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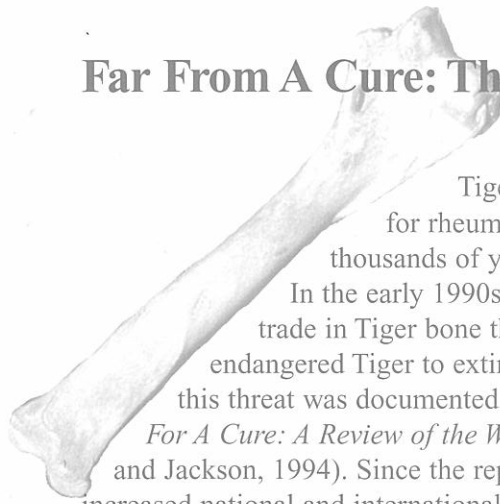
**THE  
TIGER  
TRADE  
REVISITED**

*A TRAFFIC  
Species in Danger  
report  
by Kristin Nowell*

A complete report is available.

**TRAFFIC**  
— NETWORK —

# Far From A Cure: The Tiger Trade Revisited



Tiger bone has been used as a treatment for rheumatism and related ailments for thousands of years in traditional Asian medicine.

In the early 1990s, it became evident that medicinal trade in Tiger bone threatened to drive the already endangered Tiger to extinction in the wild. The importance of this threat was documented in the 1994 TRAFFIC report, *Killed For A Cure: A Review of the Worldwide Trade in Tiger Bone* (Mills and Jackson, 1994). Since the report's publication, there has been increased national and international investment in Tiger conservation and trade control and promotion of substitutes for Tiger bone. But what progress there has been has brought new challenges and some old problems remain to be tackled. Relying primarily upon market surveys, *Far From A Cure* compares markets for Tigers and their parts and products in the late 1990s to the early 1990s, to examine the extent to which trade continues to threaten the Tiger going into the new millennium.

Nearly every part of the Tiger has a value. Live Tigers are sold as exotic pets. Traditional Asian medicine uses Tiger bone in a number of different formulae. Skin is made into magical amulets and novelties, as are teeth and claws, while Tiger penis is an ingredient of allegedly powerful sexual tonics. However, many of these products are fakes, made from the parts of more common animals. It is not clear what effect the plethora of fakes has on wild Tiger populations. Fakes may satisfy some demand which would otherwise have an impact on wild Tigers, or they may stimulate increased demand for genuine Tiger parts.

## THE SUPPLY



TRAFFIC India

Fake Tiger skin

Wild Tigers are not only killed illegally for trade, but also because they are a danger to people and prey on livestock. Poaching is frequently the result of such human-Tiger conflict. Despite such pressures the Tiger has not become extinct in any range State, despite fears in the early 1990s that this may happen. There has been greatly increased investment in all aspects of

Tiger conservation, including anti-poaching, biological monitoring, local community development, public education, and capacity-building. Progress in India, Nepal and the Russian Federation is particularly notable, although problems remain. Official seizures in the late 1990s fell, suggesting a decline in illegal trade (although seizure statistics alone cannot show trends without reference to records of enforcement and data-collection effort). In addition, prices reported for Tiger parts in range States are generally lower or unchanged from the 1990s. Major price increases would have increased the incentive to poach.

However, major illegal supplying markets still operate openly in key Southeast Asian range States, especially Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam. Trade volumes are sizeable and there has been little enforcement action against poachers and traders. Supplying markets elsewhere are more covert, but still operational. India and the Russian Federation supplied less Tiger bone in the late 1990s but a sizeable market for skins persists. Other large cats, such as Leopard *Panthera pardus*, are poached for substitutes for Tiger bone.

China and Thailand are home to several large captive collections of Tigers, called

Tiger farms, developed to explore the possibility of supplying the trade in Tiger bone. Trade bans have prevented these plans from coming to fruition, and today the farms function as tourist attractions, although there is some evidence of illegal trade from all of them. Proponents have argued that farms could relieve poaching pressure on wild populations, but others feel that wild Tigers are best protected by eliminating consumption and that Tiger farms jeopardize progress in that area.

### THE PROCESSING

Traditional preparations including raw Tiger bone would be mixed with herbs and other ingredients by a pharmacist or doctor. Previously, such medicines became factory-produced on a large scale, with China being the major producer of Tiger bone pills, plasters and medicinal wine. It is impossible to ascertain how much genuine Tiger bone these medicines contain. Current forensics techniques cannot detect the presence of Tiger bone in processed mixtures and many in the traditional medicine community say that these medicines are Tiger in name only. However, it is possible that real Tiger bone may have been used in highly diluted quantities. Manufacture of Tiger bone medicines has officially ceased in key former producer countries such as China and South Korea. China is promoting bone of *sailong* (a common type of mole rat) as a substitute for Tiger bone. Market surveys suggest that Tiger bone medicines seen for retail sale are mostly old stocks, rather than of recent production.



TRAFFIC Southeast Asia-Vietnam

“Tiger penis” and Tiger cao on sale in Ho Chi Minh City.

Tougher legislation was enacted in 1999 in the USA and Australia to prohibit trade in any product claiming to contain Tiger. Most CITES Parties now treat anything labelled as Tiger as real Tiger, providing a “safety net” while research continues towards finding forensic techniques to identify Tiger components accurately in processed medicines. In December 1999, the Japanese Government announced amendments to national legislation which already regulated Tiger hair, skins, teeth, claws and their derivatives, to ban the domestic sale of products containing Tiger bone and Tiger penis, as of April 2000.

However, they are still being produced in Vietnam and also possibly in Thailand and Malaysia. Counterfeit medicines labelled as containing Tiger bone were apparently being produced without official sanction in China. Many manufacturers have changed their packaging so that Tiger bone no longer appears in the contents. However, just as it is not possible to determine whether medicines labelled as containing Tiger bone really do, it is equally impossible to tell if the new medicines really do not.

### THE DEMAND

Surveys in major non-range consuming markets show that availability of Tiger bone medicines has declined. Increased enforcement of domestic trade bans and increased co-operation with the traditional medicine community have helped to reduce their retail sale and use. The first attitudinal studies carried out indicated that less than 5% of consumers surveyed in Hong Kong, Japan and the USA said they had ever taken Tiger bone medicines. Most said they supported wildlife conservation and would use alternatives if they were considered efficacious and readily available. However, they would still seek out Tiger bone if thought essential for treatment of illness.

Wholesale prices reported for raw Tiger bone on the black market in China and South Korea were lower in the late 1990s, suggesting a drop in demand from retail outlets. However, higher retail prices were reported, possibly reflecting the increased risks of selling Tiger bone at the retail level. Although imports of Tiger parts to Japan were prohibited in 1980 and imports of ‘pre-Convention’ manufactured

medicines were halted in 1993, domestic trade in medicines and tonics containing Tiger parts was widespread in the late 1990s. In December 1999, the Japanese Government announced amendments to its national legislation banning such products in domestic trade from April 2000.

Nonetheless, several range States have significant consumer markets for Tiger parts, especially Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia. Illegal retail trade in Tiger parts and products continues in China and several non-range consumer States, but in a more secretive fashion, making it difficult to assess trade organization and volume.

#### *CONTROLLING ILLEGAL INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN TIGER PRODUCTS*

Trade bans have led to a sharp decline in international trade in Tiger parts and products. Seizures reported by non-range consumer States have also declined over the 1990s. Two major range States, Cambodia and Myanmar, joined CITES in the late 1990s. Most range and non-range consumer States are now Party to CITES, with the exceptions of Bhutan, Lao PDR and North Korea. The Global Tiger Forum, proposed in 1994 for inter-governmental co-operation among range States, received the five national ratifications necessary for it to come into effect in 1999. Range States have signed a number of other bilateral and multi-lateral agreements relevant to Tiger conservation and trade control in the late 1990s. Trade control workshops were held in a number of range States to provide government officials with training and expertise.

The international trade now operates almost exclusively through smuggling, with large numbers of individuals smuggling small volumes of goods through a variety of channels. This type of trade is very difficult to eliminate.

#### *CONCLUSIONS*

Since the early 1990s, there has been greatly increased investment in Tiger conservation and trade controls. Significant progress has been made in reducing the use of Tiger bone in traditional Asian medicines. Progress is also evident in range States India, Indonesia, Nepal and Russia, where key Tiger populations have been protected by anti-poaching measures as well as by programmes which help local communities benefit from conservation.

However, despite an apparent substantial fall in consumption of Tiger bone medicines in former major consuming States, there is little evidence of a major reduction in poaching. While advances have been made in reducing its use in traditional Asian medicine, the fight to save the Tiger risks being lost if we become complacent. Traditional Asian medicine should continue to be treated as a leading threat to wild Tigers, while efforts to eliminate trade in skins and curios should be expanded.

Tiger bone medicines and tonics are an ancient tradition and people will try to obtain them, even at some risk, for years to come. If medicinal trade survives underground, it will provide an incentive for commercial poaching, increasing the risk of extinction for vulnerable wild populations. However, underground trade will be difficult to detect by conventional market survey techniques. Potential consumers of Tiger medicines are widely dispersed and number in the hundreds of millions, while there are not many more than 150 individual wild Tiger populations. In the future, it will be more efficient to prevent illegal trade by increasing law enforcement and trade monitoring capacity at the source of supply, in rural areas near wild populations.

**Tiger bone medicines on sale in South Korea.**



## *RECOMMENDATIONS*

### **In supplying markets,**

- Improved enforcement of trade bans, with aid on an international scale
- Development of programmes which provide incentives against poaching
- Boosting anti-poaching capacity
- Creation of specialized enforcement units, particularly in China
- Raising the political profile of Tiger conservation
- Participation of all range States in CITES and the Global Tiger Forum
- Integration of trade monitoring capacity into Tiger conservation projects
- Improved collection of poaching data, in order to gauge more accurately the impact of illegal trade on wild Tiger populations
- Regular monitoring of major wildlife markets
- Increased penalties for poaching and illegal trade
- Investment in managing human-Tiger conflict
- Enforcement of prohibitions against trade in any products from Tiger farming

### **In processing markets,**

- Increased attention to Tiger bone gelatin
- Ending the manufacture of Tiger tonics in Japan and Vietnam
- Examination of Tiger bone stocks in China
- Identification of producers of counterfeit Chinese Tiger bone medicines

### **In retail consumer markets,**

- More vigorous enforcement of domestic trade bans in certain countries, including use of specialized enforcement units for undercover investigations
- Continued close work with traditional medicine practitioners to eliminate Tiger trade and promote use of substitutes, with such work in Vietnam being of high priority
- Continuation of work to raise conservation awareness
- Careful discrimination between real and fake Tiger parts and products
- More consistent reporting of seizures to the CITES Secretariat
- Regular surveys of availability of Tiger parts and products to discern changes in the market
- More attitudinal surveys to identify and understand consumer demand
- Continued efforts to develop effective forensic techniques for identification of Tiger constituents in manufactured products
- Prohibition of trade in any products claiming to contain Tiger

TRAFFIC/Steven Broad



Tiger bone wine  
on sale in Manila,  
Philippines



TRAFFIC/Chris R. Shepherd

Tiger *Panthera  
tigris* skin on  
sale in Tachilek,  
Myanmar

The TRAFFIC Network is the world's largest wildlife trade monitoring programme with offices covering most parts of the world. TRAFFIC is a joint programme of IUCN-The World Conservation Union and WWF\*-World Wide Fund for Nature, established to help ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature. It works in close co-operation with the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

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**IUCN**  
The World Conservation Union

\* WWF continues to be known as World Wildlife Fund in the USA and Canada.

