

TRADE IN PYTHON SKINS: IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA



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This study uses a sustainable livelihoods framework to examine the impact of the python skin trade on the livelihoods of people in Peninsular Malaysia. The report details the livelihood profiles of people participating in trade, and draws on its results to discuss the livelihood outcomes, conservation implications and challenges of participation in the python skin trade. The report is relevant for importers and exporters, regulators, policymakers, non-governmental organizations, community representatives and researchers seeking to improve sustainability of the python skin trade and the associated benefits derived by people in Peninsular Malaysia.

Descriptors: **Hides and Skins, Leather, Biodiversity, Endangered Species, Sustainable Development, Economic Development, Rural Development, Malaysia.**

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English

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Foreword ITC



The majority of the world's poorest live in rural areas and in developing countries, largely dependent on natural resources for food, shelter, medicine and income. For this reason, the protection of the forests and oceans are two of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by United Nations members in 2015.

Trade has been recognized as a 'means for implementation' of the Global Goals, and particular attention should be given to trade in natural resources given the contribution this can make to addressing Global Goal 1: the reduction of poverty. In 2012, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) signed a Letter of Agreement where ITC committed to provide knowledge and capacity-building for Parties to CITES in order to strengthen the sustainability and livelihood benefits of their trade in wildlife.

This study and the accompanying publication 'Trade in Python Skins: Impact on Livelihoods in Viet Nam' are ITC's direct contribution to this agreement.

Following the publication of an ITC report in 2012 identifying sustainability, legality and animal-welfare issues in the python supply chain, ITC, together with the World Conservation Union's Boa and Python Specialist Species Group and Kering, an international group of luxury and sport & lifestyle brands, established a Public Private Partnership called the Python Conservation Partnership (PCP).

This PCP is a unique example of a United Nations organization, the private sector and scientists working together to tackle sustainability issues in conservation. It has pooled financial resources as well as expertise on markets, the fashion business and conservation biology. This has resulted in the provision of scientifically sound evidence for policymakers, such as CITES Parties, to regulate the trade more effectively. It has brought a business reality to the discussion and created greater awareness in the industry around options for enhancing the sustainability of trade in the species. Finally, it has identified capacity-building needs for traders, authorities and the communities managing wildlife.

As part of its contribution to the PCP, ITC has carried out an analysis of the livelihood benefits of the trade in python skins in Malaysia and Viet Nam. Despite the high visibility of the trade on the catwalks of Milan and London, there is very little awareness about who derives an income from the trade and how value can be increased for rural livelihoods. By carrying out this research, ITC and the PCP present evidence that the sustainable use of wild-harvested python skins is raising incomes for some of the poorest people in South-East Asia. In this respect, the trade contributes to social stability and reduced poverty.

I would like to thank the Boa and Python Specialist Group of the IUCN Specialist Survival Commission, the CITES Authorities in Malaysia and Viet Nam, the CITES Secretariat, Kering and its brand Gucci for their collaboration and support in producing the research.

I remain confident that the findings will contribute concretely to discussions at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties of CITES in September 2016 and beyond, as well as direct a greater level of interest and resources towards improved sustainable management and livelihood benefits from the trade in flora and fauna.

Arancha González

Executive Director
International Trade Centre

Foreword PERHILITAN



Trade in wildlife provides income to millions of people around the world, particularly to rural communities in developing countries. With the exception of fisheries, the harvest of reticulated pythons for skins is perhaps the most important wildlife trade in Peninsular Malaysia. Therefore, ensuring wild harvests and trade in pythons are sustainable is a similarly important challenge.

Internationally, this challenge is championed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). As a party to the CITES treaty, the challenge of ensuring sustainable trade in pythons from Peninsular Malaysia falls principally on the Department of Wildlife and National Parks of Peninsular Malaysia (PERHILITAN, the CITES Scientific Authority and Management Authority) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE, the lead CITES Management Authority).

The harvest of wild pythons for their skin is regulated through a licensing system that covers hunting up to trading as well as import and export. Since 2002, however, the European Union has banned imports of reticulated python skins from Peninsular Malaysia due to concerns about harvest sustainability. Despite this ban remaining in place, PERHILITAN has worked hard to improve management and regulation of the python skin trade because of the benefits the trade brings to local communities. The ability for people living in rural areas to capture pythons, worth up to \$30 each, contributes significantly to livelihood resilience. But without access to such a significant market, Malaysian business and communities are not realizing the potential value of this important resource.

In 2014, PERHILITAN began collaboration with the Python Conservation Partnership to improve the management and sustainability framework governing the python skin trade in Peninsular Malaysia. A critically important component of this work was to better understand how participation in the python skin trade impacts people's livelihoods and how regulatory changes can be tailored to mitigate adverse outcomes for trade participants.

With the publication of this report, a previously overlooked component of this trade has been recognized and an important information gap has been filled. I would like to acknowledge the support of the Python Conversation Partnership, and especially the International Trade Centre and the IUCN SSC Boa and Python Specialist Group, for contributing expertise and galvanizing efforts to support local livelihoods through sustainable trade.

The findings of this report will be useful for a variety of stakeholders, from NGOs and national conservation agencies, to regulatory bodies (e.g. CITES) and fashion houses. Specifically, this report is critical for the department's ongoing aim of ensuring the sustainable, legal and transparent trade of reticulated python skins, while at the same time safeguarding this important income stream for Malaysians and their families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dato' Abd Rasid Samsudin'.

Dato' Abd Rasid Samsudin

Director General
Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia

Acknowledgements

This study was carried out by Katarina Nossal (ITC), Damian Lettoof (ITC consultant), Nurshirah Mustapha (PERHILITAN), Hartini Ithnin (PERHILITAN), Syarifah Khadiejah, Syed Mohd Kamil (PERHILITAN), Jessica Lyons (IUCN BPSG) and Daniel Natusch (IUCN BPSG). Alexander Kasterine directed the work and Ann Kathrin Zotz (both ITC) managed the project.

The study was produced within the context of the Python Conservation Partnership (PCP), a public-private partnership between ITC, IUCN and Kering, established in 2013 with the objective of improving the sustainability of the python skin trade.

ITC and the study authors would like to express their appreciation to the hunters, workers and business owners in Peninsular Malaysia who agreed to be interviewed for this study. ITC also expresses gratitude to PERHILITAN (Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Peninsular Malaysia) for supporting and facilitating the research and field visits.

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About the Python Conservation Partnership

A collaboration between Kering, the International Trade Centre and the Boa and Python Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN/SSC Boa and Python Specialist Group), the Python Conservation Partnership (PCP) was established in November 2013 with the aim of contributing to the improved sustainability of the python skin trade and to help facilitate industry-wide change. The PCP's programme of research is focused on research and recommendations to improve sustainability, transparency, animal welfare and local livelihoods for the python skin trade.

About the International Trade Centre

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC supports businesses in developing countries to become more competitive in global markets, speeding economic development and contributing to the achievement of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. ITC works with policymakers, trade support institutions, exporters and other stakeholders in the public and private sectors to enable export success of small and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries and transition economies.

About the Boa and Python Specialist Group

The Boa and Python Specialist Group (BPSG) is a global network of volunteer experts, part of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC). The BPSG is the leading world authority on boas and pythons. Its mission is to provide expert opinion and scientific advice to IUCN and other conservation organizations, government and non-government agencies, applicable to the conservation of boas and pythons.

About Kering

A world leader in apparel and accessories, Kering develops an ensemble of powerful Luxury and Sport & Lifestyle brands: Gucci, Bottega Veneta, Saint Laurent, Alexander McQueen, Balenciaga, Brioni, Christopher Kane, McQ, Stella McCartney, Tomas Maier, Boucheron, Dodo, Girard-Perregaux, JeanRichard, Pomellato, Qeelin, Ulysse Nardin, Puma, Volcom and Cobra. By 'empowering imagination' in the fullest sense, Kering encourages its brands to reach their potential in the most sustainable manner. Present in more than 120 countries, the Group generated revenue of more than €11.5 billion in 2015 and had more than 38,000 employees at year end. The Kering (previously PPR) share is listed on Euronext Paris (FR 0000121485, [KER.PA](#), KER.FP).

About PERHILITAN

The Department of Wildlife and National Parks of Peninsular Malaysia (known locally as Jabatan Perlindungan Hidupan Liar dan Taman Negara, Semenanjung Malaysia – PERHILITAN) is a government organization responsible for the protection, management and conservation of wildlife and national parks in Peninsular Malaysia. PERHILITAN is responsible for the control and monitoring of the python skin trade in Peninsular Malaysia.

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