

REO HIGHLIGHTS

U. S.
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OF STATE

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FIVE TONS OF FROZEN PANGOLIN: Massive Indonesian Bust



A live pangolin stares out from the poultry cage it had been locked. Photo: Paul Hilton, Wildlife Conservation Society.

Five tons of frozen pangolin, 77 kilograms of pangolin scales, and 96 live pangolins is the grisly haul of the latest pangolin bust in Indonesia.

"This is a major breakthrough, both in terms of the enormous size of the shipment and in terms of the increasing sophistication of collaborative methods used by Indonesian authorities in making the bust," said Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) Joe Walston. WCS assisted in the investigation. Officials say the pangolins were poached on Sumatra and were destined for China.

Little-known to the general public, pangolins have the terrible honor of being the world's most trafficked animal. Their scales are used in traditional Chinese medicine; their meat is considered a curative in East Asia; and even their fetuses are eaten. (<http://news.mongabay.com>, 4/25/15)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with the Government of Vietnam and Humane Society International invited delegates from more than 30 African and Asian countries to the First **Pangolin Range States Meeting** in Danang from June 24-26, 2015. The goal of the meeting was to push back against the over-exploitation of eight separate species of pangolin.

ARF WORKSHOP ON COMBATING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

The US and Malaysia co-hosted the inaugural ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Workshop on Combating Wildlife Trafficking on March 30-April 1, 2015. U.S. Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Catherine Novelli and Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman opened the workshop while Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh delivered a keynote address.

There were over 80 participants, including officials from 10 ARF participating countries (Australia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, and the United States.)
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2015 Events

July 11 -
World Population Day

July 29 -
International Tiger Day

August 9 -
International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

August 12 -
World Elephant Day

September 7-11
XIV World Forestry Congress, Durban

September 22 -
International Car Free Day

September 22 -
World Rhino Day

September 27 -
World Rivers Day

October 4 -
World Animal Day

October 5 -
World Habitat Day

November 21 -
World Fisheries Day

December -
UN Framework on Climate Change Convention, Paris

December 1
World AIDS Day

Eat A Red Apple Day

December 5 -
International Volunteer Day

December 10 -
International Human Rights Day

December 11 -
International Mountain Day

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POACHED IVORY TUSKS SEIZED

On April 27, Thai customs' officials displayed their recent seizure of approximately three tons of ivory worth around \$6 million. The ivory was hidden in a shipment of tea from Kenya and was transported through Sri Lanka and Malaysia on its way to Laos.

The U.S. Embassy was invited to see the most recent find and the Regional Environment Officer (REO), the bi-lateral Environment, Science, Technology and Health (ESTH) officer and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Attaché all offered support in Thailand's investigative and anti-trafficking efforts.



REO Bangkok Tahra Vose and ESTH Thailand's Eric Frater with Thai Government officials.

Just one week prior, Thailand seized four tons of ivory – this time smuggled from the Democratic Republic of Congo and hidden in a shipment of beans, again bound for Laos. Thailand is one of the top destinations for African ivory smuggling in Asia and could face international sanctions soon if it doesn't show progress in combatting the problem. Customs Department Director-General Somchai Sujjapongse said, "After these two consecutive big busts ... the transnational crime networks must realize it is getting increasingly difficult to send their shipment past Thailand, but I think they will try to come up with the more complicated means, so we will have already prepared the measures to (tackle the issue)." More than 20,000 African elephants were killed for ivory in 2013, a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) monitoring program showed, leaving a rapidly dwindling population believed to be around 500,000.

TIMES SQUARE IVORY CRUSH

On June 19, 2015, in Times Square, New York City, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with wildlife and conservation partners, hosted its second ivory crush event. One ton of ivory seized during an undercover operation, plus other ivory from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, was crushed in front of VIPs and the general public, sending the message to ivory traffickers and their customers that the US will not tolerate this illegal trade. For more information about the poaching crisis: <http://www.fws.gov/le/elephant-ivory-crush.html>

ARF WORKSHOP (continued from page one)

Representatives from international organizations and NGOs (including experts from CITES, UNODC, ASEAN-WEN, INTERPOL, TRAFFIC, Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlife Alliance, and FREELAND) were also on hand to discuss the current state of wildlife trafficking in the ASEAN region, challenges and areas for enhanced cooperation, best practices in prevention and investigation, as well as demand mitigation and awareness campaigns.

The event received widespread media coverage, drawing much needed attention to the wildlife trafficking issue and generating healthy public discussion.



Malaysian actress Michele Yoh and U.S. Under Secretary of State Novelli

USG GRANTEE ACTIVITIES

From Nets to Carpets; From Exterior Debris to Interior Décor: Zoological Society of London (ZSL), Philippines

Although blessed with natural beauty Mother Nature is not always kind to the Philippines. With six to nine typhoons making landfall every year and more than 900 earthquakes annually, this archipelago nation of 7,107 islands has more than its fair share of natural calamities. The Philippines is second only to Vanuatu on the UN's World Risk Index, which measures a country's vulnerability to natural disasters. One disaster was Typhoon Yolanda which hit hard in 2013 with devastating consequences for the Philippines in general and especially for the huge numbers of fishing communities whose sole source of livelihood is from the sea.

In the wake of the super typhoon, discarded fishing nets along with other debris were dredged up and strewn along the coast (*photo: above right*). In 2014, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), Philippines, was awarded an Regional Environment Office (REO) Bangkok Small Grant from the U.S. State Department in support of Project Networks, a social enterprise that addresses marine pollution and ghost fishing associated with the improper disposal of nylon fishing nets while providing partnering communities with an opportunity to earn supplemental income from waste recycling. The income is generated from the sale of the collected nylon-6 nets to Interface, the world's largest maker of carpet tile with a reputation for environmentally-responsible manufacturing techniques.

During a site visit this past February, REO Bangkok visited fishing villages impacted by Typhoon Yolanda and saw the physical damage to structures and the mangroves which protect coastal areas from erosion and storm surge, and also act as a nursery to small fish where they can hide easily from predators. The damage to the mangrove swamps has resulted in fewer fish to be caught and less food on the table for villagers. Among ZSL's many conservation projects are working with the national and local governments to undertake science-based mangrove protection and rehabilitation activities. REO Bangkok met with community members who were being trained by ZSL to lead village savings and loan associations that manage the operation and distribute the proceeds which would supplement household income (*photo: below right*). REO Bangkok witnessed the signing of an MOU between the local mayor and ZSL to more formally launch the Project Networks concept in one of the hardest areas of Typhoon Yolanda.



US Ambassador: Wildlife Trafficking Worth USD 1 Billion: Masarang Foundation, Indonesia

Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr commented that illegal wildlife trafficking has been receiving support from military and police officials, and this is unacceptable. He also explained that North Sulawesi has become the hot spot for illegal wildlife trafficking where all wildlife in Indonesia was sent to Manado before being exported abroad. This industry is worth around USD 1 billion and has threatened Indonesia's biodiversity and wildlife. The founder of Masarang Foundation, a recipient of a U.S. State Department Small Grant, Dr. Willie Smit, welcomed the Ambassador along with local officials to demonstrate firsthand the impact of illegal wildlife trafficking. He said that to eradicate the trafficking needs cooperation from all elements including government and civil society. (Tribunnews 01/09/15)

Ambassador Opens Up Earth Day Celebration: Center for Environmental and Community Research, Vietnam

As part of activities connected with the 20th anniversary of the normalization of U.S.-Vietnam diplomatic relations, Ambassador Osius opened up an Earth Day celebration in Hanoi on April 19, 2015. The Embassy partnered with the Center for Environmental and Community Research (CECR) to put on the event, funded in part through a U.S. State Department Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) Small Grant. With the grant money, CECR is helping local communities in Hanoi meet urban surface water management challenges and better understand climate change adaptation needs. CECR is partnering with the Hanoi Lakes Club and local Women's Unions for the project. The Earth Day celebration was the culmination of a series of LMI Grant project activities that started March 22 on World Water Day. In his remarks, Ambassador Osius emphasized the importance of environmental cooperation in the bilateral relationship and urged the young crowd to be leaders on the environment. Over 2,000 people attended the event, which was featured on national news broadcasts. The celebration featured speeches, music, dancing, flash mobs, and awareness raising activities for adults and children. (Mission Vietnam ESTH, April 24, 2015)

USG GRANTEE ACTIVITIES continued

Teaching and Empowering Youth to Protect Wildlife: Wildlife Alliance, Cambodia

Early on a Sunday May morning at a community center along a dusty road on the outskirts of Phnom Penh about 35 girls and boys of middle school age were attentive and eager to learn. Learning about animals is almost always fun for young minds but even adults have a hard time absorbing lessons about why protecting wildlife is important and understanding their role in this fight to save the wild kingdom from further destruction. As Regional Environment Office (REO) Bangkok witnessed in a May 2015 site visit, these children sat quietly, colored excitedly and scurried to-and-fro on straw mats learning about their role in saving Cambodia's wildlife and forests.

There is no curriculum in K-12 public schools addressing conservation in Cambodia. Wildlife Alliance was awarded an REO Bangkok Small Grant from the U.S. State Department to help fill the gap. The grant helps fund the NGO's Kouprey Express Mobile Environmental Education and Community Outreach team (KE) which gives kid-friendly, classroom instruction; provides teachers the tools they need to incorporate conservation into their curriculum. The lesson plan developed by Wildlife Alliance includes an interactive Powerpoint presentation and hands-on activities, such as coloring contests, quizzes, and team games (*photo: above right*). There was much laughter, discussion, and, of course, prizes. At the end of the day, all the students could among other lessons learned recite the NGO's nationwide wildlife rescue hotline number by heart. KE also informs the public about wildlife issues, laws and challenges through mass messaging and signage on the roads and vehicles (*photo: below right*).

The next day the same students took a field trip to the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center (PTWRC), a government-run facility outside of Phnom Penh, which provides a sanctuary to many endangered animals, including Asian elephants. The rescue center survives with considerable technical and financial involvement from Wildlife Alliance. All the resident animals are rescued victims of the wildlife trade and human-wildlife conflict, providing a setting in which children and the general public can learn about their country's natural heritage, develop a greater appreciation for wildlife, and see firsthand the consequences of destructive choices. The students received a warm welcome from wildlife officers and concluded the field trip with more team games to reinforce the lessons from Sunday's curriculum.



Embassy Hanoi Marks World Water Day with USG-Funded Community Training on Urban Water Management: Center for Environmental and Community Research, Vietnam

In the lead up to World Water Day on March 22, Embassy Hanoi's ESTH team partnered with local NGO, the Center for Environment and Community Research (CECR), on March 18 to train Hanoi community volunteers on urban surface water management and climate change adaptation. The workshop was part of CECR's larger project to enhance local communities' abilities to deal with these challenges funded through a U.S. State Department Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) Small Grant. Participants - a generational mix of Hanoi Women's Union members, veterans, university students and professors - developed concrete plans to preserve Hanoi's complex system of lakes and canals by reducing pollution and preparing for climate change impacts. ESTH presented on Lake Tahoe community conservation efforts in California as a case study for the community volunteers and discussed the importance of bilateral environmental cooperation as we commemorate the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations. (Mission Vietnam ESTH, April 7, 2015)

Workshop with US Embassy Jakarta to Fight Trafficking of Endangered Species: Masarang Foundation, Indonesia

The Mayor of Manado opened an International Wildlife Trafficking Workshop co-sponsored by the U.S. Embassy on May 20, 2015. The three-day workshop brought together investigators and prosecutors from Indonesia and the Philippines with American experts from law enforcement and the judicial sector. Participants visited the Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Center, managed by the Masarang Foundation, to see first-hand the condition of Indonesian wildlife seized by law enforcement during counter-trafficking operations. The Masarang Foundation, which founded the Tasikoki Wildlife Rescue Center in Sulawesi, received a Regional Environment Office (REO) Bangkok Small Grant from the U.S. State Department in 2014, and cooperates closely with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry's Nature Conservation Agency (BKSDA), the Minahasa Regency, and the Indonesian National Police. (antarasulut.com & suaramanado.com, 5/24/15)

NEWS ITEMS OF INTEREST

ASEAN-WEN: A Decade of Regional Cooperation to Combat Wildlife Crime

From May 5 to 8, the heads of delegations of ASEAN member states, ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN-Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) Program Coordination Unit and other delegates from the U.S. government, regional and partner organizations met in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam for the 10th Annual Meeting of the ASEAN-WEN and the 11th Meeting of the ASEAN Experts Group on the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), hosted by Brunei Darussalam. ASEAN-WEN agreed on strategic and tactical-level matters in support of its programmatic purview and mandate including updating the ASEAN-WEN Regional Strategic Action Plan Development and continuing support to the upcoming rosewood Special Investigation Group and Operation Cobra. At the event, the United States government, represented by Ms. Allison Garragher of the U.S. Embassy in Bandar Seri Begawan, noted the decade-long progress of ASEAN-WEN and expressed their continuing interest in co-operating with ASEAN-WEN. (USAID/RDMA Weekly Environment Update, May 15, 2015)



Vietnamese-American Actress Maggie Q to Promote Wildlife Conservation

Maggie Q was in Vietnam April 9-13, 2015 as a celebrity Ambassador to promote wildlife conservation for WildAid and its local partner CHANGE. The U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission in Vietnam gave opening remarks at a press conference in Hanoi on April 10 launching Maggie Q's activities in Vietnam and highlighting WildAid/CHANGE's campaign "Stop using Rhino Horn."

Their campaign has brought in a variety of celebrities, such as David Beckham and Jackie Chan, to film PSA's against rhino horn use. The U.S. Embassy also hosted Maggie Q for a talk with students on reducing demand for rhino horn in Vietnam and to conduct press interviews. The Embassy's campaign "Operation Game Change" (OGC) will coordinate with WildAid/CHANGE over the next year to leverage resources and collaborate to reduce rhino horn consumption in Vietnam. (Mission Vietnam ESTH, April 10, 2015)

Vietnam's Mekong Delta Study in Modeling Phase

Vietnam's National Mekong Committee (VNMC) and its lead international consultant DHI briefed international partners (USG and Australia) on the status of Vietnam's high-profile Mekong Delta Study on March 26. The Study is examining the expected impacts of 11 proposed mainstream Mekong hydropower dams on the Mekong Delta. The USG is providing technical support to the Study through USAID's Smart Infrastructure for the Mekong (SIM) program. Australia has devoted \$1 million to the Study, and the World Bank is also providing technical assistance. VNMC and DHI noted the Study was on track for completion by the end of 2015. The team is currently in the modeling phase. They are plugging baseline data into a series of sophisticated models to analyze the impacts of a variety of hydropower development scenarios. Early, unofficial models show expected significant impacts to sediment loads. (Mission Vietnam ESTH, March 27, 2015)

Employing USAID Mekong ARCC Ecosystems Service Valuation Guidelines to Make a Case for Conservation

While the concept of "natural capital" is widely recognized, understanding its value can be challenging. How do you compare the loss of a forest and its many intangible and often undocumented benefits against the economic returns from a building new highway? One answer is through ecosystem service valuation. USAID Mekong Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change project (USAID Mekong ARCC) worked with senior economist John Talberth from the World Resources Institute to develop four country-specific Ecosystem Services Valuation Guides for the Lower Mekong Basin countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. These guidelines include detailed explanations of ecosystem services, valuation methods and best practices, as well as policy recommendations for these Lower Mekong Basin countries. To learn more about ecosystem service valuation: <http://mekongarcc.net/blog/employing-ecosystems-service-valuation-guidelines-solve-metaphysical-riddles-and-make-case-cons> (USAID/RDMA Weekly Environment Update, 5/29/15)

NEWS ITEMS OF INTEREST (continued)

South African Cyclists Embark on Vietnam Trip to Save Rhinos

South African sisters of German descent have embarked on a 6,000 km cycling journey through Southeast Asia in a bid to raise awareness about rhino poaching. With the goal to win the war against rhino poaching in Asia, these two sisters have targeted Vietnam, China and Thailand, the main consumer markets for rhino horn, to educate youth in hopes of curbing the demand for rhino horn. (Vietnam ESTH, June 12, 2015)

Newly Expanded Mobile App Helps Combat Illegal Wildlife Trade in Vietnam

On May 11, 2015, Vietnam rolled out its version of WildScan, an endangered species identification and response app and tool to help local law enforcement more effectively combat wildlife trafficking. The launch included a training workshop for local law enforcement officials on the WildScan app which is designed to help them respond to wildlife trafficking, an illicit trade estimated at \$19 billion globally per year and run by organized criminal syndicates. Vietnam contributes significantly to that figure as a source, transit and destination country for endangered and protected species threatened by illegal trade. WildScan's Vietnamese version includes photos and critical information for over 300 endangered species and illegal wildlife products commonly trafficked into and throughout Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese upgrade of WildScan was supported by the Vietnamese Biodiversity Conservation Agency working in collaboration with Freeland, as part USAID's Asia's Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking program. The Thai version will be released in June. (USAID/RDMA Weekly Environment Update, May 15, 2015)

Mangrove Protection Project to Benefit Coastal Communities

Nearly 40 participants from around Asia explored the best ways to develop and enable mangrove conservation and restoration, carbon emission reduction and sustainable development at the "Income for Coastal Communities for Mangrove Protection" workshop held May 7 to 9 in Bangkok. Launched in February 2015, the project is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency through the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Participants validated the project's methodology for low-cost means for mangrove monitoring, developed a consensus on benefit distribution mechanisms for the coastal communities and discussed recommendations for project partners and project sites. (USAID/RDMA Weekly Environment Update, May 8, 2015)

China Promises Crackdown on Fake Air Quality Data

China's government to probe rigged air pollution data, while new research says manipulation of monitoring stations means air quality in Beijing is much worse than acknowledged. China's environment ministry will take two years to investigate manipulation of air quality data and claims some local officials had tampered or concocted air pollution figures, according to state media reported by Reuters. (Source: China Dialogue, April 9, 2015)

USAID Partners with InfraEx to Promote Clean Energy Infrastructure Projects

USAID's Private Financing Advisory Network-Asia (USAID PFAN-Asia) recently partnered with InfraEx, a new online platform that connects parties involved in delivering clean energy infrastructure projects, including project developers, investors and other related partners. InfraEx helps USAID PFAN-Asia projects promote themselves and their financing requests, providing additional visibility and opportunities to connect with key partners, particularly potential investors. USAID PFAN-Asia is looking to forge similar partnerships with other online platforms to support and mobilize financing for clean energy projects throughout the region. (USAID/RDMA Weekly Environment Update, March 23, 2015)

U.S. – China Meetings in Beijing on Climate, Environment, Wildlife, Forestry

A series of bilateral environment and climate meetings led by OES Acting Assistant Secretary Judy Garber, Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern, and DOE Acting Assistant Secretary Jon Elkind were held in Beijing during the week of March 16-20. The formal meetings were the Ten Year Framework (TYF), the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG), and the Bilateral Forum on Illegal Logging. Specific topics included climate change measures for cities and for transportation, energy efficiency, electricity systems, clean air, greenhouse gas data reporting, EcoPartnerships, carbon capture, forests and climate change, and HFCs. The overall tone was very positive. (Mission China ESTH, March 14-27, 2015)