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## CULTIVATING DEMAND

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### THE GROWING THREAT OF TIGER FARMS

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November 2017





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## ABOUT EIA

We investigate and campaign against environmental crime and abuse.

Our undercover investigations expose transnational wildlife crime, with a focus on elephants and tigers, and forest crimes such as illegal logging and deforestation for cash crops like palm oil. We work to safeguard global marine ecosystems by addressing the threats posed by plastic pollution, bycatch and commercial exploitation of whales, dolphins and porpoises. Finally, we reduce the impact of climate change by campaigning to eliminate powerful refrigerant greenhouse gases, exposing related illicit trade and improving energy efficiency in the cooling sector.

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**Above: the Tiger Temple in Thailand portrayed itself as a sanctuary, but raids in 2016 revealed a more sinister operation.**

**Front cover: a caged tiger in Vietnam. The bones of captive tigers in Vietnam are boiled into a 'glue' used in medicine. ©ENV**

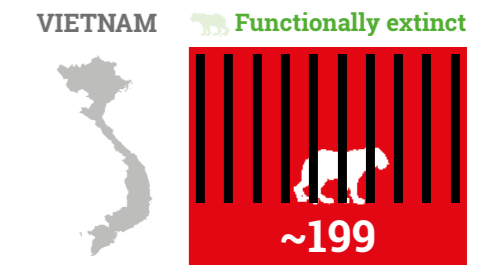
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## TIGER POPULATION

WILD  CAPTIVE 



## Executive Summary

Asia's big cats continue to be threatened as a consequence of a growing, unchallenged demand for their body parts. There are fewer than 4,000 wild tigers remaining across their range, anywhere between 3,920-6,390 snow leopards, and while nobody really knows how many leopards remain across Asia, they are one of the most traded of Asia's big cats. Along with clouded leopards and Asiatic lions, these cats are on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and international trade in their parts and derivatives is prohibited.

Since the year 2000, however, the parts of over 1,700 tigers have been seized, while populations in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam are considered to be functionally extinct. In the same period the parts of over 270 snow leopards have been seized, but it is estimated that hundreds of snow leopards are killed and traded each year. The parts of over 4,800 leopards have been seized. With NGOs and media documenting significant volumes of Asian big cat parts for sale on social media and persistent physical markets, volumes seized are likely

to be a fraction of what is in trade.

Skins are used as rugs and taxidermy specimens for home decor, often purchased as non-financial bribes. Buyers in China include the military, officials and businesspeople. Bones are used in traditional medicine, for which wild tiger bone is preferred over captive tiger bone. Wild tiger bone is also preferred among those seeking a more high-end 'pure' tiger bone wine for personal use or as a prestigious gift. Home made and

Above: there are fewer than 4,000 wild tigers, but nearly double that number exist in captivity in four major 'tiger farming' countries (China, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos)

packaged brands of tiger bone wine are being brewed in China, Laos, Vietnam and North Korea. In sleazy border and casino towns, such as Mong La in Myanmar and the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone in Laos, tiger bone wine is sold more as a virility product, primarily to visiting Chinese consumers. Teeth and claws are widely available across China and South-East Asia, not just as charms but set in silver and gold and worn openly as statements of power and wealth. Likewise, big cat meat is consumed and offered to peers as an exotic delicacy.

Demand is exacerbated by the availability of captive-bred tiger parts, illegally sold from facilities that often masquerade as 'zoos' or entertainment parks. There are at least 7,000 tigers in captivity in countries where legal or illegal trade in parts and derivatives is known to take place, including in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, China and South Africa. These tigers have no conservation value and are too habituated to people to be released into the wild.

Commonly referred to as 'farms', the kinds of facilities involved in trade range from those with hundreds of tigers and intensive battery farm-style breeding, to

circuses and backyard operations with a handful of tigers that may be kept but not necessarily bred.

In 2007, CITES Parties adopted Decision 14.69 to stop domestic as well as international trade in captive-bred tiger parts and derivatives as it puts enforcement efforts under further strain and undermines efforts to reduce demand. With the relatively easy accessibility of Asian big cat parts on social media as well as in physical marketplaces and the absence of high profile campaigns by leaders (as compared to ivory), there appears to be a sense of social acceptability or at least impunity among consumers. This unchecked demand has led to the trafficking and consumption of other big cat parts such as jaguar and African lion bones, teeth and claws, which are marketed as "tiger".

**At the 17th Conference of the Parties to CITES in 2016 (CoP17), a new round of Decisions were adopted and, if implemented, will result in much-needed investment in time-bound, country-specific actions to combat tiger and other big cat trade. Parties at the 69th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee must call for swift action.**

# Recommendations

In order to deliver a decisive blow to the tiger trade, and to end all demand for tiger parts and products, it is imperative that CITES decisions are fully implemented on an urgent basis.

At CITES CoP17 (October 2016), several positive decisions were adopted which could lead to the phase-out of tiger 'farms', thereby eliminating a major source and stimulus for trade in tiger parts and derivatives, and finally implementing CITES Decision 14.69, adopted in 2007.

**“Parties with intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale shall implement measures to restrict the captive population to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers; tigers should not be bred for trade in their parts and derivatives.”** – CITES Decision 14.69

Below: Tiger and other big cat teeth are increasingly desirable, valuable and prevalent in trade



In particular, CITES Decision 17.229 directs the CITES Secretariat to, *inter alia*, review legal and illegal trade in Asian big cats from or through facilities keeping Asian big cats in captivity, identifying those which may be of concern; and undertake a mission to those Parties in whose territories there are facilities of concern with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the operations and activities undertaken by them. Decision 17.227 empowers the Standing Committee to determine whether any further time-bound, country-specific actions are necessary. It is critical that the implementation of Decision 17.229 is expedited so that by 2018, a concrete way forward is adopted by the CITES Standing Committee targeting key countries and facilities of concern.

Nearly a decade has passed since the adoption of Decision 14.69, yet countries such as China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam have drastically expanded tiger farming operations in flagrant non-compliance with this Decision. South Africa too is emerging as a source of captive-bred tiger parts in international trade. Asian big cat captive facilities in these countries play a key role in fuelling trade in captive tiger parts and products, as demonstrated in this report and in an independent assessment conducted on behalf of the CITES Secretariat for the 65th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (SC65 Doc 38 Annex 1). We call on the CITES Standing Committee which is meeting in November 2017 (SC69) to consider the urgent need to end captive tiger trade and demand for tiger parts and products. The Committee should call for implementation of relevant decisions to achieve this goal. For example, despite the fact that funds have been made available for Laos to conduct an inventory of tiger farms, this is yet to be done. The audit should not be delayed any further because captive tigers in Laos continue to facilitate domestic and international trade.

Below: Tigers performing for entertainment at the Tiger Temple in Thailand. Parts of over 70 tigers were seized in the Temple in 2016; no one has been prosecuted



## EIA recommendations for CITES SC69:

- Acknowledge China, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and South Africa as Parties of concern under CITES Decision 17.229(b)
- Direct the Secretariat to complete implementation of Decision 17.229 in time for SC70 in 2018

Below and bottom: permit issued by the Chinese Government for a tiger skin rug made from the skin of a captive tiger



## EIA recommendations for China, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and South Africa:

### Urgent (by CITES SC70)

- Demonstrate that effective enforcement action has been taken to detect, investigate and prosecute individuals involved in tiger trade from and through Asian big cat captive facilities
- Adopt measures to ensure that there is no further expansion of existing commercial captive tiger breeding operations
- Conduct an audit to accurately identify the number of Asian big cats in captivity and work with technical experts to develop and manage stripe pattern databases and, where funds permit, DNA databases
- China and Laos prohibit any trade in the parts and derivatives of captive Asian big cats and issue public notifications to that effect

### Medium-term (by CITES CoP18)

- Audit, inventory and destroy government and privately held stockpiles of captive-bred or confiscated Asian big cat parts and derivatives

### Long-term

- Work with organisations with scientific and technical expertise in managing captive tigers to phase out tiger farms
- Implement targeted demand-reduction initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns to reduce demand for tiger parts and products

## EIA recommendations for all Parties and other stakeholders:

- Provide technical and financial support for implementation of CITES Decisions relating to Asian big cats

# Mapping the tiger trade

-  Wild and captive tiger trade routes
-  Examples of facilities that have been implicated in tiger trade
-  Examples of where wild and captive tiger parts are processed or sold together
-  Current wild tiger range<sup>i</sup>

## KEY TIGER FACILITIES

### CHINA

- 1 Xionsen Bear and Tiger Mountain Village
- 2 Sanhong Biotechnology Company
- 3 Qinhuangdao Wildlife Zoo
- 4 Shenyang Forest Zoo
- 5 Harbin Siberian Tiger Park
- 6 Hengdaohezi Siberian Tiger Park

### VIETNAM

- 7 Facility of Nguyen Mau Chien
- 8 Hon Nhan Ecological Conservation Center

### LAOS

- 9 Vannaseng facility
- 10 Lak Sao facility
- 11 Vinasakhone: a.k.a. Muang Thong Farm
- 12 Kings Romans Group: Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone

### THAILAND

- 13 Wat Pa Luangta Bua Yannasampanno (Tiger Temple)
- 14 Star Tiger Zoo
- 15 Koh Samui

## EXAMPLES OF WHERE WILD AND CAPTIVE TIGER PARTS ARE PROCESSED OR SOLD TOGETHER

### LAOS

- A Kings Romans Group: Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone
- B Sanjiang Market, Vientiane

### CHINA

- C Linxia, Gansu Province
- D Chaohu, Anhui Province



Map not to scale; borders not authenticated

Map not to scale; borders not authenticated

8 <sup>i</sup> Goodrich, J., Lynam, A., Miquelle, D., Wibisono, H., Kawanishi, K., Pattanavibool, A., Htun, S., Tempa, T., Karki, J., Jhala, Y. & Karanth, U. 2015. *Panthera tigris*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2015: e.T15955A50659951. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2015-2.RLTS.T15955A50659951.en>. Downloaded on 16 November 2017.

# Snapshot of tiger farming in China and South-East Asia



CHINA (mainland)<sup>7</sup>



LAOS<sup>8</sup>



THAILAND<sup>9</sup>



VIETNAM<sup>10</sup>

<b>Wild tiger population</b>	7 – 50	Functionally extinct	221	Functionally extinct
<b>Captive tiger population</b>	5,000 – 6,000	~380	1,450 – 2,500	~199
<b>Number of captive tiger facilities</b>	~200	At least 4 (details provided at page 14)	44	17 (13 private and 4 government owned)
<b>Increase in captive tiger population since 2007?</b>	Yes (more than 800 tiger cubs are born each year in one facility alone)	Unknown (at least 1 facility has had a significant increase in tigers, while tigers have "disappeared" from another)	Yes (662 in 2007; 786 in 2010; 952 in 2011)	Yes (~57 in 2009)
<b>Number of facilities implicated in tiger trade</b>	At least 16	All 4	At least 6	At least 5
<b>Number of suspected captive tigers seized since 2007</b>	At least 29 (1 whole skin, 5 carcasses, 6 stuffed, 17 live)	At least 11 (all live)	At least 338 (including 211 live)	~96 (from bones, each quantity counted as 1 tiger, frozen tigers, live tigers, trophies)
<b>Conviction rate for above seizures</b>	55%: five cases resulted in imprisonment of 11 offenders	0	11%: penalties imposed were all fines for six offenders	Since 2010, 44 cases resulted in prosecution of 30 offenders, however only 7 were jailed, while others received suspended sentences or probation
<b>National legislation prohibits internal trade in captive tiger parts and products?</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>National legislation prohibits stockpiling of deceased captive tigers?</b>	No	No	Yes but not enforced	Yes
<b>Has DNA / stripe pattern database with profiles of individual captive tigers?</b>	No	No	Partially	No
<b>Number of tiger skins seized in country since 2007 (wild and/or captive sources)</b>	59	2	6	~15



## SOUTH AFRICA'S ROLE IN TIGER TRADE

At least 280 tigers are kept in 44 facilities in South Africa,<sup>1</sup> and the government has allowed domestic and international trade in parts and derivatives of captive-bred tigers, which contravenes CITES Decision 14.69.<sup>2</sup> Between 2005-15, South Africa reported that it had exported 27 tiger skins, seven of which were sent to China. During 2008-15, South Africa exported the body parts of over 5,500 lions to China, Vietnam, Thailand and Laos.<sup>3</sup> The substantial volumes of lion bone, teeth and claws exported from South Africa present opportunities for laundering of tiger products; without DNA analysis it is very difficult to confirm whether these products are actually sourced from lions or include parts from tigers farmed in South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

South Africa has also emerged as a significant location for *illegal* tiger trade: seven tiger skins were seized in Benoni, South Africa in May 2017,<sup>5</sup> and a passenger found in possession of a tiger skin and 7.7kg tiger bone in Kunming, China in February 2015 had reportedly travelled from South Africa.<sup>6</sup>

# CHINA

## China's tiger conservation efforts are undermined by the duplicitous nature of government policy.

On the one hand China has recently made considerable effort to protect its own small population of wild tigers, including establishing a national park to protect tiger habitat. On the other, however, as the world's largest destination for tiger parts and derivatives, and the world's largest tiger farming country, it has failed to end the demand and the commercial industry that is fuelling tiger poaching.

At the heart of the problem lies China's massive tiger farming industry which is a source for tiger parts and products entering trade. In allowing this industry to continue to expand, the Chinese Government has stimulated demand for and trade in tiger parts. China has 5,000-6,000 tigers kept in more than 200 facilities across the country. By its own admission, the Government does not have the capacity to monitor how many specimens from these facilities have ended up in private hands. Nobody knows exactly how many of these facilities are involved in domestic trade, but they are keeping stockpiles of tiger carcasses and body parts.

Questions remain over the legal status of commercial trade in the parts and derivatives of captive-bred tigers. EIA investigations in 2012 uncovered legal commercial trade in skins of tigers sourced from captive facilities in China, accompanied by permits issued by the government State Forestry Administration (SFA). Traders described how these permits could be fraudulently re-used to enable trade in illegally sourced big cat skins, and a taxidermist permitted to legally process and sell captive-bred tiger skins claimed to have processed wild tiger skins originally from India, purchased in the Tibet Autonomous Region.<sup>11</sup>

Further, while trade in tiger bone for medicinal purposes has been banned in China since 1993, EIA and other NGO investigations have exposed the production and sale of 'tiger bone wine', marketed variously as a prestigious gift or virility product, at multiple captive tiger facilities in China.<sup>12</sup> In 2012 and 2013, tiger breeders and traders referred to a 'secret' Government notification issued in 2005, which appeared to allow the sale of tiger bone from large tiger breeding facilities to designated hospitals for production of tiger bone wine. A representative of a company manufacturing tiger bone wine on a commercial scale (see below) referenced this notification as the basis for its permission to produce tiger bone wine.

As part of a recent law amendment process, China had a valuable opportunity to remove all legal ambiguities and loopholes by unequivocally prohibiting all trade in tiger parts and products, be it sourced from wild or captive tigers. The Government instead adopted amendments to its Wildlife Protection Law which specifically allow commercial trade in captive-bred specimens of species included on a 'utilisation list' issued by the SFA. The first incarnation of this utilisation list was released in June 2017 and did not include tigers or other big cat species; however, the title of the official release clearly indicates that other species will be added in the future. In addition, Article 27 of the Law allows "the sale, purchase or utilisation of wildlife under special state protection or the products thereof where necessary for scientific research, captive breeding, public exhibition or performances, heritage conservation or other special purposes" with the approval of relevant departments, which may issue a special permit for such activities. In August 2017, the SFA was appointed as the approving body for such permits for tigers, leopards and several other species,<sup>13</sup> suggesting that it will continue to be possible for legal trade in tigers to take place in China.



Top left: tiger skin being prepared for taxidermy in China

Middle and bottom: in 2013, EIA investigators were offered a range of products branded as 'real tiger bone wine' by Sanhong. The company claimed this was produced using bone sourced from captive tigers

## CHINA: CAPTIVE TIGER FACILITY PROFILE

**NAME:** Changsha Sanhong Biotechnology Company (also associated with Sanzhen Animal Taxidermy Co. Ltd, Sanzhen Forestry Art Co. Ltd, and Sanzhen Forestry Technological Development Co. Ltd.)

**LOCATION:** Changsha, Hunan Province, China

**ESTABLISHED:** May 2005

**62** NUMBER OF TIGERS: 62 cubs bred in seven years (expansion from six tigers in 2013)<sup>14</sup>

**IMPLICATED IN ILLEGAL TIGER TRADE:** Yes

### Legal status:

In 2017, the company claimed it was registered with the Changsha City Industry and Commerce Administration. In 2013, a company representative told EIA it is legally permitted to use bones from captive tigers to manufacture and sell tiger bone wine so long as the product does not list "tiger bone" as an ingredient on its packaging. It made reference to a 'secret' 2005 Government notification that allows production of tiger bone wine made with bones of captive tigers.

The company representative claimed that it has a close relationship with the local Forestry Bureau, to whom it supplies tiger bone wine as required, and that it also sends wine to Government ministries in Beijing before major holidays. Local government officials are aware of production of tiger bone wine, as evidenced by a 2011 post on a Ministry of Commerce website advertising wildlife taxidermy services and tiger bone wine, and providing contact details for the owner of Sanzhen and Sanhong. EIA first brought this to the attention of the Government of China in 2013, and despite Government assertions that domestic trade in tiger bone is banned, no action has been taken against this company.

### Operations and activities:

In 2005, the company released a detailed business plan for the commercial production of tiger bone wine, branded as 'Real Tiger Wine'.<sup>15</sup> The plan describes the company's plans to exploit the



"great market potential" for tiger bone wine, including market positioning as a "medium-to-high-end healthcare wine" and a detailed pricing plan. The document claims that Sanhong's tiger bone wine was developed "with strong support from the Government at all levels and administrations", and specifically cites the aforementioned 'secret' 2005 notification as the legal basis for its production.

EIA investigations in 2013 found that the company was operating a winery producing 'Real Tiger Wine' (the product is still listed on the company website in 2017) and a small tiger breeding facility. Bones for producing the wine were sourced from its own tiger breeding facility and others across China. For most wine produced, the bones were steeped in rice wine for a maximum of three batches before being returned to a stockpile (and thereby circumventing the domestic ban on trade in tiger bone), although the company representative claimed that a 'special edition' wine contains powdered tiger bone.

Sales of tiger bone wine were made directly to officials and via distribution agencies which market the wine to exclusive venues. Company owners also have a taxidermy workshop licensed to process tiger skins.

News reports indicate an expansion in tiger breeding, with 62 tigers reportedly born in seven years and progress in plans to build a hunting facility near the tiger park.<sup>16</sup>

# LAOS

The announcement by the Laotian Government to phase out its tiger farms is welcome. However, progress has since stalled and captive tiger facilities in Laos continue to fuel international trafficking in tigers, targeting Chinese and Vietnamese buyers.

Tiger parts and products are openly available for sale in Laos – from the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone (GTSEZ) in the north to Sanjiang market and other retail outlets in the capital city of Vientiane.<sup>17</sup> Given that wild tigers are extinct in Laos, primarily due to poaching, the source of tiger parts and derivatives in trade in Laos includes wild tiger parts smuggled over from Myanmar as well as from tigers farmed in Laos and neighbouring countries. At the time of writing, there are at least four facilities with captive tigers in Laos, some of which demonstrate substantial changes in tiger numbers in a short period, suggesting that there is possibly an active trade in tigers through these facilities (see Table right). All four facilities have been implicated in illegal trade in tiger parts and products.<sup>18</sup> This includes a new facility in Lak Sao which was reportedly established in the past two years.

Based on seizures of tigers suspected to be sourced from captive sources and information collected through EIA and other NGO investigations, it is evident that captive tiger facilities in Laos supply an international organised illegal trade in tiger parts and products for consumption by Chinese and Vietnamese buyers. For example, in May 2016, four frozen tiger cub carcasses were seized in Vietnam along the Vietnam-Laos border and the suspect arrested stated that he had purchased the tigers from a Lao national.<sup>24</sup>

The GTSEZ is situated in a strategic location close to the borders with Myanmar and Thailand, and south of Yunnan Province of China. EIA and ENV investigations in GTSEZ in 2014 and 2015 documented open sale of tiger skins, stuffed tigers, tiger bone wine and other Asian big cat parts and products, sourced from both wild tigers (most likely from Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia or South

Asia) and captive tigers in Laos and possibly Thailand and China.<sup>25</sup> The investigations also documented the expansion of a captive tiger facility in the GTSEZ – in a short period of seven months the number of captive tigers had increased from six observed in June 2014 to 35 in February 2015, with the new tigers being acquired from another tiger farm in Laos. The stated objective of the facility was to breed up to 500 tigers for commercially producing tiger bone wine for export to China.<sup>26</sup> Although it was reported that certain illegal wildlife products in the GTSEZ were confiscated and burnt in March 2015, there has been no reported inventory of what items were confiscated. Some tiger skins were reportedly destroyed, but photographs of the skins were not shared and cross-referenced against India's photographic identification databases for the purpose of investigating origin in accordance with CITES recommendations.

The 200 hectare farm owned by Vinasakhone a.k.a the Muang Thong Tiger Farm located in Thakek, reportedly illegally sells a whole range of wildlife, including tigers.<sup>27</sup> Tiger trade is fuelled by this facility not only by supplying tiger parts from tigers born here but also from tigers imported from Thailand, Myanmar and Malaysia.<sup>28</sup> It has been reported that the farm regularly sells tiger "glue" (a sticky substance made from boiling tiger bone) to Vietnamese buyers.<sup>29</sup> There has been a substantial decrease in the number of tigers held in the facility, going from 400 tigers in 2016 to 97 tigers in 2017. This suggests that more than 300 tigers have likely been killed and/or traded from this facility in one year. Indeed, the CITES Secretariat has suggested that the missing tigers were allegedly moved to other facilities located in Laos, Vietnam and China.<sup>30</sup>



Far right: menus in restaurants in GTSEZ offer 'saute tiger meat'

Below: investigations reveal that tigers were being bred in GTSEZ for supplying bone for tiger bone wine

Bottom: tiger skins hung on wall and draped across the table, with boxes of tiger bone wine on shelves at GTSEZ where trade in both wild and captive tiger parts converge



Facility	TIGERS IN 2016	TIGERS IN 2017
Vannaseng facility	102 <sup>19</sup>	235 <sup>20</sup>
Name unknown, located in Lak Sao	Unknown	13 (capacity for 100-130)
Vinasakhone: Muang Thong Farm	400 <sup>21</sup>	97 <sup>22</sup>
Kings Romans Group: Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone	35 <sup>23</sup>	~35
	<b>537</b>	<b>~380</b>

There does not appear to be any evidence of prosecution of individuals and companies implicated in illegal wildlife trade across Laos, and a 2014 UNODC study found that not a single wildlife-related case has been referred to prosecutors between 2011-2014.<sup>31</sup> Further, EIA is concerned that the Laos Wildlife and Aquatic Law of 2007 permits the commercial domestic trade in specimens obtained from captive tigers, elephants and other species. This is a major legal loophole enabling laundering of wild tiger specimens and also stimulating demand for tiger parts. In the current climate, the captive tiger facilities in Laos can freely operate without any fear of enforcement, raising real concerns about increasing 'disappearing' tigers from the captive tiger facilities in Laos.

## LAOS: CAPTIVE TIGER FACILITY PROFILE

**NAME:** Vannaseng Trading Company (owns Soukvannaseng facility and Fulrange Of Wild Animal And Fish Farm Vannaseng (Vannaseng farm).

**LOCATION:** Facility is located in Bolikhamxay province of Laos, with a macaque farm located 5km away.

**ESTABLISHED:** Company set up in 1998,<sup>32</sup> first tiger farm established in 2002<sup>33</sup>

**235** NUMBER OF TIGERS: 235<sup>34</sup>

**IMPLICATED IN ILLEGAL TIGER TRADE: Yes**

### Legal status:

It was reported that in 2014, the Laotian Government – in clear non-compliance with CITES – authorised Vannaseng Trading Company to trade in 20 tonnes of tiger skin, bones and claws; 90 tonnes of ivory; and four tonnes of rhino horn, in a total package valued at \$28.2 million.<sup>35</sup>

### Operations and activities:

In just one year, the number of captive tigers in the Vannaseng facility more than doubled – in 2016 there were 102 tigers in the facility, which increased to 235 in 2017.<sup>36</sup> The company has reportedly exported large amounts of tiger products to Vietnam and provided



Chinese companies based in Laos with the raw materials for the production of tiger bone wine for the Chinese market.<sup>37</sup> In a recent mission to Laos by the CITES Secretariat, representatives of two farms including Vannaseng wanted to know why they were not allowed to register their farms with the CITES Secretariat and why they could not obtain permits to trade their captive-bred tiger specimens.<sup>38</sup> This raises serious concerns about the lack of awareness by the company about CITES prohibitions for trade in both wild and captive-sourced tiger specimens. The company has also been implicated in illegal trade in wild-caught macaques sourced from Cambodia.<sup>39</sup>



# THAILAND

With up to 2,500 captive tigers in farms and other facilities, Thailand is the second largest tiger farming country after China. While the recent seizure of tigers from the infamous Tiger Temple indicates willingness to crack down on tiger trade, much more needs to be done to investigate and prosecute those implicated in tiger trade through the Temple. Attention on the Tiger Temple should not detract from trade in tiger parts from other facilities.

About 221 wild tigers survive in Thailand. Meanwhile, an estimated 1,450-2,500 tigers are kept in 44 facilities across Thailand.<sup>41</sup> This includes two tiger petting zoos open from late 2016. This number has more than doubled since 2007, when the CITES Parties adopted CITES Decision 14.69 recommending that Parties should “implement measures to restrict the captive population [of tigers] to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers”. Thailand has clearly failed to implement this Decision.

The vast majority of facilities keeping tigers in Thailand offer no conservation benefit to wild tigers. Inbreeding is rife and multiple facilities offer tourist interaction experiences, including the infamous ‘tiger selfies’. While commercial trade in tiger parts and derivatives is banned in Thailand, whether derived from wild or captive tigers, illegal trade continues to take place from and through facilities that keep or breed tigers. Further, although stockpiling of deceased tigers is prohibited, this prohibition is not enforced and there is limited inspection of facilities to encourage disposal of stocks.

Since 2007, 338 tigers suspected to derive from captive sources have been seized in Thailand in 35 incidents. Only four cases (11 per cent) have resulted in convictions; in three of these cases, the penalties imposed were fines without imprisonment.<sup>42</sup>

Thai tiger facilities have also been implicated in illegal international trade in captive-bred tigers. For example, in May 2012, police in Bangkok seized three frozen tiger carcasses, resulting in the

arrest of Thai and Vietnamese nationals. Those individuals reportedly stated that they were planning to sell the carcasses to a Vietnamese buyer in Laos for onward sale through Vietnam and China.<sup>43</sup> In October 2012, police seized 16 tiger cubs from a vehicle on the “Friendship Highway” that connects Bangkok to Vientiane; it is believed that the tiger cubs were being transported to facilities in Laos.<sup>44</sup>

Organised criminal networks are profiting from the international trade in tigers through both licensed and, in some cases, unlicensed facilities that keep and breed tigers in Thailand. Such trade in captive-sourced tigers involve repeat offenders and networks operating across international borders. There is also evidence of overlap between trade in wild and captive tiger with the same criminal networks dealing in both tigers poached from the wild and captive-bred tigers. For example, in 2015 Thai authorities arrested Leuthai

Below: the Tiger Temple served no conservation purpose. Tigers here are too habituated to humans to ever be released in the wild

Bottom: the Thai government’s action against the Tiger Temple is welcome, this should now result in prosecution of those involved in the tiger trade



Tiewcharoen for smuggling the parts and skin of a tiger<sup>45</sup>, the stripe pattern of which was later found to match that of a wild tiger from the Western Forest Complex.<sup>46</sup> This was the suspect’s third brush with the law, as he had previously been arrested with fresh tiger meat and six live tigers,<sup>47</sup> and then a year later with a tiger carcass en route to Laos.<sup>48</sup> He has a history of disappearing while on bail<sup>49</sup> but he was jailed for the 2015 offence.

In another case, in 2014, the Thai Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) froze over \$36 million from a group linked to trafficking tigers, pangolins and rosewood, including assets of Daoreung Chaimas, alleged to be one of South-East Asia’s biggest tiger traders.<sup>50</sup> In 2016, however, the court order enabling the seizure of assets was reportedly revoked, which likely means that the illegally acquired assets remains with Chaimas.<sup>51</sup>

## THAILAND: CAPTIVE TIGER FACILITY PROFILE

**NAME:** Wat Pa Luangta Bua Yannasampanno (Tiger Temple)

**LOCATION:** Kanchanaburi, Thailand

**ESTABLISHED:** 1994.

**147** NUMBER OF TIGERS: 147 live tigers were seized during 2016 from the Tiger Temple.

However, the Tiger Temple thereafter announced that a new “Tiger Park” will be opened soon “with all the same options”.<sup>52</sup>

**IMPLICATED IN ILLEGAL TIGER TRADE:** Yes

### Legal status:

The Tiger Temple is no longer permitted to own tigers, however, in April 2016, an offshoot entity, the Tiger Temple Co. Ltd., was granted an official zoo permit.<sup>53</sup> The Tiger Temple Co. Ltd. changed its name to Golden Tiger (Thailand) Co. Ltd. on February 3, 2017.<sup>54</sup>

### Operations and activities:

Numerous allegations of animal abuse and wildlife trafficking by the Tiger Temple have been raised since 2001.<sup>55</sup> The first official complaint related to acquisition of tigers;<sup>56</sup> the Temple lacked permits for tigers identified there in 2001.<sup>57</sup> A series of investigations uncovered international illegal trade in live tigers to a facility in Laos<sup>58</sup> (Vinasakhone’s Muang Thong Tiger Farm in Thakkek).<sup>59</sup>

In 2010, investigations by journalists revealed that the Temple had donated the equivalent of \$23,490 to Thai police and soldiers.<sup>60</sup> A former Kanchanaburi Police Colonel has been described as vice president of the Tiger Temple Foundation and manages the newer entity.<sup>61</sup>



In 2014, allegations emerged about illegal killing and disappearance of several tigers from the temple<sup>62</sup>, when three adult male tigers disappeared but local police investigations did not result in charges.<sup>63</sup> In 2015, the Temple was raided for holding protected wildlife without correct licences and species other than tigers were seized.<sup>64</sup>

Investigations by *National Geographic* in January 2016 revealed that speed-breeding and illegal tiger trade was continuing.<sup>65</sup> By June 2016, 147 live tigers had been confiscated in phases that year, along with carcasses of 70 tiger cubs and other tiger parts.<sup>66</sup> DNA analysis revealed that six of the cubs were not the offspring of any tiger held in the facility.<sup>67</sup> Arrests were made,<sup>68</sup> but at the time of writing no charges or prosecutions have been brought against the Tiger Temple and its management. Despite apparent illegalities, as stated above, the offshoot company has been granted a zoo licence and is currently building a new tiger facility.

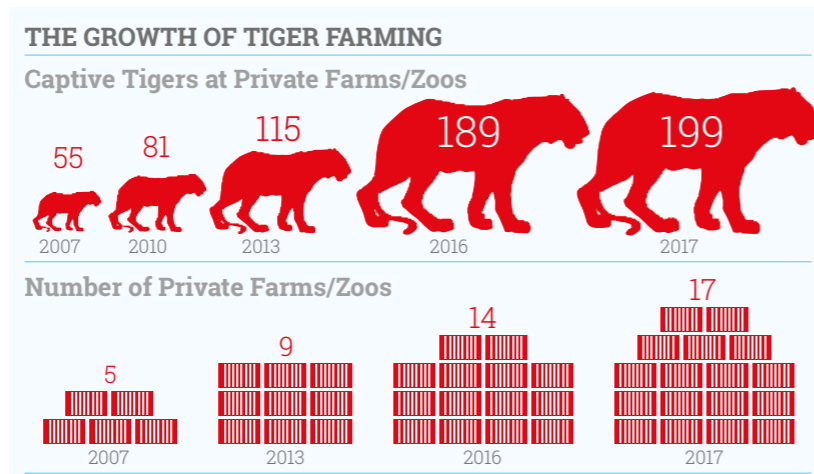
# VIETNAM

With fewer than 200 captive tigers, Vietnam is best placed among the tiger farming countries in Asia to close its captive tiger facilities. Vietnamese nationals, however, are merely shifting this problem abroad by setting up tiger farms in neighbouring Laos and as far afield as South Africa.

Captive tiger facilities in Vietnam masquerade as zoos claiming to benefit conservation, but the reality is that over one-third of the captive tiger facilities in Vietnam are linked to illegal tiger trade.<sup>69</sup> It is evident that these facilities do not serve any educational or conservation purpose and play a major role in fuelling the captive tiger trade and stimulating demand for tigers.<sup>70</sup>

Captive tiger facilities in Vietnam operate with impunity, with the Vietnamese Government in some cases turning a blind eye to their illegal activities. For example, in 2007 when five private facilities were found to be in illegal possession of tigers,<sup>71</sup> the Government decided it was sufficient to merely impose a fine and, what was worse, the facilities were allowed to continue to keep the tigers despite lack of any evidence of legal origin of the tigers.<sup>72</sup> In another case, in 2016, the Vietnamese Government authorised a facility linked with Pham Van Tuan, a notorious wildlife criminal, to import nine tigers from the Czech Republic. Tuan has two previous convictions for killing and illegally trading in tigers and other endangered wildlife. The facility had already purchased 15 live tigers from another facility in Vietnam, which in turn had imported tigers from Africa.<sup>73</sup> It is likely these tigers came from South Africa; the country has seen a rise in tiger farming and already plays a significant role in international lion bone trade to Asia<sup>74</sup> and rhino horn trafficking to Vietnam.<sup>75</sup>

In Vietnam, an unknown number of tigers are also housed in small-scale 'backyard' operations which also play an important role in supplying tiger parts and products for illegal trade. Further, it is evident that live tigers as well as tiger parts and products are being transported across the



country, and in some cases across borders from or into neighbouring countries. In 2012, a resident of a commune in Nghe An province and owner of four tigers explained in a media interview that "on average each household has a pair of tigers".<sup>76</sup> Tigers are moved between districts in Nghe An; for example, in November 2012, two tigers connected to Yen Thanh district had been moved to a premises in Dien Chau for safe keeping, where they were seized.<sup>77</sup> In 2017, Dien Chau was the location of several seizures, including five frozen tigers seized from a house.<sup>78</sup>

The Vietnamese Government has failed to take meaningful action to end the demand for tigers in Vietnam. Shockingly, in 2010, Thanh Hóa provincial authorities announced plans to publically auction seized tiger bone glue; following a public outcry the auction did not take place.<sup>79</sup> If the Vietnamese Government is committed to a zero tolerance of any tiger trade, it is imperative that it implements a strong policy to phase out its tiger farms and to ensure successful prosecutions leading to deterrent penalties against individuals and businesses implicated in the tiger trade.



Below: the captive tiger facility of Mau Chien shows how such facilities serve as a front for illegal wildlife trade

Bottom: tigers in captivity in Vietnam have steadily increased since 2007, despite CITES Decision 14.69 adopted in the same year which calls for an end to commercial tiger breeding

## VIETNAM: CAPTIVE TIGER FACILITY PROFILE

**NAME:** Facility of Nguyen Mau Chien

**LOCATION:** Xuan Tin commune, Tho Xuan District, Thanh Hóa province, central Vietnam

**ESTABLISHED:** 2006

**11** NUMBER OF TIGERS: 11

**IMPLICATED IN ILLEGAL TIGER TRADE:** Yes

### Legal status:

Licence expired on May 22 2017. However, the facility is still allowed to keep tigers until the tigers are transferred to a rescue centre. There is currently no legislation allowing the Government to confiscate tigers from farms where the licence is not renewed.

### Operations and activities:

Nguyen Mau Chien is the owner of this facility. It is a compelling example of how so-called 'legal' captive tiger facilities serve as a front for major organised wildlife criminal networks to reap profits from tiger trafficking and other criminal activities. Even though the facility is implicated in illegal wildlife trade, including tiger trade, it continues to keep several live tigers.

The facility is located in a hub for making bone 'glue' including from tiger bones.<sup>80</sup> Tiger bones are boiled into a 'glue' or resinous 'cake', which is mixed with wine / tea and consumed as a medicine. It is one of the main drivers of demand for tigers in Vietnam.

Nguyen Mau Chien began his career trading fake tiger bones (for example, fraudulently marketing bones from livestock as tiger bone) before establishing his own tiger farm.<sup>81</sup> In 2006, he sourced around 16 tigers,<sup>82</sup> all of which were illegally obtained.<sup>83</sup> In 2008, Nguyen Mau Chien's brother-in-law was fined VND 30 million (c.\$ 1,300) for illegal possession of five tigers; however, Chien was later granted permission to keep the same tigers, despite lack of evidence of their legal origin.<sup>84</sup> In 2010, two dead tigers were found in a freezer at the facility.<sup>85</sup>



Above: tiger bone glue offered for sale online

Ongoing monitoring suggests that there is a possibility for laundering tigers: the tigers currently in the facility have different stripe patterns and other identifying features compared to those originally found in the facility.<sup>86</sup> Mau Chien's network has been linked to several tiger trade seizures.<sup>87</sup>

A decade ago, Mau Chien was arrested and fined in Tanzania in relation to wildlife offences and in 2017 was described as the suspected leader of a major criminal network with expanding operations in Africa.<sup>88</sup> In 2017, authorities followed up on a seizure of rhino horns at Hanoi train station to confiscate two frozen tiger cubs and other wildlife, and arrested him.<sup>89</sup> The cubs were said to have come from his tiger farm.<sup>90</sup> The arrest is a significant event targeting a higher level suspect and is currently under prosecution.<sup>91</sup>

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