



Pelestarian Harimau Sumatera Kerinci Seblat

Kerinci Seblat Sumatran Tiger
Protection & Conservation

Progress Report to Dreamworld
Conservation Fund

September 2008-February 2009



Summary

Patrols, investigations, conflict resolution activities and law enforcement activities were conducted in three provinces around Kerinci-Seblat National Park during the reporting period.

A total of 29 separate Tiger encounters were recorded in the course of 30 field patrols in the national park in Bengkulu, West Sumatra and Jambi provinces and the rate of encounter with tiger was stable.

Snare seizures declined dramatically during the reporting period with only one active tiger snare found and destroyed: since poaching incidents continue to be reported around KSNP and investigations advise deer meat continues to be sold in village markets, the drop in snare seizures is likely to be due to poachers deterred from entering areas known to be patrolled by TPCUs and to a previously-reported increase in use of firearms to hunt deer.

One armed poacher was arrested and subsequently sentenced to a nine months custodial term, an army officer arrested in June 2008 while seeking to sell the skin and bones of an adult Sumatran tiger was sentenced to three months in a military prison followed by 're-education' at a centre in Java and five illegal loggers arrested and their cases now proceeding through the courts system..

In late February 2009 Dian Risdianto resumed duties as field manager of the PHS program having returned to the national park in August 2008.

We thank Nandang Gumilar for standing in for Dian during his Masters degree studies at the University of Indonesia and for the continued support of the national park and Dreamworld Conservation Fund for this program.

Activities

- **Forest Patrol** in key areas to prevent threats emerging or to remove threat and to establish a national park presence in the forest

A total of 30 forest patrols – including three in-forest patrols related to human-tiger conflict incidents – were conducted by TPCU teams between September 2008-February 2009 in six park-edge districts.

Patrol units recorded 29 separate encounters – including one visual – with Sumatran tiger and a frequency of encounter of 1 tiger per 22.5k patrol Km walked – was almost exactly as that in the previous period in 2007-8 (22.3Km) and suggesting that tiger populations in regularly patrolled areas have indeed stabilized.

TPCU rangers found and destroyed only one active tiger snare and 29 active deer snares during the period further confirming that areas regularly patrolled are now being avoided by hunters.

However the ongoing reduction in active snares destroyed does not indicate reduced threat over the park as a whole but threat displacement and from February 2009, TPCU ranger units were asked to review patrol focus and move some patrol effort to areas not previously or very rarely patrolled to extend the impact of patrols.

The reduction in active snares found and destroyed also reflects escalating use of illegal firearms in some areas of Kerinci Seblat National Park, Intelligence indicates five sambar deer were shot in just one area of forest-edge farmland in the south of the Kerinci valley in

the three weeks leading up to the festival of Eid ul Fitri which marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

To address this problem, the program and TPCU rangers have started to lobby park-edge police in Jambi province to take a more active role in combating illegal use and ownership and black market trade in guns and ammunition. Action by police in West Sumatra to address illegal gun ownership appears to have had a strong impact and we hope that this can be extended as it is very difficult for the mainly unarmed ranger units to address the issue of highly mobile armed poachers.

Encroachment into the national park and in protected state forests bordering the park continued to be recorded by patrol teams with 25 per cent of patrols conducted recording encroachment and illegal forest clearance.

Seven men were arrested by TPCU rangers on one patrol and given formal legal warnings and instructed to leave the national park buffer zone but not prosecuted: following an under cover patrol to this site which revealed that new encroachment continues in the surrounding area the National Park is now planning a large-scale law enforcement operation

We hope that this marks a much more vigorous approach to forest and tiger habitat protection.

Law enforcement:

A total of 23 arrests were made by TPCU rangers during the reporting period for offences including deer poaching, illegal logging, encroachment into the national park or bird catching.

An armed deer poacher arrested in September by an unarmed TPCU unit received a nine months custodial sentence in spite of intensive lobbying of police by an influential member of his family.

A court judgement is currently awaited in the case of five illegal loggers arrested by a TPCU unit in Rejang Lebong district, Bengkulu.

An army officer arrested on tiger trafficking charges in Jambi city in June 2008 was sentenced to a three months term in a military prison by a Military Tribunal in Palembang and then to a further 're-education' sentence in Java.

Eleven formal legal warnings were issued for encroachment offences and the offenders instructed to immediately leave the national park or face prosecution.

Six bird catchers were arrested and formally cautioned and the numerous birds already caught were released by the TPCU team: bird poachers are almost invariably from the poorest sector of the forest-edge community and prosecution would be counter-productive however the impact of the wild bird trade on biodiversity is immense.

In areas where arrests for tiger poaching or trafficking have occurred, the team found it very difficult to secure evidence of a suspected crime and so take law enforcement action and poachers and dealers are exceptionally cautious.

On one occasion in January 2009, the team investigator was forced to withdraw when armed individuals were spotted in the vicinity of the trader's house apparently waiting for the investigator's arrival.

A second law enforcement operation in the north of Kerinci district failed when the poacher and his colleagues 'swapped' a previously packaged tiger skin for a goat skin in the minutes leading up to a planned 'transaction' meeting. Police and TPCU rangers suspect that this incident was a carefully planned attempt to defraud 'the buyer' (who would hardly be in a position to subsequently complain to police) and that this was not the first time the gang had conducted such an action.

Investigations —

Collection of sound data on the identities and activities of individuals who threaten Sumatran tiger and their *modus operandi* is essential for any law enforcement response to poaching or trafficking.

More than 55 investigations were conducted in eight districts and all four provinces around the national park including, for the first time in five years, in Musi Rawas district of South Sumatra and its capital town, the notorious wildlife trading entrepot of Lubuk Linggau.

Evidence of tiger crime was confirmed on three occasions during the reporting period but no subsequent law enforcement action could be taken – on one occasion because it was found that a senior police officer was involved in the syndicate

The team has now made contact with the officers based at Indonesia National Police headquarters in Jakarta who are members of the ASEAN WEN network and who will provide back-up that outranks the rogue officer when the team is able to move again against this syndicate

Team investigators continued to encounter problems with securing evidence of crime which is critical to conducting subsequent law enforcement and we found individuals offering tiger skins or bone for sale were almost invariably brokers acting on behalf of other brokers for poachers apparently often far from KSNP.

There were indications that confidence tricksters (Barang Antik or 'Curiosity' vendors) previously associated primarily with the trade in elephant ivory are becoming involved in offering tiger products for sale: the majority of these individuals are fraudsters trying to secure money for facilitating the sale of a non-existent item but all such reports must be investigated and this is both time consuming and frustrating.

Tiger bone prices appear to have increased, slightly, over the course of 2008-9 (current median average is now approximately Rp450,000 per kg -AUD57 at hunter level) but still far below prices paid on the black market (Rp800,000+) in early 2007 when the People's Republic of China was considering legalizing domestic trade in 'farmed' tiger bone.

No observable movement occurred in prices reportedly paid for tiger skins. The team continued to receive reports of tiger skins being sold in small 5cmx5cm pieces as 'charms' and not entire for taxidermy.

High prices demanded for tiger skins were invariably a product of broker involvement and such prices are most unlikely to ever be paid by dealers.

Tiger poachers and dealers also pose a threat to other species and one ongoing investigation relates to Jambi-based dealer buying large quantities of deer antlers from Tapanuli Selatan district of North Sumatra province for export, via a broker in Riau, to Singapore: this man is also believed to buy Sumatran tiger skins opportunistically, frequently trade Malay pangolin (sold on to Palembang via a second dealer) and to also deal in commercial quantities of marijuana.

- **Human- wildlife conflict resolution and wildlife emergencies**

Program rangers intervened in a total of 12 cases of human-wildlife conflict, eight of these cases involved Sumatran tiger, the remainder related to Malay tapir, Malay sunbear and Sumatran clouded leopard.

The majority of the Human-Tiger conflict incidents reported referred to tigers frequently moving through forest-edge farmland and so alarming farmers. Three cases involved livestock predation – water buffalo (5), cattle (1) and dogs which are kept by farmers to guard their farmland against crop predation by wild pigs.

Reports of ‘human-tiger conflict’ whether involving livestock predation or just an animal moving through farmland correlated strongly to forest conversion or disturbance in the surrounding area.

Additionally the team provided advice and some operational support to colleagues from KSDA Jambi in a very serious case human-tiger conflict which resulted in the death of at least eight people, mainly illegal loggers. This case was almost certainly triggered by large-scale forest clearance – some legally questionable - by one or more large companies – the pulp timber paper company WKS (a subsidiary of Riau-based APP) and palm oil conglomerate PT Makin Group.

The team did not attend the conflict site to work with KSDA and our colleagues from ZSL because effective conflict mitigation and response requires an in-depth knowledge of both local people and the landscape in which the conflict is occurring and the conflict site is approximately 370Km east of this program’s area.

The most distressing wildlife emergency handled during the reporting period occurred in mid December 2008 when villagers from a forest edge community in central Bengkulu and approximately 60Km south of KSNP southern borders reported a ‘baby tiger’ roaming forest-edge farmland.

It was assumed this report probably related to a clouded leopard or Asiatic golden cat – villagers in rural Sumatra are frequently not taxonomically accurate – unfortunately in this case the report was correct and the field team found a Sumatran tiger cub in very poor condition.

The animal was taken to Bengkulu for emergency veterinary treatment for acute dehydration and starvation but died early the following morning. TPCU rangers found prints of a second cub in this area but attempts to track and catch the cub failed and it also suspected to have subsequently died.

The team strongly suspects that the mother had earlier been poached by deer hunters operating in this area which is in the process of being cleared by a subsidiary of a British-owned company, Anglo-Eastern Plantations, for an oil palm plantation.

A young male Malay tapir was rescued from farmland where it had been caught by villagers and passed to the PHS team and, after treatment for a neck injury, relocated and released into national park forest across the Merangin river to the south of the Kerinci valley where it appears to be doing well.

A young female Malay sunbear, confiscated in late 2008, was released under supervision, in September, at the same site and joined in February by a second young male confiscated by Jambi KSDA forest rangers. The female has been radio-collared and her progress will provide valuable information on how and if hand-reared bear cubs cope with a return to the forest which will be hugely valuable to species conservation and protection teams since bear cubs are frequently held illegally by villagers and subsequently are sold into the live wildlife crime trade.

Numerous other reports of tigers moving through farmland at forest edge did not require field interventions but were monitored at a distance for any indication of escalation or reports of hunters entering the area. More than 20 noise-maker 'cannons' have now been distributed to key villages where there is a history of tiger moving in farmland and where selected villagers have been trained in use of the cannons and when they may be used.

Malay sunbear predating crops, in particular corn, continue to pose a problem for forest edge farmers and for the team since mitigation measures conducted for *felids* are not generally effective with Malay sunbear. Development of an effective, practical field protocol to mitigate and resolve human-bear conflict would be very valuable to field teams and local forestry agencies in Sumatra

Other activities

The team manager joined other Sumatran Tiger conservation practitioners for a video conference link to discuss implementation of the World Bank's proposed Global Tiger Initiative and facilitated a visit by GTI consultants to West Sumatra province which, with Jambi, is proposed as a pilot area to assess how to fully implement the Sumatran Tiger Conservation Strategy and Action Plan in the field.

DJM
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