

IMAGES of the natural world, both beautiful and disturbing have proved essential to campaigners at a pioneering environmental charity. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) explains how they are a powerful tool in the fight against global eco-crime.

VISUAL information has always been key to EIA's work from its humble beginnings nearly 25 years ago, set up in a backroom by three people. One of the founders of the charity, Dave Currey, as well as being an impassioned conservationist, was a professional photographer by trade. He was quick to recognise that his images could be hard-hitting, often having more immediate and lasting impact than mere words.

"From the beginning we realised that photographs and film win campaigns. EIA's early work was successful because of our undercover investigations and ability to explain them visually."

This work was to take him and others all over the world in often difficult and dangerous situations, from openly photographing poached elephants and smuggled birds, to hiding in a box to snatch a shot of a spurious deal.

"In the 1980s we were known in Fleet Street for our professional images and unique information. This gave us access to high-circulation magazines with photographs that told the story, even though there was two or three of us".

EIA now has a US office as well as UK headquarters and networks with other organisations in Indonesia, China, Japan, India, South America and beyond.

Focusing on environmental crime, it has developed covert techniques such as hidden camera filming, covert surveillance and research techniques similarly used by investigative journalists, forensic accountants and intelligence agencies to gather information. This data is used either as leverage upon governments or industries behind the scenes to exert change in policy or published publicly in 'name and shame' reports... an attempt to jolt stakeholders and governments into action.

For a very small organisation, EIA has achieved considerable results, often described as 'punching well above its weight'. Images have always been a key factor.

Dave, now a director says: *"Our highly successful elephant "ban ivory" campaign from 1987-1989 was built on colour supplements, magazines, TV documentaries and close cooperation with TV news, all because we could deliver visually. Although we may be able to accept the survival of the fittest and animals' natural instincts, however brutal they may appear, man's cruelty to animals is not seemingly always as easy to stomach. While certain publications and broadcasters are happy to print 'aah' shots of cuddly, young animals, often editors refuse to publish anything 'too gorey' for fear of offending*

readers' at the breakfast table, whatever the reality of what is happening'.

Recently, EIA obtained exclusive shots of mounds of tiger carcasses heaped up in a room in one of China's controversial tiger farms. Officials had been conducting a PR tour at the time, in an (rather misconceived) effort to convince people of the merits of raising tigers in barred pens to be farmed for their parts. Despite much initial interest, not a single UK news outlet ran the pictures, considering them 'too much.' But other times, bolder picture editors can make waves internationally.

Dave recalls: *"Photographs can still leave a lasting memory in people's minds. I remember a bizarre occasion, soon after LIFE had published a double-page spread of one of my pictures of the blood red sea during a whale and dolphin kill in the Faroe Islands. I was on a remote island in the Philippines talking with a dolphin butcher and he was explaining how sad he thought it was that dolphins drowned*

in the nets. "They cry, you know" he explained. "It's horrible. But you know what I can't understand, I saw it in a magazine. People in Europe actually kill these animals deliberately and stain the sea with their blood. Barbarians!"

"When your pictures have reached every corner of the world, you know you're getting somewhere."

Nowadays, EIA continues to use digital video and stills to expose environmental crime and train others.

It is not all doom and gloom, hope is important too and positive images that demonstrate the incredible beauty of the natural world, can equally show that there are environments and species worth fighting for.

Over the years, EIA has been lucky to have been given many images from both award-winning wildlife photographers and top artists to help with its campaigns. Artist's names include Jenny Hartree, Kate Salway and professional photographers Tony Heald, Elliot Neep and Iain Green. They have given permission for some of their work to be used on posters, literature and fundraising material.

Best selling artist Gary Hodges, renowned for his intricate pencil works, is one such artist who has a long-standing relationship with EIA. He donates proceeds of his work to the organisation and other similar charities.

"I have been involved with the three directors since the inception of EIA. I felt very comfortable and confident about donating my work and that any money raised could be put to good use."

Wildlifes' Secret Agents

~ The work of the EIA ~

(Environmental Investigation Agency)

by Stuart Coles



Gary draws a variety of creatures, but admits he tends to rely on the 'old favourites', big cats and elephants, to pay the rent. "It does depend partly on what is likely to be popular. I'm unlikely to draw spiders or scorpions as they probably won't be very popular or bring in any money for myself or conservation groups".

He works from his own photographs of animals and says involvement with conservationists has helped his work: 'I think it helps a little to have some inside knowledge.' One picture, depending on the size, can take Gary anything from a couple of weeks for a small drawing to two, three or four months for a larger piece.

Freelance photographer and writer Iain Green specialises in documenting UK and Indian wildlife. Tigers are his passion and for ten years he has documented the lives of a family of wild tigers living in central India. In 2002, his first book 'Wild Tigers of Bandhavgarh', was published by Tiger Books to critical acclaim. In November 2007, Iain's second book about the tigers was published - 'Tiger Jungle' which offers a unique insight into the lives of a small population of wild tigers.

He explains one of the moments which makes his work so enjoyable: "There are few finer moments as a wildlife photographer than finding four young tigers and their mother lying in the jungle on a sun-drenched ledge. Over the course of the next hour, the late afternoon light warmed and the scene became more enchanting. In contrast to the worldwide situation, the jungles of Bandhavgarh currently have a healthy population of tigers and offer a clear example of how India's tiger population could increase significantly in just a few years, given thorough protection, that is why I support the EIA - working hard to protect tigers and their habitat." □

You can find out more about EIA's work and see artists' and photographers' work on sale at its new online shop at www.eia-international.org

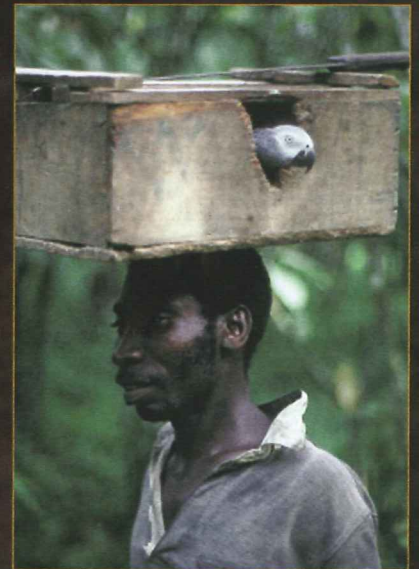


Facing Page
Centre:
1999 - Kenya
Tsavo NP,
Elephant

Left:
1988 - Kenya
Tsavo NP
Poached
Elephant

Below Right:
1993 - Ghana
Trapper, Call
Bird

Below Left:
1999 - Indonesia
Orangutan



Far Left:
India - Tiger
(photo Iain Green)

Left:
1983 - Norway
Minke Whaling

Bottom Left:
1994 - Vietnam
Ho Chi Minh
Bear Paw



Bottom Right:
1986 - Faroe
Islands
Leyal Bay
Pilot Whales

Note: All photos reproduced courtesy of the EIA