



Impacts of an Extraction and Trade Ban on Exploitation for India's Seahorses

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My research focuses on the impact of management measures for the conservation of seahorses and the livelihoods associated with the seahorse fisheries. I use the case study of seahorses in India, where in 2001, all Syngnathids were placed under the Wild Life Protection Act, preventing the catch and export of all species in this family. In 2002, all species of seahorses were listed in Appendix II of the Convention of International Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), which regulates export of these fish to ensure that populations are not damaged by international trade. Fifteen years on, the trade of seahorses in India continues but has been driven underground. Little is known about the quantity, value or number of seahorses that are being caught and traded annually. Over two field seasons, through semi-structured interviews and port sampling, I conducted surveys along the entire Indian coast with multiple stakeholders and forest officials, to understand the changes and the current scenario. I also carried out in-depth interviews in Tamil Nadu, a state in Southeast India, a traditional hot-spot for both the directed and incidental seahorse fishery. My study found that landings of seahorses and trade continues illegally, particularly in Tamil Nadu, and that the price of seahorses has increased after the ban. My work is highly topical because CITES recently decided to ban exports from Guinea, Senegal and Vietnam because of their difficulties in implementing the Convention. We need to anticipate and address the likely effects of such bans.

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