

# Porous China-Myanmar border allowing illegal wildlife trade

March 16 2010

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Porous borders are allowing vendors in Myanmar to offer a door-to-door delivery service for illegal wildlife products such as tiger bone wine to buyers in China, according to TRAFFIC's latest snapshot into wildlife trade in China.

The State of Wildlife Trade in China 2008, released this week, is the third in an annual series on emerging trends in China's wildlife trade.

The report found that over-exploitation of wildlife for trade has affected many species and is stimulating illegal trade across China's borders.

"China's border areas have long been considered a hotbed for illegal trade, with remote locations often making surveillance a difficult problem in sparsely populated areas," said Professor Xu Hongfa, Director of TRAFFIC's programme in China

The illegal trade in Asian big cat products is a key issue at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) meeting, which began on 13 March and runs until 26 March.

The meeting is taking place in Doha, Qatar, where 175 countries will vote on measures that, if properly enforced, can end illegal [tiger](#) trade for good. Tigers are especially in the spotlight during this Year of the Tiger in the Chinese lunar calendar.

"Both TRAFFIC and WWF will be encouraging CITES Parties to enforce the law effectively in their own countries in order to end all [illegal trade](#)," said Colman O'Criodain, Wildlife Trade Analyst, WWF International.

Tiger and leopard parts were also found openly for sale in western China, although market surveys in 18 cities found just two places where such items were encountered. One of them—Bei Da Jie Market in Linxia city—has a history of trading in tiger products. There, a total of five surveys between late 2007 and 2008 found one tiger, 15 leopard and seven snow leopard skins for sale.

"There is clearly ongoing demand for leopard and tiger products, but the trade appears to be becoming less visible year-on-year," said Professor Xu, adding that it is unclear if it is because there is less trade in such products or it has become more covert and organized.

The report also examines the trade of other wildlife species in China. In southern China, TRAFFIC identified 26 species of freshwater turtles for sale. The majority of animals were claimed by vendors to be supplied from freshwater turtle farms—many of which do not practice closed-cycle captive breeding and therefore rely on wild-sourced breeding stock.

"If no action is taken, sourcing from the wild coupled with increased captive production to meet an expanding market demand will pose a serious threat to wild species through unsustainable harvesting from wild populations in China and beyond," said Professor Xu.

The report also highlights research into the legality of timber imported into [China](#) from source countries in Africa and South-East Asia, noting up to 30% discrepancies between reported import and export timber volumes.

Other topics covered include sustainable utilization of traditional medicinal plants, analysis of wildlife trade information, the Corallium trade in East Asia, tackling cross-border [illegal wildlife](#) trade on the China-Nepal border, and stopping illegal [wildlife trade](#) online.

Provided by World Wildlife Fund

Citation: Porous China-Myanmar border allowing illegal wildlife trade (2010, March 16)  
retrieved 26 April 2024 from  
<https://phys.org/news/2010-03-porous-china-myanmar-border-illegal-wildlife.html>

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