



PRESS RELEASE

“Stolen Wildlife”, a new campaign against illegal wildlife trade, just launched!

18th September 2018 – **The Kukang Rescue Program and the Ostrava Zoo are launching an information campaign called “Stolen Wildlife”, which focuses on the issue of illegal trade in endangered animal species. This is the first comprehensive campaign in the Czech Republic and probably in whole Europe to cover the overlooked facts of illegal trade in wild animals and their body parts throughout the European continent.**

What is “Stolen Wildlife”? It is a comprehensive awareness-raising campaign aimed at illegal trade in wild animals and parts of their bodies in Europe and especially in the Czech Republic.

After trade in drugs, weapons and humans, illegal trade in wild animals is one of the most lucrative illegal markets in the world. Wildlife trade is often linked to other organized crimes – sale of ivory, for example, funds activities of many terrorist groups. At the same time, it is one of the biggest threats to world biodiversity, as many species of wild animals and plants have been on the brink of extinction due to the increasing demand and poaching.

Illegal trafficking in animals may seem to be an issue of only African or Asian countries, but in fact, lots of people from Europe, including many Czech citizens, are very often involved in it as well. Seizures of animal specimens or parts of their bodies directly in the territory of the Czech Republic are not rare, even despite the immense inventiveness of smugglers. *“It's like a fight against an octopus. You cut off a tentacle, but another one appears immediately. Sometimes one feels absolutely helpless and angry, but we have to fight it, we cannot afford to fail,”* Pavla Říhová from the Czech Environmental Inspectorate says.

The main tool of this new campaign is the educational website www.stolenwildlife.org. It deals with the complex issues of illegal trade – it shows either the most frequently trafficked species or the most common reasons for this trade, such as traditional medicine, hunting animals for food, trophies etc. *“The Kukang Rescue Program has been aiming at combating illegal trade in slow lorises and other animals in Sumatra, Indonesia, for several years. However, as we come from Europe where this issue is also very topical, together with other significant institutions we had decided to establish this important awareness campaign. Our objective is to raise awareness about this modern threat to many wild animal species among the general public in Europe,”* František Příbrský, Director of The Kukang Rescue Program, explains.

One of other educational tools of the campaign are photographs highlighting some of the numerous problems of illegal trade in animals and their body parts and including information on the estimated extent of the problem. *“An interesting fact is that all the specimens or parts of animals in the photographs, such as ivory, rhino horns, furs of big cats, pangolin scales etc., have been confiscated by control authorities in the Czech Republic,”* Lucie Čižmářová, author of the photographs and the field zoologist of the Olomouc Zoo, says.

An exhibition of these photographs has already been installed in several Czech and Slovak zoological gardens. This is one of the very important steps toward raising awareness about illegal wildlife trade among the general public. Interested zoological gardens or other institutions worldwide can be provided with graphic data to install their own “Stolen Wildlife” exhibition as well. In case of interest, please do not hesitate to contact us at holubova@kukang.org.

The “Stolen Wildlife” has been based on many years of experience of Pavla Říhová, the Head of the Department for the International Protection of Biodiversity and CITES of the Czech Environmental Inspectorate, in cooperation with the Ostrava Zoo’s Director Petr Čolas, Ostrava Zoo’s field zoologist and The Kukang Rescue Program’s Director František Příbrský, Olomouc Zoo’s field zoologist Lucie Čižmářová, and other team members.

The campaign has gained the support of the Ministry of the Environment, led by the 1st Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic and the Minister of Environment Richard Brabec, has decided. *“I perceive the cooperation of the Ministry of the Environment, the Ostrava Zoo and The Kukang Rescue Program on such an important topic which is the illegal wildlife trade as another milestone in the historical development of Czech zoos,”* Petr Čolas, Director of the Ostrava Zoo, adds. Moreover, this cooperation fulfills one of the objectives of the [EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking](#).

Attached photos may be freely used for press, internet, and television reporting. Author of the photographs: Lucie Čižmářová.

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