

INVESTIGATOR

Autumn • 2019

eia ENVIRONMENTAL
INVESTIGATION
AGENCY

CITES: The good, the bad and the ugly

A round-up of the key winners and losers at major
wildlife conference in Geneva

Japan draws first blood in
its new commercial pirate
whale hunt

Montreal Protocol must
step up fight against ozone
damage and global warming

China cracks down on
timber-smuggling syndicate
plundering Myanmar

eia ENVIRONMENTAL
INVESTIGATION
AGENCY



4



8



12



14



20

INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the Autumn 2019 *Investigator* magazine!

Inside, you'll find a report on the wins and disappointments at the world's biggest conference on endangered species, news of an horrific trade in tiger products exposed in Thailand, our thoughts on Japan's return to commercial whaling, the need for the Montreal Protocol to step up its fight against ozone damage and global warming and news of a crackdown in China on wood smuggled in from Myanmar.

September saw our 35th anniversary and our thanks go out to all those who have supported us – we simply couldn't have done so much without your help.

Mary Rice
Executive Director

CONTENTS

Wildlife	4
Forests	8
Ocean	12
Feature: CITES roundup	14
Climate	20
From our archive	22

Join us
and donate at
eia-international.org
or call
+44 (0) 20 7354 7960

62-63 Upper Street, London N1 0NY
T: +44 (0) 20 7354 7960
E: ukinfo@eia-international.org
eia-international.org

Environmental Investigation Agency UK
UK registered Charity Number: 1182208

Cover photo courtesy of our friends at
African Pangolin Working Group

China looks to expand protected species list – but that won't end pangolin trade

Pangolins could be in line for better legal protections and a higher profile in China - but the change will not mean an end to legal domestic trade in the species' scales.

A document leaked online in the summer revealed China is revising its list of protected wildlife species for the first time since 1988.

The move would grant hundreds of species official protection for the first time, including birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.

One key proposal is to upgrade protections for pangolins. At present, only the Chinese pangolin is included and gets second-class state protection but this would be upgraded to first-class and extended to Indian and Sunda pangolins.

However, although the highest level of protection might

increase the profile of pangolin conservation and usher in stronger penalties for illegal killing and trade, China's legal domestic trade would nevertheless continue.

In July, Chris Hamley, our Senior Pangolin Campaigner, warned that commercial pangolin farming in China would very likely have a negative impact on the species.

Companies can be licensed to legally breed pangolins in captivity but a new academic paper showed pangolin farming offers little potential to meet consumer demand for the endangered creature's scales.

The study evaluated commercial captive-breeding against 17 conditions to understand its

impact on wild populations – and concluded that only between four and six of these conditions are met.

Further, it raised several key issues demonstrating that captive-breeding is unlikely to benefit or ease pressure on wild pangolin populations.

Many attempts to breed pangolins in captivity have failed and breeding them in sufficient numbers to meet consumer demand is not considered possible; even if it were, pangolins would continue to be poached due to the high financial value attached to them by consumers preferring the products of wild-sourced pangolins – which can then be 'laundered' onto the legal market. ●

Above: a ground pangolin roams the savannah

Below: seized pangolin scales

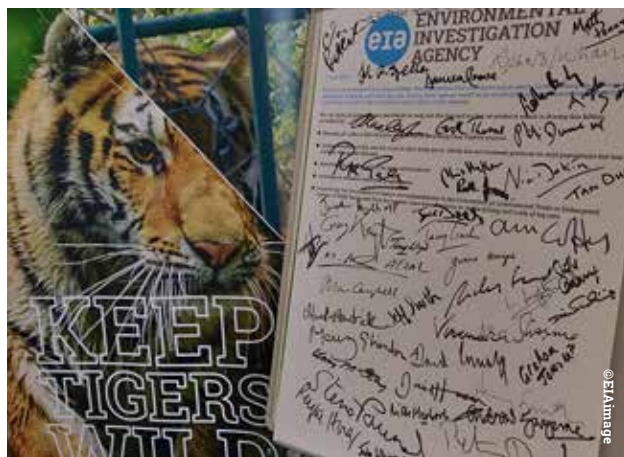


UK MPs earn their stripes with big cat support!

Our Tiger campaigners were in Westminster in July to urge MPs to do their bit to end the killing of tigers and other big cats for trade.

We co-hosted the event with the All-Party Parliamentary China Group and the Indo-British All-Party Parliamentary Group and were delighted to see so many MPs express serious concern over the crisis facing big cats due to killing to meet demand for body parts.

Below: our call for action is covered in the signatures of MPs



Debbie Banks, our Tiger Campaign Leader, said: "Demand for tiger parts and products has spiralled out of control – if we are to save this great cat and all it represents, we need a zero-tolerance to trade in body parts and an end to tiger farming.

"Tigers, leopards and many other species are facing annihilation due to demand for their parts – banning this trade in the major consumer market is the first essential step in ending this demand." ●

WILDLIFE NEWS IN BRIEF

- In June, we sounded the alarm over the damaging impacts of the multi-billion dollar Stiegler's Gorge hydropower dam project in the heart of Tanzania's Selous Game Reserve.
- Despite condemnation from many quarters, we were disappointed in May to see the World Health Organisation for the first time formally recognise traditional Chinese medicine, a driver of much illegal wildlife trade.

Made in Thailand: 'Tiger bone' products sold to Vietnamese and Chinese tourists

Tiger bone glue is being made in Thailand and marketed to tourists from Vietnam and China, our investigators have discovered.

We and partners in the country identified online ads targeting Vietnamese consumers for products claimed to be manufactured in Thailand and said to contain tiger bone.

Tiger bone glue is a brown resinous substance made by boiling tiger bones with other ingredients over a long period. It is usually mixed with wine for consumption for its purported

but unproven medicinal benefits in treating bone problems, pain and rheumatism.

In the case of Thailand tiger bone glue, we found the packaging of at least one of the products identified lists tiger bone as an ingredient.

Two of the companies involved in this trade have been previously exposed for the manufacture and sale of products

Left and far right: tiger bone glue for sale in Thailand

purporting to contain tiger.

The sale of tiger parts and products is prohibited by Thai and Vietnamese law, while international trade is banned by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Our investigators visited a large sales outlet in Thailand and were appalled to witness busloads of tourists from Vietnam and China (and, reportedly, from South Korea and Japan) being given a special tour and offered Thailand tiger bone glue to buy.

A salesperson claimed the product has the backing of very high-level connections in Thailand.

We first shared our findings with law enforcement agencies in Thailand in September 2018

but no seizures or enforcement activity have taken place to date.

Debbie Banks, our Tiger Campaign Leader, said: "These activities are directly stimulating demand among significant consumer groups for tiger products and, in our extensive experience, demand maintains poaching pressure on wild tigers.

"During a single hour while our investigators were at the sales outlet, five coaches carrying hundreds of Vietnamese and Chinese tourists arrived." ●



At the jaguar conference in Bolivia

Now jaguars are under pressure due to demand for tiger parts

Our most senior Tiger campaigner has travelled to Bolivia to share her extensive knowledge of illegal big cat trade.

The demand for tiger parts and products is now so huge

that Chinese and Vietnamese traffickers are acquiring jaguar teeth, bones and claws which are mailed back to China or carried in passenger luggage.

July's regional conference in Bolivia was the first meeting to focus on the growing problem and agreed to closer regional cooperation to counter the transnational criminal networks involved.

Debbie Banks, our Tiger

Campaign Leader, was sponsored by the British Embassy to share our experiences of the Asian big cat trade.

She spoke of the demand drivers for tiger, leopard, snow leopard and clouded leopard, discussed how the consumers access big cat parts, including via social media, and outlined actions that can be taken to disrupt criminal networks and reduce demand, including phasing out tiger farms. ●

China cracks down on timber-smuggling syndicate plundering Myanmar

China has conducted an unprecedented raid on a major criminal operation smuggling timber from Myanmar.

Above: illegal timber from Myanmar arriving at Nongdao, China

The raid led to the dismantling of a major crime syndicate and the seizure of more than 100,000 tonnes of wood worth tens of millions of dollars after 100 soldiers and police officers swept into the rural town of Nongdao, in Yunnan Province, China.

Our Forests campaigners have been investigating illegal cross-border trade in timber from Myanmar to Yunnan since 2012.

Under Myanmar law, all timber exports must leave from the seaport of Yangon, with overland trade prohibited.

But these controls have been routinely flouted, resulting in valuable teak and rosewood flowing across the border.

Sporadic clampdowns have been observed on the China side of the border in recent years but the syndicate behind the trade has largely continued operations unabated, especially in Burmese teak logs and sawn timber.

In mid-2018, we documented continued smuggling of teak from Myanmar's Shan State via border crossing points in neighbouring Kachin State. Once in Yunnan, the timber was moved to Nongdao, which acted as a free trade zone with no import duties paid until sale and onward transport.

Traders told us that 95 per cent of Burmese teak imported into China enters via the overland route, destined for southern and eastern China.

Julian Newman, our Campaigns Director, said: "When I first went to Nongdao in 2015 I could not believe how much timber was stored in plain sight around the town, showing the sheer scale of the timber-smuggling racket and how brazen the smugglers had become."

"Returning in mid-2018, the trade had become more clandestine, with storage yards hidden behind tall fences with barbed wire and CCTV cameras everywhere, but substantial amounts of teak were still available. The raid on the town in July could be a decisive step in ending this destructive and corrupt trade."

We rebut false claims in Myanmar media over timber report

In August, we were delighted to be able to fully rebut an attempted hatchet job in the Myanmar media seeking to dismiss our report *State of Corruption*, which had revealed how the multi-million dollar international trade in Burmese teak was riddled with crime and high-level corruption in Myanmar.

Eleven Media Group published an article entitled *"EIA Exposed – the campaign against Myanmar's teak trade accused of making false allegations against innocent timber trader"* but it was riddled with inaccuracies and falsehoods.

Our response to the news platform, which was also published on our website, set the record straight on every significant point raised.

We naturally stand by the findings of our report, which was the result of an exhaustive and comprehensive investigation, using techniques familiar to experienced and competent journalists.

Upper right: front cover of our 'State of Corruption' report



FORESTS NEWS IN BRIEF

- In a special report released in August, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlighting how humans affect more than 70 per cent of non-ice land surface of the globe, with forests accounting for just nine per cent of land.
- A court in Indonesia jailed the directors of four different companies for one year each in August after they admitted transporting valuable merbau timber with falsified documents.

EU stepping up action in the fight against global deforestation

The EU has put up its hand to admit its role in driving deforestation around the world – and to commit to action to stop it.

In July, the European Commission released its long-awaited communication *Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests*.

It was a timely announcement, coming hard on the heels of a YouGov poll, commissioned in May

by ourselves and partner NGOs, and supporting its findings.

The poll revealed that 87 per cent of respondents across 25 EU countries agreed that new laws are needed to ensure the products sold in EU member states do not contribute to global deforestation.

Earth's remaining forests are under considerable pressure and yet are indispensable to life on the planet – they are our lungs and life-support system, home to 80 per cent of the world's species and provide subsistence and income for about a quarter of the world's human population.

Now the EU has acknowledged its role in driving rampant deforestation around the globe through the import of commodities such as beef, soy and palm oil.

The EU has an objective to halt global forest cover loss by 2030 and its announcement included the proposal that “the consumption of products from deforestation-free supply chains in the EU should be encouraged both via regulatory and non-regulatory measures as appropriate.”

Our Forests campaigners are looking forward to working with the EU to support the development of an enforceable action plan, with binding regulations to ensure supply chains and all relevant products placed on the market exclude products linked to deforestation, environmental degradation and human rights abuses.

A key EU priority will be to work in partnership with producing countries to reduce pressures on forests.

Vanessa Richardson, Forests Campaigner, said: “Old growth forests support millions of people – protecting them and addressing governance issues also provides the best protection for mitigating climate change.” ●

Above: illegal fires clear land for palm oil plantations in Borneo

Indonesia excludes vast areas from ban on clearing forests and peatlands

The clearing of forests and peatlands in Indonesia to make way for cash crops such as palm oil has had a devastating environmental impact.

But although an announcement in August by President Joko Widodo made a ban on such activities permanent, we are concerned that the moratorium to date has been plagued by violations and a shrinking area of protection.

Since its creation in 2011, the map of the forest moratorium area has undergone 15 revisions, with the result that millions of hectares of primary forest have been removed from protection.

These removals include areas in Sebangau National Park, which has one of the world's largest remaining populations of critically endangered orangutans.

To make the ban work, we believe the Government must ensure the area it protects is not reduced in size – indeed, we want to see it increased.

Further, the moratorium has only the status of a presidential instruction and must be enshrined in law to guarantee enforcement. ●

A plantation in Tangkiling, Sebangau



Japan draws first blood in its new commercial pirate whale hunt

Japan claimed the first kill of its controversial new commercial whale hunt when it landed a minke in Kushiro port, in northern Japan, on 1 July.

The country's Fisheries Agency has set itself a commercial catch quota for 2019 of 52 minke whales, 150 Bryde's whales and 25 sei whales.



Above: the first minke whale is landed in Kushiro, Japan

Below: the first whale meat goes on sale at Washo Market

Last year, Japan sought to pressure the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to overturn the global commercial whaling ban.

But after failing to get its way, the country left the organisation in a huff in June 2019 and officially resumed commercial whaling outside the IWC's jurisdiction immediately afterwards.



Japan's decision to go rogue on commercial whaling was good news for whales in the Southern Ocean of the Antarctic, where it controversially hunted behind the fig-leaf of scientific research.

However, with the country now compelled to whale only in its own waters, this increases pressures on minke whales in Japan's coastal waters, including the endangered 'J-stock' minke whose population is under severe threat from human activities, with individuals becoming entangled in fishing gear and killed as bycatch.

Our Ocean Campaigner Juliet Phillips was quayside in Kushiro and witnessed the landing of the first minke whale slaughtered.

"It's a profoundly depressing spectacle to see the first victim of Japan's first openly commercial whaling hunt in 30 years landed for sale in restaurants and markets, despite an almost total lack of demand," she said.

"The whale hunt is targeting internationally protected species and is being carried out without the expert oversight of the International Whaling Commission, the only international body with the mandate to manage whaling."

Clare Perry, Ocean Campaigns Leader, added: "Japan has set itself up as a pirate whaling nation and this could have very serious negative consequences for the world's whales." ●

A major victory in the war on plastic pollution

Ocean campaigners were delighted to see an important commitment to dramatically clean up the international trade of plastic waste.

The changes subject mixed plastic waste to "prior informed consent" from importing countries – only plastic waste which has been pre-sorted and destined for actual recycling in the country of export is exempt from notification.

Once in effect, the immediate impact should be a reduction in dumping low-grade unrecyclable plastic waste in Asia and elsewhere, which has had disastrous

impacts on local communities and the environment.

"The Basel amendments are a critical pillar of an emerging global architecture to address plastic pollution," said Tim Grabel, our Senior Lawyer. "Other international bodies must now do their part." ●

Right: plastic pollution is killing our oceans



OCEAN NEWS IN BRIEF

- Sainsbury's ranked bottom in our 2018 supermarket survey of plastic commitments, so we were pleased to see it announce plans in June to get rid of 1,284 tonnes of plastic during 2019, including removing all plastic bags currently offered for loose fruit, vegetables and bakery items.
- The European Union voiced concerns in June that Japan's resumption of commercial whaling could trigger a rise in whale meat exports from Europe's whaling nations of Iceland and Norway.

A mix of good and bad news for endangered species at major CITES meeting

A major global event on the environmental calendar took place in Geneva this August and our UK and US campaigners were there to push for action to combat illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade.

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) usually meets about every three years and its 18th meeting (CoP18) was moved to Switzerland from Sri Lanka due to security concerns.



Among the hundreds of issues discussed, there was progress in tackling demand for Asian big cat parts and tiger farms, recommendations urging the closure of domestic markets for ivory, rhino horn and Asian big cats plus new protections for a host of tree species.

Attempts to reopen the international ivory trade fail!

We were elated to see two reckless proposals to reopen international ivory trade – one by Zambia and the other by Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe – overwhelmingly defeated.

Statements opposing these proposals, especially from African elephant range states, made it plain that allowing international trade in ivory was totally out of step with efforts to close markets and reduce demand.

Left: elephant in Botswana

It was also pleasing to see countries confirm their commitment to the closure of domestic ivory markets and agree to focus scrutiny on those remaining open, such as Japan and the EU.

There was additional good news for elephants when, on the final day of the meeting, Japan's largest internet ivory retailer, Yahoo! Japan, announced it would stop all sales of ivory on its platforms, citing concern about illegal exports and the global trend to close domestic ivory markets.

No punishment for Laos over tiger farms

Before CoP18 got under way, a meeting of the CITES Standing Committee was held to review progress by Laos in addressing serious tiger trade concerns.

Illegal trade in tigers and tiger parts is rife, stemming from the country's tiger farms which are even now seeking to disguise themselves as zoos and tourist attractions.

Our campaigners intervened on behalf of 14 NGOs to call for immediate trade suspensions on Laos until its Government acts to halt further tiger breeding, concludes a tiger farm audit and moves against those involved in illegal trade.

Instead, the country avoided formal sanction, albeit with a clear indication from the EU that it expects to see actual progress by early 2020.

Left: tiger in captivity, Laos



Taking action to fight illegal big cat trade

Tigers and other Asian big cats are under huge pressure from demand for their parts and products and we were pleased at the show of strength for an initiative led by India to adopt strong Decisions to tackle demand, illegal trade and commercial breeding.

There was overwhelming support from Parties for urgent action, including from those concerned that demand for big cat products, primarily from Asian consumers, is now impacting on jaguars, African lions and leopards.

The new Decisions urge Parties to close domestic markets for Asian big cat parts and products, ensure legislation addresses illegal trade, tackle tourist markets in border regions, improve international enforcement cooperation and implement strict controls over facilities keeping Asian big cats.



Positives for pangolins

CoP18 had some good news for pangolins, currently the world's most trafficked mammal.

The endangered ant-eater was only afforded CITES's highest protection three years ago but confusion remained as to whether stockpiles of its scales could still be legally traded – the meeting decided they could not, because current rules of the Convention apply at the time of trade.

Not only does this make it illegal for pangolin scales acquired before the 2016 Appendix I up-listing to be traded between countries, it has implications for other species transferred between Appendices.

In addition, Decisions were adopted to encourage pangolin range states to implement conservation programmes to protect pangolin populations.

Totoaba trade and its collateral damage

Tragically, we may soon witness the first extinction of a CITES-listed species due to trade.

The totoaba fish is endangered and has Appendix I protection but is nevertheless being poached in Mexico to supply illegal trade, which in turn is driving the extinction of the critically endangered vaquita porpoise as it is snared in the illegal gillnets set for the fish. As few as 10 vaquita are believed to remain.

We were disappointed that an attempt to register a commercial captive-breeding operation for totoaba was not rejected outright; opening trade at this crucial juncture carries a serious risk of stimulating demand and enabling laundering of poached totoaba. Instead, the decision was deferred to a future meeting.

Mexico and other Parties were urged to take swift action against the trade and could meet with sanctions if no progress is made by the next Standing Committee – presuming the vaquita can survive until then.

Top left: a pangolin curls into a protective ball

Left: tigress on the hunt in India

Top right: illegal totoaba fishermen off Mexico

Right: removing the totoaba's 'maw'



©Alejandro Oliveira



©Alejandro Oliveira

CoP sounds a bad note for rosewoods

We were disappointed to see a new rosewoods proposal from the EU and Canada voted through, allowing finished musical instruments, finished musical instrument parts and their accessories to be completely exempt from CITES.

Rosewoods are under considerable pressure due to demand for antique reproduction furniture in China and as a wood favoured by musicians and we fear that this change creates an unprecedented loophole through which rosewood-processing hubs could import endangered trees in the form of 'finished musical instrument parts' such as large grand piano lids.

Such a sleight of hand would avoid CITES controls which otherwise insist that harvesting of rosewood must be legal and non-detrimental to the species' survival in the wild.

On a positive note, the conference agreed greater protection for a number of threatened tree species, including the African rosewood species mukula, which range state Malawi successfully proposed for up-listing.

Right: warehouse in Vietnam housing hundreds of tonnes of illegal rosewood



Relief for rhinos

Parties at the CoP rejected Eswatini's proposal to rescind the ban on international trade in rhino horn and allow it to sell horn from its southern white rhinos.

And a proposal from Namibia to reduce protection for its white rhino population to allow commercial trade in live rhinos and hunting trophies was also voted down.

Vietnam also came under heavy scrutiny at the opening Standing Committee for its continued role in international rhino horn trafficking – if the country fails to submit a detailed report in 2020 on its actions to combat the problem, it could face compliance proceedings.

Right: a pair of white rhinos

Below: the EIA team at CITES CoP18 in Geneva



Montreal Protocol must step up fight against ozone damage and global warming

The Montreal Protocol is the world's most successful international environmental agreement – but it's being put to the test by illegal trade in chemicals which damage the ozone layer and drive global warming.

Above: raw materials used to produce blowing agent

Ahead of July's key Protocol meeting in Bangkok, we released the new briefing *High Stakes* which urged tougher and more effective commitments to tackle the problem.

The major issue facing the agreement is the illegal manufacture and use of banned ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

Alarming high, unexplained CFC-11 emissions were initially exposed by scientists in 2018 and our subsequent undercover investigations pointed to the illegal production and use of CFC-11 in China for the polyurethane (PU) foam insulation sector as the likely root cause.

Climate Campaigner Sophie Geoghegan said: "The huge and alarming CFC-11 spike must inevitably raise questions as to the fitness of the Montreal Protocol's institutions and controls.

"This considerable illegal trade, including illicit production as well as use, happened on the Protocol's watch and we're calling for a comprehensive fitness check of the Montreal Protocol to ensure it keeps ahead of the game."

As well as tackling an old foe in the form of CFCs, the Protocol also needs to prepare for potential enforcement challenges which could arise as a result of the phase-down of HFCs under the Kigali Amendment.

HFCs are widely used in refrigeration and air-conditioning; they replaced hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) which in their turn had originally replaced ozone-harming CFCs. EIA has documented alarming levels of illegal trade in HFCs in Europe, undermining the EU's F-Gas Regulation, which was a precursor to the global Kigali Amendment.

Each replacement has spurred illegal trade in the replaced chemicals and HFCs are proving to be no different, with illegally manufactured and traded HFCs slipping into Europe to break the bloc's self-imposed quotas.

CLIMATE NEWS IN BRIEF

- In June, the UK became the first major economy to commit to net-zero emissions by 2050 – and we urged the Government to ensure it has an effective action plan to meet this ambition and go even further.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change launched a new report in August on climate change and land, highlighting the critical role of natural old growth forests and sustainable land use in mitigating climate change and guaranteeing global food security.

New study finds rogue CFC-11 emissions *did* come from China

A new study published in May scientifically confirmed that large-scale emissions of the banned super-pollutant CFC-11 did originate in eastern China.

We tracked an atmospheric spike in CFCs to China in 2018 after scientists first raised the alarm and this latest study confirmed our findings.

Clare Perry, our Climate Campaigns Leader, said: "There are still multiple unresolved issues, including how much illegal CFC-11 remains in hidden stockpiles or may have been already exported.

"However, the most critical action for China now is to locate and permanently

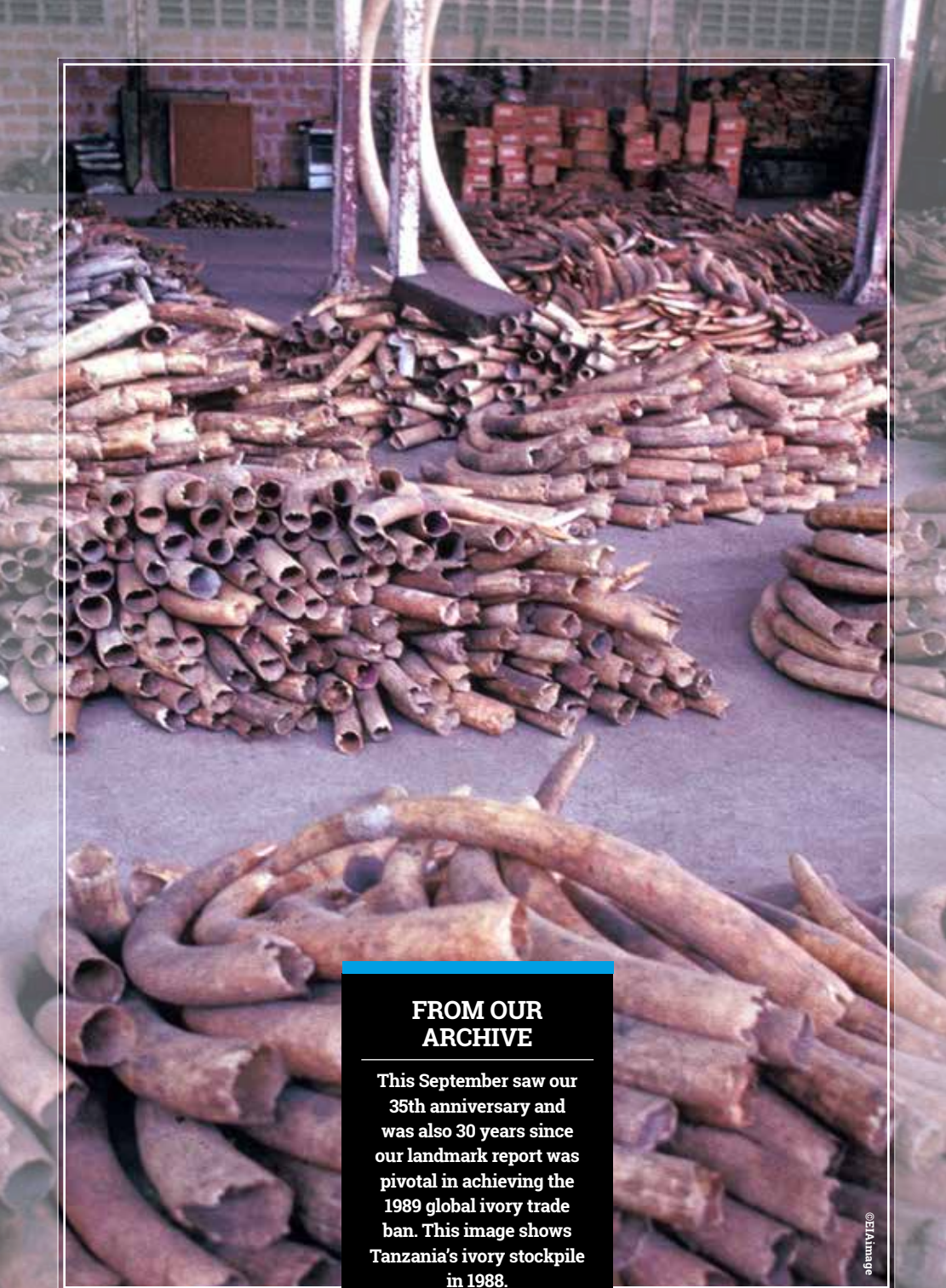
shut down all CFC-11 production. This will require a significant and sustained intelligence-led enforcement effort from China."

The new University of Bristol study found CFC-11 emissions in eastern mainland China increased after 2012 by 7,000 tonnes per year. We calculate China may have created a total bank of almost four gigatonnes CO₂ equivalent between 2013-17, much of which is yet to be emitted.



ENVIRONMENTAL
INVESTIGATION
AGENCY

Protecting the environment
with intelligence



FROM OUR ARCHIVE

This September saw our 35th anniversary and was also 30 years since our landmark report was pivotal in achieving the 1989 global ivory trade ban. This image shows Tanzania's ivory stockpile in 1988.

© EIAImage



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

Mary, EIA supporter.

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

Let your passion live on. Remember EIA in your Will.

Visit eia-international.org/giftinyourwill

Environmental Investigation Agency UK
UK Reg Charity No. 1182208

