

# 'Gangs smuggling in tusks'

**NGO REPORT:** Malaysia a prominent transit country for wildlife trafficking

NST 10/9/13 MS14

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**T**HE large amount of ivory shipped to Malaysia indicates that underworld elements are involved in the smuggling of the contraband.

Wildlife trade monitoring network Traffic deputy director for Southeast Asia Dr Chris R. Shepherd said small-time wildlife traffickers would not have the capacity to ship such large consignments of ivory across many countries.

"Wildlife crime should be treated more seriously and given a higher priority as there are indications that organised criminals are involved in the trade."

Past seizures of ivory by Malaysian Customs officers, such as the discovery of 1,500 pieces of African elephant tusks in wooden crates late last year, were proof that Malaysia had become a prominent transit country for wildlife trafficking.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) lists Malaysia as one of eight countries identified as countries affected by the ivory trade.

Shepherd said stern enforcement by authorities could hamper efforts by wildlife traffickers utilising Malaysia as a transit point in the future.

"An example would be the case where a man in Kedah was caught with 22 tiger skins and a number of elephant tusks in his house. He holds the key that could open up opportunities for further investigations, as it gives us a chance to find out who is behind the trade."

He said authorities should also punish traffickers equivalent to their crime.

Shepherd also proposed for seized ivory to be destroyed, to

## African elephant tusks seized in Malaysia – figures from published data

Year	Details	Where / Trade Route	No of Pieces	Min / estimated weight (kg)
Jan 13, 2013	Customs at KLIA seized 20 tusks	-	20	-
Dec 12, 2012	Selangor Customs seized ten crates containing ivory which were divided between two containers. Shipped from the port of Lomé in Togo and were headed to China	Togo-Spain-Malaysia (Port Klang)- China	2,341	6,034.30
Feb 12, 2012	A raid in a Malaysian man's house in Kedah uncovered 22 Tiger skulls and 9 pieces of tusks.	Kedah	9	unknown
Jan-12, 2012	Port Klang Customs seized 492kg of tusks, with Malaysia (Port Klang) listed as the end destination.	Kenya-Malaysia	49	492
Dec 11, 2011	Port Klang Customs seized tusks which was on its way to Cambodia	Kenya-Port Klang-PTP-Sihanoukville (KH)		1,400
Sept 11, 2011	After being tipped off by Customs officers in Penang, Port Klang Customs seized two containers containing 695 elephant tusks. Officers found 92 plastic bags of tusks in the middle of the container, which was surrounded by recycled crushed plastic	Tanzania - (Penang) Malaysia - China	695	2,000
Aug 11, 2011	Penang Port Customs seized 664 elephant tusks	Tanzania-Malaysia-China	664	1,586
July 11, 2011	Johor Port Authority seized 405 tusks from Kenya	Kenya-Singapore-Pasir Gudang (Malaysia)	405	2,974
Jan 11, 2011	The Selangor State Wildlife and National Parks Department raided a man's home in Bukit Jelutong and found ivory items, which he advertised in the classified ads of a well known local website.	Malaysia	Unknown	-

send a clear message to traffickers that it will not be tolerated.

"There still needs to be a lot of work done in investigating the trade, such as who is behind it, the end consumers and middlemen.

"Cooperation between source and transit countries, such as

Malaysia and countries in the region of Africa, would benefit both authorities, as it would ensure that smugglers would not have it easy."

Shepherd said Traffic was in the midst of working with the Customs Department in strengthening its capacity-building programmes.

"We are holding two workshops with the department, where front-line officers would be exposed to the wildlife trade and how to detect ivory in shipments."

He said the first workshop was held in Klang, with another to be held later this week in Johor Baru.