

A Case Study of Wildlife Crime in Bangladesh

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Abstract : Theme of wildlife crime is unique in Bangladesh. In earlier of 2010, wildlife crime was not designated as a crime, unlike other offenses. Forest Department and other enforcement agencies were not in full swing to find out the organized crime scene at that time and recorded few cases along with forest crime. However, after the establishment of Wildlife Crime Control Unit in 2012a, total of 374 offenses have been detected with 566 offenders and 37,039 wildlife and trophies were seized till November 2016. Most offenses seem to be committed outside the forests where the presence of the forest staff is minimal. Total detection percentage of offenses is not known, but offenders are not identified in 60% of detected cases (UDOR). Only 20% cases are decided by the courts even after eight years, conviction rate of the total disposal is 70.65%. Mostly six months imprisonment and BDT 5000 fine seems to be the modal penalty. The monetary value of wildlife crime in the country is approximate \$0.72M per year and the maximum value counted for reptiles around \$0.45M especially for high-level trafficking of geckos and turtles. The most common seizures of wildlife are birds (mynas, munias, parakeets, lorikeets, water birds, etc.) which have domestic demand for pet. Some other wildlife like turtles, lizards and small mammals are also on the list. Venison and migratory waterbirds often seized which has a large quantity demand for consuming at aristocratic level. Due to porous border and weak enforcement in border region poachers use the way for trafficking of geckos, turtles, and tortoises, snakes, venom, tiger and body parts, spotted deer skin, pangolin etc. Those have very high demand in East Asian countries for so-called medicinal purposes. The recent survey also demonstrates new route for illegal trade and trafficking for instance, after poaching of tiger and deer from the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove tract of the planet to Thailand through the Bay of Bengal, sharks fins and ray fish through Chittagong seaport and directly by sea routes to Myanmar and Thailand. However, a good number of records of offense demonstrate the transition route from India to South and South East Asian countries. Star tortoises and Hamilton's turtles are smuggled in from India which mostly seized at Benapole border of Jessore and Hazrat Shah Jajal International Airport of Dhaka, in very large numbers for transmission to East Asian countries. Most of the cases of wildlife trade routes leading to China, Thailand, Malaysia, and Myanmar. Most surprisingly African ivory was seized in Bangladesh recently, which was meant to be trafficked to the South-East Asia. However, forest department is working to fight against wildlife poaching, illegal trade and trafficking in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies. The department needs a clear mandate and to build technical capabilities for identifying, seizing and holding specimens. The department also needs to step out of the forests and must develop the capacity to surveillance and patrol all sensitive locations across the country.

Keywords : Bangladesh forest department, Sundarban, tiger, wildlife crime, wildlife trafficking

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