

INVESTIGATOR

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INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the Spring 2023 *Investigator* magazine, keeping you up to date with our various activities and successes.

Inside, you can read about the wins for wildlife we helped to secure at the big CITES CoP19 meeting in Panama as well as news of all our major activities.

EIA has seen rapid growth in the past few years and, recognising the need to ensure we remain effective, at the beginning of 2022 we engaged specialised external support to help us initiate a change and transition programme.

Examining our strategy, culture and structure, as well as strengthening leadership and teamworking, we have embarked on an ambitious consultative process across the organisation which will continue through and beyond 2023.

Once again, my sincere thanks for all your support.

Mary Rice, Executive Director

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Sanctions-busting US traders import more Burmese teak than before coup

Despite sanctions put in place against the military junta in Myanmar and its business interests, US traders are still importing teak from the country for luxury yachts and flooring.

Our December report *Acts of Defiance – How US traders are ignoring sanctions to import conflict teak from Myanmar*, made the case for action and, separately, we provided full details

of the accused companies to the US Department of State.

The companies concerned were named in an updated version of the report *Acts*

of *Defiance II* – released in May.

Forests Campaign Leader Faith Doherty said: “After the military seized power in Myanmar, it sought to ransack the country’s natural resources in a desperate grab for hard currency to keep itself afloat.

“Sanctions put in place by the US – and others around the world – are meant to halt the flow of conflict resources such as teak, but we’ve identified several major traders who continue their lucrative teak imports – so far, with impunity.”

Teak imports into the US are banned under both sanctions and the US Lacey Act, which forbids importing goods in violation of any law of the US or of any foreign law protecting or regulating plant species.

But EIA investigators found many US timber importers have been seeking to get around the law by using what is

called the ‘stockpile narrative’, a sleight-of-hand in which they claim their teak was purchased from Myanmar stockpiles before sanctions were imposed in April 2021.

These teak traders have continued to use this false narrative to circumvent sanctions by effectively stating that no funds were transferred to the State-owned Myanmar Timber Enterprise (MTE), which oversees all trade in Burmese teak after that date.

Our research revealed an alarming number of teak shipments into the US since the coup – and the numbers continue to rise.

Between 1 February 2021 and 10 November 2022, a total of 2,561 tonnes of teak were imported directly from Myanmar into the US. In October 2022 alone, 263 tonnes were imported via 14 shipments. ●

Will palm oil watchdog keep pretending its products are sustainable?

Palm oil produced by destroying forests is still being sold around the world with the blessing of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).

The industry watchdog’s practices mean palm oil bearing its stamp of approval to assure consumers it is sustainable cannot be considered deforestation-free, as a new EU law requires.

In November, EIA and 99 other organisations issued a joint statement calling time on the RSPO and its habitual

greenwashing – the act of giving misleading or false information about the environmental impacts of a company’s products and activities.

The EU has been working to bring in a new law – formally adopted by the European Parliament in April – which will mean palm oil and other commodities placed on

the EU market must be deforestation-free and legal.

Europe is the biggest market for RSPO-certified palm oil, with 93 per cent of imports bearing the organisation’s stamp of approval.

Forests Campaigner Siobhan Pearce said: “It remains to be seen whether the RSPO will act for a change and address the deforestation and other problems in its system or continue to paper over the cracks.” ●

Right: Palm oil plantation in Kalamantan, Indonesia





Plastics used in farming are a growing problem for people and the environment

The plastics used in agricultural production – commonly called agriplastics – account for only 3.5 per cent of the plastic used around the world each year.

But their design, use and the pollution they cause have serious consequences which extend far beyond the farmland on which they are used.

In March, our Ocean team released the first in a new series of four reports turning a spotlight on this neglected issue.

Cultivating Plastic – Agriplastics and the UK grocery retail supply chain revealed that little is being done by the UK's major supermarkets and the Government to address the issue.

In our survey of major supermarkets, we

found that while all have engaged to some extent with suppliers on the issue – through trials, raising awareness or third-party certification standards – only Lidl said it had sufficient information about the impact and risks of agriplastic pollution on the environment and human health; measurable objectives, company-level sourcing policies and funding were lacking for all.

Senior Ocean Campaigner Lauren Weir said: "These findings are very concerning, given that major supermarkets have global purchasing power across international supply chains and help create the system



in which the farmers and growers of our food operate.

"They have other sustainability targets, including plastic packaging reduction targets, but little or nothing regarding the plastics being used by their suppliers to cultivate food and the devastating pollution that results."

The second report, *Cultivating Plastic – Environmental and human health harm caused by agriplastics*, focused on the health implications of agriplastics pollution, especially as it relates to workers in close contact with agriplastics at their end-of-life.

In this installment, we were pleased to feature the research of Umut Kuruüzüm PhD, an Assistant Professor of Development at the Department of

Economics, İstanbul Technical University, who has been conducting fieldwork in the Çukurova region of Türkiye (previously Turkey) and reported on the grim price paid for our plastics addiction by seasonal farmworkers and their children.

The third report, entitled *Cultivating Plastic – Agriplastic waste mismanagement and criminality*, revealed that a significant number of UK farmers continue to burn or bury plastics used in food production on their land, despite the practices being banned.

UK farms produce 135,500 tonnes of contaminated agricultural plastic waste each year – roughly equivalent in weight to 900 adult blue whales – but according to the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management, only 20-30 per cent of it is reprocessed into new products.

The rest is disposed of, often illegally, by burning, burying, dumping and exporting the contaminated material abroad.

Weir added: "This is a significant problem for our environment and health, as the burning of agriplastics, especially PVC, releases incredibly toxic chemicals."

The fourth report in the series, *Cultivating Plastic – Caution with regards to the adoption of potential agriplastic alternatives*, took a look at possible solutions and weighed up the potential benefits and shortcomings of different policy responses. ●

Opposite page: Agriplastics deteriorating on a Spanish farm



Iceland chalks up a bloody tally of 148 dead fin whales in latest hunting season

Iceland's first whaling season in four years came to an end in September with 148 threatened fin whales killed.

As in previous hunts, the slaughter of whales was spearheaded by multi-millionaire rogue whaler Kristján Loftsson and his company Hvalur hf.

In the aftermath of the hunt, EIA Ocean Senior Adviser Clare Perry condemned the company's renegade whaling as "utterly senseless".

"Classified at 'vulnerable', fin whales are the second largest animal on the planet and are an important part of nature's solution to climate change," she said. "That 148 of these magnificent creatures have been brutally, agonisingly killed is horrendous in any event, even more so

when there's no market for their meat domestically.

"The meat and blubber from this year's hunt will sit in big energy-guzzling freezers in Iceland or be shipped to Japan, entailing even more climate-harming emissions.

"Loftsson's belligerent whaling serves no useful purpose whatsoever. All it does is drag Iceland's reputation as a progressive nation through the mud – we strongly urge the country's Government to act now and halt all future hunts."

Ahead of the hunt, EIA wrote a personal

letter to Icelandic Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir to urge her to put a stop to the plan, but received no response.

Iceland's last hunt was in 2018, when Hvalur slaughtered 145 fin whales and two very rare hybrid blue-fin whales in defiance of the international ban on commercial whaling agreed in 1982 by the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

Iceland quit the IWC in 1992 when members refused to lift the commercial whaling ban, but rejoined 10 years later with a formal reservation to the ban which, it claims, allows it to continue the practice, although the validity of this position is disputed.

EIA has campaigned for an end to the Icelandic fin whale hunt for more than a decade, specifically focused on Loftsson's crusade to open up fin whaling. ●

CITES gets tough with Mexico over vaquita failures

Following sustained calls from EIA and its partners for Mexico to clamp down on the illegal totoaba fishing which is driving the critically endangered vaquita porpoise to extinction, CITES announced in March it was taking action.

CITES communicated to Parties a recommendation to suspend all commercial trade in specimens of CITES-listed species with Mexico.

The vaquita is the most critically endangered cetacean on the planet and it is estimated that only about 10 individuals remain.

A little over two weeks later, CITES lifted the sanctions against Mexico after the Government met with officials and agreed a plan to protect both the vaquita and totoaba from illegal fishing.



Above: Totoaba maw (dried swim bladders) for sale in China, the main market driving the trade

EU's offshore methane emissions undermine climate change efforts

The European Union's goal to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030 is being undermined by 'invisible' methane emissions from its fossil fuel imports

Released in February, our report *Hidden Harm: Exposing the methane emissions associated with EU's fossil fuel imports* highlighted the climate impacts of the coal, oil and gas exported to the European market.

The EU relies heavily on fossil fuels produced outside of the bloc, importing 70 per cent of the coal, 90 per cent of the gas and 97 per cent of the oil it uses.

Hidden Harm estimated that methane emissions associated with fossil fuel imports from the major exporters to the EU in 2020 were 8,083,000 tonnes – the equivalent of 202 million tonnes of carbon dioxide or the annual emissions of 54 coal-fired power plants.

EIA Climate Campaigner Kim O'Dowd said: "We cannot afford this 'out of sight, out of mind' attitude to emissions in a world already firmly in the grip of runaway climate change.

"It's a damning state of affairs that the

European Commission, in its proposal for an EU Methane Regulation, has abjectly failed to include meaningful measures to reduce methane emissions from imported fossil fuels."

Human-driven methane emissions have contributed to approximately 25 per cent of the global warming experienced today and arise from three main sectors – energy, agriculture and waste.

Research indicates that cutting methane emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 could prevent 255,000 premature deaths and 775,000 asthma-related hospital visits annually, as well as increasing global crop yields by 26 million tonnes a year.

Hidden Harm concludes that the EU Methane Regulation must be strengthened to ensure that the bloc does more to tackle methane emissions arising from its energy imports. ●

Above: Flaring is used to burn combustible components of waste gases during fossil fuel operations and results in emissions of CO₂, black carbon, methane and other air pollutants

Not a moment to lose, warns major climate report

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its latest synthesis report in March, making crystal clear the urgent need to address the escalating climate crisis.

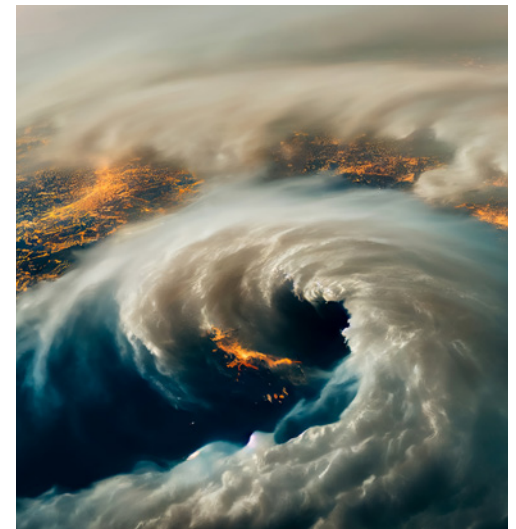
It lays bare the urgency of the climate crisis, its primary causes, its current and expected impacts and the irreversible harm that will occur if warming surpasses the global target of 1.5°C, even temporarily.

Keeping warming below that target is still possible, but is becoming increasingly difficult. The current level of warming is 1.1°C. To keep within the 1.5°C limit (with no or limited overshoot), global greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced by at least 43 per cent by 2030 (from 2019 levels) and by at least 60 per cent by 2035.

In a special new story, campaigners from each of EIA's main areas of work – Climate, Forests, Ocean and Wildlife – unpacked the key findings of the report and weighed in on the action needed.

For our Climate team, the clear priority is to tackle emissions of short-lived but potent pollutants, especially fluorinated gases and methane. ●

Top, and right: The impacts of climate change are many and varied, ranging from severe droughts to unpredictable and increasingly severe weather events, such as hurricanes and typhoons





EIA uncovers shocking use of climate-wrecking gases at UN climate summit

As global leaders and delegates baked under the desert sun at Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt at November's UN CoP27 climate summit, EIA's team attending the meeting were astounded to find that the air-conditioning keeping them cool was using climate-wrecking hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) refrigerants in cooling equipment from major equipment manufacturers which are highly damaging to the climate.

Climate Campaigner Sophie Geoghegan said: "It's shocking to see a company with net-zero commitments installing new equipment using HFCs with such high global warming impacts at this important climate conference, especially as energy-efficient alternatives using climate-friendly natural refrigerants are available."

Overall, the most positive outcome of CoP27 was the creation of a Loss and Damage fund. Demanded for decades by activists, small island nations and developing countries already bearing the brunt of climate change, it will provide financial assistance to support early warning initiatives, climate and risk finance and insurance mechanisms.

Another success was the call for global financial architecture to align with climate goals – major development institutions, such as the World Bank and International

Monetary Fund, will have to ensure that funding goes towards clean energy and adaptation.

Sadly, the overriding failure of CoP27 was the lack of a clear agreement to phase out fossil fuels.

Despite the support of 80 countries to include a phase-down of fossil fuels in the text, it didn't make it to the final political decision – shut down by major exporting countries.

What is needed is a clear signal that all fossil fuels must be phased out as a matter of urgency, while at the same time ramping up investments in renewable energy.

Above: cannisters of climate damaging refrigerants found at the Egypt COP27 summit by EIA campaigners

US chemical giant's climate disinformation

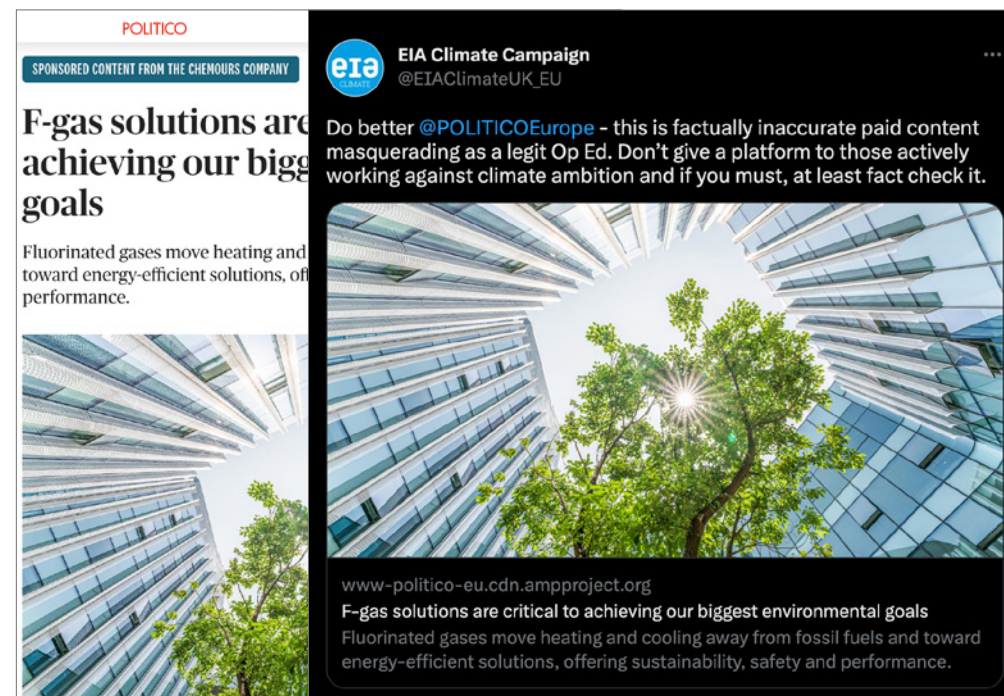
In December, our Climate campaigners accused US chemical giant Chemours of peddling disinformation to prevent the adoption of ambitious EU climate legislation that will further restrict the use of fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gases), a prominent part of the company's portfolio.

Chemours' paid-for advertorial *F-gas solutions are critical to achieve our biggest environmental goals* appeared in the highly influential digital newspaper Politico, which reports on the political affairs of the EU.

That same month, the EU was looking to strengthen climate legislation dealing with super polluting hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) and other F-gases used widely in refrigeration, air-conditioning and heat pumps.

Climate Campaign Leader Clare Perry said: "The article is toxic greenwashing, full of spurious claims and misdirection, aimed at persuading European policymakers there are no alternatives to F-gases and deterring them from supporting an ambitious strengthening of the EU F-Gas Regulation."

Below: Chemours' greenwashing article originally not labelled sponsored content by Politico, rectified after EIA tweet





The big CITES meeting in Panama – an overall win for wildlife

EIA Wildlife campaigners were in Panama in November for the 19th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) – a major meeting in EIA's calendar.

After a hectic two weeks, on their return they declared it to be an overall win for wildlife, with greater commitments to protect trees, sharks, reptiles, amphibians and songbirds from illegal and unsustainable trade.

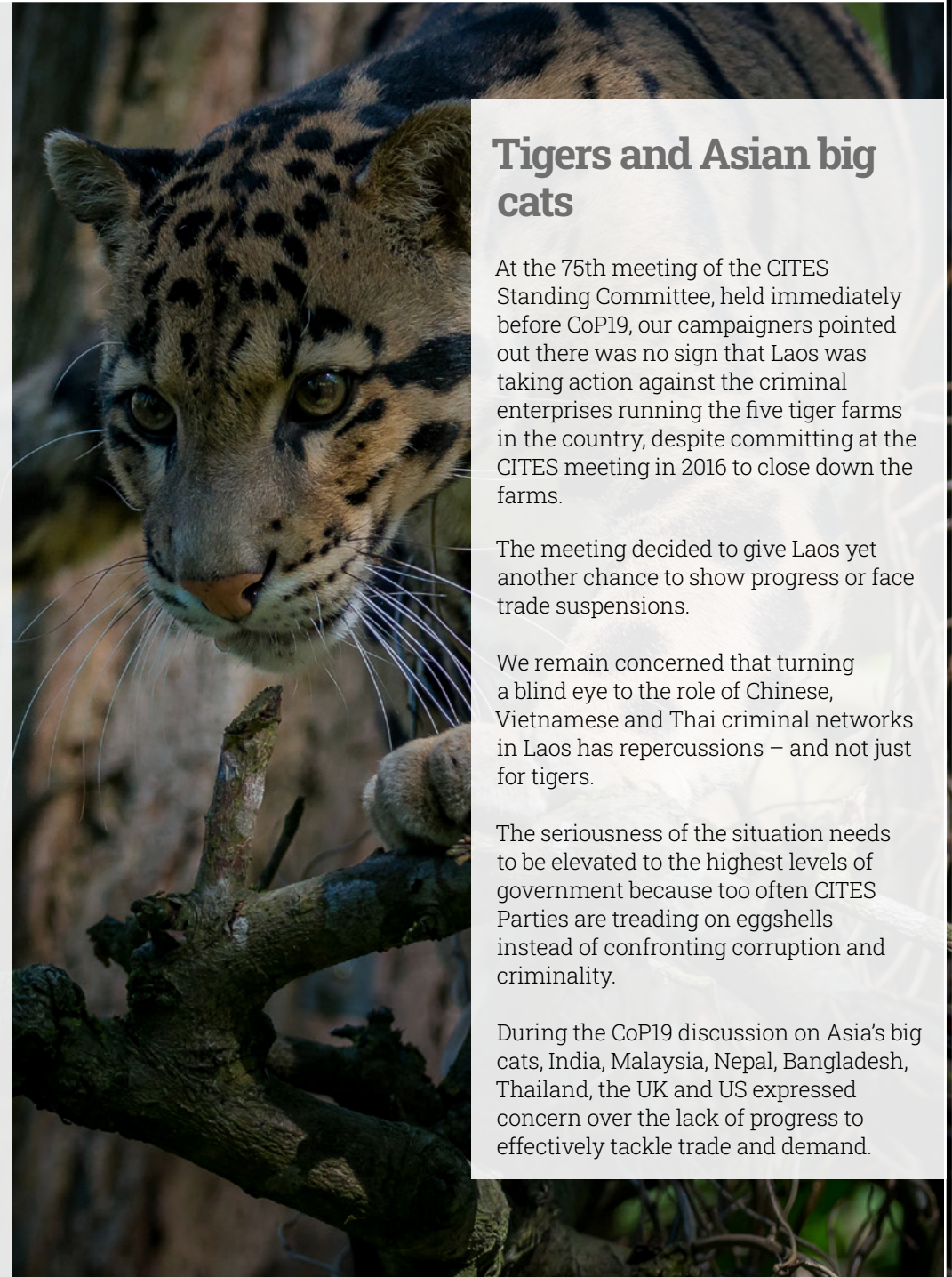
There were also some encouraging developments for the species and issues on which EIA's delegation was particularly focused.

And, as ever, we raised the alarm over

species of animals and plants at risk from trade and highlighted the role of crime and corruption in undermining conservation while also lobbying key Parties, leading and joining side event discussions, making interventions from the floor and actively participating in working group meetings.

Here we highlight some of the key outcomes from EIA's perspective.

Above: EIA's Rachel Mackenna makes an intervention calling for a review of the National Ivory Action Plan process



Tigers and Asian big cats

At the 75th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, held immediately before CoP19, our campaigners pointed out there was no sign that Laos was taking action against the criminal enterprises running the five tiger farms in the country, despite committing at the CITES meeting in 2016 to close down the farms.

The meeting decided to give Laos yet another chance to show progress or face trade suspensions.

We remain concerned that turning a blind eye to the role of Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai criminal networks in Laos has repercussions – and not just for tigers.

The seriousness of the situation needs to be elevated to the highest levels of government because too often CITES Parties are treading on eggshells instead of confronting corruption and criminality.

During the CoP19 discussion on Asia's big cats, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Thailand, the UK and US expressed concern over the lack of progress to effectively tackle trade and demand.



Pangolins

Pangolins got off to a good start when the UK's proposed amendments to a document aiming to close pangolin markets garnered significant support.

There was general agreement amongst the parties that the proposed amendments would be effective for providing pangolins with urgently needed protection, until an intervention from China pushed for regulated legal markets instead of closure.

The UK and China negotiated new language, in effect watering down the strength of the text on the closure of domestic markets, but this compromise was rejected after China requested a vote.

A subsequent vote on the original text saw it approved, with 82 per cent in support.

Rhinos

For the third CITES CoP in a row, Eswatini submitted a proposal to amend the listing for its population of southern white rhinos to allow for legal international commercial trade in rhino horn.

As at the previous two CoPs, Parties resoundingly rejected the proposal to dismantle the ban on international rhino horn trade. This is an important victory for rhinos, which continue to suffer population declines due to poaching fuelled by consumer demand for rhino horn in Asia.

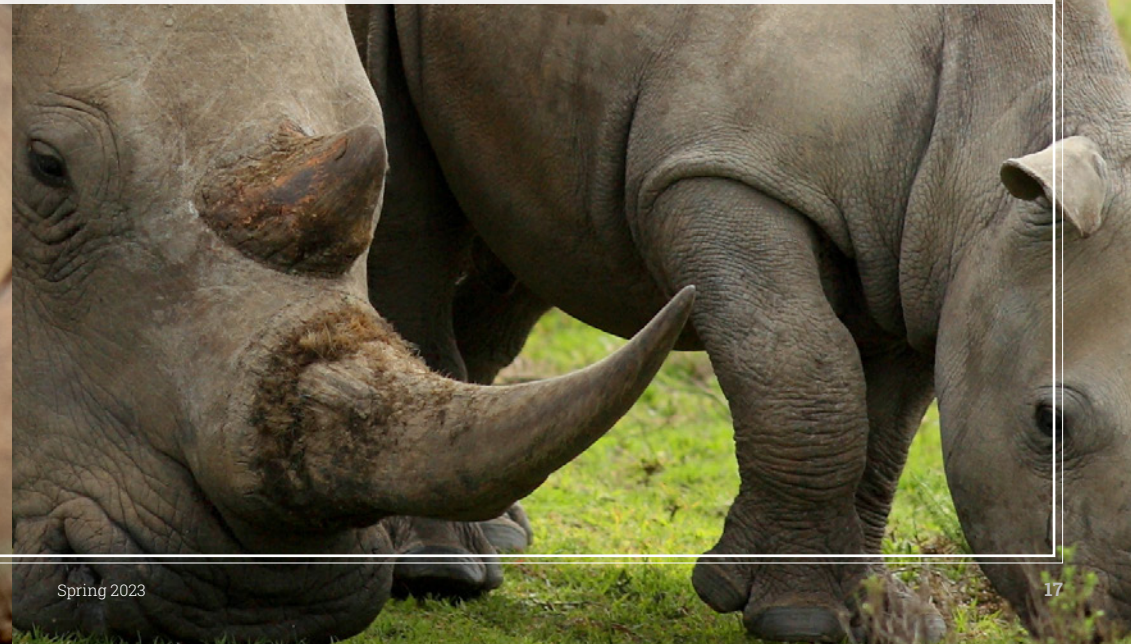
Legalising international commercial trade in rhino horn would only serve to stimulate demand and increase poaching pressure on the world's remaining rhinos.

Namibia also submitted a proposal to CoP19 to transfer its population of white rhinos from Appendix I to a lower level of protection in Appendix II, with an

annotation limiting commercial trade to hunting trophies and live rhinos for in-situ conservation.

Namibia's small, approximately 1,200-strong white rhino population has experienced an increase in poaching this year and does not meet the CITES criteria for a downlisting.

Ultimately, Parties approved a compromise proposed by the EU to transfer to Appendix II, but with the removal of the language about hunting trophies and a stipulation that live animals can only be sent to locations within the natural and historic range of the species.



Elephants

Zimbabwe submitted a proposal to resume trade in raw ivory tusks from southern African elephants, arguing that trade in elephant parts and derivatives could help offset the heavy costs associated with conservation efforts.

The bid fortunately failed, with 85 per cent voting against it to leave the international commercial ivory trade ban intact.

In a different counter proposal, Burkina Faso and others sought to uplist southern African elephant populations from Appendix II to Appendix I to strength the protection of all, but this was not adopted.

Elsewhere, EIA was delighted that, after years of campaigning, Parties agreed to take a closer look at how the National Ivory Action Plan (NIAP) process can be strengthened to ensure countries affected by poaching and trafficking are making effective progress to address the issues.

After briefing more than 70 delegates

on the need for the review as part of a side event hosted by EIA alongside the Government of Malawi, we joined a technical working group to develop the terms of reference of the review.

Concerning legal ivory trade, nine African elephant range states called for the closure of all domestic ivory markets that contribute to poaching and illegal trade.

The meeting agreed to a proposal for the CITES Secretariat to help carry out an analysis of ivory trafficking incidents linked to countries with legal domestic ivory markets, which would help Parties make informed decisions about closures – but only after the language was watered down to make the study conditional on feasibility and external funding.

West and Central Africa

West and Central Africa remain significant hubs for wildlife trafficking, despite encouraging developments in some key countries, such as Nigeria.

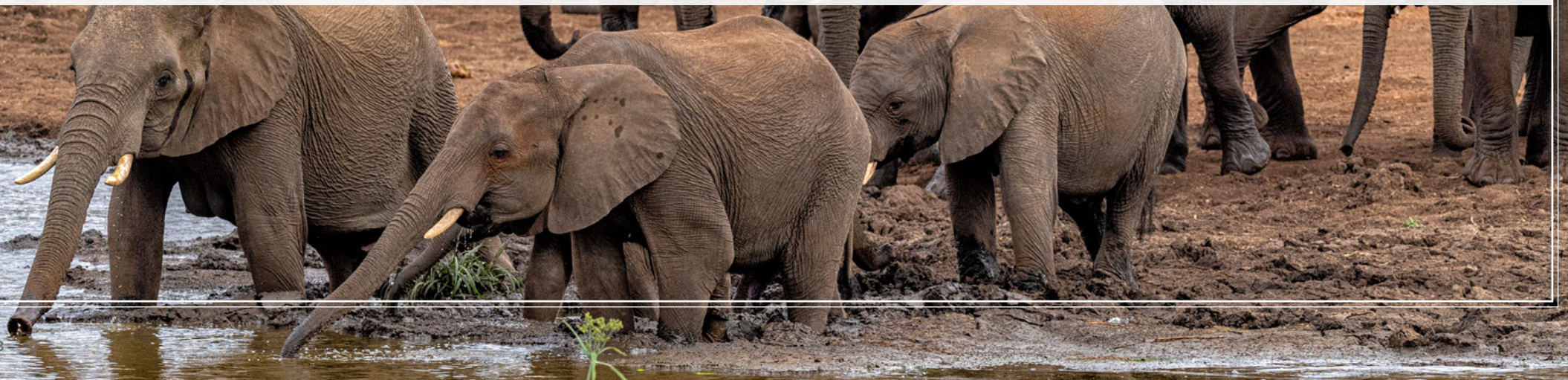
Some positive outcomes were secured at CoP19, aimed at strengthening wildlife law enforcement in the region. EIA joined a working group to discuss proposals on improving enforcement and transnational cooperation and funding, with several of our suggestions incorporated and supported by Parties, including range states.

The resulting Decisions included encouraging countries in the two sub-regions to undergo needs-assessments using the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit and to use mechanisms such as INTERPOL and the World Customs Organisation to exchange information on illegal wildlife trade and enforcement and to draw upon

the text of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC).

During the CoP, Nigeria, the world's largest export hub for ivory and pangolin scales, showed commitment to addressing illegal wildlife trade by strengthening its legislative framework, tackling corruption improving international cooperation with source, transit and destinations countries in Africa and Asia.

EIA moderated a lively panel discussion with Nigerian officials and our partner Africa Nature Investors Foundation, where representatives noted the development of agreements with Cameroon and Vietnam to combat wildlife trafficking.





Nigeria greenlights new law to tackle wildlife trafficking and protect species

In a move welcomed by our Wildlife campaigners, new legislation to combat wildlife trafficking and protect highly endangered species passed its first reading at Nigeria’s House of Representatives in January.

EIA has been working closely with regional partners – Africa Nature Investors Foundation (ANI) and Wild Africa Fund – to actively support the Nigerian Government’s efforts to fight illegal wildlife trafficking, with support from the UK Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

The country’s Endangered Species Conservation and Protection Bill would make Nigeria compliant with international conventions on endangered species, organised crime and corruption while also increasing investigative powers to include financial enquiries and

intelligence-led operations.

In addition to creating offences for damaging critical habitats, permit violations, the introduction of invasive species, obstruction and preparing to commit an illegal act, the Bill would increase penalties to reflect the seriousness of the crimes and their impact on endangered species, while expanding courts’ ability to expedite wildlife cases and recover assets.

EIA Executive Director Mary Rice said: “This comprehensive legislation is cutting-edge and a potential game-changer. Working alongside our partners, EIA sees this as a key step in tackling

China’s revised wildlife law pivots back to exploitation

For the past two years, the Government of China has been working on revising its Wildlife Protection Law (WPL) in the wake of the pandemic

When the first revision draft of the Law was released in October 2020, EIA had a number of concerns but saw some positive changes, including increased penalties and holding to account the managers of illegal operations such as breeding protected species without a permit or using wildlife to manufacture food.

Unfortunately, when the amended law was published in its final form in December last year, it became apparent that voices promoting the farming and use of wild animals have once again won the upper hand.

The revisions are a significant return to an emphasis on “utilisation” in the overarching principles of the Law, which now reads that the State “encourages and supports the scientific research *and utilisation* of wild animals”.

Right: Threatened species such as tigers will still be able to be bred for profit under the revised law



trafficking and protecting critically endangered wildlife in Nigeria and across Africa.”

After the Bill passed its first reading, co-sponsor Johnson Oghuma, Chair of the House Environment Committee, said: “The rate at which some species of fauna and flora are being extinguished is assuming a frightening dimension. Every day, more and more species are becoming endangered

and pushed to the brink of extinction.”

Tunde Morakinyo, ANI Executive Director, said: “This is a momentous thing for Nigeria. The whole world is watching us. Let’s get it right and show the world how we can be the leaders in Africa on fighting the illegal trade in wildlife.”

Opposite page: The National Assembly building in Abuja, Nigeria - the highest seat of law-making in the country



MEET THE TEAM

Name: Emma Sheard

Age: 43

Role: Head of Fundraising

Hometown

Blackburn, Lancashire

Education

BA Business Studies, University of Sheffield

Member of Institute of Fundraising

Campaign specialism

As Head of Fundraising, I oversee income generation for EIA to ensure we have enough funds for our campaign teams to do our vital work to protect the environment.

What first interested you in environmental issues?

I have always been interested in animals and nature and have happy

memories of walking through woodlands and falling over in mud!

For as long as I can remember, my mum has always been an avid viewer of David Attenborough documentaries and I remember watching one with her and becoming hooked myself. I was amazed by the vast number of species that I had not seen before and the beautiful landscapes that were so very different from where I lived. Once I realised that these beautiful species and landscapes were at risk, I knew that I wanted to help protect it.

What is your most memorable experience at EIA?

When I first started to think about an answer to this question, I thought I would struggle as I have only been at EIA for a short time (I joined the team in September last year). However, I can honestly say something memorable happens every week, whether it is reading feedback from our supporters on how important they think our work is or one of our campaign teams seeing their hard work come to fruition when governments agree to make changes to laws to protect nature.

If I had to choose one experience, it would be a virtual meeting I attended with our Tiger Campaign team and one of our partners in Thailand. It was incredibly inspiring to hear first-hand how they are protecting tigers on the ground – it really was one of those 'I LOVE my job!' moments. ●



“If it wasn't for EIA the world would be a darker place”.

Mary, EIA supporter.

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For a future where humanity respects, protects and celebrates the natural world for the benefit of all.

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