

## SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

### Snow leopards find spiritual sanctuary

The range of the Endangered snow leopard *Panthera uncia* covers several central Asian countries, including Chinese provinces on the Tibetan Plateau. A survey of the species in the Sanjiangyuan region of China's Qinghai Province found that 46% of Buddhist monasteries were located in snow leopard habitat and 90% were within 5 km of their habitat. Interviews conducted in the region revealed that 42% of local herders claimed not to kill wildlife because to do so is a sin in Buddhism. The research team propose that the 336 monasteries in the Sanjiangyuan region could play an important role in protecting more snow leopard habitat through social norms and active patrols. Monastery-based snow leopard conservation could be extended to other Tibetan Buddhist regions to encompass c. 80% of the species' global range.

Source: *Conservation Biology* (2013) [dx.doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12135](https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12135)

### RFLP draws in its nets for the final time

The Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme for South and South-east Asia (RFLP) came to a close in September 2013. Spanning four years, the ambitious programme sought to reduce the vulnerability of small-scale fishing communities in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. With over 1,100 different capacity-building actions and 35,500 participants, RFLP helped drive forward the process of co-management of marine resources in all six countries where it worked. A final review has been produced, which summarizes the key achievements and recommendations of the programme, which worked in collaboration with national authorities and communities to improve the livelihoods of fishers and their families while fostering more sustainable fisheries resources management practices.

Source: RFLP (2013) [www.rflp.org/sites/default/files/RFLP\\_Final\\_Review.pdf](http://www.rflp.org/sites/default/files/RFLP_Final_Review.pdf) (2013), and [www.rflp.org/](http://www.rflp.org/)

### Common Action Plan for Asian rhinos

A common action plan for the conservation of Asian rhinos has been agreed following negotiations between the five Rhino range states, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Nepal. The meeting, held in October 2013, was hosted by the government of Indonesia and facilitated by the IUCN

Species Survival Commission. The aim of the Bandar Lampung declaration is to increase the populations of the three species of Asian rhino by at least 3% annually by 2020. Specific conservation actions necessary to secure a steady growth rate of the Sumatran, Javan and greater one-horned rhinoceros include improving the biological management and monitoring of each species, strengthening the protection of their habitats and performing strict anti-poaching operations. The declaration commits to introducing tougher penalties for those who illegally kill Asian rhinos, and maintaining the ban on the international trade of all rhino products. (See also *Oryx*, 47, 311–312 & 340–368)

Source: *IUCN News* (2013) [www.iucn.org/news\\_homepage/?13794/Major-step-towards-Asian-Rhino-recovery](http://www.iucn.org/news_homepage/?13794/Major-step-towards-Asian-Rhino-recovery)

### Tiger soundtrack acts as deterrent to crop-raiding elephants in India

Human–elephant conflict is a major concern in rural India. Wild elephants raid crop fields and clash with people and this results in deaths of both humans and elephants and considerable crop loss. A study of the nocturnal behaviour of elephants has found that they can be deterred from invading fields by triggering a playback of a recording of tiger growls. Researchers found that the sound of tiger growls caused the elephants to retreat quickly and silently from the area. They also found that elephants did not react in the same way to leopard growls (leopards do not prey on young elephants). Although these findings may offer a short-term solution to human–elephant conflict, critics have suggested that the elephants would eventually realize that it was a hoax, and they have also pointed to the challenges involved in powering and maintaining such a scheme in isolated rural areas.

Source: *The Guardian* (2013) [www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/oct/01/tiger-growl-recordings-deter-crop-raiding-indian-elephants](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/oct/01/tiger-growl-recordings-deter-crop-raiding-indian-elephants)

### New discoveries in Vietnam's caves

Scientists have discovered many new species of water mites and several new species of other subterranean animals during an expedition initiated by Fauna & Flora International to study the little-known subterranean fauna of the karst landscapes of Halong Bay in northern Vietnam. Many of the water mites were found in the cracks and fissures of limestone caves, which host a complex and diverse community of aquatic microinvertebrates. Among the species discovered were a blind water mite *Nilotonia sketi*, no more than 1 mm in length, a

troglobiotic freshwater fish *Draconectes narinus* and a tiny crustacean *Seborgia vietnamica*, which appears to be the sole food resource of the new fish.

Source: *Fauna & Flora International News* (2013) [www.fauna-flora.org/news/subterranean-blind-water-mite-discovered-in-vietnamese-cave/](http://www.fauna-flora.org/news/subterranean-blind-water-mite-discovered-in-vietnamese-cave/)

## EAST ASIA

### China cracks down on pollution

China has taken steps to tackle its growing pollution problem by suspending all refinery projects of two of the country's top oil companies for failure to meet emissions targets. China National Petroleum Corporation and the China Petrochemical Corporation have increased their emissions of the greenhouse gas nitrogen oxide, despite the demand for an 8% reduction in emissions (based on 2010 levels) by 2015. Nitrogen oxide can become toxic and produce acid rain. There has also been a failure to meet targets for cuts in sulphur dioxide emissions, which can cause respiratory problems and premature mortality. China generates the highest emissions of carbon dioxide worldwide and its rapid economic growth has led to widespread environmental problems, including record levels of air pollution. The Chinese government has pledged to invest USD 275 million over the next 5 years to tackle air pollution in Beijing and surrounding cities. Source: *Mongabay.com* (2013) [news.mongabay.com/2013/0903-hance-china-oil-suspension.html](http://news.mongabay.com/2013/0903-hance-china-oil-suspension.html)

### Restoration of Chinese crested tern colony

An international project, with strong local support, to restore a breeding colony of Chinese crested terns on a small island in the Jiushan Islands has shown early signs of success, with at least one chick fledging along with c. 600 great crested tern chicks. The Chinese crested tern is Critically Endangered and prior to this project there were only two known breeding colonies. The rare birds have always been found nesting within colonies of great crested terns, and therefore the restoration team had hoped to initially attract great crested terns to the restored colony, using decoys and playback of tern calls. They anticipated that it would take several years to attract the birds back. However, in the first year a colony of 2,600 great crested terns, and among them 19 Chinese crested terns, had established at the site and at least two