

**Fisheries Service Protects Sturgeon** - US fisheries officials say, they're close to agreeing with other federal agencies on Savannah harbor deepening. Their concerns stem from potential habitat loss for the endangered shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*). Deepening the harbor to serve big ships will disrupt the endangered fish's habitat. So officials with the US Marine Fisheries Service want the project to include a \$7 million fish ladder to help the fish go further upstream around New Savannah Bluff Dam near Augusta. Deputy administrator David Bernhart of the service's Southeastern regional office says, his agency doesn't have a firm timeline yet. "We've been working with the Army Corps on these Endangered Species Act requirements," Bernhart says. "And we need to complete a document that's required under that law." The Fisheries Service must sign off on harbor deepening before it can begin. "That document will be our evaluation of the project's impact," Bernhart says. "Then, it will be a second step for our parent agency, NOAA, to do any of the sign-offs." State officials have made the project a top priority for years, saying it can't wait much longer.  
*Source: Georgia Public Broadcasting, Orlando Montoya, 5 September 2011*

**Fears Grow for Asia's Endangered Anteaters** - Tiger poaching gets the press but wildlife groups in Asia are increasingly fearful for the future of a smaller, scallier and "less sexy" creature: the pangolin (genus *Manis*). So prized are the meat and supposed medicinal properties of this reclusive anteater that it is now thought to be the most heavily trafficked mammal in the region, rapidly being driven towards extinction.

"The volumes we are seeing in seizures are mind-boggling. No species can survive this level of extraction for long," said Kanitha Krishnasamy from the wildlife trade watchdog Traffic. "Unfortunately, this scaly animal does not invoke as much attention from the public, and by extension from the authorities, as pangolins are considered to be less sexy than their larger mammalian counterparts," she added.

Tigers (*Panthera tigris*) are also killed for their body parts, mostly for use in traditional Asian medicines, and major international campaigns have been launched to save them from extinction. Trading in pangolins is banned under international law, yet Traffic's Asian surveys show they are frequently poached from the wild, mainly in Indonesia and Malaysia, exacerbating the threat from rapid deforestation. They are transported through Southeast Asia, mostly ending up in China and Vietnam, where pangolin flesh is a delicacy and its scales - it is the only mammal known to have them - are ground into a powder for medicinal purposes. Historically, this ingredient was used in Chinese medicine to try to cure a range of ills, from children's hysterical crying to eyelashes curling inwards, according to researcher and pangolin expert Dan Challender.

Today, reports suggest the scales are used in an attempt to reduce swellings, cure asthma and even in some cases cancer, but a lack of solid analysis means "all uses seem unfounded to date", he said. Challender, at Britain's University of Kent, added that the supposed health benefits of eating the meat include nourishing the kidneys, but these are also probably unfounded. "Unless efforts are taken to address both the demand for, and supply of pangolins, they will go extinct in Asia in the short term future," he told AFP.

Of four species found in Asia, two are "endangered" and two "near threatened", according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which says it is unknown how many of the secretive, nocturnal animals are left. Two of four species found in Africa are also "near threatened", and all have decreasing populations, while Challender said seizures of scales bound for Asia from Africa suggested a developing trade. Likened in appearance to a globe artichoke, the pangolin curls up hedgehog-like into a ball when under threat, making them easy for humans to catch.



Pangolin

(Photo by Piekfrosch/wikipedia)

Steve Galster, director of the anti-trafficking Freeland foundation, said the shy creatures were the "unknown problem" of Asia's illegal wildlife trade, sometimes fetching more than 1,000 US dollars each on the black market. "The price of pangolins is just going through the roof," he told AFP. "We're surprised there are any left." Already this year, seizures have been reported along trading routes in Thailand, Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Myanmar, Vietnam and Indonesia - but these are probably just the tip of the iceberg, according to Traffic. In one of the biggest hauls, the group

said customs officials at a Jakarta port found 7.5 tons of pangolin meat in May, stashed in crates and covered up with frozen fish, bound for Vietnam.

“The most outrageous thing here is they even exterminate the young pangolins, the ones that when curled up are about 20 centimetres long,” port customs chief Rahmat Subagio was quoted as saying after the find. Late last year, seized logbooks showed one trafficking gang alone had killed and traded 22,200 pangolins over 14 months in the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah on Borneo, Traffic said. Often, however, pangolins are transported alive to maintain freshness and smugglers are known to inject them with water to increase their weight - although many die along the way without food or drinking water, activists say. Bundled into tightly-bound sacks, the poor-sighted pangolin finds its long sharp claws, normally used to dig out dinner from anthills, can become a danger: it is common for them to blind each other as they try to escape.

Experts warn their removal from the wild also threatens to destabilise the ecosystem of tropical forests, where the pangolin’s diet of ants and termites is a key form of pest control. Asian authorities are often unwilling to go after people of influence – “the big mafias, the big well-connected traffickers”, said Galster. He said laws against wildlife crime are weakened by loopholes and judges who don’t take the issue seriously, despite the perpetrators often making millions of dollars by exploiting endangered species. “We’ve seen too many traffickers get a slap on the wrist, if anything,” he said. *Source: AFP, 4 Sept. 2011*

**China’s Consumerism Latest Threat to Elephants** - Poaching of elephants and other species has increased in Central African countries, with products headed mainly to Asian markets. A report that was presented at a meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in Geneva in mid-August said the fast-growing Chinese middle class, combined with lax policing of the Asian country’s ivory laws, is a big threat to elephant (genus *Loxodonta*) populations in Africa. The authors of the report, Esmond Martin and Lucy Vigne, visited ivory carving factories and stores in southern China in January. They compared the data with that which they had collated in previous visits going back to 1985. Despite rigorous laws controlling the sale of ivory in China, they found the industry was booming and much of it appeared to be unregulated.

The imposition of controls over ivory sales won China CITES approval to buy and sell ivory from legal stocks. In 2008 China imported 62 tons of elephant ivory from CITES-approved auctions in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. Mr. Martin, who monitors the sale of elephant ivory and rhino horn around the world, said that of 80 outlets he visited only eight had compulsory ivory identification cards on display.

He said it is possible that two-thirds of all ivory being sold in southern China today is illegal because it doesn’t have proper identification. Fuelling the illegal trade in ivory, according to Mr. Martin, is a growing demand from China’s consumer class.

A CITES report released in Geneva last week said the highest levels of elephant poaching since 2002 were recorded in 2010, with central Africa of most concern. CITES officials announced the creation of a US\$100 million fund to enhance law enforcement and secure the long-term survival of elephant populations. Kenya reported this year that it was seeing slow growth in elephant numbers in its premier elephant game park, the Tsavo National Park. However, that rise is not echoed in other African countries or even in other parts of Kenya where poaching has reached record highs. *Source: Reuters, 2 September 2011*

**Squirrels Relocated to Build Owl Homes** - It might sound like a spoof, but San Diego Zoo officials this week are crowing about the early success of a novel ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*) relocation project in the county. Why might 350 of the noted pests need new digs near Jamul, Otay Mesa and Sweetwater? It turns out the critters are critical to the welfare of burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*), which rely on squirrel holes for shelter. The zoo goes so far as to call squirrels “grasslands engineers.”

The burrowing owl population has plummeted in San Diego County and across the West, prompting zoo scientists to team with San Diego State University, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game on a conservation project that one scientist called the first of its kind. The first year will cost about \$240,000, paid for by grants and the zoo. Owl habitat projects are common, but they typically involve people creating and maintaining artificial burrows for the



2011. "Conservation/Legislative Update: Fears Grow for Asia's Endangered Anteaters." *Animal keepers' forum* 38(10), 537-538.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/219978>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/315595>

**Holding Institution**

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

**Sponsored by**

Biodiversity Heritage Library

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In Copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder

Rights Holder: American Association of Zoo Keepers

License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Rights: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions/>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.