



TROPICAL BEAR. Inuka, the world's first polar bear born in the tropics, swims in his enclosure at the Singapore Zoo in Singapore in this May 29, 2013 file photo. Inuka was euthanized recently. The 27-year-old bear suffered from age-related ailments including arthritis, and his limbs became too weak to support his more than 1,100-pound frame. (AP Photo/Wong Maye-E, File)

Singapore euthanizes 27-year-old polar bear born in tropics

By Annabelle Liang
The Associated Press

SINGAPORE — Inuka, the world's first polar bear born in the tropics, has been euthanized by the Singapore Zoo, officials said.

The 27-year-old bear suffered from age-related ailments including arthritis, and his limbs became too weak to support his more than 1,100-pound frame.

The zoo said this resulted in injuries to its abdomen and paws that did not respond well to weeks of intensive treatment.

A team of veterinarians and keepers decided not to revive the bear after a thorough health check was performed.

"Looking at all the symptoms, it is quite clear that from ... Inuka's point of view, he would have been suffering quite a fair bit of discomfort and pain," said Cheng

Wen-Haur, deputy chief executive of Wildlife Reserves Singapore, which runs most of the country's zoos.

"So we made the only right call that we can make under the situation," he added.

Male polar bears typically live for 15 to 18 years in the wild and about 25 years in captivity, the zoo said.

Inuka was born in December 1990. In recent months, his health had been on a steady decline.

Last month the zoo said Inuka might be euthanized if a medical examination showed he was suffering.

Visitors flocked to the zoo to catch a final glimpse of the bear. Some left cards and messages wishing for a speedy recovery.

Inuka was Singapore's only remaining polar bear — and is likely to be its last. The zoo has said it will not keep any more polar bears.

British group says Asian elephants are at risk from Chinese demand for skin

By Kawewit Kaewjinda
The Associated Press

BANGKOK — A report by a British-based conservation group says rising Chinese demand for products made from elephant skin is driving poaching and posing an even greater threat to Asia's wild herds than the ivory trade.

The group Elephant Family says the threat is currently greatest in Myanmar, but warns that the Asian elephant could become extinct in half of the areas where it now ranges in the region if the problem escalates. It says the threat exceeds that from the ivory trade because poachers are targeting any elephant, not just those with tusks, and threatens elephants that are scattered in poorly protected areas.

The report's authors say their research shows that the elephant's skin is ground into powder and sold in China as a cure for stomach ailments, as well as being fashioned into beads for necklaces, bracelets, and pendants.

The products are sold in physical markets and increasingly over the internet, where the report says sellers post videos showing workers in backyards in Myanmar and Laos cutting up and carving elephant carcasses to vouch for the authenticity of their wares.

Belinda Stewart-Cox, Elephant Family's director of conservation, told reporters at a news conference that from the time the group started monitoring in 2014, there has been "a major ramping up of the advertising, the promotional pitches, and the apparent sales."

She said it seems as if "there are marketers and profiteers behind this looking to ratchet up what has, I think,



NEW DANGER. In this February 16, 2018 file photo provided by conservation group Elephant Family, skin stripped off an elephant carcass is seen in Myanmar. A report by the British-based conservation group says rising Chinese demand for products made from elephant skin is driving poaching and posing an even greater threat to Asia's wild herds than the ivory trade. (Klaus Reisinger/Compass Films via AP)

long been a very, very minor incidental or local market trade of no great scale, or no scale that was threatening, anyways."

Researchers identified 50 individual Chinese traders selling through social-media forums. They say labels are printed in Chinese, prices are quoted in Chinese currency, and sales online are conducted in Mandarin.

The report — "Skinned: The Growing Appetite for Asian Elephants" — also says China's State Forestry Administration has apparently licensed some products that contain elephant skin.

"At a time when China has shown commitment to ending its domestic trade in elephant ivory, it would be troubling and perverse to find that, at the same time, it is creating a new, legal demand for elephant skin products," it said.

Stewart-Cox said her organization has reached out to Chinese officials and has worked closely with Myanmar officials to

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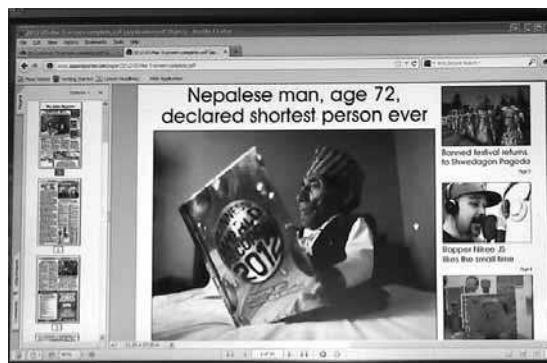


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