and criminal groups in Vietnam and China has resulted in tusks being trafficked by air, road and sea to neighbouring Tanzania and Asian consumer markets in Vietnam, Thailand and China.

Without being able to determine the link between traffickers in Vietnam and Mozambique, authorities have been limited to arresting transporters and seizing products. With the key players undetected, the trade continues. In order to successfully combat organised criminal networks, national agencies need to work together against defined protocols to defeat their common enemy.

Since 2015, WCS has continuously invested in partnerships with law enforcement authorities in Vietnam and Mozambique to strengthen their collaboration. This was achieved by creating effective mechanisms for them to share information and support each other in the investigation, prosecution and conviction of wildlife crimes. The next step was to build on this relationship with a binding legal agreement.

On December 3, 2018, a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty on criminal matters was signed by the Supreme People's Procuracy of Vietnam and the Ministry of Justice,

“ Vietnam has pretty complete legal framework on mutual legal assistance and SPP is willing to share experiences, enhance information exchange with enforcement authorities of foreign countries, especially those having signed mutual legal assistance treaty with Vietnam like Mozambique, to ensure strict and thorough handling of crimes in general and wildlife crimes in particular. ”

- Mr. Le Tien, Head of Department of International Cooperation and Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters, Vietnam Supreme People's Procuracy



Constitutional and Religious Affairs of Mozambique. In January 2019, a delegation of senior officers from the Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam met with their counterparts in Mozambique, including the National Criminal Investigation Service, Attorney General's Office, and National Administration of Conservation Areas.

The discussions focused on the current status between the two countries in combating illegal wildlife trade, compared challenges, and established standard operating procedures.

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**Wildlife crime has been increasingly aggressive and reckless. Criminals keep changing their modus operandi to avoid being arrested. Timely information sharing between countries is of the utmost importance. The Interpol office in Vietnam and Mozambique play the coordinating role in promoting mutual understanding and effective cooperation in detecting and handling wildlife crime**  
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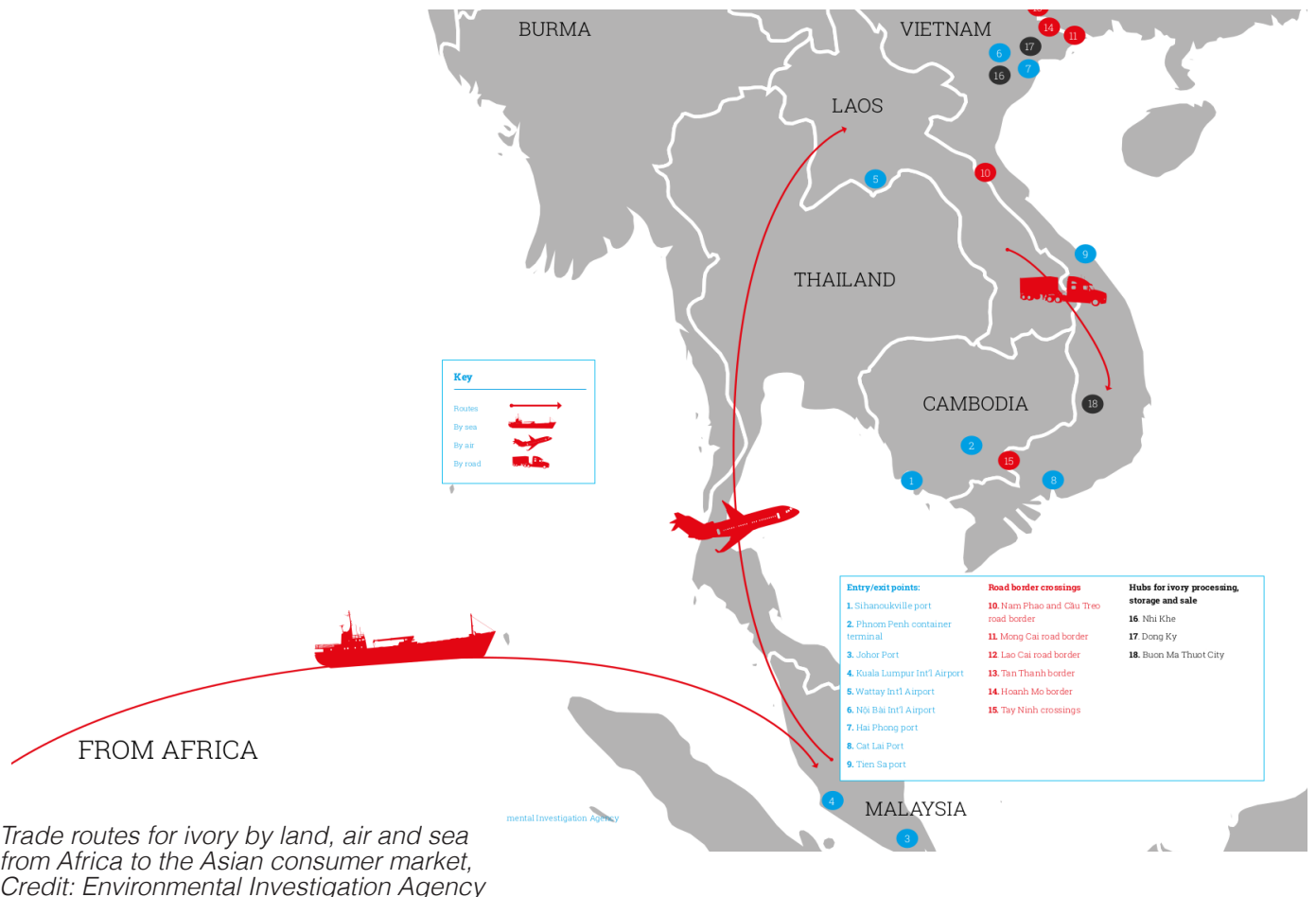
- Colonel Tran Minh Le, Deputy Head of the Office of Investigation Police Agency, Ministry of Public Security, Vietnam.

One of the biggest hindrances is the lack of coordination in information sharing between the two countries, however both sides agreed to designate an Interpol office in each country as the focal point to share information in handling wildlife related cases.

The continued joint efforts of Vietnam and Mozambique aim to strengthen the ability of law enforcement authorities to detect, investigate transnational criminals, and increase prosecution and conviction rates of ivory traders and wildlife crimes.

In the future WCS looks forward to replicating this Asia – Africa partnership to include transcontinental efforts to counter wildlife trafficking.

*This article features project IWT040 “Strengthening transcontinental cooperation to combat IWT between Vietnam and Mozambique”, led by the Wildlife Conservation Society, which works in Vietnam and Mozambique.*







CBAPU orientation training in Banke National Park, Credit: ZSL

## Anti-poaching for Wildlife and People

Nepal harbours rich biological diversity and is home to a multitude of threatened and unique species and ecosystems. The country's conservation successes, ensuring the protection and recovery of the Bengal tiger and Greater one-horned rhinoceros populations, are globally celebrated. However, conservation challenges remain.

Nepal is a hotspot for the transit and sourcing of animal products for illegal wildlife trade. This trade has the potential to generate huge profits and is conducted through complex international networks of organised criminals. These networks pose a major challenge for law enforcement agencies in Nepal and elsewhere. The wildlife trade's profitability results in a constant stream of potential poachers seeking to kill rhinos, tigers and other high-value species in order to sell their body parts. Rampant poaching is only prevented through consistent anti-poaching efforts across Nepal. Wildlife trafficking therefore poses a grave risk to Nepal's conservation successes, and any interruption in the vigilance of anti-poachers could result in major losses to already endangered populations.

Poaching also threatens the vulnerable communities living adjacent to large wildlife populations. Firstly, the profits that can be made through poaching draw criminals into these areas exposing communities to a wide variety of criminal activities; these potential profits make corruption more tempting for those in positions of power.

“ The wildlife trade's profitability results in a constant stream of potential poachers seeking to kill rhinos, tigers and other high-value species in order to sell their body parts ”

Secondly, the urgency of combatting poaching presents a risk that the law enforcement methods used treat all forest users as potential criminals - when in fact many vulnerable communities in Nepal are dependent on forests for their livelihoods - a phenomenon known as 'hyper-criminalisation'.



To combat poaching and its pernicious effects on wildlife and people, ZSL are working to strengthen community anti-poaching and ecotourism in protected areas and buffer zones of the Western Terai Complex. This work is supported through funding from the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund. We are supporting communities and authorities in protected areas to combat poaching as well as fostering dialogue and mutually supportive approaches between the two; working in Bardia, Banke and Shuklaphanta National Parks.

With protected area authorities, and through building anti-poaching capacity and developing intelligence exchange networks, we have supported the establishment of anti-poaching rapid response mechanisms.

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**345 potential threats have been identified through this system, with 14% being intercepted by a rapid response team, with an average response time of under 15 minutes**

Through this project we set up rapid response control centres in each protected area to assess information coming from a network of CCTV cameras at vulnerable points in the forest. The rapid response teams are deployed to address potential threats and so far 345 potential threats have been identified through this system, with 14% being intercepted by a rapid response team, with an average response time of under 15 minutes. This has already resulted in 17 apprehensions across the protected areas where we work.

Recognising the immense role that communities can play as ever-present guardians of wildlife, we have helped to establish and are supporting twelve new Community Based Anti-Poaching Units (CBAPUs); four for each protected area.

This network of CBAPUs actively supports the protected area authorities to combat poaching through regular patrols and raising awareness in the communities to deter potential criminal syndicates from exploiting community members.

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**to secure long-term community support for conservation and anti-poaching, and to improve community wellbeing, we have worked with vulnerable communities to establish eco-tourism ventures and home-stay groups in the buffer zones of each protected area**

Additionally, they are also playing a vital role in communication between communities within these protected areas and helping build a more positive relationship.

Furthermore, to secure long-term community support for conservation and anti-poaching, and to improve community wellbeing, we have worked with vulnerable communities to establish eco-tourism ventures and home-stay groups in the buffer zones of each protected area.

” These ensure that the most vulnerable community members receive concrete financial benefits from healthy wildlife populations and thriving protected areas. At the same time, we have also built the capacity of over 80 households to pursue a range of productive and sustainable livelihoods, which were also chosen for their potential to support a growing eco-tourism industry. These have included improved agricultural and pastoral techniques.

We hope that, through communities and protected area authorities working together, Nepal's conservation successes will be secured and that even greater successes – for people and wildlife – lie ahead.

*This article features project IWT041 “Strengthening Community Anti-poaching and Ecotourism in the Western Terai Complex”, led by the Zoological Society of London, which works in Nepal.*





Ploughshare tortoise fitted with radio tracking device, Credit: Tim Flach

## Protecting the world's most endangered tortoise

The golden-domed ploughshare tortoise (*Astrochelys yniphora*) lives at a single remote site in Madagascar, Baly Bay National Park. Due to poaching for the illegal wildlife trade it is the most endangered tortoise in the world. In the past, due to habitat loss and poaching the global population declined to only a few hundred adults.

In 1986 Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (Durrell) worked with local communities and government stakeholders to establish the first captive breeding centre for the species. The centre was initially stocked by 20 tortoises that had been confiscated from smugglers. In 1998, Durrell assisted in enabling the designation of Baly Bay National Park – the first in the country created to protect a single species.

“ The breeding centre now has a population of over 600 ploughshares and over the past ten years, using captive-bred animals, Durrell has worked with local and international partners to release tortoises back into the wild

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The breeding centre now has a population of over 600 ploughshares and over the past ten years, using captive-bred animals, Durrell has worked with local and international partners to release tortoises back into the wild. By 2015, 101 tortoises had been released into the national park and the animals are known to be breeding successfully in the wild – a huge milestone for this Critically Endangered species.

Despite the success of the captive breeding and reintroduction programme, poaching efforts have increased and the illegal wildlife trade continues to threaten the future of the species. These tortoises are greatly valued in the pet trade for their rarity and golden domed shell, and can sell for over \$30,000. Local people are recruited to poach animals from the wild, passing them to traffickers in Madagascar who smuggle them to South East Asia and China. Increases in poaching have often been associated with periods of political instability in Madagascar, but we have seen a dramatic increase in the poaching pressure since 2014.

Despite international interventions and increased security throughout the national park, poaching continued to escalate in 2015 and 2016 with three of the five wild sub-populations having been decimated and the other two severely damaged.





Adult ploughshare tortoise in protection programme, Credit: Chris Scarffe

The increase in poaching pressure has resulted in over 30% of all released animals being stolen since 2015.

In response, Durrell suspended wild releases and has refocused efforts to put in place the largest protection programme in the world for a terrestrial tortoise. We work with Madagascar National Parks (MNP), and local and international partners to implement a community patrol program of guards recruited from local villages in an effort to strengthen national law enforcement capacity in responding to wildlife crime.

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**One [person], caught in possession of a ploughshare, received the equivalent of a \$60,000 fine and a two-year prison sentence, and was the first person ever to go to prison for committing a wildlife crime in Madagascar**

With Durrell and MNP training and supervision, community guards patrol the national park, recording signs of poaching. We have implemented the anti-poaching monitoring system “SMART” and CyberTracker software to collect data in real-time to improve response rates to evidence of poachers and as a result of these collaborative security efforts, in 2016 three poachers were arrested in Madagascar for smuggling tortoises. One, caught in possession of a ploughshare, received the equivalent of a \$60,000 fine and a two-year prison sentence, and was the first person ever to go to prison for committing a wildlife crime in Madagascar.

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**Durrell works not only to protect species, but also to improve the wellbeing and livelihoods of communities living alongside endangered species**

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This is evidence that we are making significant progress within the judiciary system to deter people from smuggling, but the species is not safe yet. We are grateful to have recently been awarded an Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund grant and our new IWT project will enable us to significantly scale up our efforts to crack wildlife smuggling in Madagascar. Community-based patrollers will be incentivised to protect wild sites, national law enforcers will receive expert training to conduct intelligence-led investigations and formal collaboration between Ministries will build the foundation for a sustainable national counter-wildlife trafficking unit. Together, these initiatives will help ensure the journey from arrest to just prosecution for wildlife crimes is efficient, transparent and consistent.

Wildlife crime in Madagascar is underpinned by the fact that Madagascar’s rural communities are some of the most impoverished in the world. Recognising this, Durrell works not only to protect species, but also to improve the wellbeing and livelihoods of communities living alongside endangered species to provide alternative income streams that reduce the need for communities to participate in illegal activities.

As part of a five year Jersey Overseas Aid funded project we are working with communities in Baly Bay to improve annual food security and reduce damage to natural habitats through the introduction of Climate Smart Agriculture techniques. We are enabling financial independence by encouraging membership of Village Savings Loans Associations and improving reproductive health by partnering with Marie Stopes Madagascar to deliver advice and services to some of the most remote and inaccessible villages. Improving wellbeing and economic prosperity in Baly Bay, added to patrolling, law enforcement and the maintenance of a healthy captive population, offers the greatest hope for saving the ploughshare tortoise from extinction.

*This article features project IWT074 “Cracking wildlife smuggling in Madagascar”, led by Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, which works in Madagascar. More information on the project can be found here or through contacting Harriet Croome ([harrietcroome@durrell.org](mailto:harrietcroome@durrell.org)).*





Project team following workshop in Zambia, Credit: RUSI

## Following the money: making criminals pay

Like all crimes, illegal wildlife trade is conducted for profit. To catch the most prolific wildlife criminals, we must follow the money. This Endangered Species Day, we are highlighting the everyday actions that financial sector compliance officers can take to make a difference. By delivering capacity building workshops in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, this project led by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) increases local capacity to investigate, prosecute and one day recover the financial proceeds of this deadly trade.

“ a single African grey parrot can retail for up to \$2000 and gram-for-gram, rhino horn is worth more than cocaine, heroin and gold

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Globally, IWT is a highly lucrative form of transnational organised crime, generating an estimated \$7-23 billion per year. Dead or alive, the profits of the trade in endangered species are vast: a single African grey parrot can retail for up to \$2000 and gram-for-gram, rhino horn is worth more than cocaine, heroin and gold. Yet when compared to other types of crime such as drug and arms trafficking, financial investigations in wildlife cases are rare.

Across source, transit and destination countries, we know very little about the illicit financial flows (IFFs) linked to IWT. According to African Union figures, Southern and West Africa account for more than 80% of the cumulative IFFs in Sub-Saharan Africa, yet wildlife-linked IFFs are rarely considered in this context. These IFFs undermine broader governance and development objectives. Annually, Africa is said to lose at least \$50 billion to IFFs, almost double the Official Development Assistance the continent receives each year according to the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

This low risk financial environment allows criminal actors to earn vast profits from IWT. For this reason, the UK government has played a key role in spearheading a financial approach to dismantling the trade. Indeed, financial tools were central to many discussions at the London Conference in October 2018 and HRH the Duke of Cambridge has been instrumental in establishing the Finance Taskforce, led by United for Wildlife, which commits over 30 financial institutions to identify and share intelligence on the IFFs connected to IWT.

But these global financial efforts will only be successful if the capacity to conduct and prosecute financial investigations improves on the ground. For this reason, the primary aim of this project has been to enhance capacity in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia to conduct financial investigations and prosecutions in wildlife cases.





*Representatives of major financial institutions in Zambia, Credit: RUSI*

This project builds upon the successes of the original project led by RUSI (IWT021), which piloted financial investigations training in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania between 2016 and 2018. The first of their kind, these East African workshops highlighted the clear demand for multi-agency and private sector training in the financial dimensions of IWT.

This multi-agency approach is essential. The skills and legal authority required to carry out a financial investigation often requires the participation of partners who have not worked on IWT cases before – including the private sector. “I plan to explore more on IWT,” suggested one private sector compliance specialist, “in order to understand the main areas where the proceeds are coming from [and] to ensure we put transactions from-and-to such areas under close monitoring”.

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with support from the IWT Challenge Fund, RUSI has trained participants from over 54 government agencies and 40 financial institutions in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

This sentiment is essential to the spirit of Endangered Species Day, which seeks to highlight the everyday actions that people – especially those who do not traditionally work on wildlife – can take to make a difference.

To date, with support from the IWT Challenge Fund, RUSI has trained participants from over 54 government agencies and 40 financial institutions in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Each of these jurisdictions are very different, and this elevates the importance of tailoring each workshop extensively to the local context.

One of this project’s core strengths to date has been the extent and quality of its partnerships with local NGOs working on the ground – all of whom have been essential in guiding the content and structure of the workshops. On each workshop, RUSI has also partnered with the Environmental Investigation Agency who have provided important information and case studies on the global nature of the trade.

The lessons from this project are clear: to follow the money globally, we must upskill locally.

*This article features projects IWT021 and IWT043 “Following the Money II: IWT Capacity-Building, East and Southern Africa”, led by the Royal Unites Services Institute, which works in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.*

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Presentation from Steve Broad at the anniversary celebration, Credit: TRAFFIC

## Improving Law Enforcement Collaboration to Combat Online Wildlife Trafficking between Countries in Asia and Africa

Law enforcement agencies play a significant role in maintaining the rule of law. Customs Departments, as the primary government agencies responsible for border control, are essential in combating the smuggling of endangered species, including targeting of transnational organised wildlife crime syndicates.

TRAFFIC has facilitated interactions between more than 60 Customs officials from twelve countries - Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Burma, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Thailand, and Vietnam - through the "Combating Smuggling of Endangered Species" Asia - Africa Customs Workshop in Suzhou, China.

The workshop focused on sharing the successes and lessons from China's experience in combating smuggling of endangered species, as well as exchanges of best practices of international cooperation in law enforcement action from the source to end-use market.

The Deputy Director General of the Anti-Smuggling Bureau, General Administration of China Customs shared the experience of China Customs in cracking down on wildlife smuggling. He emphasized the necessity of close cooperation between countries in joint law enforcement efforts in the increasingly complex dynamics of international trade.

Customs representatives shared their best practices, including challenges of international law enforcement collaboration and discussed action plans to address the issues.

“ Representatives from China's Forest Police, as well as businesses from the internet and logistics sectors showed how public and private sector actors could play complementary roles to help counter online wildlife trafficking ”





*Customs workshop group photo,  
Credit: TRAFFIC*

Guest speakers from UNODC, the CITES Management Authority of China, TRAFFIC, and China Customs gave lectures on approaches and investigation of wildlife and forest crime, CITES implementation and enforcement, the verification of timber legality for Customs, and case studies on international wildlife smuggling.

Wildlife Cybercrime was also featured at the workshop and TRAFFIC shared research regarding online wildlife trade in China, Japan, Vietnam, Cameroon, and Tanzania, and how the private sector, international organizations and governments have strengthened cooperation to address the rapidly evolving online wildlife trafficking through initiatives such as the "Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online".

Representatives from China's Forest Police, as well as businesses from the internet and logistics sectors showed how public and private sector actors could play complementary roles to help counter online wildlife trafficking, and to point out where Customs officers could seek assistance.

Capacity building for law enforcement in combating illegal wildlife trade is a long-term effort, and the exposure of participants to the challenges - and possible solutions - of dealing with online wildlife trafficking will continue to

bear fruit at national, bilateral and multilateral cooperation among key countries.

*This article features project IWT042 "Combating Global Wildlife Cybercrime: Building on Success in China", led by TRAFFIC International, which works in China, Vietnam, Tanzania and Cameroon.*



*TRAFFIC China visit Baidu, Credit: TRAFFIC*





*Ploughshare tortoise protected by community based patrollers, Credit: Chris Scarffe*

## Newsletter Contacts

If you have any general queries about how the IWT Challenge Fund operates please e-mail us at [IllegalWildlifeTrade@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:IllegalWildlifeTrade@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

For any queries on project applications or existing projects please contact our IWT Administrators (LTS International) at [IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:IWT-Fund@ltsi.co.uk)

This newsletter is produced quarterly. To include an article on your project in an upcoming edition, please contact us at [IWT-Newsletter@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:IWT-Newsletter@ltsi.co.uk)

The UK Government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund provides financial support to practical projects around the world which are:

- developing sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by IWT
- strengthening law enforcement
- ensuring effective legal frameworks
- reducing demand for IWT products

To date through the Challenge Fund, over £20 million has been allocated to 75 projects.