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Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,
Linguística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 35, 2019, Especial N°

21

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales
ISSN 1012-1587/ ISSNc: 2477-9385
Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



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Recibido: 10-03-2019 • Aceptado: 15-04-2019

Illegal wildlife trade: Indonesian turtle egg traders in Kalimantan-Sarawak border

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Abstract

This study investigates illicit trafficking of turtle eggs across Kalimantan-Sarawak border, who are the individuals or organizations involved, what motivates people to engage in illegal wildlife trade. Interviews with five offenders which are identified through snowball sampling technique and observations were conducted. As a result, the offenders from Kalimantan region, are motivated to sell the eggs in order to support their family as a secondary income besides selling their legal goods in Bau. In conclusion, the easy access in obtaining the eggs from Kalimantan as well as high demand from the locals further supports the continuity of this illegal activity.

Keywords: Sarawak, Trade, Cross-Border, Smuggling.

Comercio ilegal de vida silvestre: Comerciantes indonesios de huevos de tortuga en la frontera Kalimantan-Sarawak

Resumen

Este estudio investiga el tráfico ilícito de huevos de tortuga a través de la frontera entre Kalimantan y Sarawak, que son los individuos u organizaciones involucradas, lo que motiva a las personas a participar en el comercio ilegal de vida silvestre. Se realizaron entrevistas con cinco delincuentes que se identificaron mediante la técnica de muestreo de bolas de nieve y se realizaron observaciones. Como resultado, los delincuentes de la región de Kalimantan, están motivados a vender los huevos para mantener a su familia como un ingreso secundario, además de vender sus bienes legales en Bau. En conclusión, el fácil acceso para obtener los huevos de Kalimantan, así como la alta demanda de los lugareños, apoya aún más la continuidad de esta actividad ilegal.

Palabras clave: Sarawak, Comercio, Transfronterizo, Contrabando.

1. INTRODUCTION

Illegal wildlife trade is one of the global conservation challenges. Usually, it is seen positional alongside illegal drugs, arms trading and human trafficking. Illegal wildlife trade is one of the growing illegal markets worldwide. It has caused a number of wildlife species to go extinct. Illegal trade according to Cook Schneider (2008), not only threatens survival and conservation of endangered species as it offers high rewards and low risks to those involved. Dangol (2015) stated that illegal trades in wildlife generates billions of US dollars annually. Sollund and Maher (2015) stated that trade of wildlife both

legal and illegally is worth over 300 billion US dollars per year. Lawson and Vines added that for illegal trade online, it is worth up to 20 billion US dollars.

Barks et al. Dangol (2015) reported that tigers which were numbered over 100,000 a century ago are now reduced to a few hundred. Illegal wildlife trading comes from an illegal network that transcends international borders. This is helped by globalization; opening borders and expanding the marketplace. Schneider (2008) added that loss of wildlife extends beyond monetary values; for example, the depletion of rainforests is said to contribute to global climate changes in addition to the destruction of natural habitats that sustain animals, plants and humans.

In the place of study that was conducted in the Sarawak border market, regardless of legislation and warnings from the authorities, turtle eggs are still sold here although not open to the locals and also tourists. It is known that these traders are Indonesians who take the egg supplies from Indonesia, riskily across the borders. Pahlevi (2014) reported that Paloh is the second biggest turtle nesting habitat in Indonesia, especially green turtles and hawksbill turtles. Lin (2005) stated that 2000 nests of green turtles and 500 females are found per year at Paloh.

This study intends to investigate illicit trafficking of turtle eggs across Kalimantan-Sarawak border, who are the individuals or organizations involved, what motivates people to engage in illegal

wildlife trade and what legislation, enforcement and control exist in Sarawak and Kalimantan.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Environmental Crime

The study of environmental harm and crimes against nature has become a popular area of research amongst criminologists. This includes how humans have done things to the environment that have fundamentally transformed local landscapes and regional biodiversity. From bringing plants and animals from one region to new parts of the world to polluting rivers and seas with industrial outfall and filling land and soils with human refuse, to fire burning in particular local biospheres, ecological change has been part and parcel of how humans have worked with each other. This includes as according to Collins (2015), toxic waste dumping, trade and abuse of endangered animals. According to White and Heckenberg (2014), an ecological term, today there are several areas of acknowledged harm that are garnering ever greater attention.

Global warming, threats to biodiversity, more toxic forms of pollution, and wastes are combined to disturb the ecological balance in the process to put the well-being and health of humans, ecosystem, animals and plants at risk. Clifford and Edwards (2012), stated that the terms used most often to describe criminalization of environmental

harm are an environmental crime, environmental criminology and green criminology. Environmental criminology and green criminology have increasingly been used interchangeably. White Clifford and Edwards (2012) suggested that green or environmental criminology basically refers to the study of environmental harm, environmental laws, and environmental regulations by criminologists. White and Heckenberg (2014) reported that in response to growing discontent about the state of the environment, critical green criminology has emerged in recent years that takes its focus from issues relating to the environment and social harm.

Beirne and South Clifford and Edwards (2012) outline a much more specific definition of green criminology that is referred to study of those harms against humanity, against the environment, and against animals committed both by powerful institutions and also by ordinary people. White and Heckenberg (2014) reported that there are two types of environmental crime that are brown and green crimes. Brown crimes include dumping of waste by the communities in the toxic waste site, inequalities associated with the location of disadvantaged and pollution of neighbourhood and rivers. Green crimes include the trade of reptiles, fishing-related crimes, poaching and abalone, animal abuse and illegal trade of wildlife. Bisschop (2014) stated that determining what kinds of crime are committed by local residents is crucial for a theoretical understanding of the criminogenic characteristics of rural social structures and for effective prevention efforts. Crow et al. (2014) reported that crimes committed in rural environments are relatively understudied in criminology. Various

wildlife crimes; for instance, have been particularly overlooked by mainstream criminology.

2.2. Transnational Crime

The problem of environmental crime is inherently transnational. According to Michalowski and Bitten (2005), unlike most of the other harms, toxins travel freely from one country to another, in the wind, surface and groundwater, through the movements of humans and animals. This includes other environmental threats such as species extinctions, ozone depletion, and global climate change are likewise felt around the world, not just in the countries of origin. Reuter and Petrie Felsen and Kalaitzidis (2005) have categorized the transnational crime activities as follows:

- 1) Smuggling of commodities, drugs, protected species

- 2) Contraband (goods subject to tariffs or quotas), stolen cars, tobacco products

- 3) Services such as immigrants, prostitution, indentured servitude, money laundering and fraud.

2.3. Routine Activity Theory

The illegal wildlife trade presents a suitable target in terms of Cohen and Felson's Buneil (2017) Routine Activity Theory, which states that the significant financial rewards and the absence of strong enforcement and punishment motivate the offender to carry out the offense. Crime occurs when the following three elements come together in any given space and time:

- 1) An accessible target
- 2) The absence of capable guardians that are involved
- 3) The presence of a motivated offender

This approach has been successfully adopted by Sollund and Maher (2015) to explain parrot poaching in Mexico. An accessible target can include a person, an object or a place or animals. Routine Activity Theory as a methodology of crime prevention which focuses on essential elements that make up a crime.

3. METHODOLOGY

This case study was done at the Kalimantan-Sarawak border in a small town in Bau, Sarawak where the turtle eggs are sold. This research is aimed to obtain data from a variety of resources in order to evaluate the nature, impact and motivations of illegal wildlife trade. The research questions are:

- 1) Who are the individuals or organizations involved?
- 2) What is the background of the people involved?
- 3) What motivates people to engage in illegal wildlife trade?
- 4) What is the legislation, enforcement and control in Sarawak and Kalimantan?

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Observations and Descriptive Analysis of Demographics

In the case of this study, the sample size is not determined. There is no specific number of offenders needed nor do any specific ages of offenders are identified for this research as this is criminological research. The respondents involved are identified as numbers of the underground population whose group members wanted to keep their identity secret. A purposive and snowball sample were done, that is the technique of identifying one member of a particular population and then asking him or her to identify another member who in turn will be asked to identify another member. As researcher walked further it was found that there were two other turtle egg traders from two shops selling biscuits and dried seafood. They also called out softly to me and offered the eggs. The price is the same as the researcher's previous encounter with other sellers that is RM1 per egg.

From the observations, it was found that the people who are involved in turtle egg trade are not fixed, as it could be any new people started selling each day. They are mobile and do not own any shop, and the shops all over the market have the potential to sell sea turtle eggs besides selling legal commodities and goods. The researcher had also taken in this research the role of complete observer. McIntyre (2005) stated that a complete observer has no contact with the people he or she observes, the advantage is that the researcher has the advantage to see people behave unconsciously. Four respondents are identified in this research, ages ranging from 42 to 50 years old and all of them hail from Indonesia, the West Kalimantan province. Only one respondent focusses mainly on selling eggs as compared to the rest of the traders who sell other goods and commodities in the Bau border market. The other sells food such as fruits, vegetables, dried seafood and other things besides selling turtle eggs.

Table 1: Details of Respondents

Respondent	Place of Origin	Age	Years Involved in Selling Turtle Eggs	Gender	Education Level	Marital Status
1	Bengkayang	54	10	Male	Primary 1	Married
2	Bengkayang	49	6	Female	Primary 2	Married
3	Singkawang	43	7	Female	Primary 4	Divorced
4	Pemangkat, Sambas	50	5	Female	No formal education	Divorced

All the respondents come from Indonesia but are from different districts. Two of them are from Bengkayang, and the other two are

from Singkawang and Pemangkat, Sambas respectively. Only one of the respondents is male and the rest are female. Respondent 1 and respondent 2 are married while the other two are divorced. The oldest respondent is a 54-year-old man. Respondent 1 is involved in selling turtle eggs for the last 10 years, longest than the rest. All of the respondents did not finish their primary school and one of them that is respondent 4 do not have formal education at all. The time taken from their hometown is from 1 to 9 hours to Bau border market. They are all of Malay Indonesia ethnicity and are Muslims.

Table 2: Income of Respondents

Respondent	Legal Goods and Commodities Sold	Price per turtle egg	Total income Legal goods+turtle eggs per month (RM)
1	Fruits and vegetables	RM1	1000
2	Fruits and vegetables	RM1	700-1000
3	Household appliances	RM1 and RM2 (two sizes small and big)	1200
4	Salted fish, bottled sauce, crackers	RM1	1500

4.2. Findings

The respondents sell legal goods and commodities such as fruits, vegetables, salted fish and household appliances at Bau border market besides selling turtle eggs as a side income. All of them sell sea

turtle eggs at the price of RM1 except for one of the respondents that is respondent 3 who sells two sizes of the eggs, a small one for RM1 and a slightly bigger one for RM2 per egg. The highest amount of income combined with the selling of legal goods and commodities as well as turtle eggs is respondent 4, the oldest respondent who earns RM1500 per month. The lowest income per month is respondent 2, in which the income is RM700 per month.

The first respondent, is a 54-year-old married man from Bengkayang, West Kalimantan. It takes him an hour and a half ride to 2 hours to reach Bau border market by motorcycle. He uses a Cross Border Pass to enter Sarawak. He had been involved in trading sea turtle eggs in the market for 10 years. Respondent 1 focuses more on selling legal commodities at Bau border market. He sells fruits and vegetables such as oranges and tomatoes. He obtains sea turtle eggs from his friend in Bengkayang, who is the agent of turtle eggs and gets the stocks directly from Serasan Island, at the Kepulauan Riau of Indonesia.

Furthermore, he only brings the turtle eggs across the border upon request from his customers. He does not bring to the Bau border market every week in fear of being caught. It is difficult nowadays as compared to a few years ago to smuggle and sell the eggs in Bau. Usually, upon request, he would bring in 50-100 eggs. Each egg gives him a profit of RM0.50-RM0.60. In addition to turtle eggs and other legal commodities, he can earn around RM1000 per month. In smuggling the sea turtle eggs, it is no easy task. He hides the eggs very

carefully underneath a sack of fruits and vegetables. Thus the goods he brings are declared as food to the patrol border. With the goods not thoroughly checked, he passes the border easily. In addition, there are no formal Customs and Quarantine exist at the border.

5. CONCLUSION

According to Sarawak Forestry Department (2018), certain species of animals are clarified as totally protected in Sarawak under the Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1998. Sarawak Forestry Department also stated that all marine turtles are totally protected, and offenders will face charges with a total of RM25, 000 and two years of imprisonment. Under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), marine turtles are listed as species threatened with extinction, thus international trade of these species is not allowed. In Indonesia, Profauna (2017) stated that marine turtles are protected under the Indonesia Government Regulation (Peraturan Pemerintah) number 7-year 1999 concerning the Preservation of Wild Plants and Animals as protected animals. However, with these state and international legislation, the illegal trade of sea or marine turtle eggs still occur in Sarawak, particularly in Bau.

There are manipulations of harvesting of turtle eggs by an organization that led to a chain of trade in Paloh. In Pemangkat, there is a port that becomes the hub of transporting sea turtle eggs from Serasan Island to the mainland of West Kalimantan. The laws that

protect sea turtles do exist in Indonesia, but it is lacking in enforcement. There are more than 80,000 turtle eggs smuggled weekly in West Kalimantan, which is shockingly a massive amount. Are there corruptions from low levels to the high levels of authorities involved? What is the meaning of establishing laws if the laws are not enforced? As compared to Sarawak counterpart, Sarawak state has done a good job and committed to preventing the spread of illegal turtle eggs trade throughout Sarawak.

This shows a large number of people going to Bau to get the supplies as there are no longer turtle eggs available to be purchased in other parts of Sarawak. Next, there are no official Customs and Quarantine Posts at the Bau-Jagoi Babang border, thus smuggling of goods become fairly easier. It only depends on border patrols that are soldiers to guard the borders. However, the inspection has become strict but still, the offender knows how to hide the illegal commodities among other legal goods. Next, the cooperation of locals that cover up these offenders further interrupts the effort to stop this selling of eggs. But it is obvious that these offenders do not trade in ease and always alert and careful in doing this illegal activity. They do not sell openly, and because of strict enforcement has actually controlled the sea turtle eggs trade at the border.

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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales
Año 35, Especial N° 21, (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.
Maracaibo - Venezuela

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