The role of the Federal Customs Service in the conservation of Siberian biodiversity

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the problem of biodiversity conservation. The law enforcement activity of the Federal Customs Service of Russia to curb illegal trafficking of objects of wild flora and fauna in the Siberian region has been considered. Key areas of cooperation between the customs authorities and the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora administration have been identified.

1. Introduction

The removal from nature and the illegal trade in objects of wild flora and fauna is one of the reasons for the reduction of biodiversity on the planet. According to expert estimates, from 1975 to 2014, the volume of registered trade in wild animals included in the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) list increased from 25 million units per year to 100 million [1]. The volume of illegal trade in rare species of animals, birds, plants, according to various sources, ranges from 6 to 15 billion dollars a year.

The Siberian Federal District is rich in flora and fauna. On the territory of the Altai-Sayan region and the Krasnoyarsk Territory there are species included in the Red Book of the Russian Federation, CITES Appendices, the List of especially valuable animals and biological resources. For example, snow leopard, lynx, manul, argali, snow sheep, wild reindeer, musk deer, roe deer, brown and polar bears, wolf, otter, golden eagle, eagles, peregrine falcon, gyrfalcon, saker falcon, Siberian sturgeon.

The cross-border territory with the Republic of Kazakhstan, the border with Mongolia and China, where there is traditionally a high demand for wildlife objects, contribute to the illegal movement of living specimens and derivatives.

According to experts of the Siberian Environmental Center for 2010-2015, illegal volume of trade (export) of birds of prey was: peregrine falcon 300-500 specimens, saker - 1500-2000 specimens, gyrfalcon - 2000-2500 specimens. The smuggling of derivatives does not stop - fur skins, paws and claws of a bear, musk of musk deer, antlers and tails of reindeer, eggs of northern birds, chaga mushroom, lips and antlers of an elk, bile and fat of a bear, etc.

It is impossible to guarantee the conservation of these species in the wild without providing control over the circulation of animals and their derivatives.
2. Materials and methods
In 1973, as a part of the solution to the international problem of the diversity conservation, the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was adopted.

On the territory of the Eurasian Economic Union, the customs authorities play a leading role in the fulfillment of the obligations of the CITES by Russia.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the law enforcement activities of the Federal Customs Service of Russia and identify priority areas in the field of combating smuggling and illegal movement of wild flora and fauna objects, their derivatives across the customs border of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the Russian Federation.

The informational basis of the study consists of reports on the results of law enforcement activities of the Siberian Customs Administration, legislative acts, materials of non-governmental environmental organizations.

3. Results and discussion
The permissible import / export procedure is in force on the territory of the Eurasian Economic Union for wild living animals and birds, wild plants, wild medicinal raw materials, species of wild flora and fauna included in the CITES lists and the Red Books of the Union states.

The statistics of detected smuggling during customs control by the customs authorities of the Siberian Customs Administration in 2018 is presented by the following samples and derivatives of animal origin:

When exported from the territory of the Russian Federation:

- Horns of the Mongolian dzern - 132 pcs., With a total weight of 40 kg, packed in synthetic bags hidden in wagons with coal (Chita Customs).
- Undeclared skins of fur animals (Altai Customs).
- 25 paws of a bear, with a total weight of 35.7 kg, hidden in a carriage with ore, packed in synthetic bags (Chita Customs).
- Derivatives - artiodactyl tails - 465 pcs., weight - 93 kg, bear paws - 4 pcs., weight - 2.2 kg, the internal organs of an animal - 2 kg were packed in plastic bags and hidden in the back of the cargo compartments of gondola cars with ore (Chita Customs).
- Claws of paws of a bear - 20 pcs. in the accompanying baggage of a citizen of the PRC, traveling from Russia to China (Chita Customs).
- Bear fangs in the amount - 14 pcs. in the accompanying baggage of a citizen of the PRC, traveling from Russia to China (Chita Customs).
- Deer tails - 77 pcs. (20.6 kg), tail and stream of musk deer - 104 pcs. (18.9 kg), bear paws - 41 pcs. (52.5 kg), moose lips - 6 pcs. (15.3 kg), saiga horns - 121 pcs. (22.2 kg) - Chita Customs. Derivatives were packed in plastic bags and hidden in wagons with ore. In total, more than 349 units were found. derivatives weighing 136 kg.
- Deer tails - 31 pcs., Packed in polyethylene bundles, hidden in the spine beams of wagons with lumber exported to the PRC (Chita Customs).
- 10.5 kg of dried trepang ("sea cucumber"), packed in cardboard boxes from Chinese citizens traveling from Russia to China (Chita Customs).
- Illegal export to the Republic of Kazakhstan of more than 19.5 tons of the Far East (Pacific) pink salmon from and over 1070 kg of granular salmon caviar worth 4.8 million rubles. (Novosibirsk Customs).
- 4 fangs of a brown bear with a length of 75 mm to 80 mm, a weight of 16.1 to 17.8 grams, and a market value of 9600 rubles in the baggage of a Russian citizen of the Ulan-Ude - Beijing flight (Buryat Customs).
An attempt to remove the owner of a private circus of exotic animals (tiger python, 2 imperial boa constrictors, 3 Ara parrots, 3 leopards and a puma) as part of a tour to the Republic of Kazakhstan was prevented (Novosibirsk Customs).

When imported into the territory of the Russian Federation:

- 2 stuffed endangered crocodile species in the accompanying baggage of a Russian tourist (Novosibirsk Customs).
- Pelican heads (Altai Customs).
- 2 stuffed Siamese crocodiles from a citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan, with a market value of 6.8 thousand rubles declared as souvenirs (Omsk Customs).
- An attempt was prevented to illegally import from Kazakhstan into Russia exotic animals in the amount of 15 individuals (2 leopards, 7 boas and 6 caimans) transported in a semi-trailer of a truck of a Russian citizen (Altai Customs).

In the 1st quarter of 2019, during the customs inspection of baggage of passengers of flights arriving from Vietnam and Thailand, customs officers of the Kemerovo customs discovered rare corals of the Madreporov type declared as souvenirs. Employees of Altai Customs prevented an attempt to smuggle 15 exotic animals from Russia to the Republic of Kazakhstan - North American cougar, African lion, Amur tigers, Canadian wolves, primates, Himalayan bears, brown bear.

The illegal export is suppressed during the customs inspection and personal customs inspection, as well as during the verification of documents and information.

For the detained species of animals and derivatives, there were no customs declaration and documents confirming permission to move across the EEU customs border - permissions from CITES administrative bodies of the importers and exporters; veterinary certificates; documents confirming the legality of the acquisition.

Transported animals:
- included into the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES),
- belong to strategically important resources and especially valuable wild animals belonging to species listed in the Red Book of the Russian Federation and protected by international treaties of the Russian Federation.

In this regard, administrative cases were initiated in accordance with the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation:

- according to part 2 of article 16.1 "Concealment of goods from customs control through the use of hiding places ..."
- according to part 1 of article 16.2. "Undeclared goods in the prescribed form ...
- according to article 16.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation “Non-compliance with prohibitions and (or) restrictions on the import / export of goods ...

Criminal proceedings have been instituted:

- under part 1 of art. 226.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation “Smuggling of strategically important goods and resources in large quantities or of especially valuable wild animals and aquatic biological resources belonging to species listed in the Red Book of the Russian Federation and (or) protected by international treaties of the Russian Federation, their parts and derivatives) ”
- according to art. 258.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation “Illegal extraction and trafficking of especially valuable wild animals and aquatic biological resources belonging
to species listed in the Red Book of the Russian Federation and (or) protected by international treaties of the Russian Federation”.

The analysis of law enforcement materials allowed the authors to formulate the following relevant areas in the field of combating smuggling and illegal movement of wild flora and fauna across the customs border of the EEU and the Russian Federation.

1. Assessment and monitoring of the illegal trade market of wild flora and fauna objects.

The research showed that at the state level there is no centralized system of monitoring the market and recording the volume of illegal trafficking in living objects of wild flora and fauna and their derivatives. That does not allow to quantify the volume of export-import operations, domestic trade and consumption.

As a rule, researches are carried out by public environmental organizations using the example of individual geographical territories or taxon.

For example, in the framework of the implementation of the TRAFFIC Europe program in Russia in 2013, a report was prepared on “Trade in objects of flora and fauna in the countries of the Customs Union within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) and individual states of Central Asia.”

Projects were carried out to study the illegal extraction and trade of saiga horns, wild animals in Central Asia, birds of prey, sturgeon, argali, musk deer and wild plants in Russia and the CIS countries.

The results of the 70th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee held in Sochi in 2018 indicate positive changes in solving this problem.

The customs and administrative bodies of CITES of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan reached an agreement on the need of:
- exchange of monitoring data on illegal trade in the EEC and Central Asia, “black lists” of smugglers to curb the possibility of illegal actions;
- creating a unified database on CITES Appendix II and violators.
- exchange of experience between the customs services, scientific and administrative bodies of CITES.

According to expert estimates, a significant part of the international illegal trade in flora and fauna is carried out through Internet sites [2].

In Russia, a study to identify cases of dubious or illegal online trade in wild species and their products was conducted in 2013 by the International Fund for the Protection of Animals (IFAW). As a result of which the report “Find Dead or Alive: Exposing the Online Wildlife Trade” was presented.

Trade offers in 280 online stores in 16 countries were analyzed. It was revealed that more than 33 thousand wild animals, parts of their bodies and goods made of them are involved in illegal traffic.

Bearing in mind the transition to a Risk-based approach in control and supervisory activities, it is advisable to use an automated system for collecting, processing and recording data to track the illegal trade in wild animals in social networks and on-line sites.

The automatic tracking of information content will allow to process promotional offers. Based on the presented photo and video materials, individual parts of the object, voice messages, issued sounds of animals and birds, to identify and classify them, determine their habitat, and identify the structure of consumer preferences [3].

2. Identification of species.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) restricts the commercial trade in endangered species. But it should be noted that applying CITES trade restrictions can be problematic due to errors in species identification.

In 2018, in collaboration with the Federal Customs Service of Russia, CITES Administrative and Scientific Authorities in Russia, and the World Wildlife Fund of Russia, the “Brief guide to animals and plants included into CITES applications” was reissued.
The next stage is the creation between the FCS of Russia, the CITES Administrative and Scientific Authorities of a single information and technical network for information interaction and the provision of on-line consultation assistance by customs officers. The electronic database should contain the following information - photographs of the sample and its derivatives, their description; description of illegal movements and methods of their identification. The database can be structured taking into account the territorial location of customs authorities and samples, which are most often the subject of smuggling.

3. Improving the institution of customs examination.

In cases of administrative offenses and in cases of criminal offenses, a decision is made on a customs examination of the object of wild flora and fauna.

The main objective of the customs examination is the identification of taxonomic affiliation; belonging to one of the CITES Applications, inclusion into the Red Book of the Russian Federation and the List of strategically important resources.

Determination of origin from nature or captivity, country of origin, habitat; commodity nomenclature of foreign economic activity of the EEU code; physical and chemical properties, quantitative and qualitative composition; market value of the sample; storage and transportation conditions.

While conducting research, organoleptic, physicochemical and microbiological methods are used. Due to the fact that a significant part of the objects of wild flora and fauna is moved across the customs border in the form of derivatives, processed products, after chemical and technological processing, we consider it appropriate to use the DNA method during the identification examination. This method has been successfully tested in world practice by the example of dried sea horses, fur materials, rhino horn products and leather products [4,5,6].

The habitat of such rare species as snow leopard, red wolf, manul, peregrine falcon, gyrfalcon, saker, argali, etc. covers not only the Siberian region, but also the territories of the EEU member states.

In 2014, as a part of international cooperation, a Eurasian forensic network was established in the field of protection of wild flora and fauna. The priority areas of its activities include:

- development of teaching materials for the forensic examination of wild flora and fauna objects,
- introduction of a Eurasian reference collection of rare and endangered species of wild flora and fauna, standard samples for research,
- interaction with the Central Forensic Customs Administration, including the level of territorial divisions.

4. Increasing the level of professional training of customs officers.

Customs officers should possess not only operational skills in detecting and identifying rare and endangered species of wild flora and fauna, but also knowledge in the field of commodity research, biology, jurisprudence, and rules for the transport of living specimens.

An increase in the level of professional training of the Siberian Customs Administration employees can be realized by holding training seminars and publishing specialized manuals.

For example, in the period of 2006-2010 in the framework of the UN Project and the Global Ecological Fund “Biodiversity Conservation in the Russian part of the Altai-Sayan Region”, seminars were held for customs of the Siberian Federal District to exchange experience in countering the illegal movement of rare species of wild flora and fauna and their derivatives.

At the present time, at the Siberian Federal University, in the course of training specialists in the "Customs" educational program, a training course "Customs regulation and the fight against smuggling in the international circulation of CITES facilities" is being implemented. Certain issues related to the merchandising characteristics of samples of the animal and plant world are studied in Commodity Research [7,8].
In 2005, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) of Russia prepared a methodological manual “Customs regulation and the fight against smuggling in the international circulation of CITES facilities”.

In 2014, the Siberian Ecological Center reissued the “Atlas of animal species and their derivatives - the main objects of illegal trade in the Altai-Sayan Ecoregion” [9].

5. Intersectoral interaction in the framework of operational activities.

The work to curb smuggling and illegal movement of flora and fauna is carried out in close cooperation with law enforcement and regulatory authorities - the Border Directorate of the Federal Security Service of Russia, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, territorial bodies of the Rosselkhoznadzor, Rospotrebnadzor, environmental and transport prosecutors.

For example, monitoring compliance with import / export bans on certain categories of goods near the Russian-Kazakh border in Altai customs and the Russian-Chinese border in Chita customs is successfully carried out by mobile groups.

An agreement on information interaction was signed between the Federal Customs Service and the Federal Service for Supervision in the area of Natural Resources Management.

4. Conclusions

The implementation of the above areas in law enforcement will contribute to the prevention and suppression of illegal traffic, and therefore, the conservation of rare and endangered wildlife. Effective activity is possible only with partnership between the FCS of Russia and the administrative and scientific bodies of CITES, non-governmental environmental organizations and through the exchange of experience and information, implementation of joint projects and scientific and practical activities.

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