

***That's Wild* Season 2**

Beyond Smuggling, What's Next? | Illegal Wildlife Trade Part 2

[00:00:00] **Elliott:** Hello and welcome to *That's Wild*, a podcast series brought to you by the National Parks Board. I'm Elliott, and I'll be your host for this series where we'll be talking to special guests from the nature community about topics surrounding biodiversity conservation in our City in Nature. In our last episode on illegal wildlife trade, we talked about the songbird trade, the factors that drive it, and its impacts on songbird populations.

[00:00:28] Unfortunately, we know many illegal smuggling cases often go undetected, but Singapore has successfully stopped quite a number of them at our borders. So when this happens, we know the smugglers are arrested, but then what happens to the seized animals and animal products? In this episode, we'll be shifting our focus from the broader topics of the illegal wildlife trade to zoom into the animals themselves, and their journeys after they are seized at the borders. And to discuss this, I have Anna and Yirui here with me today.

[00:00:55] **Anna:** Hello, I'm Anna. I'm from NParks Singapore. I am in charge of regulating wildlife trade. I look at, you know, the regulations internationally to allow trade to be done sustainably and safely. And also now I'm bridging towards wildlife trade and wildlife health to see how they are connected and how to carry out trade safely.

[00:01:18] **Yirui:** Hello, I'm Dr. Yirui, a veterinarian at Mandai Wildlife Group. My job involves taking care of the animals at our five parks, but also includes taking care of the wildlife that's brought to us. Sometimes this could take the form of confiscations that NParks hands over to us for special care.

[00:01:34] **Elliott:** Welcome to the podcast guys. So this is a huge topic. It's a very complex topic and it elicits a lot of emotions, sometimes very strong emotions from people. Maybe we can start by talking about some misconceptions or myths about the illegal wildlife trade or conservation in general.

[00:01:50] **Anna:** Hmm. So, a lot of people think that wildlife trade is illegal. Actually, you know, there are legal and both illegal wildlife trade. So for example, like your daily food that you eat, like your Caviar or even just your Unagi. They are considered wildlife and endangered species, so they do need permits to be imported or exported. So not all wildlife trade is illegal.

[00:02:14] **Yirui:** For me, I think when most people think of illegal wildlife trade, they think of poachers in Africa, going around with rifles, hunting down Rhinos and Elephants, and trading these big animal products. But unbeknownst to many of us, we could be potentially complicit in illegal wildlife trade. For instance, when we go overseas and we buy a small Sea Turtle jewellery piece, or a trinket from a roadside stall by the beach, this animal product may be unregulated. This makes us actually part of the illegal wildlife trade that happens all around the world.

[00:02:42] **Elliott:** So in Singapore, this is a lot more common than most people think. What are some examples of, you know, illegal wildlife products that are being sold in Singapore?

[00:02:52] **Anna:** So in Singapore, sometimes when you go online, when you see online marketplaces like Carousell or even Telegram, you do sometimes see people selling ivory

trinkets or accessories and they will sometimes advertise it as white bone, but actually it's Elephant Ivory. So Singapore actually has already banned the sale of Elephant Ivory, in 2021. So, you know, all trade is not allowed. So sometimes the public needs to make sure whatever they're purchasing online is actually legal and allowed.

[00:03:23] **Yirui:** If we look at the recent news articles that have been out on the Straits Times, I think one that really resonated with me was the case that involved someone catching a Pangolin from the wild and then putting it on the market.

[00:03:35] Thankfully the NParks officers infiltrated the chat groups on which this Pangolin was being sold on and intercepted this trade. But this is really a real life example of how illegal wildlife trade can actually happen with wildlife animals, even in Singapore.

[00:03:48] **Elliott:** So for illegal wildlife trade, there are products being traded. There are also live animals being traded. So today we're here to talk about the live animals and what happens to them after they are seized or confiscated when these shipments, or you know, instances where people are harbouring these live animals are found, what happens to them after they're seized?

[00:04:05] **Anna:** For NParks, we actually follow very closely to the guidelines, under CITES—the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. So there are guidelines on confiscated animals—we either repatriate or we try to donate, for example, to Mandai Wildlife Group, or we try to release them in the wild if they're native to Singapore.

[00:04:28] Before we even carry out all these steps, the confiscated animals are usually kept at our Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation, pending investigations. And if we can't take care of the animals, for example, more specialised care is required, then you know, we'll work with the Mandai Wildlife Group to actually care for these animals. For animal products, we will actually send it to the Centre for Wildlife Forensics because we may need to carry out more, in-depth analysis, or identify the species involved cause sometimes the item could actually be processed or, you know, carved into a figurine, which we wouldn't know what it is.

[00:5:00] **Elliott:** Right.

[00:05:01] **Anna:** Yeah. So, for in depth analysis, for example, for the seizure that we did in 2019 for Elephant Ivory, we actually worked with the University of Washington to carry out an analysis of where these Elephant tusks came from to identify the origin and also how our seizure is related to other global seizures.

[00:05:20] These analyses are very powerful because they can actually help the enforcement officers at the poaching hotspots to concentrate their efforts and also identify potential criminal networks.

[00:05:31] **Yirui:** As Anna has alluded to this already, Mandai Wildlife Group works very closely with the national authorities, and that includes NParks when it comes to the live animals that are confiscated, particularly when specialised care is required for them. I think having our experience working with the collection that we have with over a thousand animals, we are exposed to a large variety of husbandry and care conditions, which may not exactly be very straightforward for all these animals.

[00:05:55] Our priority is that these animals, when under our care, at least receive the best health and welfare. If there's a case that's pending or if there's a potential result that it might be repatriated, for instance, at least whilst it's under our watch, we give them the best care possible.

[00:06:09] So, some scenarios where this could happen, if we receive venomous reptiles, which potentially could harm humans. This then gets transferred over to our quarantine facility where we have staff that are essentially venomous animals trained to be able to take care of them in a very safe manner that poses minimal risk.

[00:06:24] Other circumstances could include animals that really have specialised care needs. This could be Vine Snakes that would only eat Lizards that are moving around in a particular fashion, or perhaps animals that require chilled conditions, which is not available in normal setups. We have these furnishings available that will be able to then give them these care conditions that will allow them to be kept comfortably and healthily for the time being whilst we wait for a conclusion on these confiscations.

The last category of animals that come to us will be the animals that are debilitated or obviously very sick, when it goes onto NParks' hands. Some of these animals will require further work up which could include a CT scan, surgery, or perhaps even more specialised care, assisted feeding, which we at our hospital, uh, do quite often and therefore are quite ready to step forward and help in such circumstances.

[00:07:20] **Elliott:** And at Mandai Wildlife Group, you guys have hundreds of animals not just under your care from these kinds of seizures, but just, you know, having that wide range of animals in exhibits. I think that's a very underrated or understated benefit of Zoos to conservation. Are there any animals that come in through these seizures that you guys might not be entirely familiar with, and how do you deal with that?

[00:07:42] **Yirui:** I guess by a circumstance of these animals having been shipped over long distances and in freight containers, in less ideal conditions, sometimes even in bottles or very cramped conditions, these animals generally are resilient enough to be able to survive these long journeys, long durations without food and water.

[00:07:59] And therefore the animals that we see on our hands, mostly are animals that we have experience taking care of. There are times where animals come to us in really bad shape, and these are animals that just do not handle such conditions well enough—which really should never be kept under human care.

[00:08:14] And I guess, these animals often end up dead, so we wouldn't have been put in a situation where we had to take care of them in the first place.

[00:08:20] **Yirui:** To me, the animal that I've seen that was possibly the most interesting would be the Dragon Snake.

[00:08:26] It's not a really huge snake. It's found in the high altitude forests in Indonesia, I believe. It looks like a moss hanging from the trees, a very peculiar animal. And a lot of the herpetological hobbyists have been trying to keep these animals and care for these animals for the longest time, but they've failed to do so.

[00:08:44] This has not stopped people in Indonesia from trying to catch these guys from the wild and sending them overseas. And we've seen some of them, and unfortunately all of them usually end up dead when they arrive in our hands. Yeah, but that's a pretty cool animal to be able to work with.

[00:08:58] **Anna:** Yeah. I think to add also I think like your last podcast where, you know, we spoke about songbirds, we do see quite a number of songbirds being smuggled across our border as well. And a lot of times, you know, they don't survive because like what Yirui pointed out, they're kept in really bad conditions.

[00:09:12] **Anna:** So in 2023, we had a seizure of songbirds across our borders. It was actually flagged out by our ICA officer. It was in a tour bus and in a hidden compartment near the engine. There were 330 songbirds and they were kept in plastic crates and very cramped.

[00:09:29] And, they were like munias, shamas. The condition was very bad because it was very cramped, it was very hot. And, you know, coming through the causeway, they would have been inside for a few hours being inside so a lot of them didn't survive.

After we confiscated the songbirds, we brought them back to the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation. We took care of the birds, but like I said, more than half of them actually didn't survive.

[00:09:50] So for the rest, we tried to nurse them back to health, rehab them, and then eventually released them back into the wild for those native ones. For example, the Scaly-breasted Munias and the shamas. And we also had, uh, Red-whiskered Bulbuls, which are allowed to be kept as pets in Singapore—so they were actually rehomed.

[00:10:07] **Yirui:** On the rehoming, Anna, I guess running the five parks over here, we have resources available sometimes to then take these animals under our care.

[00:10:15] Of course, when these confiscations come to us and sometimes if NParks then announces to us that the case is concluded and these animals can then be dispatched to us. Sometimes we are faced with a very difficult decision to make regarding the fate of these animals.

[00:10:30] The baseline is really that we need to be sure we can take care of them and provide them all the resources they can get to live a healthy life and have good standards of welfare under our care. And this is when our institutional population plan comes into play, where we then assess these animals on their special care, special needs on whether we are able and well poised to be able to provide for them in a manner that keeps them healthy and that's fitting for their welfare.

[00:10:55] Unfortunately, this is not always the case. And sometimes animals will have to be put down because we just have no means to take care of them. But in every scenario, we'll always assess these animals for its merit, for its conservation value, and also its educational value for the visitors that come to our parks and to the best of our ability, we will always try to keep them into our collection once they come to us.

[00:11:15] **Elliott:** Yeah. I think that's a very sobering point, that there is, you know, a consequence of, you know, high demand for certain animals and especially if it's illegal and it's not coming through, you know, registered pathways and there's no checkup, like they're not coming in very healthy condition.

[00:11:59] **Yirui:** To me as a veterinarian, it's quite sobering whenever we encounter these circumstances. Often we have healthy animals on our hands that we really do not want to have to put down. It is inevitable that we feel anguish and feel guilt. When we are having to deal with these circumstances, it is never easy.

[00:11:44] But the bottom line is whenever we look at this, we think of the future of the animals and we really want to act in the best interest of them. And really, the culprit here is not us. The bad people are not the authorities that seize the animals. The bad people are not the veterinarians that have to deal with the aftermath of the consequences of the actions of the poachers, the buyers in the first place.

[00:12:03] And I think that's, a point that we have to remind ourselves when we are in this line of work—what is the real issue that we need to tackle, education that we need to have for the public to know not to purchase or not to partake in illegal wildlife trade.

[00:12:14] **Elliott:** And to just drive the seriousness of these consequences across, you know, what are some notable seizures that you guys have come across?

[00:12:20] **Anna:** Yeah, so maybe I can talk about the Leopard Cat case where, you know, we found two Leopard Cats, kept at someone's house and they were kept as pets in a cage. And so, you know, at that time, we were not able to care for the animal, which was why we passed to Mandai Wildlife Group to actually care for the two Leopard Cats.

[00:12:40] **Yirui:** I remember this case very well. It's not very often we receive Leopard Cat confiscations. It is an animal that we have native to Singapore as well. And at that point in time we were wondering if these animals were actually taken from our forests and cared for illegally by private owners.

[00:12:54] **Yirui:** So when the two leopard cats came to us, they were truly Leopard Cats. These are one of the smallest cats that we find in the wild, especially in Southeast Asia in the region. They were not in the best condition. When we anaesthetised them, we performed the full health assessment to really ascertain what the health status is and whether they have any underlying illnesses that we need to be worried about, especially since we are gonna keep them with us in the Mandai Wildlife Group for a period of time.

[00:13:16] So we performed an ultrasound scan, we did radiographs on them, we took bloods for general analysis and also gave them some initial treatments against parasites, against common diseases, and also gave them some fluids. Thankfully under our care, they took well to the food that we provided for them, and we actually cared for them for a period of six months before we eventually knew their eventual outcome and what we had to do with them. So, and in parallel, we submitted these samples over to NParks, did some genetic testing on the samples that we provided, and found out that these Leopard Cats actually originated from Malaysia.

[00:13:50] Perhaps Anna, you'd like to speak about the repatriation process? Cause I think that's a really happy outcome for these two Leopard Cats.

[00:13:57] **Anna:** Yeah, so after genetic testing, like what you mentioned, we found that it was closely related to the ones in Malaysia. So we got in touch with the authorities in Malaysia, arranged on, you know, the logistics, how to actually send the Leopard Cats back and to which location, to get all the permits sorted out because Leopard Cats are also an endangered species.

[00:14:17] So all the permits, the animal health permits as well. Yeah. And then we worked with Malaysia and the animal was eventually released back into the wild.

[00:14:26] **Elliott:** This is a really interesting line of work, every time we talk about illegal wildlife trade, you learn new things and I think it's really important that we have people like you guys working on it, but also I think it's very physically and emotionally taxing—it must be right?

[00:14:40] I'm sure it includes long hours. So how did you guys, you know, find yourselves in this line of work and did you imagine working on illegal wildlife trade when, let's say you graduated from university?

[00:14:52] **Anna:** Okay, so I'm actually a trained vet, but I don't do exciting work, like Yirui you know, doing surgeries or like medicating animals. For me, for wildlife trade I deal mainly with enforcement, coming up with measures to combat illegal wildlife trade, working with the national organisations like, Interpol, CITES, you know, to actually disrupt all these supply chains. Yeah, so in a way I feel that although I'm not treating the animal per se, but in a way I'm helping the animals in a different way.

[00:15:20] **Elliott:** Was that always like your ambition to—

[00:15:25] **Anna:** No! We all graduated as, um small animal doctors, right? So, uh, no, it was just, you know, working through AVA and then NParks.

[00:15:38] I was dealing with farm animals and then small animals and yeah, so then I was involved in wildlife trade, and then we set up the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation. And that was when, you know, I realised the interest and how I can help with saving wildlife.

[00:15:52] **Yirui:** I think, Anna, the work that you do is also very important and, it's also been reported on the news how Singapore has been a hub for wildlife trade that happens all around the world. We hear of the major seizure that the authorities have done a couple years back on Pangolin scales, and I think it's, it's really kudos to the team to be vigilant about this and to stop being

[00:16:11] a player or an unknown hub for these illegal shipments to come through under our noses, even though we are not the final destination. But if we are still helping facilitate this process, unknowingly, they're not a really great thing-for us. But with the work that we've done, with the vigilance that we've had, I think we've been able to stop some of these major shipments.

[00:16:30] And I think that's really important for us as leaders in the field. And, it's really our job for the conservation of the animals in the wild. And I guess for me, in my career path, I've always had an interest in natural history. I found myself glued to the television and watching documentaries growing up.

[00:16:44] So I guess working with animals was always my calling. I was just lucky enough to find myself in vet school, pass vet school, and also find myself a job in the Zoo, to be able to contribute in the manner that I do. But it's not just the work that we do physically with the animals, treating these animals, but it's a larger community of conservationists, government agencies that really come together to help with combatting the problem of illegal wildlife trade.

Nature Nuggets (Recommendations segment)

[00:17:03] Welcome to Nature Nuggets! In the spirit of our podcast title, *That's Wild*, we wanted to ask our guests to recommend something wild that they've come across or enjoyed, and that you can check out yourself too.

[00:17:19] **Yirui:** I think a really great resource for everyone will be the “Our Wild Neighbours” initiative, it's available online. It's a good platform for us to discover more about the native wildlife. And for me, why I really like this platform is because I really enjoy nature photography.

[00:17:33] I go out to our wild spaces quite a lot to take pictures of animals and some of my pictures are also on the website. So from there you can learn more about the ecology and biology of otters, crocodiles, but more importantly, recognise that they really are our wild neighbours and how we can really live with them in a harmonious way and understand them a little bit more and like them a little bit more.

[00:17:54] **Anna:** One of the movies that I really, really like is called Sea of Shadows—you guys should watch it. Yeah, so the film talks about how poachers go out to poach the swim bladder of this fish called Totoaba because it's very high value and it actually affects another species in the sea, which is the Vaquita, a species of Porpoise. It actually looks like a small little dolphin, so please go watch the film, it's really cool.

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[00:18:21] **Elliott:** I'm quite sure you guys have had big successes so far in your career that you're quite proud of, whether it has to do with, you know, rehoming animals or, seizing a particular shipment or anything else.

[00:18:31] Yeah. Any things that you guys are particularly proud of?

[00:18:34] **Yirui:** For me, my career highlight would definitely be the 2021 case of lions getting out at our Changi airport. I can still remember it was a Saturday afternoon, we just finished lunch and, there's this taboo thing about ordering in lunch or having too good a meal in the veterinary industry because when you enjoy yourself too much, something bad will definitely happen.

[00:18:53] We had a call from the airport telling us that a lion had gotten out of the cargo hold. And this is a very strange situation for Singapore because, to my knowledge, only the zoo has lions. And so we were wondering—we had so many questions. We were wondering where these lions came from, how many lions there were, how did the lion even get out in the first place?

[00:19:12] But it was clear that they needed help to deal with the lions. So we mustered the teams together and we went over to the airport. When we got there, we were briefed that it wasn't just one lion that was part of the consignment, but it was a group of seven lions that were on the way to another destination just stopping over in Singapore.

[00:33:39] They had sent us a picture and the lion was sleeping quite comfortably on top of a crate, and it clearly escaped from its container. Um, we were very prepared to anaesthetise this lion. It's something that we do with a dart gun, essentially, we load the anesthetics into a small projectile that then is fired from a rifle that shoots the animal and then the animal goes to sleep.

That's what we did when we arrived there. The police were there, NParks was there, my team was there. We were all looking at the rest of the crates to be sure that they were fine. And outwardly they seemed okay. And just as we were about to approach the darted lion to be sure that it was truly asleep, we saw a paw sticking out of another crate, which had obviously been destroyed by another lion.

[00:20:08] So we had, we were in, essentially in a cargo hold in a room where there were two animals down on the loose. And we thought it was only one, but there were two. So we backed off. We got out and said, "Hey, no, no, there's another lion". Thankfully it looks like it's still asleep. Is it dead? Is it not dead?

[00:20:24] We loaded another dart and we went in again and we shot the second lion. And, uh, the minute the dart hit the animal, it growled, so clearly it was still very, very alive. When the animal got down, we checked the rest of the crates. It seems like every other crate was quite secure.

[00:20:35] And uh, we then safely brought these seven animals back to our newly built quarantine facility at Mandai. Thankfully, we had space and housed them, rebuilt the crates all in three to four days and sent them on their way to the final destination. I think that definitely was an exciting adrenaline pumping kind of scenario, uh, that happened so quickly over five days. And, it's a story that my team will talk about for a very long time.

[00:20:58] **Elliott:** Anna, you wanted to add?

[00:21:00] **Anna:** Yeah, so for me would be the 2019 seizure, where it was one of the largest in the world for Pangolin scales. There were actually three seizures on different days, totalling about 37 tonnes of Pangolin scales, which was about 470 bags.

[00:21:15] I remember that when we opened the containers to remove the bags, some of our staff was almost in tears because as we opened up it was all Pangolin scales and it was four different kinds of African Pangolins. So, it was a very heartbreaking moment for everyone, when you realised that almost 20,000 Pangolins died because of this.

[00:21:35] **Elliott:** Yeah. Guess it's good that it was seized and made public so people can understand the gravity of this situation. Also lots of great work being done, and I think you know as conservationists and enforcement agencies are getting better at tackling illegal wildlife trade, the trade itself is developing and changing, as we speak. So I wanted to touch a bit more about how illegal wildlife trade is changing and how we are adapting to that.

[00:21:58] **Anna:** I think the traffickers are always changing, as with any other types of traffickers, right? We just have to be fast enough to think ahead of them. So, which is why looking at trends, patterns internationally and also working with local enforcement agencies like ICA, Singapore Customs and also international ones like Interpol, United Nations.

[00:22:18] These are very important because then we know what is the situation in the world and what do we have to do, like, for example, changing our risk indicators, our risk profiles, you know, to actually get the game ahead.

[00:22:28] **Elliott:** How about the online side of things? So we've talked about a lot of, you know, shipments and live animals that we see and that you guys are dealing with. But, what's the trend like on the online side of things? Are there more animals being sold there? I think that's something that was, um, touched on a bit in, in the previous podcast episode, but would like to dive in a bit more on that.

[00:22:49] **Anna:** Yeah, so for online markets, we have been working with the e-commerce platforms very closely. And they are aware and they have put certain measures in place when people try to post, to sell wildlife. Other channels, such as Telegram, monitor these platforms as well to actually see what they're selling, whether they're illegal, not illegal. So we do monitor such platforms and also, the different marketplaces as well.

[00:23:14] **Elliott:** Has that made things harder for you guys to enforce certain laws and also make these seizures?

[00:23:21] **Anna:** I would say they're definitely challenges. Sometimes these sellers are not even in Singapore, so they can post the sale but the animals are not even here.

[00:23:30] So even if we manage to know who the seller is, the animal may not even be with him because he may not even have purchased the animals yet. He's just trying to get a sale first before bringing the animal in.

[00:23:44] **Elliott:** Right. And with all these challenges, I'm sure you guys need as much help as you can get. Are there any initiatives or programmes or just simple actions that the ordinary person or ordinary Singaporean can take to help to combat the illegal wildlife trade?

[00:23:56] **Anna:** If you do see illegal sale of wildlife or people keeping wildlife that's not allowed to be kept as pets, you know, please do contact NParks.

[00:24:04] **Elliott:** Yeah. And I think apart from that, just besides what the ordinary Singaporean can do, I think NParks has a few initiatives or programmes that you guys have to combat the illegal wildlife trade. Could you explain a bit more about that as well?

[00:24:16] **Anna:** So I'm actually very excited to share that in May 2025, our Centre for Wildlife Forensics has been designated by the World Organisation for Animal Health as a collaborating centre for Wildlife Trade and Wildlife Health. So, the mission of the collaborating centre is to promote safe, sustainable, and risk mitigated wildlife trade and movement so as to foster a healthy human-wildlife ecosystem interface.

[00:24:41] So this centre will actually carry out collaborations with different countries on enhancing capability building in terms of wildlife trade, how to regulate wildlife trade,

supporting them through reviewing their regulatory frameworks and providing our expertise in terms of forensics and also, enforcement for our wildlife trade.

[00:25:02] Elliott: Moving on from the government side of things, does Mandai Wildlife Group have any such programmes or initiatives?

[00:25:06] Yirui: Certainly, the most important tool for the Mandai Wildlife Group will be the role we play as a modern zoo in the education of our visitors that come to visit our five parks. I think every year we see about 5 million people enter our parks and see the animals.

[00:25:19] But by looking at the animals and being up close to them and developing a relationship with these animals, having an opinion on their behaviour and how you really like these animals, we also drive the messaging across and raise the profile and awareness of illegal wildlife trade that happens all around us.

[00:25:35] If you have been to Reptopia at the Singapore Zoo, for instance, there's a really cool interpretation board where, uh, you see a suitcase and if you press a button, it lights up the back of the suitcase and you can see what could potentially be inside that. And I think there's an egg, and there's a lizard that's wrapped up and this really tells the visitors a story that, you know, the animals that we see here today, some of them might have come from the illegal wildlife trade and we are housing them here, and then we are able to care for them in a proper manner. We also have organised activities when school children come over to the zoo.

[00:26:05] Just a couple months ago, I was part of this Action for Wildlife programme, which the zoo is now currently running with secondary school students as well as primary school students. And one of the topics was on the profile of lesser known species that occur in Singapore and that was the Straw-headed Bulbul.

[00:26:20] And it really tried to get the students to start thinking about ways where we could raise the profile of these animals, and at the same time also understand why it is important to conserve these animals and what's really harming populations all around the world and why Singapore is really the stronghold for this species.

[00:26:39] And I think it's through these organised activities too, that students, young minds get exposed to the field of conservation and recognise that actually even as a student, just by speaking to your family members, speaking to your friends about these issues that you truly care for and feel passionate for, you could actually already be making a big difference.

[00:26:57] Elliott: Yeah. So I think zoos are great places to bring these kinds of messages across because it's often the first time that people come up close with animals and learn about these issues. And for myself, I remember how the voiceover and the night safari trams have changed over the years.

[00:27:11] From, I think, just about maybe facts about the animals themselves. Now you include facts about the threats that they face, including the wildlife trade which makes it very memorable for a lot of people. So I think just to close off, are there any recent developments or trends that offer hope for us to transition to a more sustainable world where we care a bit more about the animals that we share this planet with?

[00:27:32] **Yirui:** I think so. Just through interactions with the visitors that come to our parks as well as speaking to kids these days, or kids of friends and engaging them on topics involving wildlife and conservation.

[00:27:46] I think a lot of people are now starting to form an opinion and feel strongly about this matter. I think that's the first step. I would say a clear indicator not really related to illegal wildlife trade, but it's on the topic of shark fins. You know, I would think that most of my contemporaries or friends would not order shark fins, or would not eat shark fins when at a restaurant.

[00:28:03] And I think that's really one signal that shows that sentiments are changing, people are starting to form opinions, people are starting to take action. And in doing these small things, actually we are all contributing to a larger effort to be more conscious about our active actions and know how our actions will affect populations in the wild and affect conservation in general.

[00:28:23] And I think this really offers us hope that it's not all going downhill. In fact, I believe if this goes on with this trajectory, we will reverse the rate, so to speak. These animals have hope.

[00:28:34] **Anna:** In May, we had our first CITES Global Youth Summit where we had youths from all over the world coming to Singapore to talk about issues related to wildlife trade and also conservation and how they can contribute and help.

[00:28:48] So, for example, by doing research projects on certain species or certain topics to create awareness and also find solutions. So all this will actually help to ensure a safe and sustainable wildlife trade in the long run.

[00:29:01] **Elliott:** It's good to know that we are slowly but surely moving the needle on the illegal wildlife trade.

[00:29:05] **Elliott:** As we close off the podcast, I would just like to thank you guys for coming down on the podcast to answer all these questions with us and also for your amazing work combatting illegal wildlife trade.

[00:29:15] So until next time, see you everyone. Bye.

[00:29:18] **Yirui:** Bye.

[00:29:19] **Anna:** Bye.

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