

Wildlife Times



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Editorial

This May was seen as a significant month in the field of wildlife trade as many events unfolded this month that was noteworthy. SAWEN countries held its first experts group meeting united the countries of South Asia to fight the illegal wildlife trade in the region. This was hosted by Nepal and was a historic event in regard to the coalition of the South Asian countries to stop illegal trade and traders. This issue of Wildlife Times has covered this event. The news article by Dinesh Regmi on birds of Qatar and how these creatures are facing extinction due to open sell in the markets of Doha is a very strong piece on need of conservation. Release and death of rhesus monkeys in Shivapuri- Nagarjuna National Park is the continuation of our regular news on 'Stop the monkey business' condemns the government for neglecting the released monkeys.

South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) launched on May 19, 2010 has laid groundwork for the coordination between the South Asian countries to combat illegal wildlife trade. This step was taken by the experts from South Asia who have foreseen the necessity to have connection and interaction among the Asian countries to prevent poaching and export of wildlife parts. Such a base has been a necessity at present times to tackle illegal trade through international cooperation and support. The first meeting of the South Asian countries came up with the decision to establish SAWEN with the view to help wildlife law enforcement agencies to become better organizations than the criminals themselves. Nepal's government's enthusiasm has been well seen where Nepal has offered to host the network and act as a coordinator for the SAWEN network. The government of Bhutan has offered to host the next meeting of SAWEN members. The meeting took place from 17th to 19th May 2010 in Kathmandu.



The birds and wild animals are facing serious threats from the aesthetic point of view. The people are interested to buy birds for decorative purpose. This case is seen in Qatar where rich people develop hobby to pet birds. The government of Qatar has banned the selling and hunting of the wild animals. Sparrow, Dove, Parrot, Quail, Snipe, Rabbit, Jackal are the major birds and wild animals found in Qatar. All the birds that are selling as hot cakes in these markets are the birds imported from other countries. Only those who have obtained the license from the Qatar government have permission to sell these animals. Obviously to fulfill the people's needs and the seller's greed, they import the birds from other countries supporting illegal trade of animals.



More than 50 monkeys have died in Shivapuri-Nagarjuna National Park where they were released from Lele Monkey Breeding Centre in January after the government's decision of ban on the export of rhesus monkeys to American Labs. The information relating to these released monkeys is not disseminated to public. Similarly, concerned conservationists and animal welfare organizations are not allowed the access to the place. It is such a shame to see that these monkeys are dying in lack of proper health care and diet. WWG has made an appeal to the government of Nepal by sending letters to hon' Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal and hon' Minister of Forest and Soil Deepak Bohara to look over the matter and take action as soon as possible to deal with a matter of such grave intensity. WWG has always fought for the rights of monkeys to live in wild and free and is seriously following up the issue.

Bird Business in Qatar

*By Dinesh Regmi from Doha
Text and Photo*





• Bird: the birds for sale in Souq Waqif

The historic street of Souq Waqif in Doha is not only modern day's labyrinth but also is a bird market. Souq Waqif is not only houses different species of birds, but also rabbits, cats and dogs.

The market also has different historically and culturally significant artifacts and handicrafts. Along the central walkway, there are variety of restaurants and cafes where thousands of tourists enjoy their meals.

Among those crowds, most of these people visit the bird's stall. Some only observe the beauty of birds while some buy them. According to the sellers, only the exotic birds are high in demand.

The government of Qatar has banned the selling and hunting of the wild animals. Sparrow, Dove, Parrot, Quail, Snipe, Rabbit, Jackal are the major birds and wild animals found in Qatar. All the birds that are selling as hot cakes in these markets are the birds imported from other countries.

Only those who have obtained the license from the Qatar government has permission to sell these animals.

There are around 40 shops selling the birds and small animals in Souq Waqif. Only few shops are scattered in Qatar except for in Souq where all these shops are found clustered. According to a local vendor, Abdul Rehman Miya,

who has been trading falcon for 8 years said that people buy these birds as pets. but Falcon and *battai* are considered for play and fighting.

Most of these vendors and buyers were reluctant to talk about the trading of birds. This was because they did not want to come across any legal trouble. So most of the people did not share their name and gave only informal information.

The skins of the wild animals are used as decorations. These decorative skins are imported from other countries. Since killing and using wild animal's body part for various purposes is banned in Qatar, the well-known and rich Arabians



• Falcon: Seller showing falcon in Souq Waqif

introduce them from different countries.

In Al Obra near Sahaniya, there is a reservation for birds, tigers, crocodiles, deer, monkeys, Nilgai, turtles etc. There are six species of parrots only. A person who has great fondness for wild animals and birds established this reservation. All the birds and animals in this reserve are from different countries. There are medical facilities available for these animals. This is Qatar's bird hospital

Students, tourists and many explorers visit this reserve to study the birds and wild animals. Similarly, a Sheikh has collection of deer in his home in Sana near Jamelia.

Market of Falcon

In Qatar, the Falcons are kept as hobby. In Arab, camel, horse and falcons are considered as the object of desire for rich people. Camel and horses are used for race. People do not hesitate to pay upto 20 lakhs riyal for a camel or horse. White falcon costs upto 5-lakh riyal.

Abdul Rehman Miya has sold a falcon from 20 thousands to 70 thousands. In Qatar, the falcons are from Iran, Pakistan, mongolia and China that include species like *sine*, *harar*, *okri*, *Jubelia* and *Jir*.

Falcon hunts upon rabbits, deer, Siberian birds, Water duck, Egret and Snipe. Though it is illegal to hunt birds in Qatar,

the Falcons are hunted in far end of the desert.

The price of the Falcon is estimated according to its type, color and body size. Female are more valuable than male. Since female have better hunting capacity than male, they are costlier. A falcon starts hunting from 1 year of age. After 3 years, they are released voluntarily as their hunting capacity decreases and starts mating. Falcon is also a major tourist attraction in Souq Waqif. many American and European come for ornithological studies. One trader stopped the trading of Falcom during the CITES conference held in Qatar in march but did not reveal the reason.



• Quail: Hunters ready to capture Quail



• Visit: Tourists observing the birds

Market of Quail

Quail, found in the grassland of Qatar, are captured by trapping in a net. Quail are trapped in a similar manner as fish.

In Al Rakiya, Quail are captured for fighting. One Pakistani hunter said, "We train these birds and pay money to the authority to take these birds to our country. We do not take them for eating."

The Quail are used in a fight and huge amount of money is

betted for it. The one, which is stronger, has more value. A single quail costs from 50 thousand to one lakh riyal.

The method for capturing Quail is very strange where the hunters play sound of the female birds with the help of cassette player or mobile. The birds get attracted to these sounds and fall into the trap.

It is illegal to hunt these creatures and so the hunters

train these birds and pay tax to the government to take these birds to their countries.

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Peter Bryne & International Wildlife Conservation Society



The International Wildlife Conservation Society (IWCS) Inc. was founded in Washington DC in 1968 and is a not-for-profit organization. The society was originally created for the purpose of creating a protected park out of part of a big game hunting indulgence operated by Peter Bryne from 1953 to 1968. This society works in Shukla Phanta also called White Grass Plains Wildlife Reserve. Originally the reserve was 60,000 acres and has increased in size to 200,000 acres. Being situated in a remote area, this reserve has remained unspoiled and untouched by exploitation.

The reserve now provides habitat for more than 60 species of mammals, 350 species of birds, approximately 27 species of fishes in its jungle rivers and a large number of reptiles, including 2 species of saurian, and giant monitor lizards. The Shukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve is a protected area of forest, grassland and wetland which is home to elephant, rhino, tiger, leopard, wild boar, crocodile, deer and many smaller animals and birds.

Since 1968, IWCS has directed all of its resources and funding

into this one area, Shukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve, and in this way has been able to appropriately apply and carefully control the application of its funding. All field work is supervised by a member of the society, usually Peter Bryne. Across the years, preservation projects in the reserve have included animal counts, poaching control. The major contribution of IWCS seems to be initiation of Water for Wildlife Program, an agenda that has included the complete restoration of two dry and abandoned lakes. Within the park are a dozen, very shallow rivers. These fill up during the monsoon (June through October.) But then, in the dry weather (November through May), they lose all of their water to ground saturation and evaporation; when this happens, the animals that use them have to find drinking water elsewhere, sometimes forcing them to travel considerable distances.

With a view to increasing awareness of the importance of wildlife conservation with villagers living around the park, IWCS has established a new curriculum called The Nepal Educational Program and has donated computers to a local

school and also sponsored some of its children.

A major program now being undertaken by IWCS is the establishment of a research and conservation center at the edge of Shukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve.

All these started with a life changing experience of IWCS's founder Peter Bryne in 1968. Peter Bryne was a White Hunter for 18 years. He used to set up expeditions and camps for hunting. During his life as a hunter, he hunted more than 100 tigers. Though being a hunter, he somehow had a soft spot for tigers and other animals. One such incident changed his mind and his life. Bryne witnessed the reality of his life's work up close. Sickened by the revelation, he decided to put away his guns and devote himself to conservation. He converted the park where he had hunted into an animal preserve that today is more than three times its original size.

Peter Bryne also pressurized the government to ban hunting which was officially taken in action in 1970s.

Today, Bryne who is 80 divides

his time between the preserve in Nepal and his summer home in Los Angeles. His latest project is building a conservation center to accommodate scientists and tourists. At this age as well, his devotion and insight is an inspiration to all.

The recent project of IWCS is a mugger crocodile rehabilitation project in the lake of Rani Tal. It will include the construction of log platforms that will allow these extraordinary saurians to stretch in the sun.

Now the days have returned where tiger's are once again the land's greatest hunters.



The works and achievements of IWCS from 2002-2009: A glance

In 2002, IWCS received grant of \$3000 from the American Himalayan Society for the construction of two waterholes, principally for *nilghai* (forest antelope) and other animals in Shukla Phanta. It received another grant of \$7500 from the American Himalayan Foundation for continuation of this work and for two new projects. These are the hidden springs project and the WGP ground water project.

In 2003, IWCS worked on the renovation of the waterhole that began in November 2002 and continued through to March 2003. Regular monitoring of waterholes were done and it was found that there was regular use of waterholes by elephants, tiger and Swamp Deep, the new pool being located at the edge of the grasslands of the park, wherein live the 1500 plus animals of the WGP Swamp Deep herd.

In 2004, *Two new water catchments* were planned, *3 new waterholes* created, *Rehabilitation of an abandoned lake*, *The central grasslands waterhole expansion*, anti-fish poaching program were set in motion.

In 2005, The IWCS project consisted of rebuilding the cut banks and sealing them. Monitoring program was then set in motion.

In 2006, the building of a safari lodge to be used as a not-for-profit conservation and research center was initiated.

In 2007, building of a pair of new ground-water waterholes, expansion of the fish habitat in one of the old river beds of the Bauni River, construction of the WGP Safari Lodge and Research Center also continued.

In 2008, a new groundwater water hole, the final restoration of Rani Tal and the IWCS educational program was performed.

In 2009, the work of planning and field work excavation of the new waterhole was done.



Open Letter to the Prime Minister

On May 5, 2010, Mr. Mangal Man Shakya, the chairman of Wildlife Watch Group wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister of Nepal demanding his attention to the tragic fate of monkeys released from Lele Monkey Breeding Center to Shivapuri Nagarjuna National Park. When the country was enduring political strike and crisis, Wildlife Watch Group took a compassionate step by submitting the letter to the Office of Prime Minister requesting for Right Honourable Prime Minister Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal's benediction, benevolence and beneficial actions in ensuring the well-being of remaining released monkeys. At the same time, it is also for bringing the issue of unprecedented death of released monkeys in the notice as no one is being able to pay attention to this issue. Therefore, the death of monkeys of Lele Monkey Breeding Center released in Shivapuri Nagarjuna National Park remained unnoticed and the WWG, being a lead campaigner to stop monkey business originating from Nepal, took an initiative to aware and inform everyone including the head of the government regarding the miserable fate of the released monkeys. The copies were sent to Minister, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), National Trust for Nature Conservation and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Nepal Program for necessary follow up and reference.

Under the shadow of Nepal's fluid and critical political circumstance, the lives of Nepali people are badly stirred by the recent political strike. In this newly developed situation, the key responsibility of the state, the government of Nepal and state mechanisms shall be maintaining peace and order and more so, the Prime Minister of Nepal as the head of the government shall bear more responsibility in comparison to the normal times. Taking a serious note of it, the Wildlife

Watch Group (WWG) is highly sensitive towards the current responsibility of and burden on the Prime Minister of Nepal.

At the same time, the WWG is deeply concerned about the survival of monkeys of Lele Monkey Breeding Center released in Shivapuri Nagarjuna National Park that remained in limbo. Therefore, with due respect to the primary duty and function of the state, the government of Nepal and the government head in order to

protect, preserve and conserve all animals and wildlife inhabiting within its territory, on behalf of the WWG, I would like to take your valuable time to present the updates on the tragic fate of 280 captive monkeys released from Lele Monkey Breeding Center to Shivapuri Nagarjuna National Park.

I am confident that you are well aware about the fact that as per the government decision dated November 26, 2009,



280 monkeys of Lele Breeding Center have been released to Shivapuri Nagarjuna National Park between December 2009 and April 2010 without any preparation and rehabilitation plan and among them, 30-50 monkeys deemed to be already dead.

I would like to recall when the government of Nepal dropped out its earlier decision of sending Nepali Rhesus monkeys to American laboratories for horrifying and painful scientific and biomedical research, the national and international conservationists (individual and organizations) including the WWG welcomed and appreciated the Government of Nepal, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Forest and Soil Conservation Minister honourable Deepak Bohora and the decision thereof. Now, I am deeply shocked that these monkeys have released without proper planning and the high number of these monkeys have been dying as the consequences. Therefore, recalling the constitutional guarantee of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007 on the environment protection and wildlife conservation, I would like to appeal for the protection of their lives.

Additionally, the information relating to these released monkeys is not disseminated to public. Similarly, concerned conservationists and organizations are not allowed the access to the place. On the other hand, the government of Nepal has already decided to

return the royalties collected from monkey breeding centers. As released monkeys are dying in the jungle, it will be unfair and unjust to pay compensation to the breeding Center unless the survival of released monkeys is ensured. Thus, respecting the right to information envisaged in the Interim Constitution of Nepal, I would like to request you to help in disseminating the true information thereof and ensuring public access as well.

I would like to inform you that the WWG is committed to protect these monkeys and it has been publishing the information and report relating to them in a monthly publication Wildlife Times. Quoting from the press release of the WWG dated on December 12, 2008, there were altogether 310 monkeys in Lele Monkey Breeding Center and among them, at least 30 were deemed unfit and euthanized and almost 133 were infected with various diseases such as TB, Herpes-B, a common infectious disease and Simian Retro Virus (SRV). 280 monkeys have deemed to be released to Shivapuri Nagarjuna National Park aftermath of the government of Nepal's decision dated on November 26, 2009. According to the statistics recovered by the WWG from a reliable source, two baby monkeys released on December 18, 2009 died within one month from attack by other animals and 29 monkeys including 1 baby found dead on April 25, 2010 and likewise, 1 female monkey on April 26, 2010. Till date almost 30 to 50

monkeys have died. Most of deaths are attributed to these primates' inability to adjust in the wild environment of the jungle including problems in eating food and drinking water from natural resources and cohabitation with the wild monkeys and wildlife of the jungles. Thus, the plight of these monkeys is miserable and appalling and further more, it is certain that if the situation continues, all remaining monkeys will die within short span of time.

Being a conservationist and also a part of 'Stop Monkey Business in Nepal' since 2006, I am deeply perturbed by learning the plight of these monkeys from various sources. Thus, I would like to request Right Honourable Prime Minister that the death of these primates is highly regrettable in the welfare state like Nepal under your executive regime. At the same time, I would like to make a point in front of Right Honourable Prime Minister that the miracle is not going to save these remaining primates, only the serious intervention and rehabilitation plan can change their condition substantially. Therefore, the issue demands the immediate response from the government of Nepal, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation and Shivapuri Nagarjuna National Park at first instance.

Appreciating the commitment shown by the government of Nepal and concerned authorities





in 'stop monkey business' issue, I would like to put forward the following points as a necessary measure in order to ensure the survivals of these monkeys:

At first instance, a team consisting conservationists and technical human resources should be formed to take immediate intervention and ensure minimum measures for the survivals of these monkeys. The appropriate management and rehabilitation plan should be designed as per the finding and recommendations of the team in compatible with international guidelines such as IUCN guidelines.

Special and adequate budget should be allocated for the effective implementation of the plan. It is obvious that without the budget, it will not be possible to carry out the intervention and plan thereof.

A technical team consisting of vet and conservationists should be assigned to take care of these monkeys in order to

monitor health conditions and socialization patterns for both short term and long term.

The suitability of the habitat for these monkeys should be reconsidered and reviewed. Shivapuri Nagarjuna National Park was chosen because it lies in short distance of Kathmandu valley and serves the purpose of easy monitoring from Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation.

Considering the delicacy of the issue, it is necessary to cooperate with national and international conservationist organizations.

Affirming to the notion and principles of the welfare state including the provisions of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007, I am looking forward to your benediction, benevolence and beneficial actions in ensuring the well-being of these monkeys.

'Let Monkeys be allowed to live in wild and free.'

Wildlife and Civil War in Nepal

Kara Stevens



The elephant driver bemoaned the shrinking numbers of rhinos, tigers and elephants from Chitwan National Park in the populous southern region of Nepal. We explored the jungle for nearly two hours without the glimpse of a one-horned rhinoceros, a species formally spotted with regularity. Due to the ongoing 9-year civil war, security forces normally employed to patrol boundaries and prevent poaching were reallocated to fight the homegrown rebel army. The Maoists had been waging a violent and disruptive civil war since 1996. With a rank of 144 on the Human Development Index out of 182 countries, it is not a disruption that Nepal and its fragile environment was equipped to bear.

In the absence of the Park guards, local communities encroached farther into the Park, and loggers and poachers acted with impunity. As we sat atop the domesticated elephant and rumbled through the forest, it became clear that wildlife was indirectly taking a hit as a result of the conflict. The one-horned rhinoceros has a limited range on the Indian subcontinent, which is made up of isolated populations in Northern India

and Southern Nepal. Bardia National Park and Chitwan National Park host the majority of Nepal's rhinos, with just more than 400 estimated in the latter, according to government figures. The value of rhino horn has at one point surpassed gold, but it is not the only target of poacher's sights. The endangered tiger ranges through National Parks from western to central parts of Southern Nepal. The government of Nepal estimates that Nepal's total tiger population may now be fewer than 125 adult breeding individuals. The breakdown in enforcement resulting from the conflict as well as increased demand from wealthy Asian countries for tiger parts and skins has placed significant pressure on this small tiger population. Sandwiched between China and India, two Asian economic powerhouses hosting more than a billion people, Nepal is a transit route for bear bile, medicinal bone, cat skins and live reptiles of the subcontinent to the markets of China.

Nepal is a diverse country that hosts subtropical Indomalayan wildlife such as tigers, leopards, one-horned rhinoceros and Asian elephant in its flat, densely



populated southern half. Just 60 miles north- roughly the same distance from Lansing to Grand Rapids- lie the sparsely populated upper hills of Nepal at the foot of the Himalayas, a mountain range that hosts eight of the world's 10 tallest peaks. During the conflict, these hills, usually filled with villagers tending terraced rice fields and hordes of Western backpackers, became eerily barren due to rural fight and infrequent tourists. The Maoist rebel army thrived in this environment- extorting "donations" from lodges, schools and scattered tourists. The Maoists reach exceeded police power and the rural populations often neglected by the urban-centered development dollars were caught in the middle between an absent national government and a rebel movement that

extorted money and forcibly recruited family members into the people's army. Across the hills and mountains, roam a unique assemblage of wildlife: the red panda, snow leopard and ungulates like the Himalayan Tahr, Musk Deer and the blue sheep. With rural people fleeing the area, the wildlife of the Northern hills may have experienced a reprieve from harvest and habitat degradation in some areas.

The effects of conflict on Nepal's environment have not been uniform and they haven't all been bad. In some hill regions where insecurity has forced emigration, forests have regenerated and wildlife returned. Due to the risk of firearm confiscation or worse, Maoist presence in some remote hilly regions has deterred

poachers from treading in search of snow leopard pelts, musk pods or bear bile, extracted from all gall bladder of Asiatic black bears for use in traditional Chinese medicine.

Characteristic of other conflicts, Nepal has seen an influx of more sophisticated weaponry, breakdown of rule of law and internal displacement especially of rural people. The Maoists succeeded in one of their main objectives- dissolving Nepal's 240 years monarchy. Since the monarchy was abolished in 2008, the transition to a new style of governance has not been a stable one. To the surprise of many observers, legitimate elections in 2008 brought the leader of the Maoist movement to hold the office of Prime Minister of the country. The Maoists have

purportedly laid down their arms. Characteristic of many transition periods from conflict to peace, Nepal has undergone a series of constitution, political leaders and policies since a peace agreement was signed in 2006. Wildlife conservation seems to factor low on the new leader's priority list.

Nepal is not alone in its position as a developing country with rich biodiversity having to cope with environmental degradation as a result of violent conflict.



Civil war has weakened the government's ability to protect species in the park against poachers. Community members and non-government entities are filling the role of diverted park guards



Poachers target rhinos for their horns – the value of which at one point surpassed gold.

Some regions, like Southern Sudan and Nicaragua's Miskito Coast, experienced significant recovery of wildlife populations and habitat due to disruptions of war. But very often, war results in devastating losses to biodiversity, as was the case in places like Mozambique, Afghanistan, Democratic republic of Congo and Cambodia.

In the absence of government security, support or stability, park rangers face daunting challenges in protecting a nation's wildlife. The substantial risks also convey opportunity: conservation organizations can play a key role in organizing, supporting and equipping local communities and government staff to protect vulnerable wildlife populations. The Zoological Society of London has teamed up with community groups in rural Nepal to assemble a group of anti-

poaching guards to protect rhinos in Chitwan and Bardia National Parks. Since the program's implementation, not a single rhino has been lost to poachers in Bardia. When the one-horned rhino population was close to extinction in the early 1900s, strict anti-hunting laws allowed the population to recover.

Six years have passed since my initial search for rhinos in Chitwan National Park. With community members and non-government entities filling the role of diverted park guards, future visitors will potentially have better success in spotting the unique one-horned rhinoceros.

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South Asia Forges Consensus on Wildlife Enforcement Network

Experts from South Asia have laid the foundation for a South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) as a co-ordinated regional response to combat illegal poaching and trafficking. Seven member countries agreed to the establishment of a secretariat and an outline work programme for the network.

The historic First Meeting of the South Asia Experts Group on Illegal Wildlife Trade was concluded 19 May 2010 in Kathmandu with the objective of helping wildlife law enforcement agencies become better organized than the criminals themselves. As a major step towards a co-ordinated and collaborative mechanism, the Experts Group agreed that an action-oriented approach under the newly formed SAWEN should be pursued without delay.

The experts from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka agreed the structure, functions and operational parameters for SAWEN, including ideas for developing multi-lateral activities based on strong inter-agency co-operation at the national level.



"Co-operation and co-ordination between the government agencies supported by their international counterparts is of utmost importance to effectively tackle illegal wildlife trade in the region," said Hon. Mr Deepak Bohara, Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation, Government of Nepal, in his closing address.

The Government of Nepal has offered to drive this process further in hosting the network and acting as an interim co-ordinator for the network. Over the next six

months, it will focus on co-ordinating key information and identifying further resources and expertise from member countries to develop joint operations, training programs, communication plans and fundraising to enable the network to begin interdicting major trafficking activities. The Government of Bhutan has offered to host the next meeting of SAWEN members.

"WWF is pleased at the outcomes of the meeting and looks forward to working with the network in the coming months to ensure the success of



this crucial initiative, "said Mr. Diwakar Chapagain, Wildlife Trade Manager, WWF Nepal." We appreciate the leadership shown by the Government of Nepal and support by TRAFFIC International in organizing this meeting."

The First Meeting of the South Asia Experts Group on Illegal Wildlife Trade was hosted by the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Govt. of Nepal and supported by WWF Nepal and TRAFFIC International. Funding support for the meeting was generously provided by the US Government's Department of State.

South Asia contains a range of habitats of global significance that support a unique array of animal and plant species such as Tigers and other Asian big cats, rhino, marine and freshwater turtles, pangolins and Red Sanders, but it is ironic that this very biodiversity richness makes

the region a target for poachers and traffickers of wildlife.

National governments in South Asia take their commitment to conserve their biodiversity very seriously, but at this historic first meeting of the South Asia Experts Group on Illegal Wildlife Trade, there was universal acknowledgement that many of the threats to biodiversity extend beyond political boundaries.

Illegal and unsustainable poaching, harvest and trade in wild species of animals and plants is clearly one such major threat. This often involves trans-boundary landscapes and habitats, movements of people and goods across porous borders, and is increasingly characterized by organized criminal syndicates working in more than one country.

More than 50 participants, including from each national

CITES Management Authority, Customs and police and/or other agencies were invited at the meeting to share their expertise on wildlife law enforcement to help prioritise issues of immediate concern.

The Experts Group also benefited from inputs from the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), including from ICPO-Interpol, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the World Customs Organization. Experiences from the neighboring South-east Asia region through the work of ASEAN's Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) was also valuable in providing lessons learned from a similar process of intergovernmental action against illegal wildlife trade.

Cont. from 20 ▶▶

The presenter of BBC Two's *Springwatch* said conservation projects were failing because the demand for dead tigers, mostly from China, is so great.

"Trying to keep them alive - given they live in places where large parts of the community are in poverty - is very difficult.

"One of the ways we've sought to protect tigers is to give them a dollar value through eco-tourism, and try to channel that money into local communities, but now I hear that some of the Indian authorities are trying to reduce this, which is worrying."

Packham evoked an angry response with his remarks last September about pandas. "Here's a species that of its own accord has gone down an evolutionary cul-de-sac. It's not a strong species. Unfortunately, it's big and cute and it's a symbol of the World Wildlife Fund - and we pour millions of pounds into panda conservation. I reckon we should pull the plug. Let them go with a degree of dignity," he said.

Reflecting on the furore, Packham said: "Leaving an art gallery, I was attacked by a man dressed as a panda, and an American wrestler who calls himself 'the Panda' threatened

to punch my lights out. That was pretty awesome.

"But, bar the lunatics, the fall-out was actually very positive. I received a tremendous amount of mail saying, 'Good on you, you stuck your head above the parapet, you said what a lot of us are thinking and we back you'.

"At the end of the day I wasn't asking to kill the pandas, I was simply asking for an audit in terms of conservation resources, and I stand by every word."

A spokesman for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) said tiger conservation was vital.

"In India and Nepal, wild tigers have already attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors to national parks and reserves, while protecting their habitat also benefits the thousands of other species that live in these areas.

"WWF is deeply committed to tiger conservation because we

believe the work we are doing has a genuine impact. Losses in many of the areas where we have been working are less severe than in unprotected areas - a clear sign that the situation is far from hopeless, provided we act now.

"Conservation projects have already helped to stabilise tiger populations in parts of the Russian Far East and the Terai Arc in India, but without sustained work to combat poaching and protect habitats, these numbers can rapidly dip. So it is vital that long term, global solutions are put in place now, before it is too late.

"Imagining a world where tigers exist only in history books is bleak."

In January, the governments of the 13 countries that contain tiger populations signed a declaration of their intent to make tiger conservation a top priority and to double tiger numbers by 2022 - the next Chinese year of the tiger.

APPEAL

Dear valued readers,

The 21st issue of the Wildlife Times is in your hands. It is our small effort to raise various issues related with wildlife conservation. Please help us include the activities from your group or organizations of wildlife conservation by sending us the concerned information. We would love to find any suggestion and criticism. Please feel free to leave your feedback at info@citesnepal.org. We also seek support from your organization to continue this Wildlife Times. We look forward to your queries, comments and support.



Tiger Conservation is Disastrous, says BBC Wildlife presenter Chris Packham

Donating money to tiger conservation charities is a waste of time because their success rate is "disastrous", according to Chris Packham, the BBC wildlife presenter.

By Anita Singh
Showbusiness Editor



There are only 3,000 tigers left in the world, down from an estimated 100,000 a century ago
Photo: REUTERS

Packham, who caused an outcry last year when he suggested that pandas should be left to die out, said efforts to save the animals through conservation were worthless.

"Tiger conservation is a multi-million pound business that isn't working. If it were in the FTSE 100, it would have gone bankrupt. Who'd buy shares in a business that's failing in its objective?" he asked.

"I'm not saying the conservation agencies don't have their hearts in the right place, but the results are disastrous."

He told the *Radio Times*: "I do rather dislike the fact that if you do as I do and openly criticise conservation, it's almost as if you're attacking something holy.

"But if we're all giving a pound for the tiger, or whatever, I think we all have a right to think that money is being best spent, that's all. Why shouldn't I criticise if there is a criticism to be levelled? One would hope the vast majority of wildlife charities are doing good - but why shouldn't I ask? What's so sacred?"

There are only 3,000 tigers left in the world, down from an estimated 100,000 a century ago, according to figures from the World Wildlife Fund.

Last year, 85 tiger deaths were recorded in India - the highest toll since 2001 - many of them a result of poaching, Packham said.

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