

Focal Point & Reviewers Orientation Meeting 8-9 May, Bangkok 2019

Overview

In May 2019, 34 CA|TS reviewers, focal points and National Committee members as well as WWF staff and staff from the Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Thailand met in Bangkok, Thailand for a two day CA|TS orientation meeting. Coming from Bhutan, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Russia and Thailand, delegates represented the majority of countries where CA|TS is currently active.

The meetings objectives were to:

- 🐯 Accelerate CA|TS across the tiger range by building the capacity of the CA|TS National Committees and Independent Reviewers.
- 🐯 Discuss the challenges and lessons learned from CA|TS assessments and review.
- 🐯 Introduce the new integrated site-based tiger management software, “CA|TS Log”, and provide hands-on training.
- 🐯 Review processes to complete assessments of WWF tiger HII sites by January 2020.

The primary outputs were:

- 🐯 Focal points and reviewers shared and learned lessons on improving the CA|TS assessment process.
- 🐯 All participants were trained in the use the CA|TS Log software and can now train site managers in their respective TRCs.



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Day 1

The meeting was opened (**session 1**) by **Natalie Phaholyotin, CEO WWF Thailand**, who reminded the meeting that tiger goals were challenging and 2022 is only three years away. She noted the external factors and conservation challenges that link the region and stressed the need for more collaborative and a meaningful approach to conservation across Asia. She stressed that CA|TS can help us realise our goals and work together.

Stuart Chapman, WWF TAI Lead, elaborated that a major challenge was to show that humans can co-exist with large predators like tigers, to achieve the goal of living in harmony with nature. Tigers are conservation dependent species; to achieve conservation success we need conservation at its best which is the aim of CA|TS. The pressures are great; we have lost viable tiger populations in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia and Malaysian populations are in crisis due to land use change and poaching. He stressed 2022 is an unprecedented opportunity for tiger conservation.

Sue Stolton, CA|TS, introduced CA|TS, the manual and provided an overview of the meetings programme. She noted that the next two days provided a great opportunity to learn from experiences in implementing CA|TS across the tiger range.

Khalid Pasha, CA|TS Manager, provided a short history of the development of CA|TS and the CA|TS partnership. He noted that CA|TS is a step towards more transparent and evidence-based conservation; which is important not only for site management but for investors who want to clearly see impact and outputs from conservation measures.



CA|TS Manual
Version 2 | June 2018

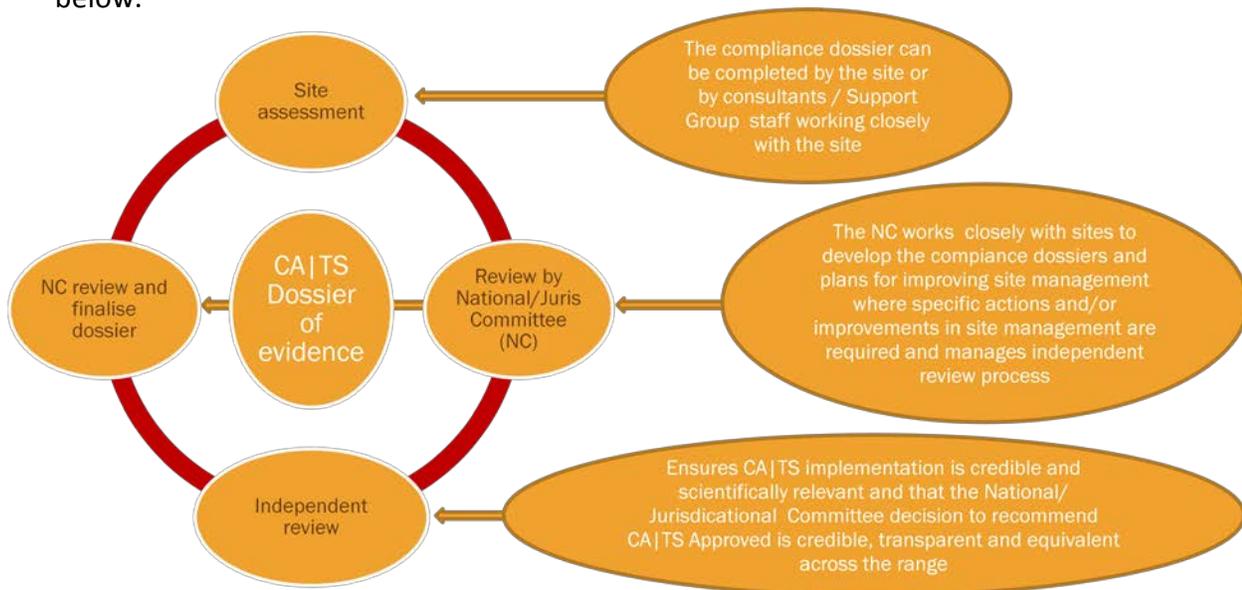


BS Bonal, GTF, gave the final opening presentation. He stressed the need for making provision in CA|TS for dealing with the concept of core and buffer zones where CA|TS sites are considered for the areas outside tiger reserves (see Box 1 for further discussion). He also noted the need for more explanation for managers on the tangible benefits of being involved in CA|TS and noted the challenge of trying to get 150 sites involved by 2022. He stated that the GTF is pressing all TRCs to become involved in CA|TS.

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Session 2 focussed on CA|TS process and governance. Sue reviewed the initial challenges to develop a system which could gather together guidance on good practices from across the tiger range to help sites ensure ‘effective’ management and to develop a system which was outcome-orientated rather than process-orientated.

The result was CA|TS which provides a set of peer-developed and reviewed standards and criteria which describe management measures and interventions against which sites can verify compliance through a credible and independent assessment and review process. The national (or jurisdictional) processes are at the heart of the CA|TS system – as outlined in the diagram below.



Khalid led a general discussion on the challenges and needs to accelerate the roll out of CA|TS. Key discussion points focused around the need for:

- 🐯 **Benefits to be clearly shown for CA|TS Accreditation:** CA|TS is not a funding agency, but being involved in the CA|TS partnership provides a vehicle for linking action plans to funders as has happened in Nepal and Russia.



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- 🐯 **A technical committee:** to focus on standards and assessment has been discussed; Mr Patnaik offered to develop a concept paper on such a committee's remit, draft terms of reference etc.
- 🐯 **A more streamlined process:** the CA|TS form is very long, however the CA|TS Log should help streamline the process and make the dossier easier to develop. It was noted that the detailed CA|TS standards and criteria were developed by the wider tiger community; and thus any simplification would be going against the wishes of site managers etc.
- 🐯 **Clarify the re-approval process:** it was agreed that the process needed to be re-clarified to NCs. All sites remain 'CA|TS Approved' for the long-term, but with a review every three years. If status is 'suspended', which will only happen if major issues arise, the whole CA|TS partnership will prioritise working with the suspended site to reinstate CA|TS Approved status as soon as possible. It was agreed that the process be renamed the "review process" to aid clarity.
- 🐯 **Register more CA|TS sites:** it was noted that there was a need to persuade people at the policy level, as the acceptance of new tools at government level can be difficult.

Sessions 3 and 4 focussed around a discussion on what makes good evidence for demonstrating in the compliance dossier that the CA|TS criteria have been met. In particular, the CA|TS Log software will include the facility to rate the quality of the evidence provided, and thus new guidance is needed. The outcome of the discussion was a set of draft criteria which will be further edited and added as a new section in the next issue of the CA|TS manual.

Indicators of weak evidence include:

- 🐯 Data is not long term
- 🐯 Protocols are inconsistent
- 🐯 Lack of feedback mechanisms
- 🐯 Lack of implementation evidence
- 🐯 Lack of official endorsement

Indicators of strong evidence include:

- 🐯 Evidence must match the criteria
- 🐯 Focus should always be on implementation
- 🐯 Budget allocated to specific activities



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- 🐯 Workers allocated to specific activities (e.g. % of total people, staff, volunteers, other workers, e.g. army, research staff etc, working on core issues)
- 🐯 Payroll records
- 🐯 MOUs / Agreement regarding collaborations / partnerships
- 🐯 Real time data (e.g. GPS)
- 🐯 Robust methodologies / protocols (e.g. for research, monitoring etc)
- 🐯 Independent audit of reports
- 🐯 Peer-review
- 🐯 Sign-off by superiors
- 🐯 Nationally collected data
- 🐯 State (national, regional etc) endorsement of plans
- 🐯 Evidence base is long-term and consistent (e.g. SMART data) and verified on ground
- 🐯 Minutes of meeting indicating outcomes



In addition a set of specific guidance in relation to certain types of evidence was discussed which can also be edited into version 2.1 of the CA|TS manual:

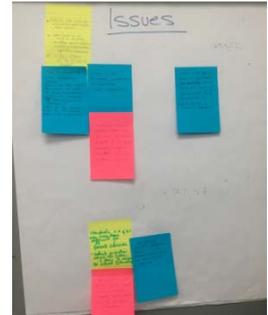
- 🐯 Detailed guidance has been developed for implementation of legislation, guidelines, policies, strategies and interventions
- 🐯 Research / journal papers need to be accompanied by evidence that results are feedback into management (Element 10)
- 🐯 Photos / videos need to be up to date, thus be clearly dated and event / source clearly labelled
- 🐯 Satellite data supports fire management and habitat issues
- 🐯 Payments for compensation etc, are allocated in a timely fashion



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Box 1: Additional issues

At the start of the meeting participants were asked to write down any specific issues about CA|TS they wanted to discuss. Most of these were covered in the main meeting but one area on Element 2 (area design) was discussed in detail. It was noted that the concept of core and buffer areas (standards 2.1 and 2.2) is not applicable in all areas (e.g. in protected areas in Bhutan, forest divisions in India etc). Such areas are vital for tiger conservation but we need to make it clear that this is a concept that does always need to be a specific / legal zone. It was discussed how this concept could be more clearly explained. Suggested revised text is given below and will be included in version 2.1 of the CA|TS manual:

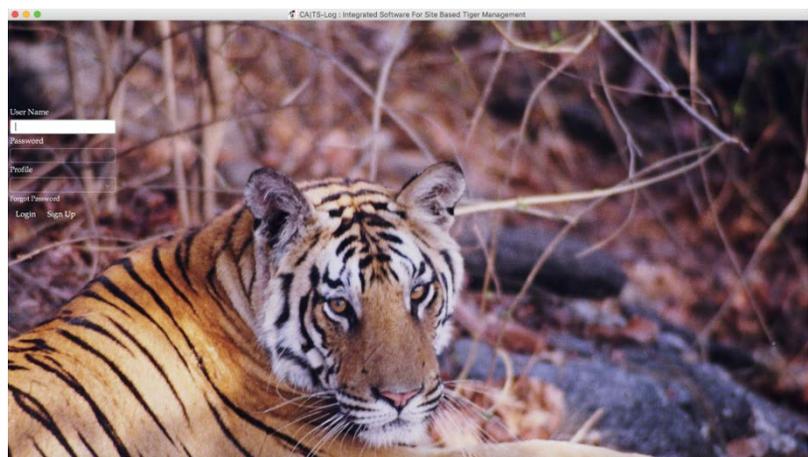


Critical tiger habitats, e.g. core areas, or similar conservation areas etc, are present at the site. Such areas are defined as having:

-  Optimum conditions for tiger and prey habitat
-  Minimal human disturbance (e.g. only patrols, research activities) and no human settlement
-  Evidence of tiger breeding (e.g. females with cubs)
-  High prey density

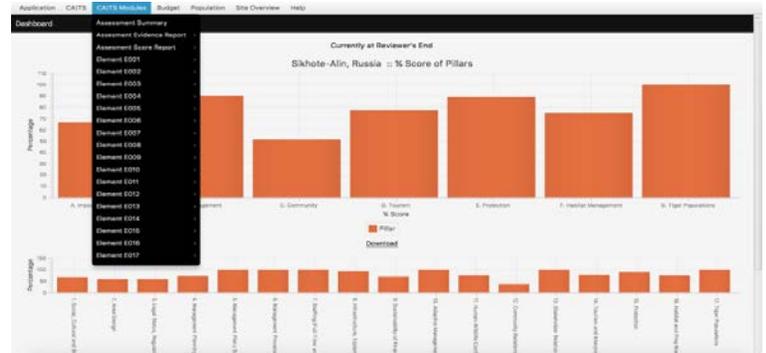
Day 2

The focus of day 2 was the introduction, review and hands on training of the new “Integrated software for site-based tiger conservation: the CA|TS Log” (**sessions 5 and 6**). The aim of the software is to capture needs, guide and prioritise actions and track site progress, to demonstrate conservation outcome through evidence-based conservation process.

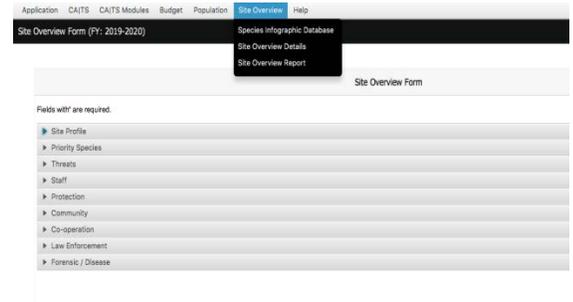


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This is the first global software for site-based conservation in protected and conserved areas. It can form the basis for monitoring progress, measuring outputs and outcomes and summarising the conservation impact of management; and thus can also be useful in supporting donor confidence in conservation investment.



The software was well received by participants and it was generally agreed that using the software will make the CA|TS accreditation and review process easier. It was suggested that CA|TS should provide training on the software to key government officials of TRCs so that they can fully understand the importance of CA|TS Log software and implement it in their respective countries.



Site Overview Form (FY: 2019-2020)

Fields with * are required.

- Site Profile
- Priority Species
- Threats
- Staff
- Protection
- Community
- Co-operation
- Law Enforcement
- Forensic / Disease

Specific issues to be resolved by the developers and the CA|TS management team included:

- 🐅 Identify mandatory fields for sign-ups form.
- 🐅 Give password limit and details.
- 🐅 Password retrieval process.
- 🐅 Add country focal point user type.
- 🐅 Add login history.
- 🐅 Revise criteria ratings codes and colouring.
- 🐅 Refer to CA|TS Manual (hyperlink to manual) so guidance notes and evidence guidelines are easily to hand.
- 🐅 Fix 'saving' bug.
- 🐅 Remove the file limit (criteria 5 MB).
- 🐅 Delete file function (in file upload criteria)
- 🐅 Have two quality criteria for evidence (strong or weak).
- 🐅 Revise the CA|TS confidentiality statement to included reference to CA|TS log and include in the software.
- 🐅 Need to revise some of the titles on individual pages to match CA|TS language.

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- 🐯 Add box to standard text in PDF report linking text in PDF report to F1 forms etc.
- 🐯 Change text around population parameters to state 'possible projected trend'.
- 🐯 Ensure questions are specific so that there is no confusion regarding what evidence to provide. If descriptive answer is sought, then question should start with something like "Please describe (in not more than XX words)". If the question actually seeks a score, date/year etc. the question should seek it directly and specifically.
- 🐯 All parameters in the latest version of the Security Audit Protocol (including training and compliance issues) and MEE should be included in the software.
- 🐯 There should be dropdown menus with scope for "Others" field and add-ons. If one person adds something, then the software should be able to add to existing drop down list-if possible.
- 🐯 Predictive models, e.g. population trends, could use latest software/models used by competent authorities such as NTCA/WII.
- 🐯 There could be a mechanism developed for vulnerability mapping (e.g. poaching, HWC, fire, invasive species etc.) through layering based on the information input into the software.
- 🐯 Access control and editing rights, e.g. at overall software level or certain sections could be built in.
- 🐯 Invasive species information should be added.

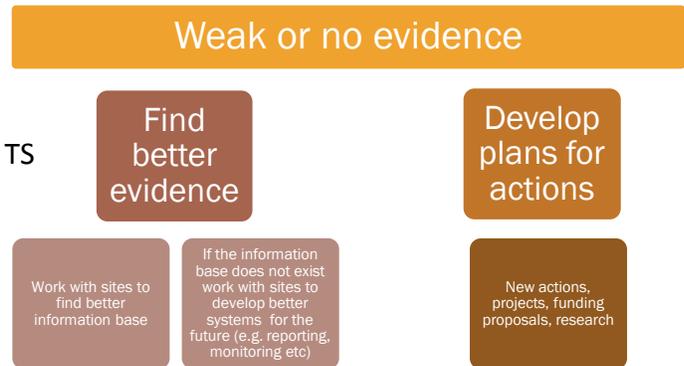


Khalid stressed that although all the issues raised will be considered, some issues might be beyond the scope of the initial version of the CA|TS Log, but all comments and suggestions will be kept and as many as possible acted upon in a future version of the Log software. He also noted that any additional comments on the software function and utility would be most welcome once the software has been launched and implemented.

Finally, Khalid noted that the final software will be audited by the authorities in Singapore to confirm it is malware free etc.

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CA|TS provides a blueprint for management of wild tiger populations. CA|TS registered sites should be able to demonstrate clear evidence as to how they are achieving the CA|TS criteria and where this is not possible sites (and partners) should develop action plans to reach the required management standards. **Session 7** focussed on filling gaps in the assessment. The diagram shows the steps needed when there is weak or no evidence to show the criteria have been met. In some cases the actions may be to find better sources of evidence or help sites develop better processes for recording activities. However were no actions have taken place plans will need to be developed with the site on how to undertake the activities outlined in the CA|TS criteria.



The CA|TS Log software allows reviewers to make comments against each CA|TS criteria. These comments should form the basis for developing plans for actions which need to be taken by sites to reach the CA|TS Approved status. National Committees should also comment on the assessment; and their review should in particular note where similar actions are needed over a number of sites in their country /jurisdiction. These comments should then identify:

- 🐯 best practices
- 🐯 evidence gaps
- 🐯 issues with implementation

From this overview the action plans can be developed.

Session 8 provided a quick overview and discussion of the key goals for the next few years, which include:

- 🐯 Focus registration and dossiers to CA|TS to reach 150 goal by 2022
- 🐯 2020: “Arguments for CA|TS” narrative report of impact of CA|TS so far
- 🐯 2021: “Arguments for CA|TS” statistics updating the “CA|TS Lite” report and showing impact of CA|TS in numbers and infographics
- 🐯 2022: lots of CA|TS Approved certificates and profile for CA|TS at tiger summit

And reviewed the main next steps from the meeting in terms of the participant feedback:

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CA|TS Manual

- 🐾 Additional comments were asked for
- 🐾 Changes discussed at the meeting will be made in version 2.1
- 🐾 CA|TS team will circulate clear notification of changes to manual with version 2.1 hopefully in early July 2019 (manual will need to be approved by International Executive Committee)



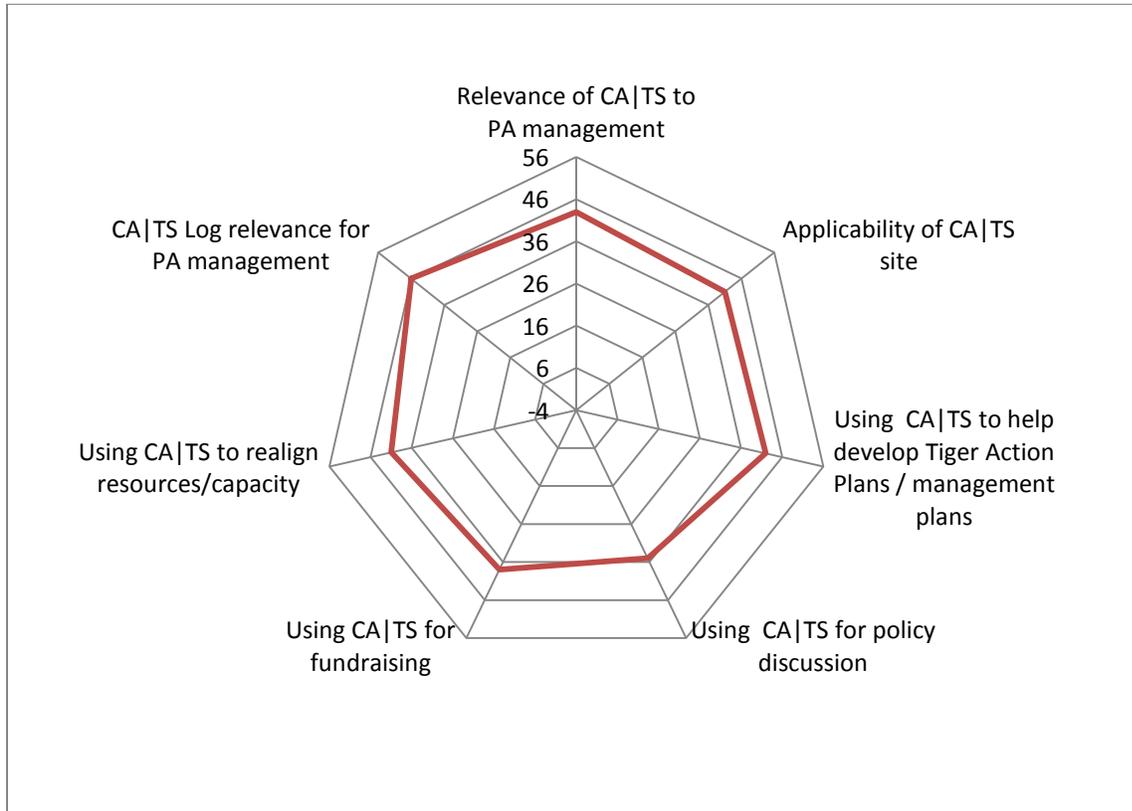
CA|TS Log

- 🐾 Suggestion noted and every feasible change will be made
- 🐾 Software will be launched in June 2019
- 🐾 User manual and tutorial will be produced

Khalid closed the meeting by thanking all participants for their hard work and contributions. Mr. B.S. Bonal extended thanks on behalf of all the participants to the organizers, Khalid and team, for their esteemed effort to develop the CA|TS Log software. A workshop feedback form was completed by all participants. A narrative and graphic summary of which is given below:

- 🐾 Most people felt most confident about the statement "CA|TS Log relevance for the protected area management" and least re "Utility of other modules for site managers".
- 🐾 The introduction of CA|TS Log was seen by many as the best part of the programme but people also expressed the need for more time for hands-on training.
- 🐾 A few noted that more regular trainings will be beneficial and can be improved by having different stakeholders participate in meetings to bridge gaps between donors, government officials, reviewers etc.
- 🐾 There were suggestions on having specific case studies to work on, learn from best practices especially from different countries, having materials in advance of meeting.
- 🐾 Generally positive feedback on the interaction between participants and resource people but a few noted it could be improved.

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Results of assessment forms from 28 participants (maximum score 56) from a set of statement scored as: strong agree (+2), agree (1), neutral (0), disagree (-1), strongly disagree (-2)

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Participants

Shyam Bajimaya, Shiv Raj Bhatta, Bishan Singh Bonal, Joydeep Bose, Diwakar Chapagain, Stuart Chapman, Liu Duo, Sivananthan Elagupillay, Roa Hagir, Madhav Khadka, Alexey V Kostyria, Arun Kumar, Rafselia Novalina, Regan Pairojmahakij, Somporn Pakpien, Khalid Pasha, B K Patnaik, Natalie Phaholyotin, Rungnapa Phoonjampa, Padchayaporn Pinitputthapong, Umphornpimon Prayoon, Sunil Shakya, B K Singh, Ram Pratap Singh, Brijraj Singh, Surasak Srigattamporn, Rajeev Srivastava, Sue Stolton, DNS Suman, Tandin, Kuenley Tenzin, Kencho Tshering, Febri Anggriawan Widodo and Ashleigh Wang Zhuxian

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Report edited by Sue Stolton, Khalid Pasha and Ashleigh Wang Zhuxian

Photographs by Ashleigh Wang Zhuxian and Sue Stolton

For more information on CA|TS sites and related publications can be found at:

www.conservationassured.org/resources and on our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/conservationassured/