

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES  
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

Seventy-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee  
Geneva (Switzerland), 6–10 November 2023

Illegal trade and enforcement

Asian big cats (*Felidae* spp.)

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. In [Resolution Conf. 12.5 \(Rev. CoP19\)](#) on *Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species*, paragraph 2 a), the Conference of the Parties instructs the Secretariat to:
  - a) *report to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties on the status of Asian big cats in the wild, their conservation, and trade controls in place in Parties, using information provided by the range States on measures taken to comply with this Resolution and related relevant Decisions and any relevant additional information provided by relevant countries;*
3. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 19.109, and revised Decisions 18.102 (Rev. CoP19), 18.103 (Rev. CoP19), 18.107 (Rev. CoP19), 18.108 (Rev. CoP19), and 18.109 (Rev. CoP19) on *Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)*. At its 18th meeting (CoP18; Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.100, 18.101, 18.105, and 18.106 on *Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)*, which remain in effect. At its 14th meeting (CoP14; The Hague, 2007), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decision 14.69 on *Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)*, which also remains in effect. These Decisions are contained in Annex 1 to the present document.
4. The implementation of Decisions 14.69, 18.102 (Rev. CoP19) and 18.108 (Rev. CoP19) is reported on in document SC77 Doc. 41.2 on *Asian big cats in captivity* and, for the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), in document SC77 Doc. 33.10 on *Article XIII process in Lao People's Democratic Republic*. Matters concerning big cats are also addressed in document [SC77 Doc. 39.3](#) on the *CITES Big Cats Task Force*.
5. The Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2023/051](#) on *Request for materials for the identification of specimens of CITES-listed species* on 20 April 2023 inviting Parties to provide the Secretariat with information on forensic research projects – including genetic and other methods – undertaken in their territory focusing on the development of techniques to support addressing illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens, as anticipated by Decision 19.109, paragraph a). Information in this regard was received from Thailand as highlighted in paragraph 68 of the present document. Thailand's response is also available in Annex 2 to the present document.
6. On 21 July 2023, the Secretariat also issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2023/091](#) on *Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)* inviting Parties to submit information to the Secretariat on their implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) and Decisions 14.69, 19.109, 18.100, 18.101, 18.102 (Rev. CoP19), 18.103 (Rev. CoP19), 18.105 and 18.106.
7. In response to Notification to the Parties No. 2023/091, the Secretariat received reports from Cambodia, China, India, Israel, Slovakia, South Africa, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. The Secretariat thanks these Parties for the reports submitted. These are compiled in Annex 2 to the present document, in the language and format in which they were received. The Secretariat briefly summarizes key aspects contained in the reporting received from Parties in paragraphs 9 to 73 below.

## Conservation status and measures

### *Tigers (Panthera tigris)*

8. Regarding the conservation status of tigers (*Panthera tigris*), the Secretariat notes the relevance of a [press release](#) by the Global Tiger Forum (GTF), an intergovernmental organization that addresses international tiger conservation issues. This release states that the global wild tiger (*Panthera tigris*) population has shown positive signs of growth, with an overall increase in several tiger range States, reaching almost 5,600 tigers as of July 2023. Notably, South Asian countries like India and Nepal have doubled their tiger numbers since the [St. Petersburg Declaration on Tiger Conservation](#) in 2010, while Bangladesh and Bhutan have maintained stable and increasing populations. The release further highlights that tiger populations in the Russian Federation show an increase and that China is working towards restoring tiger populations in certain areas. It also states that the wild tiger situation in South-East Asia is largely sub-optimal with countries like Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), and Viet Nam facing local extinction.

### *Cambodia*

9. In its response to the Notification, Cambodia highlights that the conservation status of Asian big cats in Cambodia is uncertain due to limited research and that tigers have not been recorded in the country since 2007. Presently, a few leopards and dozens of clouded leopards are reported to exist in three regions of Cambodia: Cardamom Mountain, Northern, and north-eastern forests protected by the 17,000 km<sup>2</sup> Cardamom Rainforest Landscape (CRL).
10. The Indochinese leopard population has significantly declined in Cambodia and the only potentially viable population remaining in the country occurs in the Eastern Plains Landscape of Cambodia. A survey covering two protected areas in Cambodia's Eastern Plains Landscape, along with data from seven camera trap surveys between 2009 and 2019, indicated an 82% decline in the leopard population over 11 years, with an estimated annual loss of 42%. A subsequent 2021 survey did not detect any leopards at all.
11. Key conservation efforts in Cambodia include the establishment of a Tiger Action Plan in 2004 and the subsequent Cambodia Tiger Action Plan (CTAP) 2011-2022. Despite challenges such as changes in governmental responsibilities, steps have been taken to combat poaching through patrolling, law enforcement, including with support from organizations like Wildlife Alliance and the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).
12. Cambodia reports that its Zero-Snaring Campaigns are successful. Through these campaigns, more than 35,000 snares were removed in 2022 across Cambodia's protected areas. A decrease in snares was observed in 2022 suggesting that less snares are being placed. Snares detected in 2022 showed a nearly 44% decrease compared to the more than 60,000 snares removed in 2021.
13. Wildlife corridors spanning over a million hectares have been established to bolster wildlife and biodiversity conservation efforts. In August 2023, Cambodia integrated several wildlife corridors into these protected areas, effectively expanding habitats for wildlife.
14. Through a government initiative known as the Tiger Re-introduction programme, a male and female tiger were introduced to Southwestern Cambodia's Cardamom Mountain region in 2022.

### *China*

15. China reports that it has established five national parks and tens of thousands of nature reserves, collectively covering over 170 million hectares of land, and that this expansive network constitutes approximately 18% of the country's total land area. The government strengthened patrols; promoted habitat restoration; and established parks like the Northeast Tiger and Leopard National Park and Sanjiangyuan National Park. According to China, these efforts have contributed to a steady increase in the populations of big cats such as tigers, leopards, and snow leopards in the country.
16. To strengthen communication with range countries and promote cross-border conservation actions, China actively engages in international forums like the Global Tiger Forum, the Asian Tiger Conservation Ministerial Conference, and the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Project Steering Committee.

### *India*

17. India implemented significant measures for the conservation and protection of tigers and other wildlife. These include the establishment of the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Tiger and Other Endangered

Species Crime Control Bureau; strengthening anti-poaching activities; and adopting a scientific methodology for estimating tiger populations. The tiger, the Asiatic lion, the leopard, the snow leopard and the cheetah, have all been given the highest protection under India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

18. India currently has a network of over 900 protected areas, including 53 that are designated as tiger reserves. These reserves encompass both core tiger habitats (41,499.37 sq. km) and buffer areas (34,297.46 sq. km).
19. The 5th cycle of All India Tiger Estimation report released in 2022 during the 50-year celebration of Project Tiger shows that, based on data from camera-trapped areas, India has a minimum of 3,167 tigers. Further analysis by the Wildlife Institute of India, encompassing both camera-trapped and non-camera-trapped tiger regions, estimates the tiger population at a maximum of 3,925 and an average of 3,682. This indicates a notable annual growth rate of 6.1%.
20. India has entered into bilateral agreements and engages in international cooperation to advance its tiger and wildlife conservation efforts. Notably, India has signed a bilateral agreement with Cambodia to assess the on-the-ground situation and determine capacity-building needs for a tiger reintroduction initiative in Cambodia. Subsequently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed with Cambodia, focusing on cooperation in biodiversity conservation and the development of sustainable wildlife management strategies for the recovering of tiger populations and their habitats. India also maintains bilateral collaboration with Nepal in support of conservation and to combat transboundary illegal wildlife trade. Moreover, it has a protocol with China for tiger conservation and a similar protocol with Bangladesh for the preservation of the Royal Bengal Tiger in the Sunderban. India also established a sub-group for tiger and leopard conservation in collaboration with the Russian Federation. Additionally, India has signed an MoU with Myanmar for cooperation on combating timber trafficking and conserving tigers and wildlife. India also actively contributes to the Global Tiger Forum.
21. India highlights that, in 2023, its Prime Minister launched the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), aimed at conserving seven major big cat species, including the tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar and puma.

#### *Israel*

22. Israel notes inaccuracies in the CITES Checklist, stating that it lists Israel as a range State for cheetah and leopard, despite their local extinction. These species have not been observed for years and no plans exist for their reintroduction. The response also acknowledged the existence of four other species of wild Felidae within its jurisdiction, all of which are comprehensively protected under Israeli law.

#### *Thailand*

23. Thailand reported that Asian big cats, including tigers, leopards, and clouded leopards, are protected under its Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act (WARPA).
24. Regarding conservation status and measures, Thailand reports that the 2022 estimation of the wild tiger population in the country is 148 to 189 individuals. Four main forest complexes, including Western Forest Complex (WEFCOM), Kaeng Krachan-Kui Buri Forest Complex, Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex, and Hala-Bala-Bang Lang Forest Complex, have been identified as tiger habitats. The Western Forest Complex (WEFCOM) holds over 85% of the wild tiger population, and the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex holds over 10% of the population. The tiger population significantly increased within the Western Forest Complex, expanding into other protected areas, with an increase of over 100% from 41 individuals in 2014 to 100 individuals in 2022.
25. Thailand employs camera traps in key tiger habitats for long-term population monitoring, resulting in an image database with over 300 wild tigers. This resource serves not only for research purposes but also aids enforcement by identifying wild tigers and combating poaching.
26. Thailand's National Tiger Conservation Action Plan for 2022-2034 focuses on protecting key habitats; enhancing ranger capacities; deploying SMART Patrol for anti-poaching efforts; restoring tiger populations; and implementing prey recovery plans. The plan includes maintaining tiger databases for both wild and captive tigers, with funding support from the Global Environmental Facility's Eighth Replenishment Period (GEF-8).
27. Regarding awareness-raising, Thailand conducts annual World Tiger Day celebrations in collaboration with conservation agencies and related organizations to educate the public about the tiger's ecological

significance and encourage conservation. In 2023, the event focused on "Move Forward to Sustainable Tigers Conservation", aiming to advance the conservation of tigers.

#### *United States of America*

28. The United States of America reports that its Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund is dedicated to supporting initiatives that facilitate the recovery of tiger populations in the wild, in line with paragraph 6 of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19). Since 2018, the USFWS granted a total of 64 awards, amounting to over USD 11.4 million, to support projects focused on tiger conservation in countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Russian Federation, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The funding from USFWS serves to advance tiger conservation by fostering the protection of tigers and their habitats; engaging local communities through alternative livelihoods and involvement; addressing human-tiger conflicts; implementing community-based livestock insurance programmes; restoring habitats to bolster prey populations; providing training and resources for monitoring tiger populations and their prey; and combatting the trafficking of tiger part and derivatives, while also reducing the demand for them.

#### Enforcement measures and activities to address illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens

##### *Cambodia*

29. Regarding implementation of Decision 18.100, Cambodia reports that, from 2022 to 2023, its authorities confiscated tiger specimens from illegal trade in two cases, amounting to a total of 144 specimens including 5.5 kg of tiger bone.

##### *China*

30. China revised its Wildlife Protection Law on 30 December 2022 to enhance collaboration among law enforcement agencies and increase penalties for illegal activities. China also set up a Joint Inter-Ministerial Conference on Combating Illegal Trade in Wildlife, involving 27 ministries, and the Inter-Departmental Coordination Group on CITES Law enforcement, consisting of nine ministries. These entities have collectively executed various national level enforcement operations to combat illegal trade in wildlife, including illegal trade in tiger specimens. Furthermore, China actively participates in international law enforcement initiatives like the "Thunder" series of operations to combat illegal wildlife trade.
31. China conducts annual public awareness campaigns and themed initiatives that coincide with events such as World Wildlife Day and Wildlife Protection Month to raise awareness about wildlife protection and illegal trade.

##### *Slovakia*

32. In the period from June 2020 to August 2023, the Slovak Environmental Inspectorate carried out enforcement inspections targeting facilities and individuals housing live or dead Felidae specimens, resulting in the detection of administrative offenses in eight instances involving species such as *Panthera leo*, *Panthera pardus* and *Panthera tigris*. Fines totalling EUR 2,550 were imposed in this regard. During these inspections, 13 samples of tiger hairs were collected from both live and dead tigers to support the TIGRIS ID project in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, ongoing efforts involve the collection and storing of samples from these tigers for national purposes at the National ZOO Bojnice. Additionally, in March 2023, a Slovak importer faced a fine of EUR 2,000 (or 6 months imprisonment) for illegally importing a tiger hunting trophy from South Africa.

##### *South Africa*

33. In relation to the implementation of Decision 18.100, South Africa highlights that, between 2016 and 2021, its Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) recorded very few seizures involving Asian big cat parts and derivatives within the country.
34. DFFE provides training to first responders, including customs and police officials, to support identification and detection of illegally traded wildlife specimens. Whenever information regarding alleged illegal tiger trade or trade in tiger parts and derivatives is received, thorough investigations are undertaken. However, to date, no significant cases or convictions related to the illegal trade of tigers have been documented.
35. Regarding the implementation of Decision 18.101, South Africa reports that there are no tourist markets in the country contributing to illicit cross-border trade involving Asian big cat specimens.

#### *Thailand*

36. Thailand is collaborating closely with the Lao People's Democratic Republic to address illegal trade along their shared border. Both countries are currently working on developing a bilateral agreement aimed at strengthening enforcement cooperation and enhancing their joint efforts against illegal wildlife trade.

#### *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

37. The United Kingdom enacted comprehensive legislation and the United Kingdom Border Force has remained active in seizing big cat specimens, which, in 2021 included pendants, skins, rugs, coats, and live animals.
38. The United Kingdom's [Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund](#) has allocated funding to numerous projects dedicated to combating illegal wildlife trade involving big cats. Several ongoing initiatives focus on safeguarding species like the tiger, striving to mitigate threats to these wild animals and reduce demand for illicit trade. The United Kingdom remains a member of and contributor to the Global Tiger Forum.

#### *United States of America*

39. In its report, the United States submitted a dataset of Asian big cats specimen seizures. The data shows that 98 seizures of *Panthera tigris* specimens, 34 seizures of *Panthera pardus* specimens (unclear if any of the *Panthera pardus* specimens were from the Asian range) and one seizure of *Neofelis nebulosa* were made between 2018 and August 2023. The Secretariat encourages the United States to include any seizures of specimens of Asian big cats in its annual illegal trade report using the report format and the most recent version of the *Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report*. This will enable the data to be incorporated into the CITES Illegal Trade Database.

#### Reduction of demand for illegal tiger and other Asian big cat specimens

##### *South Africa*

40. Regarding Decision 18.106, South Africa reports that it is not a consumer State for specimens of tiger and other Asian big cat species.

##### *Thailand*

41. Thailand reports that the non-governmental organisation WildAid, in partnership with its Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), organized a campaign to reduce demand driven by cultural beliefs, for wildlife products such as ivory and tiger parts. This included increasing awareness about wildlife trafficking and applicable legislation. Printed materials were created for dissemination among monks and nuns to educate the public about laws and penalties related to wildlife protection.

#### Asian big cats in captivity

42. Responses to Notification to the Parties [No. 2023/091](#) related to Asian big cats in captivity are summarized in paragraphs 43 to 63 below. Additional information on Asian big cats kept in captivity submitted to the Secretariat by Parties in the context of the work conducted in accordance with Decision 18.108 (Rev. CoP19) is available in Annex 2 to document SC77 Doc. 41.2.

##### *China*

43. China has taken strict measures to control tigers and their products. In 1993, China prohibited tiger bone usage for medicinal purposes and, since 2018, it further tightened control measures and banned the sale, purchase, delivery, carrying, transportation, import and export of tigers and their products. China also reports that there are no commercial breeding facilities for tigers in China.

##### *Israel*

44. Israel confirmed that there are no commercial operations or trade involving live wild Felidae species or any of their parts and derivatives within its territory.

45. There are a limited number of non-commercial zoos in Israel that house tigers, caracals, lions, and other wild Felidae species for educational purposes. These facilities are closely monitored by the authority, and no trade involving live specimens or any parts and derivatives takes place.

#### Slovakia

46. Slovakia highlights a range of actions implemented between June 2020 and August 2023 to tackle issues related to the implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19). These actions encompass measures such as limiting export permits; enacting legislative bans on possession; conducting enforcement inspections; engaging in genetic research collaborations; and imposing fines for unlawful imports.
47. Slovakia implemented a legislative ban on the possession of specimens belonging to the genera *Panthera*, *Neofelis*, *Lynx*, *Acinonyx*, and *Puma* within its territory. This ban includes exceptions for the purposes of species protection and for retaining specimens obtained prior to the ban entered into force. The ban was enacted in the national CITES legislation and entered into force on 1 March 2022. The legislative obligations pertaining to record-keeping, notifications of changes, marking, and disposal of dead specimens, remain in effect.
48. The stricter legislative measures in place in Slovakia since 1 March 2022 also aim to enhance enforcement regarding the handling of dead Felidae specimens. If a specimen has died and the holder chooses to retain the processed skin or the entire stuffed body, it is obligatory for the holder to create prescribed photo documentation. This documentation becomes part of the records detailing the handling of the dead specimen.
49. Slovakia further reports that, at the European Union (EU) level, a [guidance document](#) concerning the export, re-export, and intra-EU trade of captive-born and bred live tigers, as well as their parts and derivatives, was adopted in April 2023.

#### South Africa

50. South Africa's response includes information on a requirement for registration with provincial Management Authorities for international trade in Appendix-I species, record-keeping obligations, and specimen marking. South Africa notes that its legislation is adequate for CITES implementation, to investigate illegal trade. It employs enforcement methods such as anti-money laundering approaches and intelligence-led enforcement. Tigers are regulated under provincial legislation. While intensive commercial tiger breeding occurs, exports primarily go to zoos and exhibition facilities for non-commercial purposes. South Africa shares genetic samples with research projects focused on addressing illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens. South Africa observed few seizures of Asian big cat parts and derivatives within its territory. According to the Party, there is no evidence of large-scale illegal trade originating from South Africa. The response also makes reference to the mission of the CITES Secretariat (see document SC77 Doc. 41.2).
51. South Africa provides information on the requirements outlined in its national CITES regulations published under the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEMBA). It stipulates that all individuals intending to internationally trade in specimens of species listed in Appendix I of CITES (including *Panthera tigris*), must be registered with the provincial Management Authority of South Africa. Furthermore, those desiring to produce/breed animals in captivity for international commercial trade purposes, including species listed in Appendix I, are required to be registered with the provincial Management Authority and with the CITES Secretariat for captive-bred animals for commercial trade.
52. Persons registered with the provincial Management Authority for captive breeding for international trade are obliged to maintain records of parental stock and captive-bred offspring for future trading purposes. Transaction records are to be retained for a period of five years. The Management Authority retains the right to inspect the premises and records of registered individuals at any given time.
53. Additionally, the trading of specimens of animal species listed in Appendix I, which have been bred in captivity, is only permissible if they originate from a breeding operation registered by the provincial Management Authority, in accordance with national CITES regulation, and have been individually and permanently marked in a manner that makes unauthorized alteration or modification difficult. The process of marking or tagging specimens must adhere to the relevant Resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Parties.
54. South Africa's report indicates that domestic matters related to tigers, such as regulation of tiger-keeping facilities and activities involving tigers (which do not include international trade), are currently regulated by provincial legislation within some provinces of the country, rather than national legislation. This implies that

in some of the provinces, individuals are permitted to possess or keep a tiger without requiring a permit. This matter is also highlighted in document SC77 Doc. 41.2 and further addressed in that document.

55. South Africa also provides details about its implementation of Decision 14.69. The Party notes that, despite having extensive commercial-scale tiger breeding operations, the majority of these tigers are exported as live animals to zoos, safari parks, and exhibition facilities, where they are imported for non-commercial purposes. As a result, tigers are not bred specifically for trading in their parts and derivatives. Only a limited number of tiger products have been confiscated by authorities in recent years. Ongoing collaborative efforts between different agencies ensure compliance. Operations and investigations to combat illegal wildlife trade, both within the country and at ports, are implemented when alleged cases of illegal trade in tiger specimens arise.

#### *Thailand*

56. Thailand reports that commercial captive breeding in Asian big cat species, including tigers, leopards, and clouded leopards is not permitted. Breeding activities are undertaken primarily for non-commercial purposes, such as research and zoo purposes. Thailand significantly enhanced the penalties for violations under WARPA since 2019. Notably, the maximum imprisonment term has been increased from 4 to 10 years, and the maximum fine has been raised from Baht 40,000 (approximately USD 1,150) to Baht 1,000,000 (approximately USD 29,000) for offenses such as poaching and illegal import of, export of, and domestic trade in protected species. Non-compliance with these regulations could lead to the suspension or revocation of permits and certificates, including those for zoos. Revised provisions for zoos aim to strengthen regulations against illicit wildlife trade linked to these facilities and set clear guidelines for zoo standards and control measures. The requirement to report any changes in the possession of wildlife within zoos is obligatory.
57. As a response to the changes in WARPA, Thailand will revise the subordinate laws governing zoo operations. Meanwhile, the subordinate laws from WARPA 1992 will remain in effect until new regulations are introduced under WARPA 2019. This includes the Ministerial Regulation that outlines the application and issuance of permits for establishing and operating private zoos. The regulation provides detailed guidelines regarding eligibility, requirements, and the application process for obtaining a zoo permit. One of the requirements for obtaining a permit is the inclusion of a wildlife population management plan that aligns with the zoo's utilization and capacity. This approach will help regulate the number of big cats kept within zoo facilities. Additionally, the draft includes provisions that permit the establishment of species-specific requirements to address particular concerns that may arise. For instance, restrictions might be imposed on tiger populations bred within zoos. The draft regulation is presently undergoing a public hearing process as required by the Constitution of Thailand, and necessary amendments will be made before the regulation is officially enacted.
58. Alongside the Ministerial Regulation, the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) is drafting a regulation that governs the operations of both private and government zoos, covering various areas such as the maintenance of facilities for keeping and exhibiting animals, ensuring their care and welfare, prioritizing safety measures, promoting public education, and addressing other relevant factors. These forthcoming provisions are intended to provide clear and detailed instructions to officers responsible for the monitoring of zoo facilities.
59. The development of the subordinate regulations is primarily influenced by the guidance provided during the mission of the CITES Secretariat to Thailand in February 2023, in conjunction with the outcomes from a five-day workshop held in June 2023. The workshop aimed to enhance participants' understanding of legal and administrative measures related to the management of captive tigers; foster the sharing of experiences and addressing challenges; and engage in discussions to enhance enforcement efforts and data management strategies.
60. The DNP is actively engaged in the creation of a dedicated online database for captive tigers. This database will be comprehensive, containing information such as photographs capturing distinctive stripe patterns, microchip numbers, parental details, and genetic data. This systematic approach aims to reduce administrative errors; enhance data management; and provide a user-friendly platform for relevant users. Zoos will have the capability to submit online reports regarding births and deaths of tigers. Furthermore, officers with various responsibilities, from genetic analysis to field inspections, will have access to and management of essential data. This streamlined system will ensure that up-to-date information is readily available to support monitoring and enforcement efforts.

61. Finally, Thailand highlighted that, in 2021, a successful combination of genetic analysis and stripe-pattern information of tigers resulted in the revocation of a zoo permit and legal action against the zoo owner for the illegal possession of tigers.

#### *United States of America*

62. The United States' response includes a summary of the Big Cat Public Safety Act; information regarding financial and technical support for Asian big cat conservation; and insights from the National Fish and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory on forensic analytical techniques specific to Asian big cats. Detailed information is available in Annex 2 to the present document.
63. The [Big Cat Public Safety Act \(BCPSA\)](#) was signed into law on 20 December 2022. The purpose of the BCPSA is to amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 (16 U.S.C. 3371–3378) to clarify provisions enacted by the Captive Wildlife Safety Act (CWSA) and to further the conservation of certain wildlife species, including ending private ownership of big cats as pets and prohibiting exhibitors from allowing direct public contact with big cats, including cubs. The BCPSA aims to ensure the health and welfare of big cats; protect the public from the dangers associated with private ownership of big cats; and strengthen the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) ability to combat wildlife trafficking. The Act introduces new restrictions on the commerce, breeding, possession, and use of certain big cat species. To legally possess privately owned big cats, individuals or entities must register any big cat(s) that were in their possession before the date of enactment with the USFWS, unless another exception of the Act applies. For more information, see "What You Need to Know About the Big Cat Public Safety Act" which can be found at the USFWS site: <https://www.fws.gov/what-you-need-know-about-big-cat-public-safety-act>.

#### Wildlife forensics related to Asian big cat specimens

##### *Slovakia*

64. Slovakia highlighted the positive collaboration between Slovakia and the Czech Republic. From 2020 to 2023, the Slovak Environmental Inspectorate (SEI) shared samples extracted from 13 tigers in Slovakia (9 from live specimens and 4 from dead specimens) for the TIGRIS ID genetic research project. SEI intends to continue providing samples for the project, particularly from dead specimens.

##### *South Africa*

65. South Africa emphasized its dedication to offering samples of Asian big cat specimens from living animals, seized animals, or products potentially containing DNA of these species. These samples will be shared with genetic research projects aimed at developing techniques to combat the illicit trade in Asian big cat specimens as they become accessible.

##### *Thailand*

66. Thailand is continuing its efforts to compile genetic data from captive tigers. This involves genetic analysis using Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs) as part of the Counter Illegal Wildlife Trade Project (CIWT-GEF6). Collaborating with the TRACE-Wildlife Forensic Network, the aim is to create a comprehensive genetic database. This database aims to aid in identifying genetic relationships among captive tigers within Thailand, including parent-offspring and individual identification. Additionally, the database will be interconnected with genetic information from captive tiger populations in neighbouring countries, allowing for comparison of genetic data between captive tigers in Thailand and those in neighbouring countries once completed.
67. Further, Thailand is also engaged in the development of a Microsatellites (Short Tandem Repeats / STRs) genotyping technique alongside SNP genotyping. This method utilizes a reduced number of markers and is versatile, capable of analysing various sample types such as tissue, blood, saliva, hair, and even faeces. The Microsatellites technique has already been applied to analyse genetic data from wild tigers. If used for both captive and wild tigers, this approach would simplify the comparison and correlation of genetic relationships, including parent-offspring and individual identification, within Thailand's captive and wild tiger populations. Additionally, this technique could aid in tracing the origins of confiscated tigers that originated within Thailand. The development of the Microsatellites genotyping technique is supported by WWF-Thailand.
68. In Thailand, DNA tests are conducted when there is doubt about an individual's identity, and microsatellite techniques are employed in prosecuting cases to establish parental relationships. Individual tigers have been identified by using microchip and stripe pattern. Concerning identification by stripe patterns, Thailand



provided the following link to an article published on 11 March 2009 and entitled *A tiger cannot change its stripes: using a three-dimensional model to match images of living tigers and tiger skins*: <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2009.0028>. The Secretariat notes that the publication is not freely accessible online and may require payment or a subscription to access it.

#### *United States of America*

69. Regarding forensic analytical techniques specific to Asian big cats, the United States highlights that the National Fish and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory (NFWFL) is dedicated to supporting the enforcement of wildlife laws by utilizing objective scientific methods and applying them to analyse evidence in wildlife crime investigations. With a team of forensic analysts specializing in areas such as veterinary pathology, morphology, genetics, chemistry, and criminalistics, the laboratory provides essential services to USFWS special agents and wildlife inspectors, US State Fish and Game commissions, all CITES signatory Parties, and INTERPOL's wildlife crime working group.
70. The United States has undertaken a comprehensive array of forensic research projects to combat the illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens. The projects span various fields, from pathology and morphology to genetics and chemistry. According to the Party, NFWFL excels in determining causes of death through in-depth post-mortem examinations; identifying species through comparative anatomy; employing genetic techniques for species identification and sex determination; and utilizing chemistry to trace evidence analysis, including hair, tool marks, and forged documents and examination of traditional medicinal products. Beyond their existing capabilities, the NFWFL is actively engaged in advancing forensic techniques.
71. The NFWFL maintains an on-site reference sample collection (including morphological and genetic samples) that is utilized for ongoing casework. The NFWFL expresses its willingness, in accordance with national regulations, to share data generated by both research and case work (following adjudication). The laboratory is keen to collaborate with the global community to support the development of evolving forensic techniques and methods aimed at addressing the illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens. Aligned with its mission, the NFWFL advocates for collections, methodologies, and analyses that can advance the wildlife forensic discipline in a standardized and verifiable manner, suitable for courtroom proceedings.
72. The NFWFL has a keen interest in fostering collaboration with both domestic and international partners, including engaging with colleagues from the Czech Republic and Big Cat working groups, to explore joint approaches for identifying tiger species and individual specimens from various types of tiger parts and derivatives. As part of the laboratory's mandate, in-house analysis of morphological and genetic specimens using accredited protocols is necessary for the laboratory's casework, but the laboratory seeks to collaborate with external partners to build on species and individual identification techniques to advance the role of wildlife forensics in addressing illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens.

#### Photographic identification databases for tigers

73. South Africa acknowledged the details concerning tiger range States possessing photographic identification databases for tigers, along with the capability to recognize tigers based on photographs of their skins, as outlined in paragraph 14 of document SC70 Doc. 42.1. South Africa emphasise that it commits to sharing images within 90 days following the seizure of tiger skins in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19).

#### Additional information from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on the implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) and associated Decisions

74. In addition to Parties' responses on their implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) and associated Decisions, the Secretariat received relevant information from some intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Secretariat briefly highlights this information in paragraphs 74 to 82 below. The Secretariat thanks these organizations for the information provided and encourages all stakeholders to bring any information of suspected illegal trade in specimens of Asian big cats to the attention of relevant enforcement authorities as soon as it becomes available.
75. **The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)** provided information on activities it has undertaken during the period November 2022 to August 2023 to combat illegal trade in Asian big cats, as follows:
76. On 13 January 2023, INTERPOL and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) organized an online "Asian Big Cats Enforcement Dialogue" to discuss the nature, scale and trends of crimes involving big cats; understand the efforts made to combat Asian big cats related crimes in Asia; gain better

understanding of the enforcement challenges at both national and transnational level; and explore ways to overcome these challenges.

77. INTERPOL is actively collaborating with Parties to identify, locate, and apprehend wildlife fugitives involved in Asian big cat trafficking. In 2023, information was updated on one such fugitive and INTERPOL is now working with relevant Parties to facilitate the arrest and extradition.
78. INTERPOL is also creating a video on Asian big cat poaching and illegal trade, highlighting enforcement efforts, best practices, lessons learned, and INTERPOL's capabilities in addressing these crimes. The video is scheduled for release in the last quarter of 2023.
79. INTERPOL is offering support to India and Nepal in mapping organized tiger trafficking networks and identifying key targets for joint investigations, with the aim of dismantling these illegal supply chains. A Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meeting (RIACM) on tiger trafficking is scheduled to take place during September 2023, and a similar RIACM is also planned for the end of 2023 with Thailand and Lao PDR.
80. **The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)** provided information on its activities related to Asian big cats, as follows: WWF provided technical and financial support to enhance the management and monitoring of captive tigers in Viet Nam, with a focus on preventing illegal activities through approved facilities and promoting compliance with CITES requirements.
81. WWF also collaborates with the wildlife forensic network TRACE in Thailand, providing training to the CITES Management Authority of Thailand and the DNP, which includes DNA analysis for captive tigers.
82. Further, in a 2022 briefing entitled "Snaring of big cats in mainland Asia", WWF and TRAFFIC uncovered evidence of documented snaring cases involving a minimum of 387 big cats, including tigers, leopards, snow leopards, and Asiatic lions, across seven Asian countries between 2012 and 2021. Most of these cases were reported outside protected areas. The data underscores the vulnerability of tigers (*Panthera tigris*) and leopards (*Panthera pardus*) to snaring, revealing that over a third of cases (33%) involve tigers and more than half (63%) involve leopards.

## Conclusions

83. Although only a limited number of Parties responded to Notification to the Parties [No. 2023/091](#), these submissions reveal that some Parties have established measures and practices to implement Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) and the associated Decisions, that can serve as exemplary models for others. For instance, India's Project Tiger, which marked its 50th anniversary in 2023, demonstrates an annual growth rate of 6.1 percent in India's tiger population. Cambodia's Zero-Snaring Campaign also stands out as a best practice, significantly reducing snare numbers within protected areas. In Thailand, the use of camera traps in key tiger habitats for long-term population monitoring, resulted in an image database with over 300 wild tigers, which now serves as a resource not only for research purposes, but also for enforcement efforts.
84. In the context of management practices and controls concerning facilities keeping Asian big cats in captivity, as recommended in Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) paragraph 1 h), two notable best practices to highlight are the [European Commission's guidance document on the export, re-export, and intra-EU trade of captive-born and bred live tigers and their parts and derivatives](#) and the U.S. [Big Cat Public Safety Act](#). Further, Thailand reports that the DNP is actively engaged in the creation of a dedicated online database for captive tigers, which will contain comprehensive information, such as photographs capturing distinctive stripe patterns, microchip numbers, parental details, and genetic data. Parties with tigers in captivity are encouraged to engage with Thailand to learn from their experiences in this regard.
85. The implementation of paragraph 6 in Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) is exemplified through funding initiatives like the United Kingdom's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund and the World Bank's Global Environment Facility Trust Fund (GEF). Additionally, assistance to combat illegal trade in specimens of Asian big cat species is extended by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.
86. Based on the information provided, it is evident that several Parties are actively engaged in efforts to combat illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens, in line with Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) and Decisions 18.100, 18.101, 18.103 (Rev. CoP19), and 18.105. These efforts include law revisions, inter-ministerial collaboration, enforcement actions, public awareness campaigns, and international cooperation. Parties are encouraged to fully investigate allegations that tiger products, such as tiger wine and tiger bone glue, are being produced and sold.

87. The Secretariat notes that some Parties have not submitted their annual illegal trade reports, as required in paragraph 3 of Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP19) on *National reports*. This leads to data gaps and makes it difficult to monitor illegal trade over time, including for Asian big cats. The Secretariat strongly encourages Parties to report on seizures of illegal trade in specimens of Asian big cat species in their annual illegal trade reports in a timely manner (by 31 October each year, covering data from the previous year).
88. Regarding implementation of Decision 18.105, there is a lack of specific information concerning seizure data related to illegal trade in Asian leopards. The CITES Illegal Trade Database records seizure data of leopard specimens as *Panthera pardus*, encompassing both African and Asian leopards. Consequently, it becomes challenging to distinguish between illegal trade data pertaining to Asian leopards and African leopards in the database. To address this issue, the Standing Committee may wish to consider encouraging Parties to submit an ad hoc report on any illegal trade data involving *Panthera pardus* within its Asian range to the Secretariat prior to the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee.
89. Regarding wildlife forensics related to Asian big cat specimens, several Parties, including Slovakia, South Africa, Thailand, and the United States of America, demonstrated commendable efforts in implementing Decision 19.109.
90. The Secretariat encourages all Parties affected by illegal trade in specimens of Asian big cats to take note of the [outcome document](#) of the *CITES Big Cats Task Force*. The Secretariat is of the view that the strategies, measures and activities identified and presented in the outcome document provide a solid basis for Parties to initiate or strengthen efforts aimed at combatting illegal trade in specimens of big cat species. The *CITES Big Cats Task Force* will be discussed under agenda item 39.3 at the present meeting.

#### Recommendations

91. The Standing Committee is invited to:
- a) note the information provided by Parties in response to Notification to the Parties No. 2023/091;
  - b) encourage all Parties affected by illegal trade in Asian big cat species to include seizure data related to these species in their annual illegal trade reports and submit their reports in a timely manner; and
  - c) request the Secretariat to:
    - i) issue a Notification to the Parties inviting:
      - A. all range States of *Panthera pardus* within its Asian range to submit a report to the Secretariat on the conservation measures undertaken; poaching incidents detected; and seizure data involving *Panthera pardus* within their territories; and
      - B. all Parties that made seizures of specimens of *Panthera pardus* to submit a report to the Secretariat on seizure data involving *Panthera pardus*; and
    - ii) report on the information received to the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee.

DECISIONS ON ASIAN BIG CATS (FELIDAE SPP.)

**Directed to Parties**

- 19.109** Parties are encouraged to:
- a) *inform the Secretariat of forensic research projects, including genetic and other methods, undertaken in their territory focusing on the development of techniques to support addressing illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens, for this information to be made available to Parties;*
  - b) *in accordance with their national regulations, share samples of Asian big cat specimens from living animals, seized animals or products that could contain DNA of Asian big cats with genetic research projects focusing on the development of techniques to address illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens; and*
  - c) *take note that methods for the identification of tiger species and individual identification from different types of specimens of tiger parts and derivatives have been developed in the Czech Republic, and that analytical kits for use of these methods, as well as testing of tiger samples, are available to Parties free of charge.*
- 18.100** *Parties affected by illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens, in particular Parties identified in document CoP18 Doc. 71.1, are encouraged to take into consideration the information in Annex 4 to document CoP18 Doc. 71.1, and pursue enforcement efforts to address this illegal trade, including through the initiation of joint investigations and operations aimed at halting the members of organized crime networks across the entire illegal trade chain.*
- 18.101** *Parties, in whose territory tourist markets exist that are contributing to illegal cross border trade involving Asian big cat specimens, are encouraged to strengthen law enforcement cooperation with their neighbouring Parties to target such illegal trade.*
- 18.102 (Rev. CoP19)** *Parties in whose territories there are facilities keeping Asian big cats in captivity referred to in Decision 18.108 (Rev. CoP19), paragraph a) are invited to welcome a mission from the Secretariat, to visit these facilities.*
- 18.103 (Rev. CoP19)** *All Parties that make seizures of tiger skins are encouraged to take note of the information on tiger range States which have photographic identification databases for tigers, and the capacity to identify tigers from photographs of tiger skins, as presented in paragraph 14 in document SC70 Doc. 42.1, and to share images in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species, paragraph 1 I) within 90 days of such seizure.*
- 18.105** *Parties, in particular those mentioned in section 3.1.5 of Annex 4 to document CoP18 Doc. 71.1, are encouraged to take serious consideration of the concerns regarding illegal trade in leopard parts and derivatives as outlined in Annex 4 to document CoP18 Doc. 71.1 and take measures to address these.*
- 18.106** *Consumer States of specimens from tiger and other Asian big cat species are urged to take action to end demand for illegal tiger and other big cat parts and derivatives by working with relevant specialists such as consumer behaviour change, social marketing and communication experts to conduct targeted behaviour change initiatives ensuring initiatives are underpinned by sound evidence, are properly baselined, and have strong monitoring and evaluation built in, including appropriate metrics to assess efficacy; and adopting and*

*implementing appropriate legislative and regulatory measures, to deter consumers from purchasing any illegal big cat products.*

**18.107 (Rev. CoP19)** *Parties are invited to report to the Secretariat on implementation of Decisions 14.69, 19.109, 18.100, 18.101, 18.102 (Rev. CoP19), 18.103 (Rev. CoP19), 18.105 and 18.106 in time for the Secretariat to report to the Standing Committee and the Conference of the Parties as per requirements in paragraph 2 a) of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19).*

***Directed to the Secretariat***

**18.108 (Rev. CoP 19)** *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *subject to external funding, undertake a mission prior to the 77th meeting of the Standing Committee to those Parties identified in document SC70 Doc. 51 and in whose territories there are facilities which may be of concern keeping Asian big cats in captivity, with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the operations and activities undertaken by these facilities; and*
- b) *report to the Standing Committee at its 77th meeting on implementation of Decision 18.108 (Rev. CoP19), paragraph a), and progress with regard to the missions concerned and formulate recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee.*

***Directed to the Standing Committee***

**18.109 (Rev CoP19)** *The Standing Committee at its 77th and 78th meetings shall review the report and recommendations of the Secretariat concerning the implementation of Decisions 19.109, 18.100, 18.101, 18.102 (Rev. CoP19), 18.103 (Rev. CoP19), 18.105, 18.106, 18.107 (Rev. CoP19) and 18.108 (Rev. CoP19) and determine whether any further time-bound, country specific measures are needed to strengthen the implementation of the Convention, of Decision 14.69 and of paragraph 1 h) of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19).*

***Directed to Parties, especially Appendix-I Asian big cat range States***

**14.69** *Parties with intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale shall implement measures to restrict the captive population to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers; tigers should not be bred for trade in their parts and derivatives.*

## PARTIES' RESPONSES TO NOTIFICATION NO. 2023/091 ON ASIAN BIG CATS (FELIDAE SPP.)

## Cambodia

**Status of Asian big cats (*Felidae spp.*) in Cambodia****1. Current Status**

Asian big cats (*Felidae spp.*) include Tiger (*Panthera tigris*), Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), and Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*) in Cambodia. All these three species used to be abundant in Cambodia in the past. Tigers have not been recorded in Cambodia since 2007. The last tiger of Cambodia was captured on camera trap in 2007.

Currently dozens of Clouded Leopard and few Leopards have been estimated to occur in the three remaining regions, Cardamom Mountain, Northern, and Northeastern forested areas of Cambodia. The Cardamom Rainforest Landscape (CRL) is a 17,000 km<sup>2</sup> protected landscape in southwestern Cambodia. Despite the conservation value of the landscape there is little recent published information on the status and conservation significance of the ground-dwelling mammal populations. A report on seven camera trap studies conducted in five protected areas across the landscape between 2012 and 2016 with 255 trap-stations and >30,000 trap-nights. At least 30 species of medium to large ground-dwelling mammals were detected including one species of clouded leopards *Neofelis nebulosi*.

Populations of these three species in the landscape, though below ecological carrying capacity, are regionally significant. Any *Panthera* cats, were not detected confirming that tigers *P. tigris* and leopards *P. pardus* are likely to have been extirpated.

The Eastern Plains Landscape of Cambodia contains the largest extent of deciduous dipterocarp forest remaining in Indochina. Camera-trapped extensively (>220 locations; >18,500 camera-trap nights) between 2008 and 2012. leopard *Panthera Pardus* (391 encounters) and mainland clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa* (three encounters), were photographed. Leopard cats were encountered equally frequently across forest types (deciduous dipterocarp forest and mixed deciduous/semi-evergreen forest).

In Cambodia, the Indochinese leopard has declined dramatically, and now occurs only in 8% of its historical range in the country (Gray & Prum, 2012). The only potentially viable population remaining in the country occurs in the Eastern Plains Landscape (EPL), a large protected-area complex covering greater than 10 000km<sup>2</sup> in eastern Cambodia (Rostro-García et al., 2018). In 2009, the leopard density within one protected area of the EPL, Srepok Wildlife Sanctuary (SWS), was estimated to be 3.6 leopard/JOOKm<sup>2</sup> (Gray & Prum, 2012).

Survey of two protected areas within Cambodia's Eastern Plains Landscape and an aggregation of data from seven camera trap surveys from 2009-2019 found that the leopard population declined by 82% over 11 years, with data suggesting 42% of the population was lost each year. An additional survey in 2021 failed to detect leopard.

**2. Law enforcement**

The illegal wildlife trade is one of the biggest threats to wildlife globally.

Cambodia is a source of transit country. From 2022 to 2023, the government of Cambodia confiscated tiger specimens from illegal trade in 2 cases with a total of 144 specimens of skins, beard and 5.5Kg of tiger's bone.

### 3. Threats to Asian big cats

Threats to the three species of big cats are:

- Widespread poaching in all the three Cambodian regions. Traps are the main tools of poaching of Leopards and Clouded Leopards;
- Habitat loss: 1) Lost of forest areas due to deforestation; 2) human disturbance. Human activities, for poaching of other wildlife species.
- Population declines due to poaching, habitat loss, and fragmentation, as well as additional human pressure.
- Big cat populations are being challenged worldwide, as pressures such as climate change, human population growth, and lack of prey abundance impact big cats, their species will continue to be threatened and persecuted.

### 4. Conservation

Tiger Action Plan was established in 2004 (FA, 2004), but its implementation has been slow due to, government busiest agenda, and the changes in Protection Responsibilities of the government responsible ministries - Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and Ministry of Environment (MoE). The Cambodia Tiger Action Plan (CTAP) 2011-2022 was approved by the Royal Government of Cambodia in March 2016. The CTAP is a species management plan which reflects Cambodia's commitment to the TX2 global goal to double tigers by the year 2022.

Patrolling and law enforcement have been conducted to combat wildlife poaching and habitats in protected areas in the Cardamom Mountains, Eastern Plains of Cambodia, and Prey Long Wildlife Sanctuary. Rangers have been equipped with necessary materials and vehicles with substantial training which has been supported by Wildlife Alliance, and WWF. Conservation of infrastructure has been provided to increase effective protection, suppression and prevention of poaching of cat species, destruction of habitats.

"The 1st stage of Zero-Snaring Campaign has remarkably been successfully implemented in 6 provinces, namely, Kratie, Steung Treng, Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri, Preah Vihear, and Kompong Thom. And the 2nd stage of Zero-Snaring Campaign will be executed in another 6 provinces, namely, Kompong Speu, Pursat, Koh Kong, Pailin, Battambang and Siem Reap. The action of stopping the snaring in the protected areas located in provinces of the 1st stage of Zero-Snaring Campaign still keep going on simultaneously as in the provinces of the 2nd stage of the Campaign." Zero-Snaring Campaign phase I and 2 and its provincial rallies covering Pursat, Kampong Speu, Koh Kong, Siem Reap and Battambang, Pailin provinces, in partnerships with WWF, USAID, Wildlife Alliance, Wild Earth Allies, Conservation International, Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity, Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Society, NatureLife Cambodia, Fauna and Flora International, and RECOFTC Cambodia.

The results of the campaigns indicate that, more than 35,000 snares were removed in 2022 across Cambodia's protected areas, suggesting a decrease of nearly 44% compared to 61,611 snares removed in 2021. In parallel, 52 restaurants in six provinces located northeastern Cambodia proclaimed their commitment to not serving wild meat in their restaurant menus.

The number one priority is to reduce threats to tigers, including those which wiped them out in Cambodia. Wildlife Alliance has supported the operation of 2 new ranger stations since 2020, in addition to its other 9 operational stations throughout the Cardamoms. These ranger teams have removed over 300,000

snare to date.

Snare removal is one of the important programs that can reduce threats to all kind of wildlife especially key wildlife species. In Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary program was established to remove snares since 2020. Training on snare search and removal to project officers and rangers has been provided for two years. Thousands of snares with different types were removed. In July 2023 alone, 452 snares with different type have been removed.

More than one million hectares of wildlife corridors has been established for wildlife and biodiversity conservation and to form a cluster of protected areas for the wide-ranging species of wildlife which include elephants. In August 2023, the Government of Cambodia integrate a number of wildlife corridors into protected areas. In this regard, habitats of wildlife including elephants have been expanded to promote conservation of wide-ranging species of wildlife.

## 5. Reintroduction

Species Reintroduction is one of governmental programs - Tiger Reintroduction. A pair of tigers (male and female) was brought into the Cardamom Mountain, Southwestern Cambodia, by the Government of Cambodia, MoE, with the technical and financial supports from Wildlife Alliance in 2022. The program was coordinated and facilitated by the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Center of Cambodia. Large carnivores have extensive spatial requirements, with ranges that often span geopolitical borders.

Tiger prey within the Cardamom Rainforest Landscape includes sambar deer, wild pigs, red muntjac and pig-tailed macaque. Their numbers are increasing across the landscape and the combined density of these species in the core zone of the Southern Cardamom National Park is estimated at approximately 7 individuals per km<sup>2</sup>.

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## China

### **Report on the Implementation of Resolution Conf.12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on Conservation of and Trade in Tigers and Other Appendix I Asian Big Cat Species**

The Wildlife Protection Law and other laws and regulations of the P.R.China strictly control wild animals and their products, including tigers and other Asian big cats, and impose harsh penalties for related illegal activities. On December 30, 2022, China revised its Wildlife Protection Law to further strengthen cooperation among various law enforcement departments and increase penalties for illegal activities. In particular, China has taken stricter measures to control tigers and their products than CITES. As early as 1993, China banned the use of tiger bones for medicinal purposes. Since 2018, it has further tightened its control measures and completely banned the sale, purchase, delivery, carrying, transportation, import and export of tigers and their products. Currently, there are no commercial breeding facilities for tigers in China.

China continues to promote the development of a nature reserve system with national parks as the main component. Five national parks and tens of thousands of nature reserves have been established, with a total area of more than 170 million hectares, accounting for 18% of the country's land area. The Chinese government has further strengthened patrols and guards, promoted the renovation and restoration of wildlife habitats, creating a favorable environment for wildlife. In particular, the Northeast Tiger and Leopard National Park and Sanjiangyuan National Park have been established, and the populations of big cats such as tigers, leopards, and snow leopards have grown steadily.

The Chinese government has established the Joint Inter-Ministerial Conference on Combating Illegal Trade in Wildlife attended by 27 ministries and the Inter-Departmental Coordination Group on CITES Law enforcement attended by 9 ministries. These participants have jointly carried out a series of enforcement operations including "Operation Breeze", "Operation Net Shield" and special operations of "Import Control at the Border", to fight against the whole chain of wildlife resource destruction and illegal trade in wildlife and their products such as tigers at the national level. The Chinese government prioritizes big cats such as tigers, leopards and snow leopards, and holds regular meetings to review the work progress, analyze the situation, and determine the key points for the next step. Key areas of work include revising laws and regulations, carrying out special law enforcement operations, developing publicity and education, promoting international cooperation, etc., covering all aspects, including field patrols and guarding, artificial breeding, trade, transportation, import and export, and the use of wild animals and their products.

China organizes a large number of public awareness campaigns every year, and holds theme-based campaigns during special environmental awareness programs such as World Wildlife Day and Wildlife Protection Month, to raise public awareness of wildlife protection and rejection of illegal trade.

China actively promotes international exchanges and cooperation. China actively participates in the Global Tiger Forum, the Asian Tiger Conservation Ministerial Conference, and the Steering Committee Meeting of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Conservation Project to strengthen communication with range countries and promote cross-border conservation actions. China leads or participates in international joint law enforcement actions such as the "Thunder" series operation, and promotes the whole chain of source, transit, and destination countries to combat illegal trade in wildlife and their products. China also organizes workshops for relevant developing countries every year to strengthen communication on wildlife conservation management in various countries.

India



डॉ० एस. पी. यादव  
Dr. S. P. Yadav



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DO No. WL-4/65/2023-WL

Dated: 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2023

Sub: CITES Notification No. 2023/091 - Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)

Dear Mr Higuera,

Please refer to the CITES Notification No. 2023/091, regarding Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix I Asian big cat species.

- Big cats have a special place in India, since time immemorial. Tigers, Lions, etc. have been associated with legend and folklore. Conservation of these cats has been taken up in India since long. Tiger (*Panthera tigris*) has been designated as the National animal of India. The big cats found in India, viz., Tiger, Asiatic Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard and even Cheetah have been listed in the Schedule-I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 thereby according them highest degree of protection from hunting and illegal trade of its parts and products.
- Presently, India has a network of more than 900 Protected Areas and amongst these 53 have been declared as Tiger Reserves, covering an area of core / critical tiger habitat (41499.37 sq. km.), and the buffer / peripheral area (34297.46 sq.km.).
- On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> year of successful implementation of the 'Project Tiger', Hon'ble Prime Minister of India had released the 5<sup>th</sup> cycle of All India Tiger Estimation, 2022, report, which indicated a minimum tiger population estimate of 3167 tigers, with an upper limit of the tiger population estimated to be 3925 and the average number is 3682 tigers, reflecting a commendable annual growth rate of 6.1% per annum.
- Also, Hon'ble Prime Minister had also announced the creation of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) for conservation of seven big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma harbouring our planet.
- We wish to bring to the notice of the CITES Secretariat and the Standing Committee, some of the milestone initiatives taken by the Government of India for conservation and protection of tiger and other wild animals. Please find enclosed a brief on the initiatives as **Annexure** to this letter.
- We would like to reiterate our support to the CITES Secretariat for control of illegal trade in big cats.

**Milestone initiatives taken by the Government of India for conservation and protection of tiger and other wild animals**

1. Amendment of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 in 2006 provided an enabling provisions for constituting the National Tiger Conservation Authority under section 38 IV B and the Tiger and Other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau under section 38 IV C.
2. Strengthening of antipoaching activities, including special strategy for monsoon patrolling, by providing funding support to tiger reserve for deployment of antipoaching squads involving ex-army personnel or home guards, apart from workforce comprising of local people, in addition to strengthening of communication and wireless facilities.
3. A scientific methodology for estimating tiger (including co-predators, prey animals and assessment of habitat status) has been evolved and mainstreamed. The findings of this estimation and assessment are bench marks for future tiger conservation strategy.
4. As per the 5th cycle of All India Tiger Estimation 2022 summary report released on Commemoration of 50 years of Project Tiger' event by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India in Mysuru, Karnataka on 9th April 2023. India has a minimum of 3167 tigers, which is the population estimate from the camera-trapped area. Now, further analysis of data, done by the Wildlife Institute of India, from both camera-trapped and non-camera-trapped tiger presence areas, the upper limit of the tiger population is estimated to be 3925 and the average number is 3682 tigers, reflecting a commendable annual growth rate of 6.1% per annum.
5. India has a bilateral understanding with Nepal on controlling trans-boundary illegal trade in wildlife and conservation, apart from a protocol on tiger conservation with China.
6. A protocol has been signed in September, 2011 with Bangladesh for conservation of the Royal Bengal Tiger of the Sunderban. The bilateral meeting on Transboundary Conservation of Tigers in Sundarban Landscape of India and Bangladesh was held at Kolkata on 14th February 2023.
7. A sub-group on tiger and leopard conservation has been constituted for cooperation with the Russian Federation. A tripartite MOU between the National Tiger Conservation Authority, Wildlife Institute of India and A.N. Severstov Institute of Ecology & Evaluation was signed for cooperation in scientific research on tigers.
8. India is the founder member of the Global Tiger Forum (an intergovernmental organization) of Tiger Range Countries for addressing international issues related to tiger conservation.
9. An MoU signed with Myanmar for Cooperation on Combating Timber Trafficking, and Conservation of Tigers and other Wildlife.
10. Steps have been taken for modernizing the infrastructure and field protection, besides launching 'Monitoring system for Tigers' Intensive Protection and Ecological Status

(MSTrIPES)' for effective field patrolling and monitoring. The MSTrIPES application has been made android based with three distinct modules, viz. patrol, ecological and conflict.

11. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been issued in 9 thematic areas as below:
  - a. for dealing with tiger death.
  - b. to deal with emergency arising due to straying of tigers in human dominated landscape.
  - c. for disposing the tiger/leopard carcass/body.
  - d. to deal with orphaned / abandoned tiger cubs and old / injured tigers in the wild.
  - e. to deal with tiger depredation on livestock.
  - f. for Interstate Co-ordination amongst tiger reserves that share boundary.
  - g. for active management towards rehabilitation of tigers from source areas at landscape level.
  - h. to deal with stray/feral dogs in tiger reserves.
  - i. to deal with the Tiger re-introduction and supplementation in wild.
12. Phase-IV tiger reserve level, continuous monitoring of tigers using camera traps and building up data on photo captures of individual tigers, has been institutionalized. A national repository of camera trap photo IDs of individual tigers has been created.
13. National Tiger Conservation Authority and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau have established an online tiger / wildlife crime tracking / reporting system in tiger reserves.
14. Bilateral agreement signed, between India and Cambodia for assessing the field situation and the capacity building requirements for tiger reintroduction initiative in Cambodia. Subsequently, a MoU signed with Cambodia regarding "Cooperation in biodiversity conservation and sustainable wildlife management recovery strategy of tiger and its habitat".
15. Scientific co-operation agreement in the field of camera trap data management with Russia. The NTCA and WII will provide technical assistance to LLNP to use CaTRAT (Camera Trap Data Repository and Analysis Tool). The tool was developed through joint collaborative efforts of NTCA, WII and IIIT.

**Israel Response to Notification No. 2023/091 on Asian Big Cats**

1. The CITES Checklist of species show Israel as a range state for 2 species of big cats, cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) and leopard (*Panthera pardus*). However, this is not correct as both these species are considered as locally extinct in Israel, since there have been no reliable observational records in many years. There are currently no plans to reintroduce these species to the wild.
2. Israel has 4 other species of wild Felidae. All wild Felidae are fully protected by Israeli law.
3. There are no commercial operations in Israel that keep wild species of Felidae (including all big cats), and there is no trade in live wild Felidae or in any of their parts and derivatives.
4. There are a few non-commercial zoos that keep tigers, caracals, lions and other species of wild Felidae for educational purposes, but these are very closely monitored by our agency and there is no trade in live specimens or in any parts and derivatives.

## Slovakia

In relation to the Notification No. 2023/090 from 21th July 2023, published by the CITES Secretariat, we are sending following information (valid for the period June 2020 – August 2023) to relevant resolution and decisions.

1. Implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species
  - a) based on the decision of the former minister of Environment, Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic as a CITES Management Authority, decided to restrict issuance of export or re-export permits for specimens of the genus *Panthera*, *Neofelis*, *Lynx*, *Acinonyx* and *Puma* and granting intra EU certificates for Annex A species of mentioned genres. Adoption of mentioned restriction does not apply to exports and intra EU trade transactions for the exceptional purposes of protection and conservation of the species mentioned (e.g. licensed zoos, subjects involved in rescue programs, detention centres, scientific or law enforcement purposes). Decision is in force from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020;
  - b) decision mentioned above finally resulted in adoption of a legislative ban on the possession of mentioned species of felines on the territory of the Slovak Republic with exceptions for the purpose of species protection and keeping specimens acquired before the ban entered into force. This ban was adopted in the national CITES legislation (Act No 15/2005 Coll. on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein and on the amendment to certain acts and relevant Decree No 110/2005) and entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022;
  - c) legislative obligations related to the record keeping, all changes notifications, marking, disposal of dead specimens (as reported in previous report) are still valid;
  - d) from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022, stricter legislative measure was adopted also in relation to the disposal of selected dead specimens of selected above mentioned *Felidae* species. In case that the specimen died and holder decided to keep processed skin or whole stuffed body with unique pattern, he is obliged to make prescribed photo-documentation as part of records of the treatment of the dead specimen. This measure was adopted with the aim of enforcement improvement;
  - e) at the EU level, Guidance document on the export, re-export and intra-EU trade of captive-born and bred live tigers and their parts and derivatives was adopted in April 2023 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC\\_2023\\_135\\_R\\_0001](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC_2023_135_R_0001) ;
  - f) enforcement inspections of facilities/persons holding live or dead *Felidae* species led by the Slovak environmental Inspectorate (SEI) continued also in June 2020 – August 2023. Administrative offences were detected in 8 cases (*Panthera leo*, *Panthera pardus*, *Panthera tigris*). Fines were imposed in amount of 2550 Euro. During inspections in 2020 – 2023, samples (13) of tiger hairs from 13 tigers (live and dead specimens) were taken for the purposes of the TIGRIS ID project in Czech Republic. We also continue in collecting and storing samples from mentioned tigers for our national purposes in National ZOO Bojnice.
  - g) In March 2023, Slovak importer was sentenced to 2000 Euro fine (or 6 months imprisonment unconditionally) for illegal import of tiger trophy from South Africa. The trophy was used for commercial purposes and was confiscated.

2. Implementation of relevant Decisions

- a) Decision 19.109 b)

Based on good cooperation between Slovakia and Czech Republic, in 2020 - 2023 SEI shared samples taken from 13 tigers from Slovakia (9 from live and 4 from dead specimens) for the purposes of the genetic research project TIGRIS ID. SEI plans to contribute with the samples also in the future, especially from died specimens.

## South Africa

### REPORT ON ASIAN BIG CATS: SOUTH AFRICA

I refer to Notification 2023/091 dated 21 July 2023 with regard to the above. Please find below feedback from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE).

#### Implementation of Resolution Conference 12.5 (Rev CoP19) on the Conservation of and trade on tigers and other Appendix I Asian big cats

Please note that the national CITES Regulations published under the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) requires the following:

- All persons wishing to internationally trade specimens of any species listed in Appendix I must be registered with the provincial Management Authority.
- All persons wishing to produce captive bred animals for commercial international trade purposes of any species listed in Appendix I must be registered with the provincial Management Authority and where required with the CITES Secretariat in the case of captive bred animals.
- All persons registered with the provincial Management Authority for captive breeding of animals must keep records of their parental stock and of captive bred offspring for future trading purposes. Records of any transactions must be kept for a period of five years. The Management Authority may inspect the premises and records of persons registered with the Management Authority at any time.
- Specimens of animal species listed in Appendix I that have been bred in captivity may not be traded unless they originate from a breeding operation registered by the provincial Management Authority and have been individually and permanently marked in a manner so as to render alteration or modification by unauthorized persons as difficult as possible.
- The markings on or tagging of specimens must be done in accordance with the relevant Resolutions adopted by the Conference of Parties as amended from time to time.

South Africa thus have adequate legislation to implement CITES and if illegal international trade in Asian big cats is detected or it is in any way suspected that the confiscated specimens were destined for international trade, we will investigate the case. We are vigilant in addressing illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens if it is destined for international trade. We have innovative enforcement methods in place, including anti-money laundering approaches, forensic analytical techniques and intelligence-led enforcement. We have good working relationships with enforcement authorities in some of the consumer countries, and regularly liaise with officials in these countries on illegal activities involving CITES listed specimens. Tigers are not currently regulated under national legislation, but rather in terms of provincial legislation in some of the nine provinces. This means that a person is allowed to possess / keep a tiger without a permit in some of our provinces.

#### Decision 14.95

Although South Africa has intensive tiger breeding operations on a commercial scale, most of these tigers are exported as live animals to zoos, safari parks and exhibition facilities and the animals are thus imported into those countries for non-commercial purposes. Tigers are thus not specifically bred for trade in their parts and derivatives. During the last few years very few tiger products have been confiscated by authorities and the DFFE believes that first responders, including Customs and Police officials, receive adequate training to be aware of and ensure they are on the lookout for illegal wildlife products. Regular joint compliance and operations take place within the country and at ports to address the illegal trade in wildlife. When we receive information of alleged illegal trade in tigers or tiger parts and derivatives, we investigate these cases. However, to date, there have not been any major cases or convictions for the illegal trade in tigers.

#### Decision 19.109



South Africa will share samples of Asian big cat specimens from living animals, seized animals or products that could contain DNA of Asian big cats with genetic research projects focusing on the development of techniques to address illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens when these become available.

#### Decision 18.100

In terms of the CITES Illegal Trade reports from 2016 to 2021, the DFFE has had very few seizures within South Africa of Asian big cat parts and derivatives. We have not heard of nor seen seizures or cases involving big cat parts/ derivatives in other countries originating from South Africa apart from one incident reported by China where a person was caught with 8kg of tiger bone allegedly imported from South Africa. Whilst there might have been a few cases over the years, it is not possible to conclude, based on the information available, that the demand for tigers has led to large scale illegal trade from South African. According to Annex 4 to document CoP18 Doc. 71.1, lion parts and derivatives from South Africa has been found in consumer countries but most of these are likely to have emanated from the legal trade in lion bones from South Africa as mentioned in the report.

#### Decision 18.101

As far as the DFFE knows there are no tourist markets that are contributing to illegal cross border trade involving Asian big cat specimens, but if we become aware of such markets, we will strengthen our law enforcement cooperation with neighbouring Parties to target such illegal trade.

#### Decision 18.102 (Rev. CoP19)

South Africa hosted a mission from the Secretariat in May 2023 to visit four identified facilities that keep and breed Asian big cats in captivity. We are awaiting the report of the mission.

#### Decision 18.103 (Rev. CoP19)

South Africa took note of the information on tiger range States which have photographic identification databases for tigers, and the capacity to identify tigers from photographs of tiger skins, as presented in paragraph 14 in document SC70 Doc. 42.1, and will share images in accordance with Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on *Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species*, paragraph 1 l) within 90 days of a seizure of tiger skins.

#### Decision 18.105

South Africa took note of the information in section 3.1.5 of Annex 4 to document CoP18 Doc. 71.1.

#### Decision 18.106

South Africa is not a consumer State of specimens from tiger and other Asian big cat species. However, they may be people living in South Africa that consume specimens from tiger, although we have not detected that this is the case in South Africa to date.

#### Decision 18.107 (Rev. CoP19)

South Africa responded to the invitation of this Decision by sending this letter to the Secretariat.

## Thailand

### Thailand's response to Notification 2023/091 - Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)

In Notification No. 2023/091, the CITES Secretariat requests Parties to submit information on implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev) and Decisions in related to Asian Big cats (Felidae).

#### 1. Legal measures

Three species of the Asian big cats: Tiger (*Pantera tigris*), Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), and Clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), are protected species under the Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act (WARPA). Private possession of protected species is not allowed, excluding pre-WARPA specimens. These big cats are not protected species permitted for captive breeding, as such, breeding is comprehensively conducted in non-commercial manner, for instance, research and zoo purposes.

Significantly improving upon its 2019 efforts, WARPA has escalated the penalties for violations. Notably, it has increased the maximum imprisonment term from 4 to 10 years and elevated the maximum fine from 40,000 Baht (approximately USD 1,150) to 1,000,000 Baht (approximately USD 29,000) for offenses like illegal poaching, import, export, and domestic trade of any protected species. Failure to comply with these regulations could result in the suspension or revocation of related permits and certificates, including zoo permits. In relation to zoos, the revised provisions aim to fortify regulatory measures to combat illicit wildlife trade within zoo facilities, while also establishing clear guidelines for zoo standards and control measures. The obligation to report any increase or decrease in the possession of wildlife within zoos remains mandatory.

In response to the amendments made to WARPA, there will be a revision of the subordinate laws that govern zoo operations. In the meantime, subordinate laws from WARPA 1992 remains in effect until new regulations are issued under the WARPA 2019. This includes the Ministerial Regulation concerning the application and issuance of permits for establishing and operating private zoos. It provides detailed guidelines pertaining to eligibility, requirements, and the application process for obtaining a zoo permit. Among the requirements for obtaining a permit, there is the inclusion of a plan for wildlife population management that aligns with the zoo's utilization and capacity. This strategic approach will facilitate the regulation of the number of big cats held within zoo facilities. Furthermore, the draft includes provisions that allow for the establishment of species-specific requirements to address specific concerns as they arise. For example, there may be restrictions imposed on tiger populations that are bred within zoos. The draft of this regulation is currently undergoing a public hearing process, as mandated by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. Necessary amendments will be incorporated before the regulation is officially issued.

In addition to the Ministerial Regulation, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) is currently in the process of drafting a regulation regarding the operation of private zoos and government zoos, aligned with their designated responsibilities. This notification aims to outline comprehensive standards for zoo management, encompassing aspects such as keeping and exhibiting areas, animal care, welfare, safety, public education, and other relevant factors. These upcoming

provisions will offer explicit guidance to officers for monitoring zoo facilities.

The drafting of the subordinate regulations is primarily informed by the recommendations of the CITES big cats mission, in conjunction with the outcomes of a workshop conducted in June 2023. This five-day workshop, funded by GEF-6, brought together DNP field officers from across the country. Its objectives were to strengthen comprehension of legal and administrative measures pertaining to the management of captive tigers, facilitate the exchange of experiences and challenges, and deliberate on strategies for enhancing enforcement and data management.

## **2. Supportive measures for addressing illegal trade of tigers in captivities**

DNP is presently involved in the development of an online database dedicated to captive tigers. This comprehensive database will encompass essential details, including photographs capturing the distinctive stripe patterns, microchip numbers, parental information, and genetic data. This systematic approach is designed to minimize administrative errors, improve data management, and offer a user-friendly platform for relevant users. Zoos will be able to submit online reports for births and deaths. Additionally, officers with responsibilities ranging from genetic analysis to field inspections will have efficient access to and management of essential data. This streamlined system will ensure up-to-date information is available to support monitoring and enforcement efforts.

In 2021, a combination of genetic analysis and stripe-pattern information of tigers led to the revocation of a zoo permit and legal action against the zoo owner for illegal possession of tigers.

Thailand is continuing its efforts to compile genetic data of captive tigers. Genetic analysis of the tigers using Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs) is part of the Counter Illegal Wildlife Trade Project (CIWT-GEF6). This collaborative initiative involves partnering with the TRACE-Wildlife Forensic Network. The aim is to establish a comprehensive genetic database that will ultimately facilitate the identification of genetic relationships (parent-offspring and individual identification) among captive tigers within Thailand. This database will also be interconnected with genetic information from neighboring countries' captive tiger populations. Upon completion of this database, it will enable a comparison of genetic data between captive tigers in Thailand and those in neighboring countries.

In addition, Thailand is also engaged in the development of a Microsatellites (Short Tandem Repeats / STRs) genotyping technique. This method is being developed simultaneously with SNP genotyping and employs a reduced number of markers. Notably, it boasts versatility by accommodating various sample types, including fresh tissue, blood, saliva, hair, and even feces. Thailand has already harnessed the Microsatellites technique to analyze genetic data from wild tigers. If this same genotyping approach is employed for both captive and wild tigers, it would streamline the comparison and correlation of genetic relationships (parent-offspring and individual identification) within Thailand's captive and wild tiger populations. Furthermore, this system would facilitate the tracing of the origins of confiscated tigers that may have originated within Thailand. The development of the Microsatellites genotyping technique is receiving support from WWF-Thailand.

Thailand has actively engaged in a close collaborative effort with Lao PDR to combat illegal trade across the shared border. The development of a bilateral agreement between the two nations is underway, with the primary goal of enhancing enforcement cooperation.

### **3. Status of tigers in the wild and protection measures**

The 2022 estimation of the wild tiger population in Thailand is ranging from 148 to 189 individuals. There are four forest complexes have been identified as tiger habitats: Western Forest Complex (WEFCOM), Kaeng Krachan-Kui Buri Forest Complex, Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex, and Hala-Bala-Bang Lang Forest Complex. More than 85% of the wild tiger lives in the WEFCOM, while the Dong Phayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex is home of >10% of the tiger population. The tiger population has significantly increased, particularly within the Western Forest Complex, where there is a notable expansion of the tiger population into other protected areas, with a rise of over 100% from 41 individuals in 2014 to 100 individuals in 2022

Thailand conducts long-term tiger population monitoring programs using camera traps in important tiger habitats. These resulted in a photography database of more than 300 wild tigers have been found in Thailand. Besides research advantages, this database has been used for enforcement by identifying wild tigers and prosecuting poachers.

Under the National Tiger Conservation Action Plan 2022 - 2034, Thailand emphasizes the importance of safeguarding key habitats to prevent threats that could negatively impact tiger survival. This includes capacity buildings to strengthen capabilities of rangers, and implementing comprehensive patrol system, SMART Patrol, to prevent wildlife poaching and forest encroachment. Restoration of tiger populations and prey recovery plans will be implemented in targeted forest complexes. Continuation of data compilation for tiger databases both for the wild tigers and those keeping in captivity also are parts of the Action Plan. Thailand receives funding to support implementation of the Action Plan from Global Environmental Facility Eight Replenishment Period (GEF-8).

### **4. Public educations and demand reductions**

Every July 29<sup>th</sup>, the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, in collaboration with conservation agencies and related organizations, organized the World Tiger Day. The annual event has been conducted for educating public about significant role of tiger in ecosystem, and promoting participation and engagement of conservation among general public, government and non-government sectors. In 2023, the event held at Nakhon Sawan under the theme "Move Forward to Sustainable Tigers Conservation," aiming to advance the enduring conservation of tigers.

WildAid, in collaboration with DNP, held a campaign to reduce the demand for wildlife products, ivory and tiger parts, driven by beliefs. The activity involved practical training for Buddhist monks and nuns to raise awareness on wildlife trafficking, laws, and strategies to reduce the demand for wildlife products. This involved producing printing media for Buddhist monks and nuns to use in disseminating information related to laws and penalties, aiming to communicate with the general public.

*Thailand's response to Notification to the Parties No. 2023/051 regarding Asian big cats (Felidae spp.)*

Individual tiger has been identified using microchip and stripe pattern (Extract Compare., Lex Hiby, Phil Lovell, Narendra Patil, N. Samba Kumar, Arjun M. Gopaldaswamy and K. Ullas Karanth Published:11 March 2009, <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2009.0028>), DNA test has been applied for individuals if indoubt, and prosecution microsatellite technique has been used for proofing parental relationship for previous prosecutions.

## **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)**

### **UK response to Notification 2023/091**

The UK has in place comprehensive legislation and has established management and enforcement authorities that fully support the implementation of CITES Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species and CoP19 Decisions related to Asian big cats.

#### **Funding**

The UK's [Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund](#) has granted funding for a significant number of projects committed to tackling illegal wildlife trade in big cats. There are a number of ongoing projects aimed at protecting species including tigers and panthers, which are working to reduce threats to wild species and reduce the demand for illegal trade.

The UK also continues to provide funding to support relevant activities of ICCWC which have included promoting law enforcement networking and regional cooperation, strengthening prosecutorial and judicial networks and tackling wildlife crime linked to the internet.

The UK also continues its membership and support for the Global Tiger Forum.

The UK continued to provide additional funding to the CITES Secretariat to support the implementation of relevant CITES Decisions.

#### **Enforcement**

The UK Border Force continues to make seizures of big cats and or big cat derived products which in 2021 included pendants, skins, rugs, coats, and live animals. The UK continues to fund and to report its seizure data to the EU TWIX to help facilitate and coordinate European enforcement activity and submits annual illegal trade reports to the CITES Secretariat.



## United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
International Affairs  
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IN REPLY REFER TO:  
FWS/DMA/MA 5-09 e.

August 18, 2023

CITES Secretariat  
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VIA EMAIL: [info@cites.org](mailto:info@cites.org), [maroun.abi-chahine@un.org](mailto:maroun.abi-chahine@un.org)

Dear Colleagues:

Enclosed please find the U.S. response to Notification to the Parties No. 2023/091 – Asian big cats (*Felidae* spp.), which includes information on U.S. efforts to comply with the provisions of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on *Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species*. The information we have enclosed includes a summary of the provisions of the Big Cat Public Safety Act (enacted December 2022); information on financial and technical assistance in support of the conservation of Asian big cats; and information from the National Fish and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory on forensic analytical techniques specific to Asian big cats. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the enclosed information and our apologies for the late response.

**United States – Refusals of Asian big cat specimens (2018-present)**  
**Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement**

Genus	Species	Generic Name	Wildlf Desc	Qty	Unit	Ctry Org	Ctry IE	Purp	Src	Act	Ship Date	I E
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	2,220	NO	VN	VN	P	U	R	8/15/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	12	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	8/17/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	5	NO	XX	CN	P	U	R	8/15/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	42	NO	VN	VN	P	U	R	9/21/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	4	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	9/26/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	60	NO	CN	CN	P	X	R	9/27/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	SKP	1	NO	XX	VN	P	W	R	9/27/2018	E
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	10	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	10/17/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	1	KG	XX	VN	T	W	R	10/20/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	36	NO	TH	TH	P	U	R	12/13/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	IN	IN	P	U	R	12/20/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	12/28/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	TEE	1	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	12/28/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	XX	VN	T	W	R	11/8/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	TEE	1	NO	XX	VN	T	W	R	11/8/2018	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	TEE	1	NO	VN	VN	P	U	R	1/28/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	BON	1	NO	TH	TH	P	W	R	1/25/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	70	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	2/4/2019	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	GAR	1	NO	GB	G2	P	O	R	1/15/2019	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	19	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	2/12/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	XX	VN	P	W	R	2/15/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	VN	VN	P	U	R	2/13/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	277	GM	TH	TH	P	U	R	2/15/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	VN	VN	P	U	R	2/25/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	627	GM	TH	TH	P	U	R	2/21/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	12	NO	TH	TH	P	U	R	3/4/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	12	NO	TH	TH	P	U	R	3/4/2019	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	SHO	2	NO	SD	SD	P	W	R	3/14/2019	I

PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	TEE	1	NO	VN	VN	P	U	R	3/7/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	45	GM	VN	VN	P	U	R	3/18/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	24	NO	XX	US	P	U	R	3/21/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	JWL	2	NO	XX	IN	P	U	R	3/31/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	2	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	4/11/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	15	NO	XX	HK	P	U	R	4/22/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	30	NO	XX	US	P	U	R	4/25/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	GEN	1	NO	MX	MX	T	W	R	4/7/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	115	NO	XX	KH	T	U	R	5/1/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	200	NO	XX	CN	P	W	R	5/2/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	1,080	NO	XX	KH	P	W	R	4/25/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	1	NO	XX	CN	P	U	R	3/18/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	4	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	5/1/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	3	NO	XX	CN	P	U	R	1/9/2019	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	TRO	1	NO	ZM	ZM	H	W	R	5/6/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	6/10/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	TEE	1	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	6/11/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	TEE	1	NO	VN	VN	P	U	R	6/11/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	6/26/2019	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	SKP	1	NO	PE	PE	P	W	R	7/9/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	7/5/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	10	NO	XX	SG	P	U	R	7/19/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	TEE	1	NO	KH	KH	P	W	R	7/25/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	6	NO	XX	VN	T	U	R	8/6/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	1	NO	XX	KH	P	U	R	8/6/2019	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	3	NO	XX	HK	T	U	R	7/26/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	160	NO	XX	VN	T	U	R	8/28/2019	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	20	NO	HK	HK	P	W	R	8/19/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	9/5/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	VN	VN	P	U	R	9/3/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	13	NO	ID	ID	P	U	R	9/1/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	40	NO	XX	CN	T	W	R	7/31/2019	I



PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	30	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	8/25/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	3	NO	XX	CN	P	U	R	9/29/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	HAI	277	NO	BD	BD	S	W	R	3/12/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	3	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	11/15/2019	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	120	NO	XX	CN	T	U	R	8/28/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	10	NO	XX	KH	P	U	R	12/31/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	VN	VN	P	W	R	12/28/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	TEE	1	NO	XX	NG	P	W	R	12/26/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	1/17/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	BON	2	NO	ZW	ZW	H	W	R	11/27/2019	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	BON	2	NO	ZW	ZW	H	W	R	11/27/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	BON	1	NO	XX	MM	P	U	R	1/29/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	72	NO	HK	HK	P	W	R	1/23/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	TEE	1	NO	KH	KH	P	U	R	2/4/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	JWL	1	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	2/11/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	18	NO	XX	MM	P	U	R	3/6/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	1	NO	XX	MM	P	U	R	3/7/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	XX	VN	P	W	R	3/15/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	160	NO	XX	ID	P	U	R	3/17/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	2	NO	KP	CN	P	U	R	12/24/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	120	NO	VN	XX	T	X	R	6/29/2019	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	VN	VN	P	U	R	7/5/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	200	NO	XX	CN	T	U	R	6/1/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	EXT	10	ML	XX	KR	P	W	R	7/20/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	138	NO	XX	CN	T	U	R	7/30/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	TEE	1	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	6/25/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	720	NO	VN	KH	P	U	R	9/19/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	5	NO	XX	CN	P	U	R	8/7/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	8	NO	XX	CN	M	U	R	8/27/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	720	NO	XX	KH	P	X	R	9/19/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	UNS	6	NO	XX	MY	T	W	R	11/2/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	60	NO	XX	CN	T	U	R	9/16/2020	I

PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	RUG	1	NO	IN	GB	T	W	R	9/1/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	10	NO	XX	CN	T	U	R	10/26/2020	I
NEOFELIS	NEBULOSA	LEOPARD	SKP	1	NO	XX	TH	P	U	R	10/28/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	2	NO	XX	CN	T	U	R	12/30/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	20	NO	XX	CN	T	W	R	12/30/2020	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	20	NO	XX	CN	T	U	R	12/30/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	RUG	1	NO	AU	AU	H	O	R	1/6/2021	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	SKI	1	NO	IN	G2	T	O	R	9/1/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	8	NO	XX	CN	P	U	R	12/30/2020	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	15	NO	XX	CN	P	U	R	1/19/2021	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	18	NO	HK	HK	P	W	R	5/6/2021	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	60	NO	XX	CN	T	U	R	3/10/2021	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	30	NO	HK	HK	P	W	R	8/11/2021	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	BON	1	NO	VN	MX	P	W	R	8/21/2021	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	10	NO	XX	ID	P	U	R	10/27/2021	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MEA	594	GM	LA	LA	T	W	R	11/19/2021	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	SKU	1	NO	XX	G2	T	O	R	12/2/2021	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	SKU	1	NO	XX	G2	T	O	R	12/2/2021	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	SKU	1	NO	XX	G2	T	O	R	12/2/2021	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	SKU	1	NO	XX	G2	T	O	R	12/2/2021	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	4/12/2022	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	BOP	1	NO	XX	AU	P	U	R	11/15/2021	E
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	12	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	5/12/2022	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	10	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	3/24/2022	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	SKI	1	NO	XX	MX	P	U	R	6/15/2022	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	BON	11	NO	IN	IN	P	W	R	7/29/2022	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	9	NO	IN	IN	P	W	R	7/29/2022	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	600	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	7/31/2022	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	192	NO	VN	VN	T	X	R	8/10/2022	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	CLA	1	NO	BF	BF	P	U	R	10/16/2022	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	MED	6	NO	XX	CN	*	U	R	8/3/2022	I

PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	SKI	1	NO	TZ	TZ	H	W	R	12/5/2022	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	SKU	1	NO	TZ	TZ	H	W	R	12/5/2022	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	BON	0	KG	CU	CU	P	U	R	2/25/2023	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	EXT	70	NO	CN	CN	P	X	R	3/16/2023	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	1	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	3/30/2023	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	TEE	1	NO	KE	KE	P	W	R	4/6/2023	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	SKP	1	NO	GH	GH	P	W	R	3/31/2023	I
PANTHERA	TIGRIS	TIGER	MED	2	NO	XX	VN	P	U	R	5/30/2023	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	TRO	1	NO	MX	XX	H	W	R	4/13/2023	I
PANTHERA	PARDUS	LEOPARD	TEE	60	NO	CM	CM	P	U	R	5/25/2023	I

## **Big Cat Public Safety Act**

The Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA) was signed into law on December 20, 2022 (Pub. L. 117–243). The purpose of the BCPSA is to amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 (16 U.S.C. 3371–3378) to clarify provisions enacted by the Captive Wildlife Safety Act (CWSA) and to further the conservation of certain wildlife species, including to end private ownership of big cats as pets and also to prohibit exhibitors from allowing direct public contact with big cats, including cubs. The BCPSA helps to ensure the health and welfare of big cats, protects the public from the dangers associated with private ownership of big cats, and strengthens the Service’s ability to combat wildlife trafficking.

It places new restrictions on the commerce, breeding, possession, and use of certain big cat species. In order to continue to legally possess privately owned big cats, the Act requires individuals or entities to register any big cat(s) that were in their possession before the date of enactment with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), unless another exception of the Act applies.

The USFWS site “What You Need to Know About the Big Cat Public Safety Act” can be found at: <https://www.fws.gov/what-you-need-know-about-big-cat-public-safety-act>

The BCPSA interim rule can be found at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/06/12/2023-12636/regulations-to-implement-the-big-cat-public-safety-act>

### **U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (DOS/INL)**

#### **Panthera (Cross-cutting)**

Start date: September 2022- September 2024

This is a global program with activities that enhance capacity building and improve conservation measures toward the conservation of Asian big cats. Panthera’s implementation plan increases the effectiveness of counter-wildlife poaching and trafficking efforts in Malaysia, Thailand, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan through a coordinated Big Cat Intelligence Network that consolidates information on current and emerging threats to big cats and their prey, promotes best practices in intelligence-led approaches for law enforcement and wildlife authorities, and develops linkages within and between counter-wildlife trafficking (CWT) agencies. With this award, Panthera strengthens partner counter wildlife trafficking (CWT) agencies’ intelligence-led systems while developing a lasting structure for more coordinated interventions.

#### **National Trust for Nature Conservation (Nepal)**

Start date: Oct 2021 – Sept 2024

Focus areas: Protected areas in the Terai Landscape of southern Nepal.

- Supporting SMART systems and basic patrolling and wildlife crime scene procedures training to frontline staff
- Provision of equipment to front line park rangers (planned for delivery 2024)
- Developing investigative and enforcement functions
- Enhancing prosecution and judicial capacity
- Establishing Wildlife Crime Control Bureaus in the various provinces
- Support for Community Based Anti-Poaching units including training and provision of equipment
- Support to establish centralized wildlife crime database

### **Wildlife Trust India (India/Nepal)**

Start date: Oct 2018 - Sept 2023

Focus Areas: Protected areas in the Terai Landscape and border region between Nepal and India.

- Capacity building of Park Managers and frontline rangers on Wildlife Crime Prevention (Anti-poaching) and training of trainers in India along the Indo-Nepal border
- Inter-agency cooperation & capacity building workshops for wildlife Trade and Enforcement for representatives of customs, Army, Railways, Forest Department and Police officers from India and Nepal
- Conducting regular anti-snare/trap walks and setting up dedicated department teams in collaboration with state FDs in 6 PAs, to locate snares and electric wires and traps.
- Sustained legal support to Forest Department regarding wildlife laws, and on each wildlife crime case registered
- Implementation of Criminal intelligence management system to improve intelligence gathering mechanisms, trend analysis, establish transparency and better governance.

### **WWF (India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh)**

Start Date: Oct 2022 – Sept 2024

- Provide new SMART tools and technology to strengthen Bhutan's enforcement functions in protected areas.
- Enhance the use of SMART Profiles to allow the secure storage, management, and analysis of information.
- Training of front line LEOs in species ID, crime scene investigation techniques, evidence collection, digital evidence etc.
- Provision of new x-ray machines at critical border checkpoints known for illicit wildlife trade.

### **Fauna and Flora International (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan)**

Start Date: Oct 2021 – Sept 2023

Focus areas: Protected Areas across Central Asia.

- This project aims to build law enforcement capacity and will to combat wildlife trafficking (CWT) across major hotspots and trade routes throughout Central Asia. Working in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, the project will support law enforcement agencies to better detect, respond to, and prevent wildlife trafficking at national and regional scales by: 1.) developing cross-border regional cooperation on CWT; 2.) building CWT interdiction, investigative, and enforcement functions; and 3.) enhancing prosecutorial and judicial capacity for CWT
- Mentor relevant authorities in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to collect and analyze CWT data, develop national databases, and produce national CWT reports
- Enhance detection performance of 17 sniffer dogs in Kazakhstan through in-situ training with imitator scents and intensive refresher training for 3 sniffer dogs and handlers (Border Service)
- Provide specific, targeted support for and expansion of existing Cynology departments in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan to enabling greater wildlife trafficking interdiction capabilities
- Increase capacity to counter wildlife crime in protected areas in Central Asia through the roll out and implementation of SMART systems in 6 protected areas.
- Expand support for Ecopark Rangers in the south Kostanay region, prioritized for the connectivity it offers commonly trafficked species between protected areas.

**U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)**

<b>Operating Unit</b>	<b>Activity Name</b>	<b>Implementer(s)</b>	<b>Countries and / Big Cat Species Benefiting</b>	<b>USD Total Estimated Funding</b> (entire project, not only big cats component(s))	<b>Period of Performance</b> (Start year - End year)
Asia Regional	End Environmental Crime	INTERPOL	Various countries, especially South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) members		2022 - 2024 (latest in long partnership with INTERPOL)
Asia Regional	Asia's Linear Infrastructure safeGuarding Nature (ALIGN)	WWF, in partnership with the Center for Large Landscape Conservation	Throughout Asia, focused on India, Mongolia and Nepal	\$6.03 million	October 2021 - September 2025
RDMA	USAID Reducing Demand for Wildlife	RTI International	Big cats demand reduction work focused on Thailand / Tigers		2021 - 2023
RDMA	USAID Wildlife Asia	RTI International	Big cats demand reduction and enforcement collaboration work focused on Thailand / Tigers	24.5 million	2016 - 2021
Bangladesh	USAID DOJ Wildlife Protection Activity	U.S Dep. of Justice - International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (DOJ/ICITAP)	Bangladesh / all big cats located in country will benefit from building gov't capacity to combat wildlife crimes	\$2.2 million	Dec 2020 - Nov 2025
Bangladesh	USAID Ecosystems (Protibesh)	Chemonics International	Bangladesh/ Bengal tigers via co-management and livelihood support.	\$20.5 million	July 2021 - June 2026
India	Strengthening Landscape Management and Conservation	Winrock International	India / Tigers and Leopards	\$20 million	April 2023 - March 2028

	(SLMC)				
Nepal	USAID Freshwater and Forests (Jal Jangal)	DAI	Nepal / all big cats located in targeted protected areas will benefit through improved mgmt and community engagement	\$33 million	Nov. 2022-2027
Nepal	Green Forest (Hariyo Ban II)	WWF	Nepal / Tigers (Indian side also benefited from conservation of tiger corridors that link PAs in both countries)	\$18 million	2016 - July 2021, direct follow-on from similar size / duration "Hariyo Ban" award to WWF
Vietnam	USAID Saving Threatened Wildlife	WWF	Vietnam / Tigers	\$15 million	2021 - 2026

#### **ADDITIONAL DETAIL** (where available)

##### ASIA -WIDE

##### INTERPOL Asian Big Cats activities funded by USAID - recent/current activities and results

- INTERPOL engaged with South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) to strengthen the network by assisting in organizing their Annual General meeting in November 2022 and developing its 5 year's strategic plan. INTERPOL is also implementing SAWEN's communication and visibility activity to highlight regional enforcement issues including the tiger trafficking.
- INTERPOL and USAID organized a virtual "Asian Big Cats Enforcement Dialogue" on 13 January 2023. The event included a high level address from INTERPOL, CITES Secretariat and USAID highlighting the role of the law enforcement community in securing the future of Asian Big Cats in the wild. Ten law enforcement experts and practitioners representing international organizations, civil society and law enforcement agencies in the region engaged in the dialogue discussing big cats crime trends, enforcement challenges at the national and transnational level and the ways to overcome those challenges.
- INTERPOL participated and contributed to the CITES Big Cats Task Force Meeting in April 2023 in Uganda where it presented on capabilities and contributions to tackle illegal trade of big cats through its operational, analytical, and capacity building support to member countries.
- INTERPOL is producing a promotional video highlighting poaching and illegal trade in Asian Big Cats (Malaysia and Nepal). The video will showcase Asian big cat enforcement efforts, best practices and lessons learnt and at the same time highlight INTERPOL's capabilities in addressing the Asian big cat crime.
- INTERPOL is working actively with member countries to identify, locate and arrest wildlife fugitives wanted for Asian big cat trafficking. The identity and location of one such fugitive was updated in 2023. INTERPOL is working with the relevant countries to assist in arrest and extradition of the fugitive.
- INTERPOL will continue the ongoing work with India and Nepal on mapping organized tiger trafficking networks and identifying key targets for joint investigation, with the aim to dismantle the supply chains. A Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meeting (RIACM) on tiger trafficking will take place in September 2023 in Kathmandu (Nepal), to update new information on the criminal groups, jointly review their dynamics and reassess the targets for

future enforcement actions. Similar RIACM is planned in the last quarter of the year with Thailand and Laos.

## NEPAL

Based on the Government of Nepal's [2022 census](#), Nepal's tiger population has reached 355. It was announced by Nepal's then Prime Minister Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba on July 29, 2022. Wild tiger numbers in Nepal have seen a steady rise since the St Petersburg declaration in 2010, when/where all 13 tiger-range countries committed to double the wild tiger numbers by 2022 (Nepal's target was 250 wild tigers). Every four-year's periodic assessments indicated a steady rise in Nepal's wild tiger population to 198 to 235 to 355 in 2014, 2018 and 2022, respectively. It was possible due to concerted efforts from the GON, local communities and development partners, especially USG through USAID's Hariyo Ban Program and other donor funded conservation initiatives to achieve these historic achievements.

USAID Nepal's biodiversity conservation activities aim to reduce the threats to biodiversity and adverse impacts of climate change in the Government of Nepal (GON) recognized bio-diverse landscapes of Nepal - Terai Arc Landscape (TAL, a landscape designated based on wild-tiger habitat), Chitwan Annapurna Landscape (CHAL), and Karnali and Mahakali Basins. These activities apply an integrated whole-of-landscape perspective to biodiversity conservation and sustainable forests and watersheds management in partnership with the GON and local community groups.

Major technical assistance and capacity building interventions of the program included: i) reduction of threats to biodiversity conservation, ii) promotion of climate induced vulnerability reduction measures in local communities and ecosystems, iii) improvement in livelihoods of forest dependent poor people, iv) promotion of gender and social inclusion (GESI) in conservation, iv) enhancing internal governance of forest and watershed management user groups; and v) policy support to coincide with the new constitution of Nepal to promote biodiversity conservation, sustainable forest management, and climate resilience for poverty alleviation and economic growth at federal; provincial and local levels.

In TAL, the globally significant tiger conservation landscape of Nepal, USAID focuses interventions in key areas to restore and conserve corridors and critical habitats and establish original assemblages of herbivores, working to build climate resilience for nature and people. Currently, USAID Biodiversity (Jal Jangal) is committed to the conservation of big cats and their ecosystems. This comprehensive effort is designed to uphold the natural balance while also elevating the well-being of human populations. By safeguarding the habitats of big cats, our primary goal is to bolster the overall vitality of ecosystems. Furthermore, this undertaking actively combats unlawful activities that jeopardize these iconic creatures and their surroundings.

Through USAID Biodiversity (Jal Jangal), our mission encompasses empowering local communities to effectively confront the challenges arising from climate change and natural calamities. By ensuring the protection of big cat habitats, we not only enhance the resilience of indigenous ecosystems but also equip communities to proactively prepare for and adapt to the repercussions of environmental shifts.

Previously, until July 2021, USAID's [Hariyo Ban II program](#)'s specific support that directly/indirectly contributed to increase the tiger population in Nepal include but not limited to: species and habitats conservation, networking and coordination among local and cross-border authorities to combat wildlife trafficking, support to establish loose network of wildlife crimes control bureaus in 32 districts, landscape level conservation strategy and action plans, species level conservation action plans, promotion of co-management between protected area authorities and adjoining buffer zone community forestry user groups through training and capacity building support on sustainable landscapes and corridors management, support to human wildlife conflict mitigation measures such as predator proof corals, support to upgrade a molecular lab in Chitwan, community education and awareness events, and cross-border coordination and networking between India and Nepal's law-enforcement authorities, formation and mobilization of community based anti-poaching units/groups; promotion of



alternative livelihoods/employment opportunities to buffer zone communities adjoining to protected areas that are key tiger habitats, and so on.

USAID/Nepal's Environment and Energy Team continued to provide oversight and improved compliance of environmental and social safeguards of multilateral development banks funded road projects that are/were crossing through the key tiger habitats, such as East-West Highway of Nepal that crosses through several big cat's biological corridors in Nepal.

Further, USAID [Asia's Linear Infrastructure safeGuarding Nature \(ALIGN\)](#) Activity that aims to conserve biodiversity and support livelihoods in response to Asia's rapid expansion of linear infrastructure, especially roads, railways, and power lines partly contributed to the tiger conservation in Nepal. Besides doing policy analysis, capacity building training, and policy advocacy for making roads, railways and power lines conservation friendly, this ALIGN activity is helping to field level implementation of Ministry of Forests and Environment's newly formulated Wildlife Friendly Infrastructure Development Guideline into actions in Nepal.

With USAID funding INTERPOL is assisting SAWEN to develop and implement its strategic plan (2022–2026) and expand training to law enforcement officials from the region. [South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network \(SAWEN\)](#) is an inter-governmental wildlife law enforcement support body of eight South Asian countries with a Secretariat in Kathmandu. It focuses on policy harmonization, institutional capacity strengthening through knowledge and intelligence sharing, and collaboration with regional and international partners to enhance wildlife law enforcement in the member countries.

## National Fish & Wildlife Forensic Laboratory (NFWFL)

**Memo:** Response on forensic analytical techniques specific to Asian big cats in relation to the CITES Notification on Asian big cats ([Notification to the Parties 2023 \(cites.org\)](https://www.cites.org/eng/doc/2023-001)).

The National Fish & Wildlife Forensic Laboratory (NFWFL), under the US Department of Interior's Fish & Wildlife Service's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), mission is to support the enforcement of wildlife laws through the development of objective science, and its application to the analysis of evidence in wildlife crime investigations. As forensic analysts specializing veterinary pathology, morphology, genetics, chemistry, and criminalists, the lab serves Fish & Wildlife Service's special agents and wildlife inspectors, U.S. State Fish & Game commissions, all signatory countries for the Convention for the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), and Interpol's wildlife subgroup.

**a) inform the Secretariat of forensic research projects, including genetic and other methods, undertaken in their territory focusing on the development of techniques to support addressing illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens, for this information to be made available to Parties;**

### Existing capability:

#### Scope: Cause of Death

**Pathology:** The NFWFL's Pathology Unit primarily deals with question of cause of death. Pathology staff have experience in disease diagnostics and forensics of wild and exotic species, including evaluation for abuse, neglect, and cruelty to housed animals. Animal remains undergo a full post-mortem examination to look for pathologic changes or evidence that would help to reconstruct the circumstances surrounding an animal's death. In-house pathology analysis includes necropsy, X-ray and CT scans, microscopic exams, and alternate light source examination. Criminalists, morphologists, geneticists, microbiologists, or toxicologists may provide ancillary information to further elucidate a cause of death. The pathology unit has provided this service for cases of US-based wild and captive cats, diagnosing gunshot, blunt force trauma, poisoning, and predation. The team is able to work with any of the Asian big cat species.

	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	<i>Neofelis spp.</i>	<i>Panthera leo (persica)</i>
<b>Veterinary Pathology</b>					
Cause of death	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recovering trace evidence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

#### Scope: Species identification

**Morphology:** The NFWFL's Morphology Unit uses classic techniques of comparative anatomy (such as size, shape, form, or color) to identify both native and non-native animal remains. Morphological identification is used as a rapid and cost-effective method to compare known reference items to unknown evidence items, to make a taxonomic identification based on observed physical characteristics, as well as determine minimum number of individuals, and when possible, sex. Analysts examine photographs of live animals and wildlife products as provisional identifications for probable cause, in addition to casework and independent research projects.

With felid items commonly in trade, if present, some key features can help distinguish real versus fake items, exclude other commonly confused taxon such as bears, and identify an item to species – using unique spot or stripe patterns, and size, shape, and other diagnostic features of skulls, claws, or teeth.

	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	<i>Neofelis spp.</i>	<i>Panthera leo (persica)</i>
<b>Morphology</b>					
Species identification					
Live animal & carcass	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Skins	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Skulls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teeth (canines)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Claws	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baculum	Yes	Not known in U.S. trade	Not known in U.S. trade	Not known in U.S. trade	Not known in U.S. trade
Derived products / bone	If taxon-diagnostic characters available	If taxon-diagnostic characters available	If taxon-diagnostic characters available	If taxon-diagnostic characters available	If taxon-diagnostic characters available

**Selection of related NFWFL Morphology References:**

- Sabo BA, Yates BC. 1996. Distinguishing the claws of mammals and birds. Identification Notes for Wildlife Enforcement M-96-3. National Fish & Wildlife Forensics Laboratory, Ashland, Oregon, USA.
- Sims ME. 2012. Cranial morphology of five felids: *Acinonyx jubatus*, *Panthera onca*, *Panthera pardus*, *Puma concolor*, *Uncia uncia*. Russian Journal of Theriology 11(2):157-170.
- Sims ME, Yates BC. 2001. Bear and Cat Claws. Identification Notes for Wildlife Enforcement M-01-1. National Fish & Wildlife Forensics Laboratory, Ashland, Oregon, USA.
- Yates B. 1996. Types of mammalian teeth. Identification Note for Wildlife Enforcement M-96-2. National Fish & Wildlife Forensics Laboratory, Ashland, Oregon, USA.
- Yates B. 1996. Fangs! Identification Note for Wildlife Enforcement M-96-5. National Fish & Wildlife Forensics Laboratory, Ashland, Oregon, USA.

**Genetics:** Fragmentary or modified remains are analyzed by the NFWFL's Genetics Unit. The Genetics Unit also works with native and non-native species, extracting DNA for species identification, sexing, and hybridization for casework.

	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	<i>Neofelis spp.</i>	<i>Panthera leo (persica)</i>
<b>Genetics</b>					
Species identification	Yes, mtDNA; real-time QPCR (tiger wine)	Yes, mtDNA	Yes, mtDNA	Yes, mtDNA	Yes, mtDNA
Sex Determination	Yes, XY	Yes, XY	Yes, XY	Yes, XY	Yes, XY
Hybridization	Yes, STRs	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes, STRs

*Key to acronyms:* mtDNA – mitochondrial DNA sequencing; QPCR – real-time quantitative polymerase chain reaction; XY – XY chromosomes; STRs – microsatellite markers (nuclear short-tandem repeats), N/A – not currently applicable.

**Selection of related NFWFL Genetics References:**

Henger CS, Straughan DJ, Xu CCY, Nightingale B, Kretser HE, Burnham-Curtis M, McAlouse D, Seimon TA. 2023. A new multiplex qPCR assay to detect and differentiate big cat species in the illegal wildlife trade. *Scientific Reports* 13:9796.

## Scope: Elemental and materials analysis

**Chemistry:** The Criminalistics and Chemistry Unit specializes in trace evidence such as hair, tool marks forged documents, such as altered hunting or import-export permits, as well as, elemental and materials analysis. The NFWFL's Chemistry Unit supports elemental analysis of traditional Chinese medicinal products, to measure organic compounds in products to determine if products are real or fake.

	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	<i>Neofelis spp.</i>	<i>Panthera leo (persica)</i>
<b>Chemistry</b>					
Species identification					
Traditional Chinese medicinal products (powder, etc.)	Yes	not known in U.S. trade	not known in U.S. trade	not known in U.S. trade	not known in U.S. trade

## Additional research interests and potential capabilities:

### Morphology:

**Individual identification:** In response to requests in case work and pursuant to the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA), Pub. L. 117-243, the NFWFL's Morphology Unit has interest to develop a forensic protocol for Asian big cat individual identification using spot and stripe patterns of the coat, building on methods of individual identification that has been used in field biology.

**Species Identification:** The Morphology Unit, in collaboration with the State of California, is exploring the use of proteomics to identify felid and other tanned fur. Due to tanning processes, DNA can be degraded and thus the lab is seeking other rapid methods for species identification.

**3D Reference Library:** In addition to the on-site reference collection, the NFWFL is in the process of building a 3D reference library of Asian big cats that can be used for case work as well as research purposes, along with 3D material available across other institutions, to external partners and researchers. The 3D lab also seeks to utilize 3D printed material to build the lab's on-site reference collection for casework, but also for training purposes.

	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	<i>Neofelis spp.</i>	<i>Panthera leo (persica)</i>
<b>Morphology</b>					
Species Identification					
Proteomics on fur	Testing	Testing	Testing	Testing	Testing
Individual identification					
Coat pattern	Future, stripe pattern	Future, spot pattern	Future, spot pattern	Future, spot pattern	N/A
Reference material					
3D reference library	Future	Future	Future	Future	Future

### Selection of related NFWFL Morphology References:

Robinson N. 2012. The individualization of leopards via pattern analysis of the spots forming their dorsal rosette rings. Master's Thesis. California State University, Fresno, California.

**Genetics:** In response to requests in case work, current international collaborations with similar projects (e.g., jaguars), and pursuant to the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA), Pub. L. 117-243, the NFWFL's Genetics Unit has interest to work with national and international researchers and laboratories to validate robust genetic panels (SNPs or STRs) in a forensic context to support casework related to questions on species of origin, individual matching and geographic provenance. The lab seeks to work with both governmental and non-governmental partners to support the development of a robust genetic panel that for Asian big cats that would advance the field of forensic science.

	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	<i>Neofelis spp.</i>	<i>Panthera leo (persica)</i>
<b>Genetics</b>					
Individualization	Future – near term	Future	Future	Future	Future
Minimum Number of Individuals	Future – near term	Future	Future	Future	Future
Individual Matching	Future – near term	Future	Future	Future	Future
Geographic Provenance	Future – near term	Future	Future	Future	Future
Pedigree Analysis	Future – near term	Future	Future	Future	Future

**Chemistry:** The Chemistry and Morphology Units are exploring felid species identification using Direct Analysis in Real Time - Time of Flight - Mass Spectrometry or DART for furs and other tanned products that may be too degraded during the tanning process to contain quality DNA for genetic analysis. The interest is to build on the lab's current resource library, and technological and analytical capacity, for both wood and wildlife.

	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	<i>Neofelis spp.</i>	<i>Panthera leo (persica)</i>
<b>Chemistry</b>					
<b>Species identification</b>					
DART Mass Spectrometry on hair	Testing	Testing	Yes	Yes	Yes

**b) in accordance with their national regulations, share samples of Asian big cat specimens from living animals, seized animals or products that could contain DNA of Asian big cats with genetic research projects focusing on the development of techniques to address illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens; and**

The NFWFL houses an on-site reference sample collection (morphological and genetic) of specimens and samples used for ongoing casework. The NFWFL is willing, in accordance with national regulations, to share data generated by both research and case work (once adjudicated). The laboratory is keen to collaborate with the global community to support evolving forensic techniques and methods to address illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens. As part of our mission, the NFWFL promotes collections, methods, and analysis that can advance the wildlife forensic discipline in a standardized and verifiable way that can stand up in a court of law.

**c) take note that methods for the identification of tiger species and individual identification from different types of specimens of tiger parts and derivatives have been developed in the Czech Republic, and that analytical kits for use of these methods, as well as testing of tiger samples, are available to Parties free of charge.**

The NFWFL is interested in collaborating with national and international partners, including colleagues in the Czech Republic and Big Cat working groups, to discuss collaborative methods for identification of tiger species and individual identification from different types of specimens of tiger parts and derivatives. As part of the lab's mandate, in-house analysis of morphological and genetic specimens using accredited protocols is necessary for the lab's casework, but the lab seeks to

collaborate with external partners to build on species and individual identification techniques to advance the role of wildlife forensics in addressing illegal trade in Asian big cat specimens.