

SECTION THREE:

The Next Steps: Awareness and action on bear bile



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The Next Steps

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The international campaign for bears

Bear gall and bear bile are no longer essential for use in traditional medicine; there are suitable herbal and synthetic alternatives to their use. Also, bear bile has no place in the non-essential products that are now being marketed by the proponents of the bear farming industry. Human greed is propelling this industry, which is founded on extreme animal suffering. WSPA believes that farming bears for bile should be stopped as soon as feasible on the grounds of: the extreme animal cruelty involved; the negative effects on wild bear conservation; and the existence of suitable herbal and synthetic alternatives to bear bile.

Progress towards this end, requires a combination of approaches. Collaboration between CITES and national and local governments is needed to ensure that effective regulations and legislation are in place to stop the illegal bear products trade and to protect wild bear populations. Direct communication with China is needed, to determine their long-term strategy for the bear farms, and to explain the reasons why bear farming should end. Effective enforcement of national legislation is needed. Ways in which NGOs (non governmental organisations) can assist governments should be explored, including public awareness work and the sharing of survey information that may assist governments.

In close collaboration, NGOs and the public can play an important role in making positive progress on this issue. In 1999 and 2000, WSPA concentrated specifically on obtaining data on the bear farms¹, which was analysed by Dr Barbara Maas, a behavioural scientist, internationally respected in her field² (Dr Maas' findings are outlined in Section One of this report). When they were first publicised, WSPA requested its member societies and members to assist with the campaign. The organisations worked to raise the profile of the issue by discussing it during communications with national authorities and international bodies. WSPA members and members of the public sent lobby cards and wrote letters to the Chinese Government, as well as their national governments, requesting that the bear farms be closed down.

During the past three years, WSPA has worked closely with several of its member societies to uncover the extent of the illegal international trade in bear bile and gall products, in order to focus the attention of the international community, and specifically Parties to CITES, on the illegal trade and to attempt to find effective ways of stopping it. However, ultimately, in order to stop the trade, the demand has to stop. Therefore, an additional focus during the past year has been on public and consumer awareness programmes in key countries. Similar work is carried out by the Asian Conservation Awareness Programme (ACAP), which campaigns to reduce demand for wildlife products. WSPA, JWCS and ACRES have carried out awareness programmes in Singapore and Japan in 2002. Additional programmes will be carried out in other countries.

Campaigns on the bear issue are being undertaken throughout the world to illustrate some of the key strengths and strategies of these campaigns, in the following pages we take key examples of activity in Taiwan, Singapore, and Japan.



WSPA's mechanical bear, which moves, groans in pain and has "bile" dripping from its wound. It simulates the lives of thousands of bears in China (see Section One), here making an appearance at the annual Earth Day event in Tokyo, one of several venues for the awareness campaign in Japan



People in Singapore were shocked, saddened and moved to tears when they watched the mechanical bear. Some admitted that they were not "animal lovers" but that ACRES exhibition still generated empathy in them for the suffering of animals.

Taiwan: Animal protection groups and public opinion

As has been shown in Taiwan, it is possible to reverse the trend regarding the consumption of bear products. Over several years, the Environment and Animal Society of Taiwan (EAST), have been carrying out public awareness work concerning the consumption of bear products. Legislation which was amended in 1994, combined with effective campaigning has helped to create awareness amongst the TCM community and the public about the illegality of bear products.

Singapore: Animal protection groups and public opinion

Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) launched their report, *The Trade In Bear Gall Bladder And Bile Products In Singapore* (featured in Section Two – Bear Markets) and a campaign video of the findings at a press conference in Singapore in December 2001³. The event received significant media coverage. Prior to the press conference, the report had been sent to the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA), the CITES Management Authority in Singapore, for their information and action. Detailed information about the bear products found in the survey and the shops selling them were also forwarded to the AVA at that time. Over several months ACRES communicated with the AVA, focusing on the recommendations in the ACRES report.

To compliment this governmental liaison, ACRES carried out a two month public awareness campaign with WSPA's 'mechanical bear'. This mechanical bear is an exact replica of a bear in a bile farm cage in China (see photographs opposite). The roving exhibition was used to highlight the cruelty behind the production of bile on the bear farms, and to explain the findings of the Singapore bear trade investigation. By linking these two aspects it became a 'local' issue. The exhibition reached 30,000 people in nine shopping malls and educational institutions from December 2001 to February 2002. The response of Singaporeans visiting the exhibition was one of empathy for the suffering of animals. The exhibition was further assisted by striking displays designed by Saatchi & Saatchi, who also designed 28,000 free postcards on bear farming which were distributed by ZoCard Singapore, in restaurants around Singapore, to create further public awareness.

The campaign has successfully raised awareness and education about the issue – consumers of bear bile have responded that they would not take bear bile again after viewing the ACRES exhibition. Having seen the mechanical bear and watched the video footage of Chinese bear farms, people are now more sensitive to and concerned about the suffering on Chinese bear farms. Thousands of signatures were collected in support of the campaign and presented to the Ministry of National Development. The number of signatures was also sent to TCM Associations.

Singapore: Collaboration with the TCM community

At least one TCM Association, the Singapore Chinese Druggists Association, has issued statements to its 500 members to stop selling bear products. The TCM Industry has made public statements on the promotion of alternatives to bear bile:

“There are herbal alternatives which are what we are selling in our stores instead of bear bile”

Mr Liew Show Kiat, of the Singapore Chinese Druggists Association, in *The Straits Times* (25 April 2002)

“There's a host of alternatives you can use instead of bear bile products to treat fever, and that is the beauty of traditional Chinese medicine”

Mr Clifford Eu, Executive Director, Eu Yan Sang, one of Singapore's biggest TCM retailers (*The Straits Times*, 8 December 2001)



This Singapore shopping mall screened ACRES campaign footage on the TV screens, including a large wide screen on the side of the building.



Educational exhibits (kindly designed by Saatchi and Saatchi) and video footage provided detailed information on the Singapore study and bear farming.

In addition to these statements, Mr Fong Cheng Ek, a lecturer with the Singapore Chinese Physicians Association told *Today* (7 December 2001) that there are alternatives to bear products, which can also cool heatiness (internal heat) in the blood.

A TCM trader, reported to the Authorities for selling bear bile, has been prosecuted as a result of the campaign.

Singapore: National and local governments

Good progress has been made with the national government. The Agri-food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) has discussed with the Health Sciences Authority that the registration of new TCM products, with animal content, should be referred to them for vetting for presence of endangered species. The AVA is also engaging with the TCM community in the regulation of trade in endangered species. The AVA has established a relationship with the Singapore TCM Organisations Committee (STOC), which represents TCM retailers, manufacturers, importers and physicians, and is working with STOC to enhance its members' understanding of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The STOC has assured them its full cooperation. The AVA has publicly stated that they want to eliminate the use of endangered species in TCM in Singapore

"We'll continue to educate TCM practitioners that endangered species and their parts must not be used in traditional Chinese medicine"

Miss Lye Fong Keng, Head of the CITES Unit at the AVA
The Straits Times, 25 April 2002

In addition, the AVA have stated that they will carry out educational awareness through airport displays, and that they will be exploring the use of the UK's Green Parrot Identification System for the identification of samples at Customs. They will also 'look into prosecuting those making false claims of products under the penal code.' Other ACRES recommendations will also be pursued.

Japan: Animal protection groups and public opinion

In March 2002, a similar campaign was initiated in Japan. The Japan Wildlife Conservation Society launched the results of their bear trade investigations in the report 'Japan's Illegal Trade In Bear Products: A Threat To Bears Worldwide'⁴ (see Section Two). Two press conferences were held on consecutive days in Tokyo, the first to launch the bear trade report and the second to discuss the Chinese bear farm issue, and the cruelty behind the products. Both events were well attended and supported by Saatchi and Saatchi staff, ten of whom climbed into small animal transport cages to illustrate for the press the cramped conditions on the bear farms. Three further press conferences, in Kobe, Osaka and Toyama (the main TM manufacturing city in Japan), then followed. The mechanical bear was used at these events and on the streets in Tokyo and Osaka. It provoked a good interest from the public, many of whom were very shocked by the cruelty of the farms and also concerned about the wild bear populations in Japan.

The launch was designed to coincide with discussions being held in the Japanese Parliament regarding amendments to the Game and Hunting Law, which affects the indigenous wild bear population (see 'Bear Markets: Japan' in Section Two).

Subsequent public awareness campaign work was carried out on Earth Day in Tokyo in the spring, and during the summer in Tokyo, Toyama, Yokohama and other cities.



In Japan, after a press conference in the Foreign Correspondents Club in Tokyo, the mechanical bear was exhibited outside and the bear farming and bear trade issues clearly explained to members of the public.



The traditional medicine connection between the hunting of Japan's wild bears and the bear farms in China is taken onto the streets of Japan.

Japan: National and local governments

JWCS lobbied hard in the Japanese Parliament, to improve the amendments being made to the Game and Hunting Law. A reply from the House of Representatives on this issue stated that:

“The House urged the government in a supplementary resolution to the bill to take appropriate measures, such as controlling the use of wire trapping and counter measures to the catching of wildlife under false pretences, as when the animals caught are actually used for pharmaceutical purposes. The House also called on the government to consider future steps toward establishing a legal framework to further promote animal protection.”



In Japan, JWCS and ALIVE (All Life In A V iable Environment) joined forces to put the message across to the public.

It is hoped that further progress can be made.

Liaison and co-operation with National and local governments is needed in all countries with indigenous wild bear populations and in those countries that are potential markets for bear bile and gall products.

Japan: Collaboration with the TM community

Collaboration with TM communities in Japan and other consumer countries is vital in order to achieve success in changing the buying habits of the traditional medicine communities. The promotion of suitable herbal and synthetic alternatives to bear bile products needs to be carried out in all the countries surveyed. The endorsement of the alternative products by TM practitioners is needed in order to encourage consumers to use these products.

CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is the key platform regarding the international trade in bear species; all eight species are listed on the CITES Appendices. Detailed discussions are needed with the 159 Parties to CITES, in order to discuss the findings of the eight national surveys (see section Two), which are relevant to not only bear range and consumer states, but other states where the issue could potentially become a problem. Co-operation and collaboration between countries is important to prevent the international illegal trade.

References

- 1 Watkins, V & Hsieh, Y. (2000) Chinese Bear Farming. World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA). UK.
- 2 Maas, B. (2000) The Veterinary, Behavioural And Welfare Implications Of Bear Farming In Asia (WSPA). UK.
- 3 Govind, V. & Ho, S. (2001) The Trade In Bear Gall Bladder And Bile Products In Singapore. Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES). Singapore.
- 4 Togawa, K. and Sakamoto, M. (2002) Japan's illegal trade in bear products: a threat to bears worldwide. Japan Wildlife Conservation Society (JWCS). Japan.

Recommendations

CITES and international collaboration

- The current CITES regulations regarding the conservation of and trade in bear specimens should be maintained and improved upon, in order to control the current significant illegal international trade in bear products and to protect the remaining wild bear populations.
- Parties to CITES should assess their national legislation that implements CITES to ensure that it is effective and does not allow any loopholes for bear parts or derivatives to be traded internationally.
- The CITES Secretariat should meet with the Chinese CITES Management Authority to discuss the effectiveness and enforcement of China's national legislation that implements CITES. The extent of the illegal international trade of manufactured bear bile medicines, bear bile powder and bear galls being exported from China, indicates that there is a significant problem with the legislation and/ or the enforcement of the legislation.
- Bear range and consumer states should collaborate to a greater extent to share expertise and knowledge concerning the illegal trade in bear parts and products. Illegal trade routes should be closely monitored.
- In addition to the current ban on the trade in bear parts and derivatives of Appendix-I listed bear species, there should be a total ban on the trade in parts and derivatives of Appendix-II listed bear species. This would help to resolve the look-alike problem associated with bear galls of all species.
- Any attempts to register a bear farm operation in order to internationally trade bear bile should be rejected on the grounds of: the extreme animal cruelty involved; the negative effects on wild bear conservation; and the existence of suitable herbal and synthetic alternatives to the use of bear bile in traditional medicines.

National legislation and enforcement

- The governments of China, Korea and Vietnam, and any other states where bears are farmed for their bile, should close bear farm facilities as soon as is feasible for the reasons listed above.
- Stricter law enforcement by national authorities is needed in order to seize illegally traded bear products. Stronger penalties, both fines and custodial sentences, should be applied to those found guilty of illegal trade. International laboratory facilities to analyse samples should be utilised.
- In bear range states, there should be improved legislation to protect wild populations. Effective monitoring of wild populations should be carried out to determine levels of poaching and illegal international trade out of the country. If poaching and illegal trade does exist, then effective enforcement should be carried out. Information concerning trade should be given to CITES.
- More training is needed for customs and law enforcement officers, to assist them with the identification of illegal bear products. Practical identification manuals, such as the UK's Green Parrot Project, should be utilised by customs authorities.
- There should be close collaboration between government departments (wildlife/customs/health authorities) to ensure that illegal products are not registered for use in the country concerned.

- The significant contribution of NGOs should be recognised and there should be enhanced communication and collaboration between governments/CITES Management Authorities and NGOs.

Traditional medicine communities and the general public

- Traditional medicine communities should be made aware of the illegality of the importation and use of bear products. Educational materials should be distributed to TM practitioners, dealers, shop owners, and consumers.
- There should be awareness programmes for traditional medicine communities regarding the cruelty associated with bear bile products. The humane herbal and synthetic alternatives should be actively promoted, with the support of the traditional medicine associations in the countries concerned.
- Public education is needed concerning animal welfare and conservation, to help prevent the use of products that exploit animal species.
- Educational, awareness displays are needed at points of entry into countries to highlight to tourists the illegal products that cannot be imported.



“Before they kill them, they make them wish they were dead”: 28,000 of these postcards were distributed in restaurants in Singapore. The design was sponsored by Saatchi & Saatchi and distribution sponsored by ZoCard Singapore.