

# THE WILD CAT TRADE IN MYANMAR

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A TRAFFIC SOUTHEAST ASIA REPORT



**TRAFFIC**  
the wildlife trade monitoring network

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**Cover:** Spotted Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii*  
skin

**Photograph credit:** Chris R. Shepherd/TRAFFIC  
Southeast Asia

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Chris R. Shepherd and Vincent Nijman



Chris R. Shepherd/TRAFFIC Southeast Asia

Leopard Cat *Prionailurus bengalensis* and juvenile Leopard *Panthera pardus* skins displayed at a stall in Tachilek

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Chris R. Shepherd/TRAFFIC Southeast Asia

Leopard Cat *Prionailurus bengalensis* skin with other wildlife parts for sale in Mong La

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A total of 1320 wild cat parts, representing an absolute minimum of 1158 individual animals were observed during 12 surveys carried out in Myanmar (formerly Burma) between 1991 and 2006. These parts represented all eight species of wild cats found in Myanmar.

Under Myanmar's *Protection of Wild Life and Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Law (State Law and Order Restoration Council Law No.583/94.1994)* only five of eight species of native wild cats are protected. Large numbers of parts from totally protected cat species were observed openly displayed for sale during these surveys. Protected species (Tiger *Panthera tigris*, Leopard *P. pardus*, Clouded Leopard *Neofelis nebulosa*, Marbled Cat *Pardofelis marmorata*, Asiatic Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii*) were offered in similar numbers as non-protected species (Fishing Cat *Prionailurus viverinnus*, Leopard Cat *P. bengalensis*, Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*), but species that are globally threatened are offered in significantly larger numbers than non-threatened species. This, and the frankness of the dealers, suggests a serious lack of enforcement effort to prevent this illegal trade, and highlights the threat that trade poses to already threatened species.

Three of the four markets surveyed were situated on international borders, catering to international buyers. Myanmar is a signatory to the Convention on international Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), prohibiting any cross-border trade of cat species (including their parts and derivatives) listed in CITES Appendix I, and requiring permits for export of species listed in Appendix II. Dealers openly acknowledge that the trade is illegal and give suggestions on how to smuggle these contraband wildlife products across borders. No dealers indicated that they were able to trade any of these specimens legally. According to the CITES trade database managed by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), no cats of any species have been legally exported from Myanmar since becoming a Party to the Convention in 1997.

From this study, TRAFFIC makes the following recommendations:

- National laws should be enforced, and markets openly selling protected wildlife should be closed down. Those found violating the national legislation should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.
- In order to reduce illegal international trade of wild cats and other protected wildlife, Myanmar should be encouraged to work closely with Thailand, China and other relevant countries, as international co-operation is essential to enforce effectively CITES and to put an end to the illegal international trade.
- Authorities in airports and other points of international entry and exit should be more vigilant to prevent parts and derivatives of protected wildlife from being carried across Myanmar's borders. Myanmar should ensure that staff based at these checkpoints are sufficiently trained in CITES implementation, enforcement and species/parts of species identification.
- Regular and systematic monitoring of the markets in Myanmar should continue to be carried out by non-government organizations to assist the authorities in their enforcement efforts as well as to detect changing trends and dynamics in the trade.

- Myanmar, as a Party to CITES, should revise existing laws or enact completely new CITES implementing legislation and enforce all CITES-enabling legislation.
- The status of the Fishing Cat *Prionailurus viverinnus*, the Leopard Cat *P. bengalensis* and the Jungle Cat *Felis chaus* should be clarified in the Protection of Wild Life and Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Law (*State Law and Order Restoration Council Law No.583 / 94.1994*).

## INTRODUCTION

Illegal trade in wildlife in Myanmar (formerly Burma) is a serious threat to many species. Among the numerous species of wildlife openly traded in markets throughout the country are wild cats. Eight species of wild cat are reported as occurring in Myanmar, including Tiger *Panthera tigris*, Leopard *P. pardus*, Clouded Leopard *Neofelis nebulosa*, Marbled Cat *Pardofelis marmorata*, Asiatic Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii*, Fishing Cat *Prionailurus viverinnus*, Leopard Cat *P. bengalensis* and Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*.

Myanmar, the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia, shares its borders with five other countries: Bangladesh, China, India, Lao PDR and Thailand. Compared with other Southeast Asian countries, Myanmar still maintains extensive forest areas, and may still harbour significant populations of wild cat species, although very little work has been carried out to determine their population sizes of cat species in Myanmar, or the impact hunting and trade has on these populations. However, populations of some species, such as the Tiger, are known to be in serious decline (Lynam *et al.*, 2006). The current wild Tiger population in Myanmar is estimated to be no more than 150 and may be on the verge of extinction if steps to eliminate threats to the survival of these animals are not removed (Lynam, 2003).

Myanmar has committed to the conservation of some, but not all native species of wild cats through the Protection of Wild Life and Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Law (*State Law and Order Restoration Council Law No.583/94.1994*). Only five of the eight species of cats are listed in this law (Table 1). The status of the remaining three species is unclear, as the law states all Viverridae (civets) are protected, and includes the term 'wild cats/civets'. It is likely that the remaining three species are considered protected, although listed under the wrong family in the law.

Hunting of non-protected wildlife requires a permit from the Director General, who "may grant a hunting license, stipulating conditions to a hunter to hunt wild life other than wild life and protected wild life within a natural area".



Chris R. Shepherd/TRAFFIC Southeast Asia

**High quality Tiger *Panthera tigris* skin said to originate from India on sale in Tachilek**

Chapter VI of the Protection of Wild Life and Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Law (*State Law and Order Restoration Council Law No.583/94.1994*) states that a person who has been granted a hunting license shall:

- a) pay the hunting license fees as may be prescribed;
- b) abide by the conditions of the hunting license;
- c) submit to the inspection of the Forest Department.



However, despite whether the remaining three species are protected or not, the Forest Department does not give out permits for the hunting (Rao *et al.*, 2005; Duckworth in litt. 2007), and therefore no parts originating from any species of cat from Myanmar should be in trade.

This law is enforced by the Myanmar Forest Department, which also serves as the country's CITES Management Authority. Possession, sale or export of species covered by this law, or their parts, is punishable by a fine of up to Myanmar Kyat (MMK) 50 000 (USD 7450) and/or imprisonment for up to seven years.

Regarding the international trade of wildlife, Myanmar has been a Party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) since 1997. The agency responsible for the national implementation and enforcement of CITES is also the Forest Department, under the Ministry of Forestry.



**Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii* skin for sale in Tachilek**

All Parties to CITES have been categorized under the CITES National Legislation Project, based on the ability of national legislation to implement and enforce CITES, as follows:

- Category 1 (legislation that is believed to generally meet the requirements for the implementation of CITES);
- Category 2 (legislation which is believed generally not to meet all requirements for the implementation of CITES) and;
- Category 3 (legislation that is believed generally not to meet the requirements for the implementation of CITES).

A decade after becoming a Party, Myanmar's national legislation is rated in Category 3 because it is still not considered adequate for the effective implementation and enforcement of CITES. As a Party to CITES, Myanmar is urged to adopt comprehensive legislation and enforcement controls relating to the "Conservation of and trade in tigers and other Appendix-I Asian big cat species" (CITES Resolution Conf. 12.5). CITES Parties are also recommended to raise general awareness to eliminate illegal trade in and use of all Asian big cat derivatives, however, Myanmar has yet to do so significantly (Nowell, 2007). According to the Myanmar's Ministry of Forestry, this is largely due to limited resources (Director General and CITES Management Authority, in litt. to the CITES Secretariat, 2006). Myanmar has reported to the CITES Secretariat that amending national legislation with regards to the implementation of CITES is in progress (<http://www.cites.org/common/resources/reports/pab/03-04Myanmar.pdf>) but the current status of this is unknown.

Five species of wild cats occurring in Myanmar are listed in Appendix I of CITES, which prohibits international commercial trade of live animals, their parts and derivatives, while the remaining three species are in Appendix II, which requires specific procedures are followed if international, commercial trade is permitted (Table 1). All five species of cats listed in Appendix I of CITES are also listed as Completely Protected under Myanmar’s national legislation.

**Table 1**  
**Status of wild cats in Myanmar – National legislation, CITES and IUCN Red List**

Species	National Legislation*	CITES	IUCN Red List (2007)
Tiger <i>Panthera tigris</i>	Completely protected	I	EN
Leopard <i>P. pardus</i>	Completely protected	I	LC
Clouded Leopard <i>Neofelis nebulosa</i>	Completely protected	I	VU
Marbled Cat <i>Pardofelis marmorata</i>	Completely protected	I	VU
Asiatic Golden Cat <i>Catopuma temminckii</i>	Completely protected	I	VU
Fishing Cat <i>Prionailurus viverrinus</i>	Not listed	II	VU
Leopard Cat <i>P. bengalensis</i>	Not listed	II	LC
Jungle Cat <i>Felis chaus</i>	Not listed	II	LC

\*Source: Forest Department Notification No. 583/94 (26 October 1994).

EN=Endangered, VU=Vulnerable, LC=Least Concern

Regarding the global conservation status of the eight species of wild cats in Myanmar, one is classified as Endangered, four as Vulnerable, and three are considered Least Concern by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Table 1). However, the status of these species within Myanmar itself is not known.

Wild cat species are threatened by habitat loss and many are threatened by conflict with humans and by loss of prey (Sunquist and Sunquist, 2002). However, of all the threats facing cats, hunting for the illegal trade has the greatest potential to do maximum harm in minimal time (Nowell and Jackson, 1996), although this is likely true for some species more than others, and the situation in Myanmar needs further study. In some areas, Tigers, for example, are thought to be extirpated due to hunting for trade (Rao, *et al.*, 2005). While there is some information (Martin, 1997; Martin and Redford, 2000; Shepherd, 2001; Shepherd and Nijman, 2007a) on the trade of a few of the Asian big cats, such as the Tiger, even less is known of the trade in the smaller cats. In order to assess the level of trade in these species in Myanmar, TRAFFIC conducted market surveys and research, and the following analysis was made.

## METHODS

The results of 12 surveys of four wildlife markets in Myanmar are analysed in this report, nine of which were carried out by TRAFFIC. Surveys were conducted in the Tachilek market, on the border with Thailand, for cat parts on four occasions in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2006, the market at Golden Rock twice in 2000 and 2006, the market in Three Pagoda Pass on the border with Thailand once in 2006 and the Mong La market on the border with China once in 2006.

Results from four additional surveys, all carried out in Tachilek are also included in this analysis, one from 1991 (by Murray) and two from 1992 (one by Nash and one by Murray) and one from 1994 (Redford in: Martin, 1997). It is important to note that surveys carried out from 1991-1998 tallied the number of cat skins (and occasionally skulls) but no other cat parts at these markets.

In addition to the surveys carried out in Myanmar, surveys were also carried out in Mae Sai, Thailand (immediately across the border from the Tachilek market), and in China, in the towns of Ruili and Jiegao, to gather further information on the cross-border trade.

From 1999-2006, all cat parts were recorded in each market surveyed. As with most of the wildlife available in the markets, wild cats and their parts were openly on display, and there was no need to resort to undercover techniques to obtain the relevant data. The number of live animals, carcasses, canines, skulls, claws and pieces of skin were recorded and when possible information was requested on origins and

**Figure 1**  
**Markets selling wild cat parts in Myanmar**



Map prepared by Sandrine Pantel



**Clouded Leopard *Neofelis nebulosa* parts for sale at Golden Rock**

potential buyers from the vendors. Parts that could not be identified to a species level, including numerous small cat canine teeth, claws and bones, or could not be confirmed to be genuine, were not counted and are not included in the results of this report. No wildlife parts or derivatives were purchased during these surveys.

For each survey we estimated the minimum number of cats needed to supply the number of parts offered for sale. Thus

two canines and a complete skull (with teeth) must have been derived from two animals, whereas a skull and a skin may have derived from just one single individual.

Absolute numbers and ratios were compared between species, and use non-parametric statistical tests (regression analysis and chi-square tests) to explore temporal and spatial differences. Significance is accepted when  $P < 0.05$  in a two-tailed test.

It was not possible to collect data on turnover rates, but for analysis it was assumed that it was less than the shortest inter-survey interval (assumed to be six months apart in 1992, all other surveys were carried out at least one year apart).

Official exchange rates used in this report are 1 US Dollar (USD) = 6.711 Myanmar Kyat (MMK) = 8.003 Chinese Yuan Renminbi (CNY)

## RESULTS

During the 12 surveys carried out in four markets between 1991 and 1998, all cat skins and some skulls were counted and from 1999 to 2006 all wild cat parts that could be identified to the species level were recorded. In total 1320 items, representing all eight species of wild cats native to Myanmar were recorded. Whole skins were the most frequently observed cat part in the markets, followed by canine teeth and skulls. These items are sold as trophies, although some dealers stated that the canine teeth are sometimes sold as talismans to bring luck or strength to the bearer. The absolute minimum number of individual cats this total of 1320 items represented was 1158 (Table 3). It should be noted that this is an underestimate, as in 1991 and 1998, only skins and some skulls were counted (parts that could not be identified were not counted). Furthermore, the likelihood that different cat parts observed at any given market were indeed from the smallest number of cats possible as assumed in our calculations is very unlikely. Not unexpectedly, there is a highly significant relationship between the number of items recorded for each species and the minimum number of individuals this represents for each species

(Pearson's correlation coefficient,  $N=8$ ,  $R^2=0.986$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). In subsequent analysis only the number of individuals were considered.

**Table 2**  
**The total parts and minimum number of individuals of wild cats observed in Myanmar 1991-2006**  
**(note only skins and skulls were counted from 1991-1998)**

Species	Total parts observed	Total minimum individuals observed
Tiger	167	107
Leopard	215	177
Clouded Leopard	301	279
Marbled Cat	4	4
Asiatic Golden Cat	111	110
Fishing Cat	37	36
Leopard Cat	483	443
Jungle Cat	2	2

The most numerous species for sale was that of a non-protected species, the Leopard Cat, with a total of 483 parts observed, representing at least 443 individuals. The second most numerous was a totally protected species, the Clouded Leopard, with a total of 301 parts observed, representing a minimum of 279 individuals (Table 2). Perhaps this is to be expected, as both are widespread in the wild, and both have attractive pelts.



**Tiger *Panthera tigris* skin purportedly from an animal killed in Myanmar awaiting sale in Tachilek**

There is no statistically significant difference between the number of protected vs non-protected species on sale ( $\chi^2=0.70$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $P>0.30$ ), i.e. legal protection alone does not lead to a lesser availability at markets. Interestingly, globally threatened species (i.e. those that are listed as either Endangered or Vulnerable according to IUCN threat criteria) are offered for sale in significantly higher numbers than non-threatened species ( $\chi^2=39.7$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). However, not all species follow this general rule. The Endangered Tiger and the Vulnerable Marbled Cat for instance were offered significantly less than all other threatened cat species combined, and the Leopard Cat was found in significantly larger numbers than the other non-threatened species combined.

Table 3 gives a detailed breakdown of the species and parts observed.

## THE MARKETS

### Tachilek

The largest number of cat parts observed for sale were found in the border town of Tachilek, with a total of 1265 parts observed, representing eight species of cats (Table 3). There are undoubtedly more wildlife products for sale in this town than anywhere else in Myanmar, including many rare cat skins, especially Tiger, Leopard and Clouded Leopard. According to Martin and Redford (2000), there are probably more Leopards and Clouded Leopards skins for sale in Tachilek than anywhere else in the world.

Smaller cat skins, especially from the Leopard Cat, are commonly available and less expensive than the larger cat skins (Martin and Redford, 2000). Although the number of cat parts, and especially skins at Tachilek is larger than at any of the other markets, comparing the ratio of large (Tiger, Leopard, Clouded Leopard) vs small cats offered for sale at Tachilek to that of the other markets, shows that at the other markets large cats are significantly more offered for sale ( $\chi^2=7.05$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). There were large intra-annual variations in the numbers of the different species offered for sale ( $\chi^2=134.4$ ,  $df=30$ ,  $P<0.001$ : data from the two surveys in 1992 averaged, and Fishing and Marbled Cat omitted so as to avoid too many low expected values) with for instance in 1991 more Fishing Cats but fewer Leopard Cats, but conversely in 1994 many more Leopard Cats on offer than in other years.

Among the observations of skins was a Golden Cat with ocelot-like rosettes. This rare 'tristis' form has been previously recorded from China (Nowell and Jackson, 1996), and possibly two records from Myanmar (Duckworth, in litt., 2007). Although its true provenance can not be identified, this is the first time this variety of the Golden Cat has been recorded in trade in Myanmar (see Figure 2)

In the wildlife market of Tachilek, the vast majority of dealers sell cat parts as trophies and talismans to foreigners, who according to dealers, are mostly from Thailand and East Asian countries, and include tourists, collectors, traders and individuals who purchase goods in this market for resale outside of Myanmar. According to retailers, locals apparently very rarely buy these products. Skins are purchased wholesale by Thai nationals, for resale in Bangkok, and to tourists, mostly coming from eastern Asia (cf. Martin and Redford, 2000).

In conversations with dealers in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2006, it was learned that skins, with the exception of at least one shipment of Indian Tigers *P. t. tigris* and Leopards, which came from India, all originated in Myanmar. The first author was shown cardboard boxes in the home of a dealer that contained Tiger and Leopard skins which had been transported by air into Yangon from Delhi,



Chris R. Shepherd/TRAFFIC Southeast Asia

Figure 2: A rare 'tristis' form of the Golden Cat *Catopuma temminckii* for sale in Tachilek

India, and then had been taken by land to Tachilek. The dealer stated that at least some of these skins were to be sold to a buyer from Taiwan.

Dealers in Tachilek all claimed that Tigers in Myanmar are becoming increasingly rare. Many claimed that their Tiger parts were from India as it is much easier to acquire parts of these species from there. Tigers claimed to originate from India were generally much larger and as dealers pointed out, the standard of taxidermy was much better than that evident from skins said to have originated from Myanmar.



Chris R. Shepherd/TRAFFIC Southeast Asia

**Tiger *Panthera tigris* and Leopard *Panthera pardus* skins for sale in a jewellery store in Tachilek. According to the owner, these skins had come from India**

### **Golden Rock**

Forty-four parts from five species of cats were observed in Golden Rock, including Tiger, Leopard, Clouded Leopard, Golden Cat and Leopard Cat (Table 3). In 2000, a dealer offered the investigator a pair of very fresh Tiger canine teeth, asking MMK 67.00 (USD 10.00) each. The teeth still had dried blood on them, indicating freshness. He claimed that Tiger canines are kept in homes for protection.

Also in 2000, a Leopard penis and testes were observed for sale, along with other parts of the freshly killed animal. The dealer stated that these were sold to increase one's sexual performance. This was the only genuine cat penis observed during these surveys, although numerous fake ones were observed, likely made from tendons and sinews of other animals, such as domestic cattle. According to the dealer, the Leopard was killed near Golden Rock less than a month earlier using a snare. He claimed that Leopards were extremely rare in the region and that this was the first killed in the area in approximately five years. Other Leopards observed were apparently killed in other parts of Myanmar and brought to Golden Rock for sale.

According to one dealer, Tigers no longer survive in the area surrounding Golden Rock and the few parts that were observed here were from other parts of Myanmar (Shepherd, 2001). The Golden Cat, according to dealers in Golden Rock (2000) is very rare in that area, and difficult to obtain, due to over-hunting. Hunters in the area suggested that not only the Golden Cat, but most species of large mammals are becoming increasingly scarce there due to over-hunting.

The market caters largely to locals and sells wildlife products largely to supply demand for medicinal purposes. It therefore seems likely that expensive items, such as Tiger skins are sent to other markets that cater to foreign buyers.

### **Mong La**

A total of nine cat parts were observed, representing three species, including Tiger, Jungle Cat and Leopard Cat (Table 3). The wildlife market in Mong La is situated immediately on the border with



**Tiger *Panthera tigris* skin displayed for sale in a hotel lobby in Mong La**

China and caters largely to buyers from China. A total of 14 vendors selling wildlife products were observed during a survey carried out by TRAFFIC in Mong La during February 2006, selling a wide variety of wildlife parts, most of which were sold for food and for use in traditional medicines (Shepherd and Nijman, 2007a).

Among the wildlife observed was a complete Clouded Leopard skin and skeleton, four complete Leopard Cat skins and a live young Jungle Cat. This was the only live cat observed for sale in Myanmar during any of these

surveys. The dealer stated that a second one was available, but that it was at her home. The live Jungle Cat was being offered for sale as a pet.

In a hotel near the market, a Tiger skin was hung on the wall in the lobby, with a price on a card beside it (58000 CNY or USD 7247), further illustrating the openness of the trade and the disregard for wildlife legislation.

### **Three Pagodas Pass**

Three Pagodas Pass, situated in Myanmar immediately on the border with Thailand, was surveyed in April 2006. While a few wildlife products were observed for sale in this market, for trophies and as traditional medicines, very few cat parts were available. Only one skin and a skull of a Clouded Leopard were observed (Table 3).

### **China and Thailand border towns**

To confirm cross-border trade, TRAFFIC visited the towns of Ruili and Jiegau, China, in January 2006. Both of these towns are very near the Myanmar border and, according to locals, had wildlife traders. Dealers of wildlife, precious stones and other black market items smuggled across the border from Myanmar were there and questioned about the availability of cat parts. All the dealers claimed it was easy to obtain skins and other wildlife parts. These are usually kept in Myanmar and brought across into China when there was a buyer. TRAFFIC researchers, posing as potential buyers, were taken to the home of a dealer in the town of Jiegau and shown the skin and skeleton of a Clouded Leopard hidden under a bed, which had been smuggled in from Myanmar and was awaiting sale.

In Mae Sai, Thailand, immediately across the border from the large Tachilek market, no wildlife products were observed during TRAFFIC's visit in 2006, with the exception of ivory. When asked about cat parts, locals recommended the surveyors go to the Tachilek market in Myanmar.



### **Myanmar border towns**

Almost all wild cat parts in these markets are sold to international buyers, as there is apparently little demand for trophies or talismans within Myanmar. Dealers stated that wild cat parts are frequently smuggled out of the country, with relative ease. One dealer explained to the authors that a common way for foreign tourists to smuggle Tiger claws and teeth out of the country is to drill a hole in them and wear it on a necklace. Other products, especially larger items such as skins, are merely smuggled across the border in closed boxes, or, most commonly, hidden in vehicles.

Three of the four markets surveyed are situated on international borders with China and Thailand, and dealers stated that buyers come from these two neighbouring countries, and from Taiwan. Furthermore, at Tachilek and Three Pagoda Pass, prices were quoted in Thai Baht and in Mong La in CNY. Clearly these markets cater to international buyers. Like Myanmar, both China and Thailand are signatories to CITES, prohibiting any cross-border trade of cat species, their parts and derivatives. Dealers openly admit that the trade is illegal and give suggestions on how to smuggle these contraband wildlife products across borders. According to dealers, items can be hidden in bags, under other non-wildlife goods, and carried across the border. No dealers indicated that they were able to trade any of these specimens legally.

Based on data from the Chinese authorities from 1994-1995, Li *et al.* (2000) concluded that there is ample evidence of illegal wildlife trade across the Sino-Myanmar border. Numerous animals, animal parts or animal derivatives were confiscated by the Chinese authorities in the border area between Myanmar and Yunnan, including 11 species listed in either CITES Appendix I or II. This included Tigers and Clouded Leopards, purportedly originating in Myanmar. Li *et al.* (2000) noted that "...the number of species and volume



Chris R. Shepherd/TR AFPC Southeast Asia

**Clouded Leopard *Neofelis nebulosa* skin and bones in China near the border with Myanmar. According to the seller it had been smuggled across the border from Myanmar**

of [cross-border] trade is much higher than those confiscated, but it is difficult to estimate how much higher. Tiger-based products from Myanmar were confiscated on the Chinese border twice during 1994-1995 suggesting that these products are actively traded across the Sino-Burma border”.

According to the CITES trade database, managed by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), no cats of any species have been legally exported from Myanmar since becoming a Party to the Convention in 1997. Therefore, it can be concluded that all of the international cat trade from these markets is contrary to CITES as well as illegal with reference to existing national laws.

## CONCLUSION

This is the first comprehensive study of the trade in all species of wild cats in Myanmar, with all eight species of wild cats known from Myanmar openly observed for sale in markets. The extent of trade and information provided by the traders themselves indicate that there is a burgeoning trade in cat parts in Myanmar. With reference to the (international) trade in Tiger parts, Lynam *et al.* (2006) noted that wildlife trade networks in Myanmar are organized, albeit limited in comparison with those of neighbouring countries that have superior communications and transportation infrastructures.

The different body parts of the various species were not offered for sale in the same ratios during the three years that the surveys were conducted. In some years, certain parts were observed in large numbers whereas in others they were rarely recorded or not observed at all. Information is lacking on whether or not this is a change in availability of certain species or certain body parts, or that this is a reflection of (temporal) differences in consumer demand.



Chris R. Shepherd/TRAFFIC Southeast Asia

**Penis from a freshly killed Leopard *Panthera pardus* at Golden Rock**

While only five of the eight species of wild cats in Myanmar are listed as Completely Protected in the *Protection of Wild Life and Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Law (State Law and Order Restoration Council Law No.583/94.1994)*, the Forestry Department does not grant hunting licenses for the remaining three species. Any trade of these species that was observed should therefore be considered illegal. However, as evident from this report, trade of these species, and other protected species, continues, openly and unabated. A similar picture emerged from a study on the trade in bears and bear parts in Myanmar in 2006, where large numbers of bear parts were openly offered for sale at various

wildlife markets in Myanmar (Shepherd and Nijman, 2007b). A total of 483 cat parts, of all eight species of wild cats known from Myanmar were observed during these surveys. Dealers displayed these parts openly in the markets, indicating a blatant disregard for the law due to the serious lack of enforcement effort on the part of the authorities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to combat the illegal trade in wild cat parts in Myanmar, and to work towards the conservation of wildlife, TRAFFIC makes the following recommendations:

Most importantly, national laws should be enforced, and markets openly selling protected wildlife should be closed down. Those found violating the national legislation should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

In order to reduce illegal international trade of wild cats and other protected wildlife, Myanmar should be encouraged to work closely with Thailand, China and other relevant countries, as international co-operation is essential to enforce effectively CITES and to put an end to the illegal international trade.

Authorities in airports and other points of international entry and exit should be more vigilant to prevent parts and derivatives of protected wildlife from being carried across Myanmar's borders. Myanmar should ensure that staff based at these checkpoints are sufficiently trained in CITES implementation, enforcement and species/parts of species identification.

Regular and systematic monitoring of the markets in Myanmar should continue to be carried out by non-government organisations to assist the authorities in their enforcement efforts as well as to detect changing trends and dynamics in the trade.

Myanmar, as a Party to CITES, should revise existing laws or enact completely new CITES implementing legislation and enforce all CITES-enabling legislation.

The status of the Fishing Cat *Prionailurus viverinnus*, the Leopard Cat *P. bengalensis* and the Jungle Cat *Felis chaus* should be clarified in the Protection of Wild Life and Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Law (*State Law and Order Restoration Council Law No.583/94.1994*).

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**Table 3**  
**Observations of wild cat parts observed in trade in Myanmar, 1991-2006 (note that the absolute minimum number of cats, the parts could represent from each survey is in brackets)**

Species	Parts	Markets surveyed										Total		
		Tachilek 1991 (JM)	Tachilek (JM)	Tachilek 1992 (JM)	Tachilek 1992 (SN)	Tachilek 1994 (TR in EBM)	Tachilek 1998	Tachilek 1999	Tachilek 2000	Tachilek 2006	Golden Rock 2000		Golden Rock 2006	Mong La 2006
Tiger	whole skin	22	21	5	8	12	16	3				1		
	skin parts													
	skull or head			2			12	19			1			
	paws													
	claws										4			
	canines							37		2	2			
	skeleton													
	live													
Leopard	MIN. TOTAL	22	21	5	8	12	16	19	1	1	1	1		167 (107)
	whole skin	37	31	16	24	13	26	14	3	1				
	skin parts									11				
	skull or head			10				6	1	2				
	paws									20				
	claws													
	canines													
	skeleton													
Clouded Leopard	live													
	MIN. TOTAL	37	31	16	24	13	26	14	11	5				215 (177)
	whole skin	21	19	20	20	51	97	23	4			1	1	
	skin parts								8					
	skull or head								22	1			1	
	paws									4	3			
	claws													
	canines													
Leopard	skeleton										3	1	1	
	live													
	MIN. TOTAL	21	19	20	20	51	97	23	22	3	1	1	1	301 (279)

**NOTE:** JM – Jonathan Murray, SN – Stephen Nash, TM – Tim Redford, EBM – Esmond Bradley Martin

**Table 3 (cont.)**  
**Observations of wild cat parts observed in trade in Myanmar, 1991-2006 (note that the absolute minimum number of cats, the parts could represent from each survey is in brackets)**

Species	Parts	Markets surveyed										Total		
		Tachilek 1991 (JM)	Tachilek 1992 (JM)	Tachilek 1992 (SN)	Tachilek 1994 (TR in EBM)	Tachilek 1998	Tachilek 1999	Tachilek 2000	Tachilek 2006	Golden Rock 2000	Golden Rock 2006		Mong La 2006	Three Pagodas Pass 2006
Golden Cat	whole skin	14	26	2	14	6	33	9	5	1				
	skin parts													
	skull or head								1					
	paws													
	claws													
	canines													
	skeleton													
	live													
	<b>MIN. TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>				
														<b>111 (110)</b>
Fishing Cat	whole skin	21	14	1										
	skin parts													
	skull or head													
	paws													
	claws													
	canines													
	skeleton													
	live													
	<b>MIN. TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>										
														<b>36 (36)</b>
Marbled Cat	whole skin					1								
	skin parts													
	skull or head													
	paws													
	claws													
	canines													
	skeleton													
	live													
	<b>MIN. TOTAL</b>													
														<b>4 (4)</b>

**NOTE: JM** – Jonathan Murray, **SN** – Stephen Nash, **TM** – Tim Redford, **EBM** – Esmond Bradley Martin

**Table 3 (cont.)**  
**Observations of wild cat parts observed in trade in Myanmar, 1991-2006 (note that the absolute minimum number of cats, the parts could represent from each survey is in brackets).**

Species	Parts	Markets surveyed										Total						
		Tachilek 1991 (JM)	Tachilek 1992 (JM)	Tachilek 1992 (SN)	Tachilek 1994 (TR in EBM)	Tachilek 1998	Tachilek 1999	Tachilek 2000	Tachilek 2006	Golden Rock 2000	Golden Rock 2006		Mong La 2006	Three Pagodas Pass 2006				
Jungle Cat	whole skin					1												
	skin parts																	
	skull or head																	
	paws																	
	claws																	
	canines																	
	skeleton																	
	live														1			
	<b>MIN. TOTAL</b>					<b>1</b>									<b>1</b>			<b>2 (2)</b>
	Leopard Cat	whole skin	50	50	21	100	102	41	48	25	1	5						
skin parts												29						
skull or head																		
paws													12					
claws																		
canines																		
skeleton																		
live																		
<b>MIN. TOTAL</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>							<b>484 (443)</b>

**NOTE: JM** – Jonathan Murray, **SN** – Stephen Nash, **TM** – Tim Redford, **EBM** – Esmond Bradley Martin

TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, works to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature. It has offices covering most parts of the world and works in close co-operation with the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

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