

CITES, Sanctions & the Rhinos

6019

Over the past two years EIA has created a phenomenally successful campaign to save the rhino. Steve Trent gives the inside story on the undercover investigation into the trade in rhino horn which forced the international community to take unprecedented action.

Within three days of EIA's rhino campaign launch on November 2nd, 1992, Taiwan – the world's largest consumer of rhino horn – announced a complete ban on all trade in rhino parts. Working together with other conservationists including the David Shepherd Conservation Foundation, Tusk Force and WSPA, EIA's campaign has also shocked Hong Kong out of its complacency and generated action at the highest level in China, in the Supreme Council.

Generating international publicity and revitalising the world-wide campaign, EIA set about persuading people that we could save the rhino – persuading them that what was needed was immediate action.

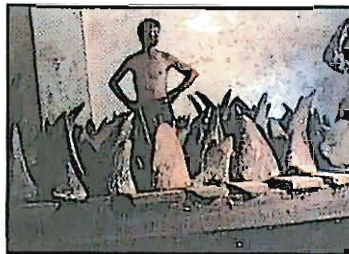
EIA's next action was to launch a series of investigations, working deep undercover, to provide the facts and film vital for our international lobbying.

Massive retail markets were uncovered in Taiwan, Hong Kong and China. The illegal trade routes in the Far East were exposed. We found a huge illegal stockpile of rhino horn in China. In Hong Kong, we secretly filmed rhino parts openly for sale in pharmacies. Posing as dealers we went on to prove the vital link played by Hong Kong as an entrepot for the shady international trade.

In Taiwan we were able to show how the Government was cheating the international

community, as they failed to put promises into practice while the illegal trade in rhino, tiger and countless other endangered species parts flourished.

At the same time EIA campaigners were working to make the politicians listen. Presentations to CITES, Governments and media aimed at forcing the international community to sanction consuming countries, were creating a powerful force to save the rhino. Meetings were held with the Hong Kong Governor, with high Government officials in the UK, USA, European Parliament, Taiwan and elsewhere and the pressure was beginning to pay off...



© EIA

Deep Undercover – EIA Tracks the Traders

Drawing on many months of detailed research and information gathered through a world-wide network of contacts, an undercover team funded by WSPA picked up the rhino horn trail in Taipei, capital city of Taiwan. Led by Steve Galster, one of our most experienced investigators, accompanied by veteran EIA cameraman, Clive Lonsdale and investigator Rebecca Chen, they set about making contact with dealers and traders trafficking in horn.

Soon they had identified three of Taiwan's biggest dealers, along with a major dealer in Hong Kong, responsible for countless shipments to and from Taiwan.

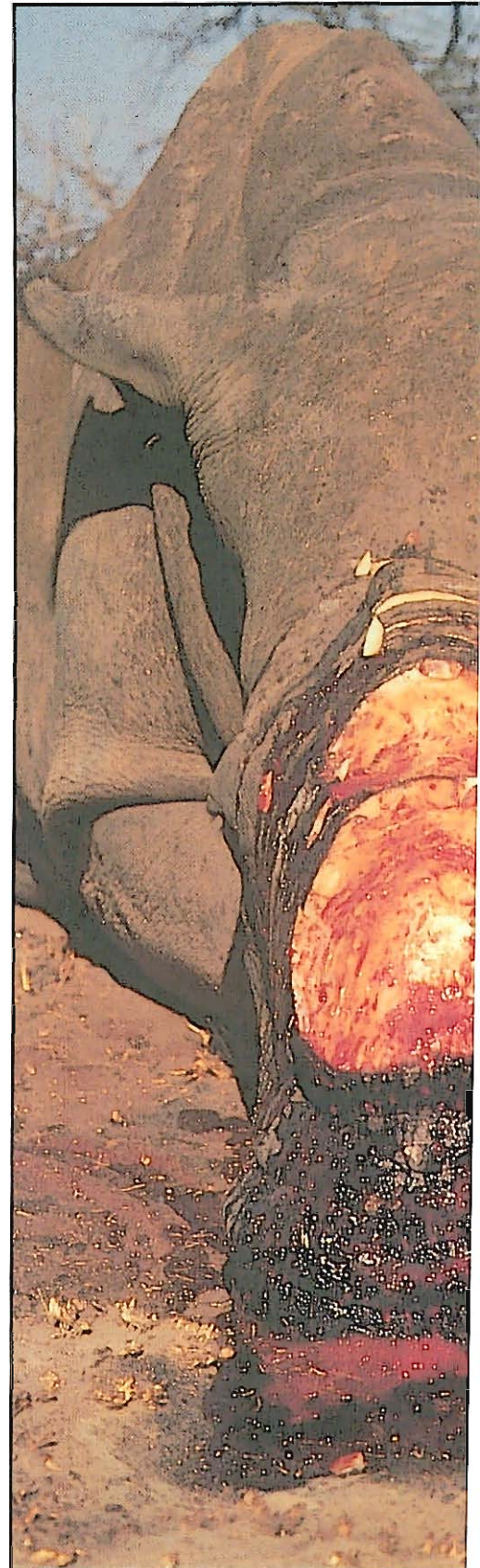
The team began by undertaking a covert survey of shops thought to sell horn. The Taiwanese authorities had claimed to find rhino parts in less than 1% of shops during their supposed "crackdown". We found rhino parts in 79% of the places we checked.

After two weeks the team were able to make an assessment of rhino horn stocks in Taiwan. But where was the horn coming from? Who held the stocks? How was it being shipped?

The team had already identified routes out of South Africa and China, some direct to Taiwan, some via Hong Kong. The scale of the trade was clear, but they knew that if we were going to create the international pressure required to force China, Taiwan and Hong Kong to end their trade in rhino parts we had to catch them at it.

Acting on the information of a Taiwanese contact, Steve and Rebecca left for China. Adopting new identities – Steve posing as a South African representing a major Taiwanese buyer, Rebecca as his wife and interpreter – the team would now be operating deep undercover, often out of contact with EIA's offices in London and Washington.

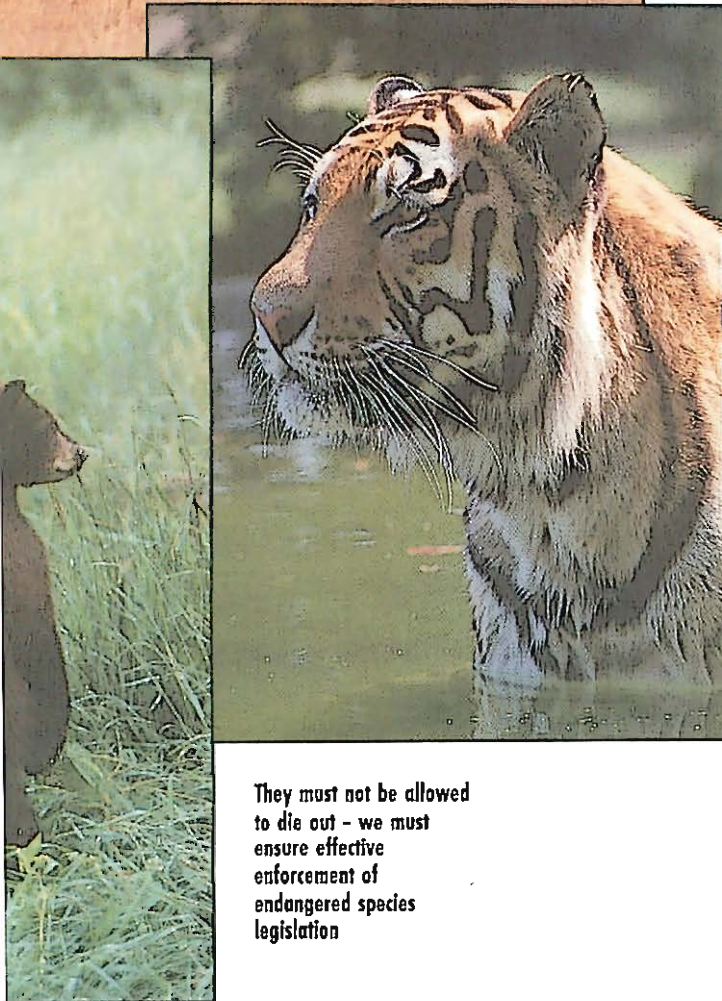
They soon won the confidence of a



© EIA



© EIA



They must not be allowed to die out - we must ensure effective enforcement of endangered species legislation

CITES?

Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was set up in 1975 in the wake of increasing world consciousness of the plight of vanishing species. Member nations subscribe to the Convention which has regulations governing the international trade in some 34,000 species of plants and animals.

The Convention lists species in which international commercial trade is banned because of the risk of extinction. Appendices I and II limit and monitor the trade in species which are endangered or about which concern has been raised.

It does work - when it is enforced. One of the Convention's best known successes is the trade ban for which EIA fought so hard and which in five years has saved the lives of many elephants.

The ivory ban has worked because the member governments of CITES co-operated to make the same for rhinos, tigers, butterflies, bears, orchids and countless other species. But give wildlife the priority it deserves and so desperately needs. EIA is campaigning in Africa and Asia to ensure that they do.

Campaign Action Points

Letters do work: please write to the following people, expressing your concern and demanding action; insist on replies to all your letters and send copies of your replies to EIA.

Action for Elephants

John Gummer, MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, DoE, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3EB. Ask him to confirm that the UK will be continuing in its unequivocal support for the Appendix I listing of ALL African elephants.

President Nelson Mandela, c/o South African Embassy, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DP (fax 071 321 0834). Ask President Mandela to withdraw the proposals to downlist both elephants and white rhinos from the agenda at CITES in November.

Action for Endangered Species

EIA has been joined in our CITES enforcement campaign by The Body Shop. A global petition has been launched to collect tens of thousands of signatures world-wide calling for action by world leaders to ensure CITES works. Body Shops across the country and around the world are inviting people to take action and *Speak Out* against the trade and for endangered species.

Europe needs its own Wildlife Law Enforcement Agency to prevent illegal trade in endangered species. Write to your MEP asking him to support this important initiative.

Action for Rhinos

Dr Paul M H Sun, Director, Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan, 37 Nanhai Road, Taipei 100, Taiwan. Tell Dr Sun that you are unhappy with Taiwan's failure to enforce national and international regulations on the rhino horn trade and ask him how Taiwan will crack down on the trade and so ensure that the USA lifts sanctions.

Action for Tigers

Dr D G Rhee, Director, Global Environment Division, Ministry of Environment, 2nd Government Complex, Kwacheon 427-76, Republic of Korea. Ask him to implement an immediate ban on the sale and possession of tiger parts, and crack down on the illegal trade in tigers into the Republic of Korea.

Action for Whales & Dolphins

William Waldergrave, MP, Secretary of State for Agriculture, MAFF, Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2HH. Ask the Minister to ensure that the UK remains opposed to the adoption of any management scheme at the IWC that does not take into account the methods used to kill whales. Ask him to call for a permanent ban on all commercial whaling.

Action for Pilot Whales

June Lombard, Norbrit Fish Sales Ltd, Marsden Road, Fish Docks, Grimsby, Humberside (tel 0472 240 444). Keep up the pressure on the UK fish industry by writing to Norbrit, urging them to stop dealing in Faroese fish.

Action for Wild Birds

John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, DoE, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3EB. Ask him not to relax UK's quarantine and import controls until the EU harmonises similar controls in other States. Ask the UK to demand the strictest control in any CITES Regulation the EU adopts.

Whenever travelling on any airline, before you book and pay for your flight, ask them to confirm that they do not carry any wild caught birds or other wildlife. Make sure you ask how they check whether shipments are of wild or captive bred animals.

Action for Forests

John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, DoE, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3EB. The UK imports more Brazilian mahogany than any other country. Urge the Minister to support ALL the timber listing proposals at the forthcoming CITES meeting to ensure that the trade is this and other timber species is properly controlled and monitored.

✓ DONE !

Saving

© MARTIN HARVEY/NATURAL SCIENCE PHOTOS



vital contact, a "middle man" extremely well connected with police, military and government, who said he could lead them to a trader, "Mr Wu", 200km away in Wuchuan. In their guise as buyers, Steve and Rebecca

were shown around a dark, humid warehouse in Wuchuan. It was filled with hundreds of horns – the largest illegal stockpile of

rhino horn ever found, worth millions of pounds and representing the lives of more than 300 slaughtered rhino.

They asked if they could see the horn in daylight to "test its quality", and while Steve took pictures, ostensibly to show his Taiwanese buyer, Rebecca filmed using a secret camera.

But the lighting conditions were bad and when they saw the film later, the results were disappointing.

The team had come so far. Now, if their cover was blown, they would almost certainly be killed. Yet they needed to get good film of this huge stockpile in order to prove that China was lying to the world and had not cracked down on the trade. "At first I did not want to go back," admits Rebecca, "but after carefully considering the risks and checking with the campaign directors in London, we decided to try once more".

On the pretext of wanting to choose which horns to buy, they once again persuaded the dealer to display his stock while Rebecca's hidden camera rolled. "This time the dealer had lined up hundreds of horns in the warehouse and was shaking more out all the time," says Rebecca. And then came the most startling revelation of all, "he told us he could arrange a military police escort for us, through China to the border with Hong Kong. He said his company belonged to the State". In effect the Chinese state was running this illegal operation.

The team's brave decision to return to the warehouse had paid off. The footage was clear and now they had all the evidence needed. "It was only later that the fear came to me," says Rebecca. "If the dealer had seen the camera, or found out who we were, I wouldn't be talking to you now".



Within a week of the team's return from the Far East their story hit the headlines. The film shocked the world when it was shown on TV news bulletins.

On April 11th this year, our calls were finally answered – having seen the film, having listened to our evidence and that of many other conservationists, including the Earth Island Institute,

WWF and Tiger Trust, President Clinton announced that the United States would issue sanctions against Taiwan for its failure to crack down on the illegal trade in rhino and tiger parts. This is the first time the United States has ever been

persuaded to take this step to protect wildlife.

But, despite these successes, rhinos are still being poached. No more than 50 Javan rhino now survive. We must keep up the pressure. Hong Kong is still operating as a vital conduit for the trade;

China and Taiwan are still consuming rhino parts. Taking on some of the most powerful and fastest growing economies in the world, EIA has won a reprieve for the rhino – but only if we keep up the pressure will we be able to save one of the

Earth's most precious species from extinction.

Our campaign is still building the pressure, still fighting for the rhino's survival. With the help of our supporters and working with other organisations, our campaigners and investigators will keep working to ensure the demand for rhino parts is killed off, that it is the traders in rhino who become extinct and the rhino that survives.

Blueprint for Survival

- the immediate seizure and destruction of all stocks of rhino horn by China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and other consuming nations.
- decisive action against traders, middlemen and poachers involved in trafficking horn.
- the immediate use of all appropriate economic, political & diplomatic means to exert pressure on countries continuing to allow trade in rhino horn.
- compensation for range states by consuming nations to aid the protection and conservation of remaining rhino populations.
- the establishment of effective Endangered Species Enforcement Units in the Far East and comprehensive regional cooperation.



ACTION: see page 7