

NEWS AND NOTES

FATWA AGAINST ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN INDONESIA

In March 2014, the Indonesian Council of Ulama --- Indonesia's top Muslim clerical body --- issued a *fatwa* (Fatwa No. 04, 2014) on Conservation of Threatened Wildlife to maintain Ecosystem balance. In a religious context, it effectively requires Indonesia's 200 million Muslims to take an active role in protecting and conserving endangered species, including tigers, rhinos, elephants, and orangutans. At the same time, it declares illegal hunting or illegal trading of endangered species to be *haram* (forbidden). The fatwa is believed to be the first of its kind in the World and is a welcome example of a religious body engaging proactively and responsibly in an area usually covered by existing civil laws.

The fatwa is not “implementable” per se, but is issued to give an explanation, as well as guidance, to all Muslims in Indonesia on the sharia law perspective on issues related to animal conservation. It will supplement existing Indonesian law and it is hoped that this proactive initiative by the Indonesian Council of Ulama will have positive impact on the current exscallating illegal wildlife trade in the country.

FEMALE SUMATRAN RHINO RESCUED IN SABAH, MALAYSIA

On the 21st of March, 2014, a critically endangered female Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) was successfully rescued from a very remote area in Danum Valley and translocated to join male (Tam) and a female (Puntung) rhinos at the Borneo Rhino Sanctuary (BRS) Facilities in Tabin Wildlife Reserve. Due to the remote capture area, she had to be flown in a Sikorsky S-64 Helicopter that was made available by Erickson Air-Crane Inc. She was named “Iman” (Fig. 1), after a small river near where she was caught, and her rescue was a result of a year of intense efforts to make every last rhino in Malaysia count towards efforts to prevent the extinction of one of the world's most critically endangered species. The Sabah State Cabinet had previously heeded advice from local and international



Figure 1. A female Sumatran rhino a day after capture, March 2014, from Danum Valley, Sabah. The rhino named “Iman” was in poor reproductive health © John Payne

rhino experts and agreed that the only way to ensure that every Sumatran rhino in Sabah plays a role in saving the species is to bring all of them into a managed, fenced facility, with the necessary local and global expertise and collaboration to breed them.

Once Iman is settled into Tabin, the Sabah Wildlife Department and Borneo Rhino Alliance (BORA) will review all the potential options on how she can best contribute to her species. But it is expected that Iman will be given a reasonable time to mate with the male, Tam, at the BRS. Earlier Tam had been slotted to be loaned to Cincinnati Zoo as part of a breeding collaboration, where there is already a fertile female. If Iman proves to be fertile and the pair compatible, it might not be necessary for Tam to fly to Cincinnati to mate.

DRASTIC MEASURES NEEDED TO SAVE SUMATRAN RHINOS FROM EXTINCTION

The successful capture of a female Sumatran rhino in Danum Valley, Sabah, in March 2014 renewed hope of establishing a local breeding population in Sabah. After capture Iman, as the rhino was named, exhibited various indications similar to pregnancy but a detailed ultrasound examination under anesthesia by specialists from the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research Berlin (IZW) with local counterparts revealed that what had been suspected to be a fetus was in fact a collection of tumors in the uterus. A thorough examination revealed that some of the tumors were as

big as footballs. This indicates that Iman has not been sexually active for 5-10 years, most likely because there are too few males left, if any at all, in the wild.

The discovery of the poor reproductive condition of Iman is similar to that of Puntung, a female captured in 2011, and a young poached female from 2001. It is a big blow to the Global Sumatran Rhino Breeding program and it reiterates the critical need for assisted reproduction techniques such as in vitro fertilisation. It is evident that Sabah's rhino population is far too small to recover without human intervention. While Sumatran populations appear to reproduce naturally in the wild the threat of poaching continues to push Sumatra's remaining small wild populations into a similar irreversible extinction vortex as is undeniably happening to the rhinos in Sabah.

BORA executive director, Dr. Junaidi Payne, stated that "everyone concerned with preventing the extinction of this magnificent species really ought to work collaboratively to share knowledge, ideas, experience, gametes and rhinos. That includes Indonesia and Malaysia, and the various specialists, notably IZW".

MORE PLANS MADE TO SAVE JAVAN LEOPARD

Recently the Indonesian Forestry Ministry held a two day "National Conference on Javan Leopard" workshop at the Indonesia Safari Park in Cisarua, Bogor, West Java, to develop a Javan leopard conservation strategy and action plan aimed at saving the species from extinction. Dozens of participants from institutions including the Indonesian Wild Animals Conservation Forum (FOKSI), the Indonesian Zoo and Aquarium Association (PKBSI), Indonesia Safari Park, the Harimau Kita Forum, Java Carnivore Awareness, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), Bogor Agricultural Institute and research institutions provided the ministry with four key recommendations: a) conservation of Javan leopard in its natural habitat, b) the need to include conservation institutions (e.g. zoos and wildlife refuges), c) public awareness tasks, and d) financing conservation and research activities. An important addition to the strategic approach was the inclusion of *ex-situ* conservation actions. The participants agreed that it is critical to manage the genetic *quality* of all captive Javan leopard individuals, and that a studbook keeper should be appointed to oversee this.

Also highlighted was the need to develop standard surveying methods, technical guidelines on the protection of the animals victimized in conflicts and the establishment of the Javan Leopard Forum.

There is still no accurate population estimate for Javan leopard, although it is expected to number in the range of 400-500 individuals. The main reason for the general decline of the species is believed to be associated with habitat loss, due to expanding production forests and agricultural land. A Javan Leopard Forum was declared by 10 representatives of various stakeholders from state-run forestry enterprise PT Perhutani, Foksi, Java Carnivore Awareness, the Indonesia Institute of Sciences (LIPI), the Bogor Agricultural Institute, the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group Indonesia and the Zoological Society of London. The Javan leopard conservation strategy and action plan is expected to be approved by the Forestry Ministry in the near future, and it will provide a much needed guidance to ensuring the long-term survival of Java's top predator.

GLOBAL FOREST WATCH TRACKS WHERE TREES FALL

It is well known that forests across the world are vanishing at an astonishing rate, and with it biodiversity. Sometimes it is hard to visualise just how serious the problem is. The World Resources Institute (WRI) recently released a new online mapping tool that aims to put all the eyes of the world on forests everywhere in the World, with near-real time monitoring. The system combines satellite pictures, computer algorithms and crowd-sourced data to provide an up-to-date look at the health of forests across the World. The system named "Global Forest Watch" is developed in collaboration with dozens of partners and will allow users with a computer and internet access to zoom into a forest anywhere in the world and see where trees are being lost as well as how fast it is being lost. The system has a resolution of 30 meters and will be able to detect if a stand of trees is felled by logging or fire, or wasted away by disease. A very important fact is that WRI provides the Global Forest Watch as an "open source" platform that any person can use for free. Hopefully, the system will contribute to ending the procrastinated denial and secrecy of forest clearings across the Globe and begin a more factual and progressive debate about how to manage, protect and replace forested areas.

NEPAL CELEBRATES ‘ZERO POACHING YEAR’ FOR RHINO, TIGER AND ELEPHANT

Nepal recently celebrated a monumental conservation achievement: 365 days without a single incident of rhino, tiger or elephant poaching record in any of the country’s protected areas. The achievement has to be seen in contrast to the huge increases in elephant and rhino poaching worldwide, and is testament to the collective commitment of Nepal’s Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and its national and international collaborators. The last reported incident of rhino poaching in the country occurred on February 16, 2013. In recent years, the Nepalese Government have focused increasingly on its conservation plight, among others by establishing the Wildlife Crime Control Coordination Committee at the national level and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau at the district level and increased law-enforcement. In 2013 alone, law enforcement officials arrested more than 700 wildlife criminals in the country. This has resulted in a significant decrease in poaching and illegal wildlife trade, and a rise in the rhino population. The success is a good example of combined efforts in protected area and species management IUCN’s country representative pledged continued support to the DNPWC in the future.

Despite this recent success, the large number of arrests in 2013 indicate that Nepal is still a major transit point for trade and the smuggling of body parts of endangered animals. Between February 2013 and February 2014 authorities seized 1,200 grams of tiger bone, two rhino horns, a rhino toe, six leopard hides, and 11 red panda hides.

A 2011 rhino census revealed that 534 Greater One-horned rhinos still persist in Nepal; 503 of these occur in Chitwan National Park, 24 in Bardiya National Park and seven in Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve.

THE WORLD’S FIRST NET-ZERO ENERGY SKYSCRAPER RISES IN INDONESIA

The *Pertamina Energy Tower* will soon become the world’s first net-zero energy skyscraper. It will be built in the center of Indonesia’s capital, Jakarta, and expected to be completed by 2019. It will consist of 99 stories and serve as the headquarters of Pertamina, the national energy company. Up to 20,000 people will

work there, where there will also be a campus that has a mosque, a sports center and a 2,000-seat auditorium for the performing arts. The design appears like a funnel, the top of the tower opens at the top, capturing wind and sucking it inside to run a series of vertical wind turbines that provide 25 percent of the building’s electricity. The façade will be calibrated for Jakarta’s proximity to the equator to mitigate solar heat gain throughout the day as well as year. The sides of the building will be made as sun-shading “leaves” that allow daylight to enter while shielding the building from glare and heat from the sun, and airconditioners will be replaced with radiant cooling systems. The power will be supplied by thousands of solar panels and geothermal facilities.

In the past decade, Indonesia has developed a long range of policies aimed at guiding the Nation into a path of sustainable development. The Pertamina Energy Tower will reflect Indonesia’s sustained commitment to sustainable development, and possibly propel the nation into a small group of elite nations taking a big step towards a resource based economy.

NEW EU INITIATIVE TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY AND FIGHT WILDLIFE CRIME

On the International Day for Biological Diversity today, the Commission is launching a major new initiative to halt biodiversity loss and eradicate poverty in developing countries. The EU Biodiversity for Life (B4Life) initiative is designed to assist needy countries protect their national ecosystems, combat wildlife crime and develop green economies. B4Life will operate with an estimated budget of up to €800 million for the period 2014-2020 and will focus on Least Developed Countries and countries containing “biodiversity hotspots”, the places where ecosystems and their services are the richest but also the most threatened.

The past two decades have manifested that biodiversity and development are closely linked and mutually reinforcing --- that is, healthy ecosystems sustain development while development impacts on habitats. Therefore, the B4Life focus on ecosystem conservation and restoration as an opportunity to generate growth, create jobs and reduce poverty through developing new strategic frameworks for green economy. B4Life will operate in three priority areas:

- Promoting good governance of natural resources.

- Securing healthy ecosystems for food security.
- Developing nature-based solutions towards a green economy.

In addition to the three priority areas, B4Life will include a special ‘Wildlife Crisis Window’ (WCW), dedicated to combating the increase in the illegal trade of endangered species, particularly in Africa. As well as threatening species, wildlife poaching and trafficking harm local and national security. There are mounting evidence that rebel militias and possibly terrorist groups are involved in elephant and rhino poaching as a means of financing their actions. The WCW aims at tackling poaching and trafficking at all levels --- at a local level by securing the management of priority protected areas; at a national level by reinforcing the rule of law by tackling corruption and improving investigation; at a regional level by promoting anti-criminal networks and the creation of cross-border protected areas, and by improving species monitoring; and internationally by supporting organisations specialised in the fight against wildlife crime, illegal trade and smuggling.

ASSOCIATION FOR TROPICAL BIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION MEETING, CAIRNS

The Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) held its 51st annual meeting in Cairns, Australia. The event also included the Asia-Pacific Chapter (AP) meeting and was co-hosted by James Cook University. The 2014 annual meeting became the largest congregation of tropical biologists ever in Australia, with 589 registered scientists and conservationists from 55 nations participating. The event theme was *The Future of Tropical Biology and Conservation* and almost 200 oral presentations were delivered in five concurrent sessions along with almost 100 posters.

In lieu of the recent plans for port development and associated dredging in the Abbott Point area near Bowen, Queensland, the meeting produced the *ATBC 2014 Cairns Declaration in Support of Stronger Protection of the Great Barrier Reef*. The declaration focus particularly on the feasibility of the offset requirement for reducing net sediment input into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and the cumulative effect of this development to the marine ecosystem. The ATBC Cairns Declaration can be downloaded at: <http://tropicalbiology.org/atbc-2014-cairns-declaration/>.

The Asia-Pacific Chapter meeting reconstituted the chapter board and decided that the 2015 AP-meeting will take place in Cambodia. The team will be preparing for this event.

FORESTS ASIA SUMMIT, JAKARTA

One of the most important and largest events in the region took place in Jakarta from 5-6th of May, 2014. *The Forests Asia Summit: Sustainable Landscapes for Green Growth in Southeast Asia* was organised by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and co-hosted by the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry. The event was the largest in Asia in recent years and attracted more than 1,000 leading stakeholders from Southeast Asia and across the world. It saw ministers from across Southeast Asia join CEOs, civil society leaders, development experts and the world’s top scientists, to share knowledge on how the region can accelerate the shift toward a green economy by better managing its forests and landscapes. Thousands more participated online or through nationwide broadcasts, and there were special learning events with leading global experts on the Green Economy, the Southeast Asian haze crisis, climate change negotiations and the Sustainable Development Goals.

As a testament to the importance of the occasion H.E. President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono delivered the opening address, with ministers and high ranking Government officials and corporate players from most of SE Asia also making presentations. One notable absentee from this important event was Malaysia.

The aim of the Forests Asia Summit was to lay the foundations for continued dialogue, transitions toward sustainable investments, and further research to support evidence-based policymaking, all directed toward achieving equitable green growth and more sustainable management of landscapes across Southeast Asia.

Following the event, an outcome statement was compiled from reporting from the sessions at the Forests Asia Summit to provide an overview of messages throughout the conference. In summary, the reporting concludes that:

- To achieve equitable and sustainable green growth in Southeast Asia, all stakeholder groups must strive to overcome communication barriers, engage in continued, participatory dialogue, and act together within a landscape and multilevel governance framework.

- Government, the corporate sector and the finance sector must work together to create enabling conditions to unlock private capital and support investments in sustainable landscapes and smallholders.
- The scientific community, with support from the public and private sectors, must engage in integrated and targeted research aimed at increasing understanding of the dynamics that shape landscapes and communicate findings to government and business in a way that supports evidence-based changes in policy and practice toward a sustainable future and action on the ground. sustainable landscapes and smallholders.
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TIGERS IN PERIL

The annual Global Tiger Day took place worldwide on 29 July 2014. Unfortunately, there is still very little cause to celebrate with tiger populations continuing to decline across its ranges. Poaching and habitat destruction remain the primary causes of decline, along with an increasing loss of prey base. These are some of their concerns that were highlighted in a comprehensive report co-authored by TRAFFIC into the progress made by the countries implementing measures to protect Asia's four big cat species. The report states that in the period from 2000-2014 a minimum of 1590 tigers have been seized - an average of two animals per week - with most recorded from India (536) (Fig.1). Despite formulating policies, high level meetings, pledges and plans the number of tigers represented in seizures has increased from less than 100 in 2000 to 150 per year in 2014. While this can also be a result of improved law enforcement, it is a trend that concerns many conservation biologists across the region.

Indonesia reportedly lost 103 tigers in the 2000-2014 period. While this figure is small in comparison to India's loss of tigers, the report warns that Indonesia must improve its law enforcement if tigers are to survive in Sumatra. In the period 2010-2012 Indonesia contributed with 20% of all tiger parts seizures despite only having less than 10% of the global tiger population.

The detailed Outcome statement with associated explanation can be found at: <http://www.cifor.org/forestsasia/about/outcome-statement/>.

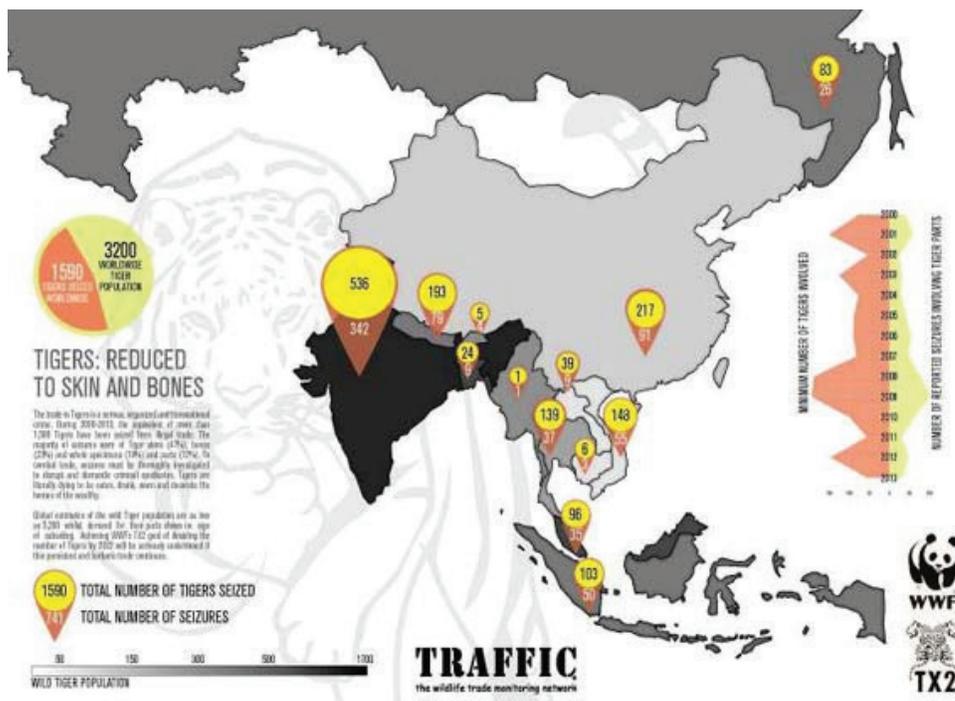


Figure 1. Number of killed and traded tigers in range countries suggest that the illegal trade flourishes as much as ever. From TRAFFIC (2014).