

ECOLOGIC

Go Wild for Life to Put an End to Poaching

One of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals was on the illegal wildlife trade. Act now to protect endangered species



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June 5 was the World Environment Day and citizens participated in beach and lake clean ups. But across the globe, this day also stood for: "Put an end to poaching". One of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by all 193 member states of the UN was on the illegal trade of wildlife. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is calling everyone to 'go wild for life' and take action to help safeguard species under threat for the sake of our future generations. We all know that Veerappan illegally poached elephants for ivory and felled sandalwood trees.

The aim now is to bring awareness and reduce the demand for illegal wildlife products. Campaigns this year stress that greed, fashion, ignorance, indifference, corruption, pseudo medicinal uses and cultural beliefs endanger many species of animals, plants and trees.

Seven wild animals have been



Wildlife protection measures helped India increase its tiger population

identified for focused protection: orangutans, sea turtles, pangolins, helmeted hornbills, tigers, elephants and rhinos. Poaching exists in our country as well; but estimates from 2014 show 2,226 ti-

gers roaming our forest reserves. Their numbers have risen sharply from 1,706 in 2010. Though tigers breed well in captivity, intelligent wild life protection measures have helped India increase its tiger

population to 55% of the world's current reserves.

Similarly rosewood trees are marked for special protection. The battle against mafias exploiting red sanders trees in Seshacha-

lam forests of Andhra Pradesh is worth recalling.

Many have visited the Tiger Temple in Kanchanaburi, Thailand. There are many photos on social media of people gambling with these large cats or feeding tiger cubs milk in bottles; but these 'temples' have cruelly drugged, tortured and slaughtered tigers for lucrative trade in their body parts.

Earlier this week, 70 dead tiger cubs, as well as tiger skins, talismans and other parts were discovered in this temple. Sadly Indian tourists too have unwittingly abetted criminal activity here. At present, 4,000 tigers are all that are left on our planet (UNEP and UNDOC - UN Office on Drugs and Crime) and these exterminated cubs represent nearly 2% of the global tiger population in one location!

Several other temples and zoos are suspected of similar horrendous commercial activities. UN agencies have confirmed that these depravations are a 'tiny proportion' of the illegal wildlife

trade pushing species to the brink of extinction. The next time you plan a trip that involves wildlife, stop and think. Many such places breed animals outside of conservation efforts, and these are NOT sanctuaries. Also, be careful when you choose a day trip or activity for kids, or shop in any of the local Asian markets. Some zoos are unnatural habitats too, where wild animals are not allowed to stay 'wild'.

There are many conservation groups fighting to protect our endangered flora and fauna. These groups are always looking for volunteers and funds. Please contribute your mite to protect wildlife being poached or trees being felled for illegal trade with China. Whether it is Tigger, Hobbes, Shere Khan or Richard Parker we identify with, we all have a favourite tiger tale to tell - save the tiger, in India and beyond!

(The writer is an architect, urban designer, dancer and chief designer at Shilpa Architects)