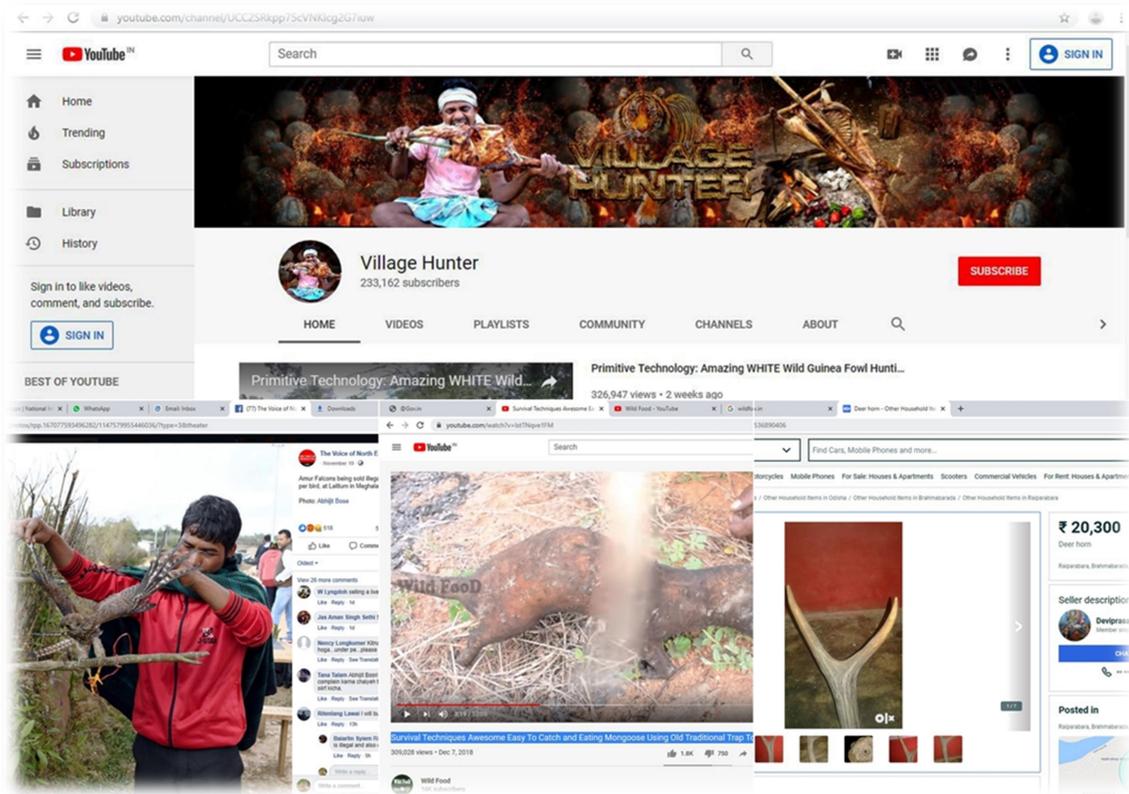




OPERATION WILDNET-II REPORT

WCCB's Countrywide Wildlife Enforcement Operation



WILDLIFE CRIME CONTROL BUREAU
IIND FLOOR, TRIKOOT-I, BHIKAJICAMA PLACE, NEW DELHI-110066

Report on Wildlife Crime Control Bureau's "OPERATION WILDNET-II"

From 1st November to 30th November 2019

INTRODUCTION:

The Internet has revolutionized the distribution and accessibility of information as well as economical activities. Over the past two decades, the rapid growth of the Internet has led to important changes in criminal activities, offering new opportunities and facilitating certain types of crime such as illegal wildlife trafficking. Considering offenders have now a global reach, they have access to international potential of sellers and buyers of illicit wildlife goods/articles. There are many tools that offenders can use to cover their tracks online, which restrict potential detection by authorities.

Wildlife traders are shifting away from the physical markets that have come under increased pressure from law enforcement agencies. Wildlife traffickers use existing legitimate platforms such as classified sites, online trade portals/online forums. However, in recent years, traffickers have mainly moved their illegal activities through social media. The increasing popularity of social media amongst traffickers can be explained by the many advantages they offer over more traditional online trade portals. Posting on social media is free, and traffickers can control their accessibility. Most of the social media platforms such as Facebook/WhatsApp/Instagram groups are set to a "closed" privacy setting requiring permission from a group administrator or an invitation from a group member in order to join. Traffickers can thus use social media to advertise and select customers while enjoying a broad audience.

Considering the increasing threat of online wildlife trade, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau had envisaged a multispecies enforcement operation, code named as "Operation WILDNET" in May, 2017 to drag the attention of the enforcement agencies towards online wildlife crime during which 7 cases of online trade of wild species and 36 e-commerce sites on which trade in wildlife was going on, were detected. Based on analysis of outcome of Operations WILDNET, meeting with representatives of online trade portals i.e. Olx, Quikr, Amazon, Snapdeal, Indiamart, Flipkart was conducted to discuss issues related to online illegal wildlife trade and to reach a consensus on sharing of information of merchandise offering wildlife

articles/products on their trade portals to facilitate legal action against offenders. On appeal of WCCB, olx also ran awareness campaign with coordination of WCCB in which advertisement consisting pictorial & one liner representation with appeal to protect wildlife were placed on olx webpage.



Another meeting to address the concern of rapidly increasing online illegal wildlife trade was conducted by WCCB and TRAFFIC-India on 12th September, 2019 in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change which was attended by the officials of MoEF&CC, National Tiger Conservation Authority, Central Zoo Authority, State Forest Departments, Paramilitary Forces, Delhi Police, Global Tiger Fund, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Wildlife Trust of India, WWF-India, TRAFFIC-India and representatives of Google India, Quikr, Flipkart, Indiamart, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). A consensus was had among participants to develop a mechanism for cooperation and collaboration among internet companies (Internet Service Provider/Application Service Provider) as well as online trade portals and enforcement agencies to tackle the menace of online illegal wildlife trade.

To drag the attention of enforcement agencies within the country to carry forward the legacy of earlier operation WILDNET, another pan India enforcement operation code named “Operation WILDNET-II”, was envisaged by Wildlife Crime Control Bureau.

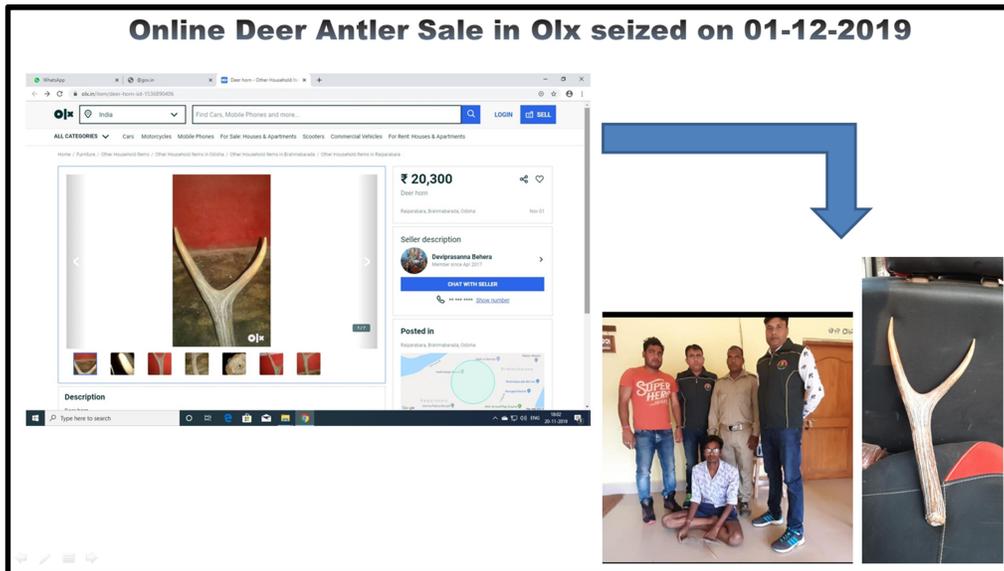


ABOUT OPERATION “WILDNET-II”

The operation started on 1st of November, 2019 and terminated on 30th November, 2019. The Enforcement agencies were requested to focus their attention on the ever increasing illegal wildlife trade over internet using Social Media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat etc. apart from various online classified sites and online trade portals, websites and blogspots. The Enforcement Agencies were requested to bring in the information about various platforms used by wildlife traders to market their illegal products and to apprehend them by conducting joint operation in coordination with WCCB. It was also requested to generate awareness among the general mass towards the menace of online wildlife crime and urge the support of the people towards demand reduction.

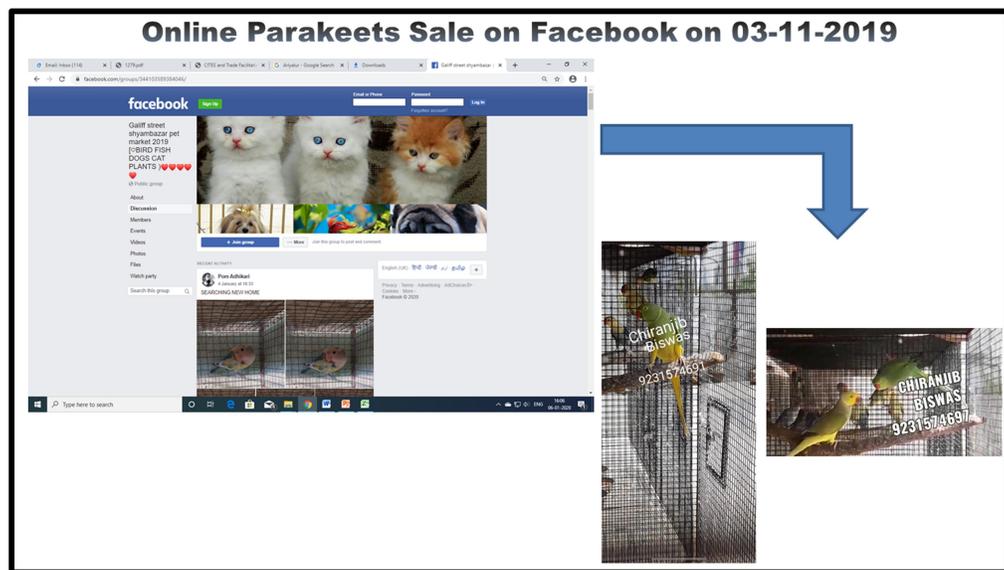
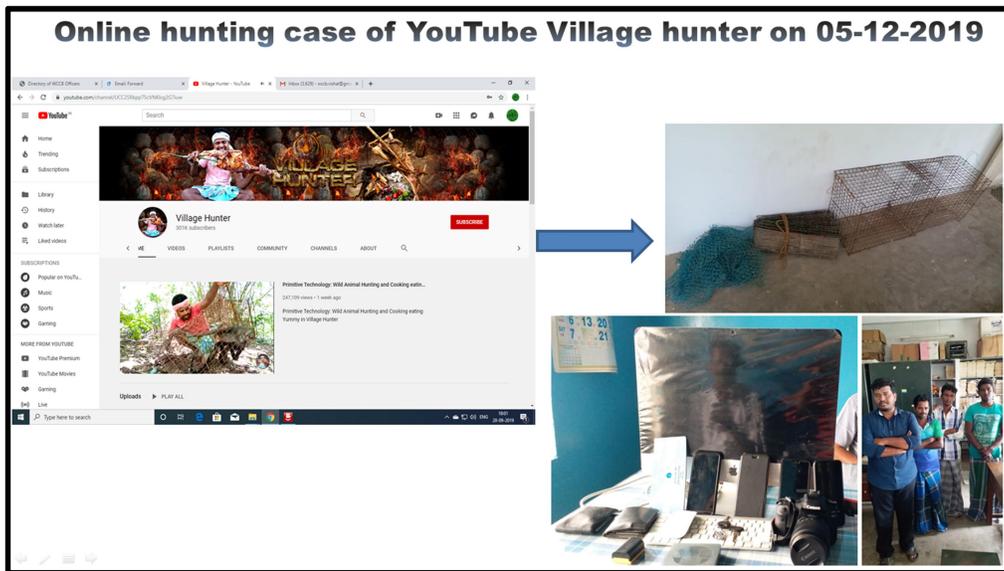
OUTCOME OF THE OPERATION:

During operation, cyber patrolling with focus to detect offers of wildlife articles/products was made extensively by WCCB. From the offers posted for online trading of wildlife articles, details were extracted through available information and actionable inputs were prepared and shared with State Enforcement Agencies to take action against the offenders. Online posts for trading of wildlife articles were detected from Adpost, Facebook, WhatsApp, OLX, Youtube, ExporterIndia and SuppliersIndia.com. Wide range of wild species including Falcon, Jackal nail, Monitor lizard Hemi penis, Snakes, Deer Antler, Wild Boar, Turtles, Pangolin, Mongoose hair brushes, Rhino Horn, Parakeets, Dove, Civet Cats, Hornbill, Corals, Trochus, Sea fans were found being traded online. Based on the actionable inputs extracted from available online posts with respect to wildlife trade, 09 criminal cases registered resulting in the arrest of 12 offenders and seizure of 14 Monitor Lizard Hemipenis, 5 Sea Fan, 14 Trochus, 01 Sand Boa snake, 4 Laughing Dove, 24 Parakeets and 01 Sambar Antler.



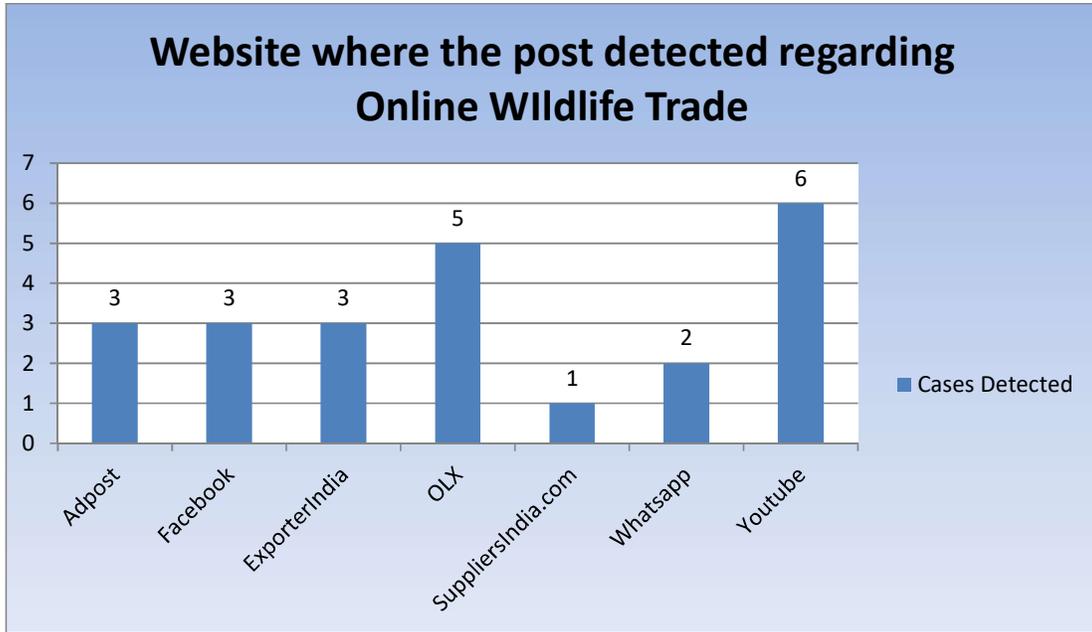
The Bureau noticed a YouTube channel "Village Hunter" on which videos of hunting of protected wild animals such as Monitor Lizard, Wild Hare, Palm Civet, Partridges, Dove etc. were being uploaded for viewers in contravention of provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. To gather details of the suspects running the said channel, YouTube was contacted and requested to block the channel and to provide the details of channel account holder, however WCCB did not get the

adequate response. With consistent cyber persuasion, the account holders of the above said YouTube channel were identified and 04 accused were arrested in a joint operation conducted by WCCB and Tamilnadu Forest Department for poaching of scheduled wild species and uploading of hunting, snaring, cooking and eating videos of Wild animals on YouTube channel “Village Hunter”.



Online cases detected during operation Wildnet-II

Cases Detected	Case Registered	Total States	Website detected	Types of Species detected
25	9	14	9	18



Sensitization/Awareness program conducted during the Operation

During the period of operation, 9 sensitization programs were conducted for stake holders in the country and officers of other enforcement agencies. A total of 521 officers from Forest, Police, Airport staff, Border Guarding Forces, Custom were sensitized on issues related to illegal online wildlife activities and methods to detect activities related to online wildlife trade.



03 awareness programs for representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Students as well as teachers were conducted by WCCB to generate awareness towards increasing online wildlife trade and its ill effects on biodiversity and how to fight against it. 207 PRI members participated in these awareness programs.



Cases Registered during OPERATION WILDNET-II

S.N	Date	Website/ Portals	Location	Quantity	Species	No of Arrests
1.	20.11.2019	Private Portal	Jodhpur, Rajasthan	5 No. +14 No.	Sea Fan + Moti Shankh	1
2.	01.12.2019	OLX	Jajpur, Odisha	1 No.	Sambar Antler	1
3.	12.11.2019	Forum	Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh	1 No.	Sand Boa	1
4.	05.11.2019	Whatsapp	Ranchi, Jharkhand	24 No.	Hathajodi	1
5.	03.11.2019	Facebook	Kolkata, West Bengal	9 No.	Parakeets	1
6.	03.11.2019	Whatsapp	Kolkata, West Bengal	7 No.	Parakeets	1
7.	03.11.2019	Whatsapp	Kolkata, West Bengal	8 No.	Parakeets	1
8.	06.12.2019	YouTube	Ariyalur, Tamil Nadu	1 No.	Snares(Illegal hunting of Schedules Species On Youtube)	4
9.	06.12.2019	Facebook	Trichy, Tamil Nadu	4 No.	Laughing Dove	1

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Wild meat dishes fetch TN poachers Rs 1.5 lakh every month on YouTube, nabbed after 10 months

Hailing from Nachiyarpettai in Ariyalur district, the accused were seen hunting wild boar, civet, rabbit, iguana, partridge, hare, Indian monitor lizard and dove and cooking and eating them.

Published: 07th December 2019 04:44 AM | Last Updated: 07th December 2019 09:13 AM



The videos became popular and the channel got about 5.59 lakh subscribers. (File Photo | AP)

By P Thiruselvam
Express News Service

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2019/dec/07/chilli-trail-snuffs-out-poachers-youtube-spell-2072633.html>

Decoding solutions to end online wildlife crime in India: Enforcement agencies, internet companies and industry leaders to collaborate

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Posted on 16 September 2019 | 0 Comments

New Delhi: An important "Stakeholders meeting to find measures to help curb illegal wildlife trade on cyberspace in India" took place on 12th September, organised by TRAFFIC and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Government of India in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy, New Delhi and WWF-India at the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEF&CC), New Delhi.

The meeting enabled creation of a common platform for wildlife law enforcement agencies, internet-based companies, policy makers and market leaders to highlight and discuss problems and solutions for curbing online wildlife crime and build and strengthen mutual co-operation and collaboration.

More than 50 senior officials from various wildlife law enforcement agencies—State forest department, Paramilitary forces (SSB, ITBP, CISF, BSF and Assam Rifles), Police—plus internet companies including Google India, Flipkart, IndiaMART and representatives from FICCI and CII, CZA, NTCA, GTF, IFAW, IUCN and WTI attended.

Participants recommended extending current Information and Technology legislation to include wildlife crime, raising consumer awareness to influence buying choices, capacity building for law enforcement officials and creating a common forum that will bring all stakeholders on one platform to help find and implement ways to curb

https://www.wwfindia.org/news_facts/pres/?18661/Decoding-solutions-to-end-online-wildlife-crime-in-India

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