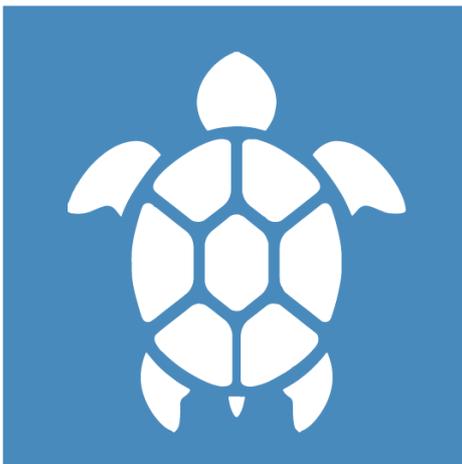


**DISRUPTING ILLICIT SUPPLY CHAINS OF WILDLIFE IN ASIA
BY LEVERAGING CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS TO INCREASE THE
EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNMENT ACTION**

ALSO KNOWN AS

PARTNERS AGAINST WILDLIFE CRIME

HIGHLIGHTS 2020



This project is funded by
the European Union



CASE STUDIES

2020 HIGHLIGHTS



This project is funded by
the European Union

Index

Regional Overview

Cambodia

Myanmar

Malaysia

Thailand

Lao PDR

Vietnam

PR China



REGIONAL OVERVIEW

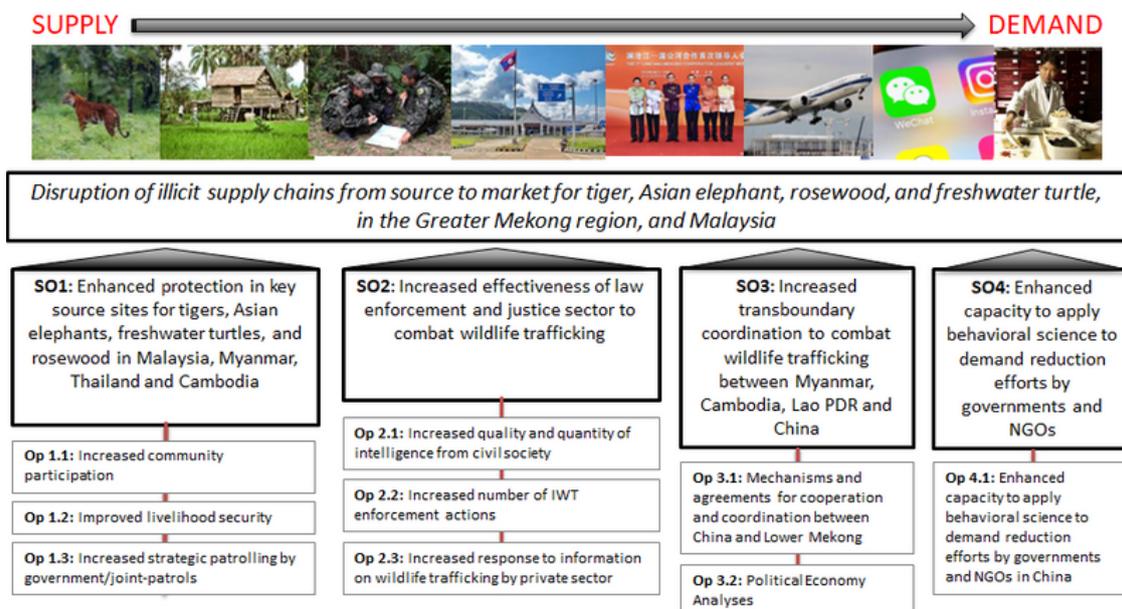
The "Partners Against Wildlife Crime" Project is a 10M€ Action implemented through a consortium of 12 international and national partner organizations. Its goal is to disrupt the illicit supply chains of tiger, Asian elephant, Siamese rosewood and freshwater turtles – from source to market. It represents the European Union (EU)-funded "Support to Civil Society in Combating Wildlife Trafficking and Forest Crime in the Greater Mekong Region, Malaysia and PR China".

Title:	Disrupting illicit supply chains of wildlife in Asia by leveraging civil society partnerships to increase the effectiveness of Government action
Lead:	Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), with 11 other implementing partners
Location:	Cambodia, PR China, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam
Duration:	4-year project: 1st Jan. 2019 – 31st Dec. 2022
Budget:	10M€, of which 8M€ from the European Union (EU)

Project Overview

The project's overall objective is to disrupt illicit supply chains from source to market for tiger, Asian elephant, Siamese rosewood, and freshwater turtles, in the Greater Mekong region, Malaysia and China by leveraging civil society partnerships to increase the effectiveness of Government action. The project coordinates a set of activities along clearly defined supply chains for high priority Asian taxa being trafficked in the Greater Mekong and Malaysia along trade routes between source sites to end markets. It works with six protected areas identified as high priority for tigers, Siamese rosewood or Asian elephant in Malaysia (Endau Rompin National Park), Thailand (Huai Kha Khaeng, Thung Yai East and Thung Yai West Wildlife Sanctuaries and Thap Lan National Park) and Myanmar (Rakhine-Yoma Elephant Range Protected Area), as well as two priority wetland KBAs for freshwater turtles in Cambodia along the Mekong and Sre Ambel Rivers. It focuses its anti-trafficking interventions in key localities in Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR and China. Finally, it seeks to reduce the consumption of these taxa in the main end markets in southern China.

In order to disrupt illicit supply chains trafficking wildlife, interventions are taken along the entire supply chain in a coordinated manner that together contribute to achieve the overall project goal.



REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Project Context

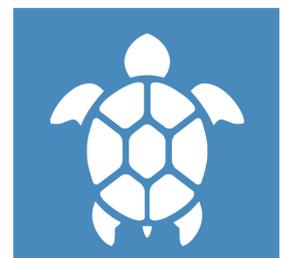
Wildlife trafficking is devastating populations of many species across the globe; the problem is at its most extreme in eastern Asia. A large number of species native to the Mekong region in particular are now threatened primarily by poaching due to an international demand for their specimens, parts and products, particularly from China.

Tiger: We have lost 93% of tiger rangeland across Asia, and over recent years, tigers have become extinct in Vietnam, Lao PDR and Cambodia. The low numbers of wild tigers increase the value of remaining individuals, with wild tigers always considered more “potent” than captive tigers, providing even greater incentives for poachers. Endau Rompin National Park in Malaysia and Huai Kha Khaeng, Thung Yai East and Thung Yai West Wildlife Sanctuaries in western Thailand are among the most important sites for tigers globally, also containing key habitats for other species including Asian elephant, gibbons, wild ungulates and pangolin. Demand for tigers and their products is greatest from Vietnamese and Chinese consumers, with Vietnamese tiger poaching and trafficking syndicates operating as far afield as Thailand and Malaysia.

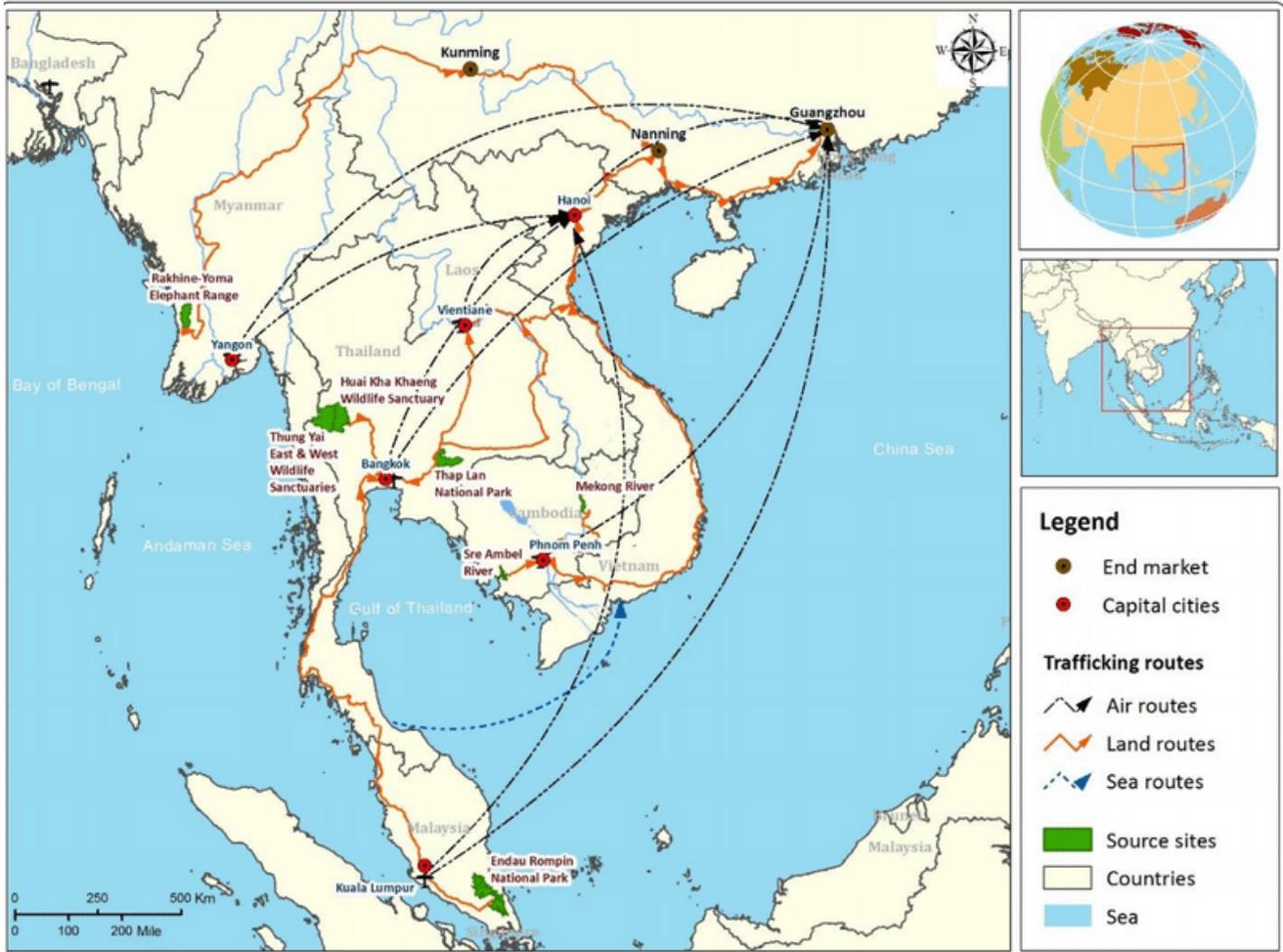
Siamese rosewood: The demand particularly in China for furniture and decorative items made from Siamese rosewood and the high prices these command have led to an epidemic of illegal logging and trafficking. Rosewood is the world’s most trafficked timber globally, accounting for a third of all seizures recorded by UNODC from 2005-2014. Thap Lan National Park in eastern Thailand is now the frontline for efforts to protect this species as it is facing significant pressure from logging groups from Cambodia organized by Thai and Chinese middlemen. Thap Lan National Park is critical not only for Siamese rosewood, but also for tiger, Asian elephant, pangolin and bears.

Asian elephant: In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in commercial poaching of Asian elephants in Myanmar to supply a growing market for their skin in China, with at least 59 elephants killed in 2017 alone and incidents continuing into 2018. Poaching is targeted and organized; whilst currently focused on Myanmar, it has started to expand to North-east India. The highest priority area to combat wildlife trafficking of the Asian elephant in the Greater Mekong is in the Rakhine-Yoma Elephant Range Protected Area in Myanmar, where at least half of recent elephant poaching events have occurred. The area also contains critical habitat for a range of other species including bear, wild cattle, and turtles.

Freshwater turtles: These are being driven to extinction by one of the most globalized and lucrative supply chains for any taxonomic group, with certain Asian species commanding a higher price per/kg than even rhino horn. These species are in demand primarily from China, as pets, for traditional Chinese medicine, for meat and increasingly now as a long-term financial investment. Many are also exported live to collectors in Europe and the US. To date, there have been minimal investments at a transnational scale to address freshwater turtle trafficking. Cambodia supports globally significant populations of a number of highly threatened turtles now largely restricted to intact wetlands in the Mekong and Sre Ambel river systems. Traders along the Mekong will pay up to \$10 per kilo for *Pelochelys cantorii*, and with adults reaching up to 50kg this creates a significant incentive for poaching. As a result, Cambodia has become both a source for the illegal trade of turtles and also a transit country with turtles trafficked from Thailand onto Vietnam and China.



REGIONAL OVERVIEW



Map of the major supply chains the project targets highlighting common land, sea and air routes used by traffickers from source sites in Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia to end markets in China via Vietnam and Lao PDR

Main Donor:



This project is funded by the European Union

Implementing partners:



CAMBODIA

From poacher to nest protector: how a former collector of Asian Giant Softshell Turtle eggs now sees the value of the endangered species

Abstract:

In Cambodia, the project works closely with local communities, Community Fisheries, NGO partners and local and national government institutions, to conserve two endangered species of freshwater turtles: the Royal Turtle in the Sre Ambel river system in the Southwest, and the Asian Giant Softshell Turtle along the Mekong river in the Northeast. Enrolling a team of experienced local women is key to guarantee their protection.



Turtles release at Sre Ambel river site

Context:

Wildlife trafficking is devastating populations of many species across the globe; the problem is at its most extreme in Southeast Asia. A large number of species native to the region are now threatened primarily by poaching due to an international demand for their specimens, parts and products, particularly from China. Wildlife trafficking undermines local livelihoods, promotes the spread of zoonotic diseases, weakens the rule of law, exacerbates corruption, and funds violent armed groups and organized crime syndicates.

Unfortunately, Cambodia has become both a source for the illegal trade of turtles and also a transit country for turtles trafficked from Thailand and Malaysia onto Vietnam and China. Cambodia supports globally significant populations of a number of highly threatened turtle species, including the Royal Turtle *Batagur affinis*, the Asian Giant Softshell Turtle *Pelochelys cantorii* and the Yellow-headed Temple Turtle *Heosemys annandalii* - all largely restricted to intact wetlands in the Mekong and Sre Ambel river systems. The continued sand dredging, illegal fishing, overexploitation and loss of habitat from land grabbing and the clearance of riparian flooded forests, are major threats to the survival of these species, at great risk of extinction. Trafficking of turtles in Cambodia is a serious issue that needs to be further addressed by government agencies, with more awareness to be raised in the general public.

Objectives:

- 1** To enhance protection in key source sites for endangered species of Asian freshwater turtles
- 2** To increase effectiveness of law enforcement and justice sectors to combat wildlife and turtle trafficking
- 3** To increase transboundary coordination to combat wildlife trafficking especially with China
- 4** To reduce preference for illegally sourced products of turtle and tortoise species

Results (2020):

52 TURTLE NESTS protected by community members from nearby villages as part of 10 negotiated conservation agreements, and resulting in 868 successful hatchlings of endangered turtles

744 DAYS OF JOINT PATROLLING carried out at source sites, covering over 10,000 km largely on boat along the Sre Ambel and Mekong river systems.

As a result of increased intensity of patrolling, the level of threat/per km remains drastically reduced compared to its level prior to project implementation

1,407 HOUSEHOLDS participating in and benefitting from livelihood development activities: incentive for nest protection, patrolling, aquaculture, vegetable gardening, etc.

1,977 INFORMATION REPORTS recorded or received through the wildlife crime hotline and other sources, of which at least 383 were specific to freshwater turtle and tortoise species

98 RAID AND RESCUE OPERATIONS conducted against illegal turtle and tortoise traders, of which 25 resulted in legal action against the perpetrators



A rescued turtle ready to be released into the wild



Ms. Chan Nin, turtle nest protector

Testimonial:

Ms. Chan Nin, aged 62, is part of the project-supported Nest Protection Team. From dusk till dawn, she works along the Mekong River with her colleagues to search for Asian Giant Softshell Turtle nests, using her experience when she was a former collector of these turtle eggs for consumption. Every year, her team could find an average of ten nests at different nesting sandbanks and she could earn approximately US\$ 1,200 per season.

Ms. Chan Nin said, *"I am very happy to join the project and, especially to save this rarest turtle species from extinction. If we don't protect, young children will no longer know this species in the future."*

Ms. Chan Nin's living conditions have improved significantly since being part of the team. She said that with these seasonal incentives for her work as nest protector, plus some loan from a local bank, she could refurbish her house. In addition, she can cover her basic daily expenses to feed her family of four, support the education of her four grandchildren, as well as cover other expenses such as attending religious and wedding ceremonies.

MYANMAR

Community participation plays a major role to reduce human-elephant conflict around a key sanctuary for Asian elephants

Abstract:

The project's work in Myanmar focuses on reducing Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) in 22 villages which adjoin the project site, the Rakhine Yoma Elephant Range (RYER) - an important sanctuary for Asian elephants located in the southern corner of the Rakhine state.

The project enhances community participation and provides both technical assistance and material support to mitigate conflict, by reducing incursions from elephants in the fields around the target villages, in particular during the crop ripening season. These conflicts are significantly mitigated thanks to the active participation of the village conservation committees which were formed when the project started.



Delivering field equipment and materials to village committee for HEC mitigation



Wild elephant intrusion into banana plantation in Kyauk Chek village

Context:

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in commercial poaching of Asian elephants in Myanmar due to market demand for elephant skin and other parts in neighbouring countries, particularly China. At least 59 elephants were killed in 2017. Elephant poaching is organized by groups of hunters supported by international smugglers. Another threat is habitat degradation, which also leads to increased human-elephant conflict. The Rakhine Yoma Elephant Range (RYER), in the western coastal area of Myanmar, is a regionally important source site for elephants, and a strategic area for combating elephant trafficking. It has recently been proposed as a flagship site for 'Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE)' - the CITES-led site-based system designed to monitor trends in the illegal killing of elephants, build management capacity and provide information to help range states make appropriate management and enforcement decisions. A designation of RYER as 'MIKE site' would only strengthen further the elephant protection activities underway.

Objectives:

- 1** To enhance protection activities in Rakhine Yoma Elephant Range Wildlife Sanctuary (RYER), a key site for Asian elephants in the region
- 2** To reduce Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) in the vicinity of RYER through the participation of local communities
- 3** To increase transboundary coordination to combat wildlife trafficking especially with China

Results (2020):

0 ELEPHANT CARCASS inside RYER, as in 2019 ; sadly, one wild elephant died from an infected wound following a poaching incident in an area outside of RYER

809 DAYS OF JOINT PATROLLING by three specialist Elephant Protection Units inside RYER, covering over 5,500 km largely on foot in thick tropical forest. The EPU's are a combined team of RYER's patrol staff and community guardians who live around RYER

1,066 HOUSEHOLDS benefitting from the interest generated by a revolving fund jointly administered by community representatives and the project's partner RCA

1,051 MEMBERS OF COMMUNITIES living around RYER and affected by elephant incursions made aware of the contingency plan on how best to reduce and mitigate conflict

22 VILLAGES participating in a local community network to combat illegal wildlife trade and forest crime through sharing of information

Testimonial:

The scene is a beautiful village named 'Kyauk Chek' located on the Sat Thwar stream flowing down from RYER; it is made of 65 households; some 270 people live there. People's livelihoods depend solely on seasonal crops and non-timber forest products. Villagers are seasonally threatened by marauding elephants which destroy their crops and houses. Originally, villagers tried to frighten the elephants with traditional means, but it has not been effective to reduce conflict. Since the project began in 2019, it has brought significant improvements. The project's field team, led by its coordinator Mr. Aung Myo Naing from Rakhine Coastal Conservation Association (RCA), explains. First, an ad hoc HEC committee was formed with the consent of villagers; it is facilitated by RCA. A rapid response plan has been designed and is activated when elephants approach the village. The project contributes with materials like torchlights, jungle boots, loudspeakers and a noise-making device to frighten the elephants. The village's HEC committee also links up with other villages to send or receive early warning notification on suspect elephant movements. As a result, only 6 elephant intrusions were recorded in 2019, and only 3 in 2020. In all instances, the villagers could frighten out the elephants before they destroyed crops or damaged houses, without fatalities on either side. Kyauk Chek villagers are very pleased to be part of the solution.

Mr. Aung Myo Naing said, *"I am confident to say that the EU project implementation on HEC reduction is very successful thanks to the team work of villagers and the good collaboration among the village HEC committees. I would say that communication between villagers, RCA, WCS and staff from RYER has greatly improved since the project began. The villagers realize the positive impacts of the project and I am sure they will continue to work with us not only in reducing human-elephant conflicts, but also for the protection of RYER and the conservation of natural resources in our region."*



MALAYSIA

Improved enforcement action through effective and strategic communication between partners of the operation Ops Bersepadu Khazanah (OBK)

Abstract:

The work in Malaysia focuses on enhancing tiger protection in a regionally important site, the Endau-Rompin Landscape (ERL). Trust, coordination, effective communication, sharing of information and sustained engagement between project partners ensure the success of the anti-poaching operations in several ways: improved patrol planning, enhanced detection of threats on site, better intelligence leading to an increased number of arrests of poachers around the landscape, etc.



OBK team in operation removing snares in Endau-Rompin landscape



Patrol team members practicing satellite phone use before the commencement of OBK operations

Context:

Since 2015, the Malayan Tiger *Panthera tigris jacksoni* is listed as Critically Endangered in IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species. From an already declining population estimated at 250–340 individuals in 2014, the wild tiger population is now estimated to be less than 200 individuals. The Endau-Rompin Landscape in the states of Johor and Pahang, southern Malaysia, is of critical importance - one of the few sites where tiger population remains stable. Multi-agency patrolling inside the protected area has been supported for a decade, however with limited success due to deficiencies in the operations cycle; anti-poaching patrols needed to be more effective. Alarmed by the prospect of a rapid decline of wild tigers on site, in 2018 a new approach involving the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) was recommended by WCS and its project partner the Malaysia Conservation Alliance for Tigers (MYCAT). Responding to this campaign, the Inspector-General of Police launched *Ops Bersepadu Khazanah* (OBK) in September 2019; two of RMP's General Operations Force battalions have been deployed to assist the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) to track and arrest poachers in the protected area. Since its commencement, the project supports the OBK operations in the southern sector of the park through strategic patrol planning, briefings on SMART patrol data management and analysis, and in logistics.

Objectives:

- 1** To increase patrol efforts and the impacts of the patrolling in the Endau-Rompin Landscape, a key source site for endangered tigers in the region
- 2** To improve information and intelligence sharing among relevant agencies, partners, and targeted community members
- 3** To promote public use of the wildlife crime outline to counter wildlife trafficking

Results (2020):

STABLE TIGER DENSITY on site as calculated through the analysis of the camera trapping survey

SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION OF # THREAT encountered per km patrolled under the new OBK system compared to its level prior to the operational reform

170 DAYS OF JOINT PATROLLING carried out at source site involving *Orang Asli* community members from the surrounding villages

164 INTELLIGENCE/INFORMATION from community patrolling and local networks recorded in SMART module and database for further wildlife crime analysis

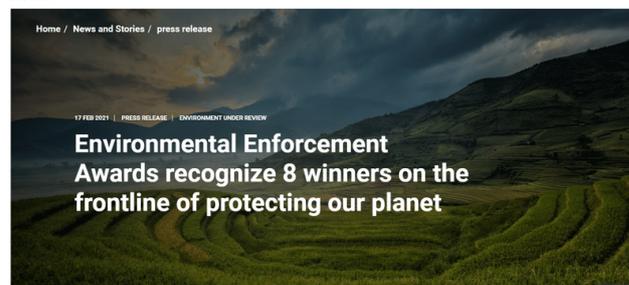
118 INFORMATION REPORTS received through the wildlife crime hotline, doubling the number in 2019 following promotion and awareness campaigns

***Ops Bersepadu Khazanah (OBK)* selected as one of the 8 winners of the Fifth Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards under the United Nations' Environment Programme (UNEP)**

In addition to the increased patrol effort as one element of the OBK reform, the Department of Wildlife and National Parks initiated a number of high-profile anti-money laundering investigations targeting wildlife crime - thus, placing the authorities one step closer to stamping out syndicates operating along the poaching and trafficking chain. Also, in January 2020, aligned with the OBK mission, the Royal Malaysia Police announced the withdrawal of firearm licenses to 6,900 holders. The UNEP award is a recognition of the cooperative efforts undertaken by all stakeholders involved, including project partners, since the initiation of the OBK operations in 2019.



<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/environmental-enforcement-awards-recognize-8-winners-frontline>



Testimonial:

"We have to be smart and innovative in our approaches and use all means to facilitate information sharing in a real-time and effective manner. We found that the best way to transmit poaching information and incursion evidence from MMS cameras to the DWNP is via instant messaging apps such as Whatsapp, Telegram, Signal etc. as the officers always carry their mobile phones around. In case mobile phone network is not available, we make sure to assign satellite phones to the patrol teams and the officers-in-charge, to guarantee real-time sharing of information during operations."

Ms. Norolhuda Jamaluddin, WC&S' focal person for OBK



THAILAND

Strengthening the law enforcement system to save Thap Lan National Park from illegal logging of Siamese rosewood and poaching

Abstract:

Thap Lan National Park (TLNP) in eastern Thailand, part of Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai World Heritage Site, is a critically important habitat for high commercial value tree species, especially Siamese rosewood *Dalbergia cochinchinensis* that conservationists fear may become extinct within 10 years. Working in close collaboration with the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), the project supports site-based analysts at work; in doing so, it brings new intelligence-led approaches to integrate strategic planning in the operations cycle, and to spot, track and identify offenders in near real-time.



TLNP patrol team arresting Cambodian loggers with 1.5 m³ of rosewood timber potentially worth an estimated \$~38,000



Context:

In the previous decade, poaching of rosewood in Thailand severely increased, the highly prized timber being smuggled through neighboring countries eastward to finally reach China as end market. While in the last few years there has been a remarkable improvement in the geographic coverage of ranger patrols across TLNP, poachers are relentless in their pursue to illegally source the precious timber from the area. Because of the persistence of these threats, and because of the likelihood of a rapid escalation of these threats should the quality of patrolling drop, there is a constant need to keep up the effort.

One of the newest and important sources of information related to wildlife crime is via covert surveillance equipment (e.g., multi-media messaging service (MMS) poacher cams). This system, also known in Thailand as the Network Centric Anti-Poaching System (NCAPS), is a system that deploys, maintains and monitors cellular cameras that can detect poachers walking in and out of the park, and send real-time alerts through signals and photographs to rangers' cellular phones. Upon reception, the park authority can quickly act to intercept and try to arrest poachers before they could cut down invaluable trees. First introduced in 2015 in TLNP, it has become a model. The project supports NCAPS operations in the park; in addition, it contributes to improve the morale and capacity of rangers by providing them with high-quality training courses and materials, and patrol rations and field equipment.

Objectives:

- 1** To enhance protection in three wildlife sanctuaries of the Western Forest Complex, a key source site for endangered tigers in the region
- 2** To form and support the deployment of smart, joint patrol teams to detect and prevent threats to wildlife and habitats
- 3** To develop and use intelligent approaches to deter poaching and trafficking of Siamese rosewood
- 4** To rally Karen ethnic communities around tiger conservation by supporting local, sustainable production of traditional handicraft products and the expansion of market opportunities

Results (2020):

STABLE TIGER DENSITY overall in project sites, as calculated through the analysis of the camera trapping survey, with evidence of dispersal of individual tigers outside of the project target area

ABOUT 65,000 KM covered by SMART patrolling in all four project sites combined, including by teams combining national rangers and members from Karen communities in WEFKOM.

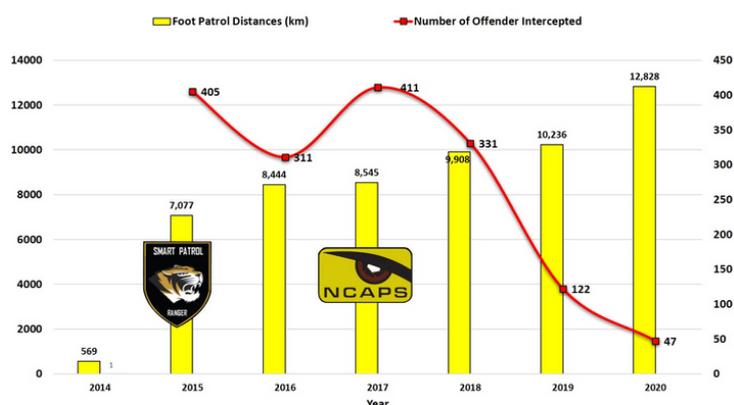
As a result, the level of threat encountered per km patrolled has been reduced to a fraction of what it was in 2017 in particular in Thap Lan National Park (TLNP)

ONLY 10 NEW STUMPS of rosewood detected in 2020. 12 timber poachers arrested including eight inside TLNP, with dozens more suspect intruders identified through the use of near-real time anti-poaching trail cameras and stopped prior to engage in cutting valuable rosewood timber

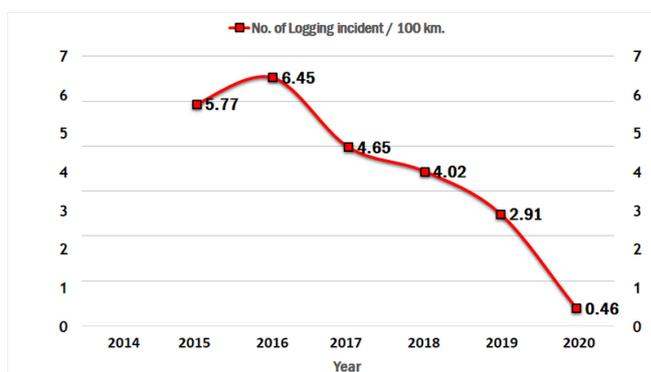
AN ESTIMATED 3,746,200 THB INCOME generated for 115 Karen households through the support to the production of handicraft and marketing of products

Testimonial:

An analysis of data from January 2015 till December 2020 indicates that the introduction of systematic SMART patrolling in TNLP, followed by the integration of the NCAPS system in the operations cycle, has had a remarkable effect in reducing the level of threat in the protected area. The number of suspect intruders is in steep decline, a vast majority of them being driven out of the park prior to committing any offense. To date, more than 80 rangers have been trained in SMART patrolling and are supported to fully function. As a result, in 2020 the patrolling effort covered over 80% of the area of the park, with the total distance walked by patrols well over 12,000 km.



This intensification of law enforcement together with the deployment of the cellular camera system against intruders allowing near real-time action, clearly result in a declining trend of rosewood poaching incidents inside the national park, saving precious standing trees.



"We are grateful to the European Union for providing us with adequate resources and capacities for our park rangers to patrol effectively. By doing so, we can continue and strengthen our daily work, and concentrate our effort on engaging further with local people, raising more awareness, and bringing additional support to conserve the rosewood trees of Thap Lan National Park."

Mr. Prawatsart Chanteap, Superintendent of TLNP, Department of National Parks (DNP)

LAO PDR

Investigative work leads to sting operation during which over twenty live animals are confiscated, including three individuals of the endangered Keeled Box Turtle species

Abstract:

In September, the project partner Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife (LCTW) received a tip-off via Facebook that a trader was selling a variety of animals including endangered turtles. LCTW was able to gather information about the seller; a report was shared with the Provincial Office of Forest Inspection in Khammouane, enabling the law enforcement agency to intervene and rescue endangered species.



Keeled Box Turtle *Cuora mouhotii*, a forest turtle species listed as Endangered in IUCN Red List

Context:

In recent years, and despite increased efforts by the Government of Lao PDR to implement its CITES obligations and commitments to address illegal wildlife trade, its responses to combat wildlife trafficking have been continuously hindered by insufficient capacity, lack of information and weak coordination among law enforcement agencies, and with those of neighboring countries. Lao PDR, bordering Thailand, Vietnam and China, has been identified as an important source, transit and destination country for wildlife parts. There is a growing number of ivory and wildlife markets catering for Chinese workers, transitters and travelers popping up across the country, with reports of tiger parts also being trafficked to Vietnam through Lao PDR.

Asian freshwater turtles and tortoises are also being increasingly traded, principally for food, pet, and traditional medicine; as a result, they are going through dramatic population declines.



Critically endangered Impressed Tortoise *Manouria impressa* released by LCTW in Nam Et-Phou Louey National Protected Area

Objectives:

- 1** To increase effectiveness of law enforcement responses to illegal wildlife trade through capacity building and intelligence analysis support
- 2** To promote transboundary cooperation in tackling wildlife trafficking between Lao PDR and neighboring countries, in particular Vietnam

Results (2020):

A TRIPLING OF THE AUDIENCE AND OUTREACH of the national wildlife crime hotline, from ~5,000 to ~14,000 followers, as a result of an active promotional campaign

208 INTELLIGENCE/INFORMATION coming from the wildlife crime hotline, key informants and investigation trips to wildlife trade 'hotspots' - at least 124 of which were about the project's target species

45 INTELLIGENCE PRODUCTS on trafficking networks of target species shared with law enforcement agencies at national and provincial levels

6 CRIMINAL CASES involving target species launched as a result of project partners interventions, with two legal prosecutions by judicial authorities completed successfully

Testimonial:

In September 2020, the Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife (LCTW), project partner in Lao PDR, received tip-off information on the sale of various prohibited and protected wildlife in the central province of Khammouane, including, but not limited to, a ferret badger, various turtles and tortoises, slow lorises, and python. Upon receiving the tip-off, the staff at LCTW could gather reliable information about the exact location of the animals, and reported it to the Provincial Office of Forestry Inspection (POFI). Based on the intelligence information, POFI officials raided the suspected location, intercepted the seller, and made confiscation of live animals including 15 bamboo rats, one ferret badger, one reticulated python, one baby rhesus macaque, one baby pig-tailed macaque, three pygmy slow lorises, three keeled box turtles - an endangered species -, and one Oldham's leaf turtle - one of the top five turtle taxa sold in mainland China markets. The animals were sent to LCTW's rescue center to receive veterinary treatment against respiratory infections, malnutrition, and parasites. Most of these animals' health improved; following rehabilitation, a number of the rescued animals were released back into the wild in January 2021.

Mr. Sonexai Phomluangsy, Head of Khammouane Provincial Office of Forest Inspection (POFI) said,

"This case has shown us that illegal wildlife trade in Laos exists in different types - from local markets, in social media, and as transnational crime. Solving this issue in the past was challenging because of the lack of coordination and sharing, and gaps in our technical capacity. The active cooperation between various inspection authorities in the government and the support from NGOs has assisted us in tracking the offenders and rescue the wildlife. On behalf of the Provincial Forest Inspection, I would like to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to the European Union, the "Partners Against Wildlife Crime" project, and Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife for the technical support in assisting, coordinating and sharing crucial information."



VIETNAM

How can local journalists and national media contribute to enforce laws that protect wildlife from trafficking?

Abstract:

Vietnam is identified as both a destination and a transit country in a number of major routes for illegal wildlife trade. While law enforcement agencies are critical in handling wildlife crime, local journalists can contribute by gathering and presenting accurate information from the field to the government, for action. To contribute to disrupt wildlife crime networks in and/or related to Vietnam, the project builds capacities of such journalists to gather information professionally and securely, playing an important role in the pursuit of enforcement responses.

Context:

Despite relatively good coverage of wildlife crime in Vietnamese media, there are a very limited number of high-quality investigations led by journalists. The project's Vietnamese partner People and Nature Reconciliation (PanNature) has developed an extensive experience working with Vietnamese media. Besides regular field training exercises and investigative trips offered to journalists, PanNature also facilitates 'Media-Bridge' workshops where these journalists are connected to key experts and authorities with expertise and mandate to combat wildlife trafficking. Journalists are encouraged to package and present to targeted audiences the information they have gathered using diverse approaches, and to follow up and report on enforcement actions afterwards.



Birds sold in Thanh Hoa market, Long An Province



Local Forest Rangers checking Thanh Hoa market



Journalists on the trail of the last elephant of northern Vietnam

Objectives:

- 1** To increase the quality and quantity of intelligence generated by local journalists and NGOs on wildlife crimes
- 2** To increase the number of enforcement actions on illegal trade of the project's target species in and/or related to Vietnam
- 3** To collect field evidence for policy advocacy on wildlife protection and against illegal wildlife farming and trade

Results (2020):

129 JOURNALISTS equipped with new knowledge and skills in wildlife crime investigation and presentation of appropriate information to local authorities and the general public

133 ARTICLES published as a result, providing through telling stories a vivid picture of the situation of illegal wildlife hunting and trade in Vietnam

6 INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS on project's target species shared with government agencies, leading to the opening of 3 criminal cases

Testimonial:

In October 2019, PanNature staff led three journalists to conduct a first investigative trip to the infamous Thanh Hoa market in the southern province of Long An. They spotted various wildlife species openly sold without evidence of legal sourcing. Appropriate information was shared to the national and provincial Forest Protection Departments (FPD). In March 2020, the same journalists returned to monitor changes. They joined the national FPD Task Force, the FPD Zone III, and the Thach Hoa district police for an inspection of the market. Dozens of live animals were seized on the spot, including otters, civets, owls, and nearly 40 kg of snakes; one shop owner was sanctioned with an administrative fine of 10 million VND (approximately €370). In subsequent days, the three journalists continued to survey the market, reported progress on local media, and went to interview the Deputy Chairman of Long An province - all in order to attract attention from the public and pile up pressure on enforcement authorities. As a result, the provincial Chairman issued an Instruction Letter ordering all relevant agencies in the district to handle the situation decisively. In parallel, echoing the Covid-19 pandemic crisis unfolding, the journalist team conducted and broadcast interviews with conservation organizations' representatives to highlight the severe risks to humans such wildlife markets pose through the transmission of zoonotic diseases.

"Two months later, we published additional articles to report progress in Thanh Hoa market and organized new investigative trips to other wildlife trade locations in neighboring provinces to expose the overexploitation of wildlife at an alarming rate, and its consequences on nature and human's health" said one member of the journalist team, who wishes to remain anonymous.

"The key point is, we journalists should use our new knowledge, investigative skills, and media power to detect burning issues, dig deep in search of facts and evidences, in order to support but also to monitor progress on enforcement actions. And we should not stop until the job is done."



PanNature staff and three journalists conducting their inaugural trip to Thanh Hoa wildlife market



In January 2021, that very team of journalists received the first prize of the VIEWS Award 2020 (Vietnam Information on Environment-Wildlife-Sustainability) by CHANGE - a national organization promoting hands-on actions and networking for environment sustainability - in recognition of the quality of their work covering illegal tiger wildlife trading in Vietnam that was published in a series of articles by various media.

PR CHINA

Logistics delivery companies in outer province trained to counter shipping of illegal wildlife and wild products

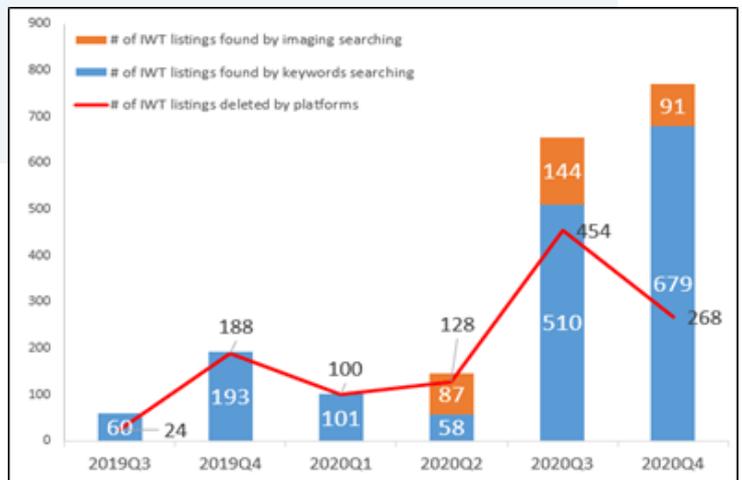
Abstract:

The project's work in China focuses on the end market; it aims to reduce both demand and offer of wildlife products using different strategies and approaches. That includes the development of partnerships with selected actors of the private sector to prevent and disrupt wildlife criminals using e-commerce and transportation services. Project partners and Chinese agencies co-hosted a training on "Preventing Smuggling of Wildlife and Wild Products" targeting key logistics and courier companies operating in southern China.

Context:

After a momentary drop in "wild meat" related postings and advertisements as observed by Chinese top search engines following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, it appears that traffickers are increasingly turning to online platforms for their transactions and use logistics delivery means to ship wild products.

From an analysis based on Chinese news collated from open-sources, in 2020 over 20% of IWT cases used postal and express packages in their transactions, indicating that logistics delivery industry has become a high risk industry in relation to illegal wildlife trade (IWT). Located in the Chinese-Vietnam border area, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is a major transit point in the wildlife trafficking route from Vietnam to China; a large proportion of illegal wildlife products entering China will be sent to end consumers through postal and express delivery in Guangxi. Staffs of logistics delivery companies often lack knowledge of IWT related laws and regulations; also, they have limited capacity to detect and identify illegal wildlife products during their inspection work, and little experience on how to report those. Thus, there is pressing need to mobilize postal administrations and logistics delivery companies to effectively crack down IWT routes, and to enhance their cooperation with law enforcement agencies.



Objectives:

- 1** To support partnerships with private sectors to prevent and disrupt wildlife criminals using e-commerce and transport/courier services
- 2** To facilitate international cooperation on wildlife and forest crimes between China and countries of the Mekong region
- 3** To reduce intentions to purchase products made from tiger, elephants and turtles through a behavioral science-based approach

Results (2020):

1,670 IWT INFRINGING LISTINGS detected online and reported to the supporting e-commerce platforms, of which 950 were subsequently taken down - a 5-fold increase compared to 2019

OVER 560 STAFF from ByteDance, the developer of the video-sharing social networking apps TikTok and Douyin, trained on methods and best practices to detect and disrupt illegal wildlife trade online

6 PRE-BASELINE STUDIES around Chinese consumers' preference for project's target species parts completed - a key background research ahead of demand reduction initiatives

1 BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS UNIT established and functioning in Sun-Yat-Sen University, project partner

Testimonial:

A Training on "Preventing Smuggling of Wildlife and Wild Products" was held in Nanning City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, co-hosted by Guangxi Anti-Smuggling Management Office, China CITES Management Authority's Guangzhou office, and project partners. Over 70 participants participated, from enforcement agencies, transportation and post administrations, and 29 major logistics and courier delivery companies. Experts from the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, China CITES Science Commission, WCS and IFAW gave technical lectures on CITES implementation and wildlife species management in China, on the endangered species most involved in IWT, on how to identify wildlife products, on the latest trends in wildlife cybercrime, and on the key role of logistics delivery companies in countering wildlife trafficking. During the training, SF Express (Guangxi) committed to implement new standards in the manual inspection of parcels, in addition to an all-round, systematic use of X-ray for inspection.

"SF Express in Guangxi has good ties with law enforcement agencies in the province. For wildlife products found but difficult to identify by front-line couriers, we will immediately report them to our headquarters and relevant agencies", said Mr. Pan Guoqing, Deputy General Manager. "We are willing to cooperate with government authorities and non-governmental organizations to strengthen our detection of illegal wildlife products. We will transfer the knowledge we gained from this training to front-line staff through internal trainings, in order to build up an effective net to intercept such products."



Mr. Xu Chengwei, official from Guangxi's Postal Administration, giving a lecture on policies and laws pertinent to transportation of wildlife and wild products



Front line staff of SF Express Guangxi learning relevant laws and regulations and how to identify commonly shipped wild products



Mr. Pan Guoqing, Deputy General Manager of SF Express in Guangxi, shares his experience preventing the transportation of illegal wildlife in the operations of his company