

**Forum:** Environmental Commission  
**Issue:** The question of preventing and combating the trafficking of wildlife and related products  
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## Introduction

There has been an increase in illegal wildlife trade, threatening to overturn decades of conservation gains. Poaching threatens many endangered animals such as wild tigers that number as few as 3,200 and rhinos due to rhino poaching in South Africa increasing from 12 to 1,004 between 2007 and 2013. Ivory estimated to weigh more than 23 metric tons, a figure that represents 2,500 elephants, was seized through illegal means in 2011. However, elephants and tigers are just some of the better-known cases of illegal wildlife trade. In addition to elephants poached for their ivory and tigers for their skin and bones, there are countless other species who are similarly overexploited such as marine turtles. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF)'s 2014 Living Planet Report found that wildlife populations of vertebrate species, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, have declined by 52 percent over the last 40 years. The impact will reach far beyond the potential cultural loss of species such as tigers, rhinos and whales.

Wildlife crime is a large industry that is run by dangerous international networks with some of which traced to terrorist groups. It is almost impossible to obtain reliable figures for the value of illegal wildlife trade. Experts at TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade-monitoring network, estimate that it is worth hundreds of millions of dollars. However, not all wildlife trade is illegal. Wild plants and animals from tens of thousands of species are either caught or harvested from the wild and sold legitimately as pets, food, medicine and other various things. When an increasing proportion is illegal and unsustainable, wildlife trade escalates into a crisis; this directly threatens the survival of many species in the wild.

There are certain parts of the world where wildlife trade is a big issue, these areas are called "wildlife trade hotspots" and they include China's international borders, the Solomon Islands, parts of Indonesia and New Guinea, some markets in

Mexico, parts of the Caribbean, the eastern borders of the European Union and trade hubs in East and Southern Africa, and Southeast Asia. Even though these hotspots are currently trouble areas, they offer great opportunities for conservation success only if action and funds are well focused. Wildlife trade alone is a major threat to certain species however it is often made worse by habitat loss and other pressures.

There are organizations, such as WWF whose priority is to eliminate wildlife crime as it poses a threat to the future and many species. WWF collaborates with TRAFFIC and works closely with conservation organizations, governments and local communities. Their means of combatting illegal wildlife trafficking is through public education, supporting regulations and campaigning. By persuading consumers to make informed choices about the products they are purchasing, whether they are the people buying the end product in a shop or the suppliers and manufacturers. WWF discourages the purchase of certain wildlife goods whilst encouraging the production and purchasing of sustainable goods. WWF also works with communities worldwide, providing support to overcome poverty and help them learn to use the local wildlife in a sustainable manner. With the help of TRAFFIC, WWF researches the illegal wildlife trade routes, deficiencies in wildlife trade laws and the effects of wildlife trade on particular species. This information is given to the likes of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and supports new plans for eradicating illegal wildlife trade. Stop Wildlife Crime is a campaign that WWF created in an effort to get the general public more involved. The campaign aims to: push governments to protect threatened animal populations by increasing law enforcement, imposing strict deterrents, reducing demand for endangered species products and honouring international commitments made under CITES. It also speaks up on behalf of those who are being threatened by armed poachers and getting them proper equipment, training and compensation. Lastly, it strives to reduce demand for illegal wildlife parts and products through encouraging others to ask questions and get facts before consuming any wildlife or plant product.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **Wildlife**

Living things including mammals, birds and fish that are neither human nor domesticated, also includes fauna and flora.

### **Trafficking**

Trafficking is the transportation of goods for the purpose of trade. In respects to wildlife, trafficking is the international illegal trade of wildlife across borders.

### **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)**

Established in April 1961, WWF was set up in Morges, Switzerland with H.R.H. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands as the organization's first president. Over the years, they have carried out numerous projects protecting a vast range of wildlife from the bald eagle to the Amazon rainforest. They are currently working with various organizations and governments to continue their efforts to preserve and restore wildlife. It is a non-government organization (NGO) that aims to conserve nature and ecological processes by preserving biodiversity, ensuring sustainable use of natural resources and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful use of resources and energy.

### **TRAFFIC**

An organization that aims to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature.

### **Endangered Species**

According to WWF, endangered means that a species is listed as Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) or Vulnerable (VU).

- Critically Endangered (CR): A species facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.
- Endangered (EN): A species considered to be facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild.
- Vulnerable (VU): A species considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild.

## **Background Information**

### **History of Wildlife Trafficking**

The wildlife trade is not a new phenomenon. For hundreds of years, the trade of various animals such as tigers, leopards, rhinos and elephants has thrived between China, Siam and Japan as well as the Americas and Europe. In 1663, one shipment of ivory between Siam and Japan reportedly totalled 3,000 kilograms. As time progressed shipment sizes increased. Over the course of eight ships, in 1821,

18,000 kilograms of ivory was exported to China from Siam, which also carried quantities of rhino horns, elephant skins, tiger skins, and leopard skins.

### **General Use of the Goods**

Demand for illegal wildlife products is based on their use in traditional East Asian medicine, desire for status symbols, the international trade in commercial goods (e.g. timber) as well as other factors. The profits made are one of the largest sources of criminal earnings in the world, ranking alongside the trafficking of drugs, arms, and people. Today, illegal wildlife trade is estimated to be worth 50-150 billion US dollars per year.

### **Key Issues**

#### **High Environmental Costs**

Wildlife trade has the potential to be very damaging as seen through the decline of populations of species on Earth by an average 40% between 1970 and 2000; it is the second biggest direct threat to species survival, after habitat deconstruction. The overexploitation to the point where the survival of the species hangs in balance is the most obvious problem associated with wildlife trade. Previously, such overexploitation has caused extinction or severely threatened species, and this, combined with a growing human population has resulted in a decrease in wildlife and an increase in demand for wildlife products. Recent overexploitation has affected many species, the biggest ones being tigers, rhinoceroses and elephants.

#### **Harm to Human Livelihood**

Wildlife is vital to a high proportion of the world's population, often the poorest. Certain rural households rely on local wild animals for their meat and local trees for fuel, and both wild animals and plants provide components of traditional medicines used by the majority of people in the world. Many people in the developing world depend entirely on the continued availability of local wildlife resources.

#### **Indirect Harm**

The introduction of invasive species which then prey on or compete with native species disrupts the balance of nature. There are cases where wildlife traders have introduced invasive species; examples include, the American Mink, the Red-eared terrapin, and countless plant species.

The incidental killing of non-target species, such as dolphins and seabirds when they are caught in fishing gear is also an example of indirect harm caused by wildlife trafficking. It is estimated that over a quarter of the global marine fisheries catch is incidental, unwanted and discarded. Additionally, incidental killing of non-target animals also happens on land where crude traps are set.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### People's Republic of China (PRC)

China, alongside Kenya has been identified as key nexuses in the trade, according to a paper published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) journal. Research suggests that by focusing resources on removing key players from these places, and a number of others, conservationists can disrupt the global wildlife trade network. China is the centre of rhinoceros and tiger trade networks whilst being a large consumer of ivory. According to reports from wildlife organization, Save the Elephants, a kilogram of raw ivory cost USD 2,100 in China. This is a drastic increase from USD 750 per kilo in 2010. China was also ranked by CITES as one of the eight countries that are heavily involved in buying, selling and/or providing illicit ivory.

Pangolins are mammals that are also referred to as scaly anteaters and they are hunted for their meat and armour. A report released by China's Public Security Bureau for Forest and the University of Oxford found that the average price for a kilogram of pangolin scales is USD 600. Between 2010 and 2013, 2.59 tonnes of scales were seized in China alone. The scales represented approximately 4,870 pangolins. Additionally, 259 intact pangolins were seized during the time period. There are various forms of smuggling including using old drug routes and the postal system.

### Republic of Kenya

Kenya was listed next to China, according to CITES, as one of the eight countries that are heavily involved in the buying, selling and/or providing of illicit ivory. Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda account for 80% of the major seizures in Africa in 2013. A large portion of the poaching of elephants and rhinos take place in Kenya. Security services in the region state that organized groups of poachers use night vision goggles, chainsaws, and automatic weapons to kill rhinos and elephants and

quickly remove horns and tusks. Wildlife charities and advocates claim that the poaching in Kenya is done by a core group of 20 to 30 people. In Kenya, wildlife crime has evolved overtime and presented an increasing number of problems for conservation efforts.

Trans-border patrols and other scout support in the cross-border region between Kenya and Tanzania are making a difference. An aerial census conducted in the Kilimanjaro landscape in April 2013 found the elephant population to be stable with almost 2,000 elephants counted. This is an increase in comparison to the just above 1,000 in the early 2000s. The increasing number of animals is partly due to the great strides that the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) has taken. To help Africa's scouts and rangers better protect themselves and wildlife, AWF sent 62 individuals from the Samburu landscape for paramilitary and ecological training at the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Law Enforcement Academy in 2013. The three-month course allowed them to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to protect and manage wildlife, plan patrols, implement anti-poaching efforts and more.

### Kingdom of Thailand

The Wildlife Conservation Office in Thailand released its figures of the number of wildlife and animals that it seized from wildlife traffickers in 2013. According to the department, approximately 10,700 live animals, 3,293 kilograms of various animal parts and 1,348 carcasses of dead animals were seized from wildlife traffickers in Thailand in 2013. There were around 642 people involved in illegal wildlife trade that were arrested. Thailand and China are the two most important destinations for illegal wildlife products.

Due to uncontrolled borders in Southeast Asia, particularly between Burma, Thailand, China, and Laos, the problem is hard to control and stop. Many state that the lack of law enforcement along these borders is contributing to the local extinction of several wildlife species in and around Thailand.

### Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of event
1966	<b>Animal Welfare Act (AWA)</b> regulates interstate and foreign trade, traffic and transport of animals to insure that animals are intended for use in research facilities, for exhibition purposes, or for use as pets are

provided humane care and treatment. The Act assures the humane treatment of animals during transport in commerce. This law requires that animals in commerce must be marked or identified in a humane manner, and includes standards for handling, housing, watering, sanitation, feeding, shelter from extreme weather and temperature and ventilation, among other guidelines. This law prohibits buying, delivering, selling or transporting animals for participation in animal fighting ventures.

1988 **The African Elephants Conservation Act** was established by the U.S. with the goals of assisting in conservation and protection of the African elephant. The Secretary of the Interior reviews export controls of raw African elephant ivory in producing states and import controls in raw ivory destination countries. If source or transit countries are found lacking in adequate management of ivory trade, the Secretary of Interior can issue a moratorium on the import. The law also makes illegal the import of raw African elephant ivory from any country besides an ivory producing state, the export of raw ivory from the United States, the import of raw or worked ivory from other countries unless that country certifies that the ivory was derived from legal sources and the sale of raw or worked ivory in the United States from importers or exporters that have not obtained permission to do so by the Secretary of Interior.

1971 **Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (RAMSAR)**  
This Convention is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. There are currently 169 contracting Parties and 2,227 RAMSAR sites. The treaty was negotiated through the 1960s by countries and non-governmental organizations that were concerned about the increasing loss and degradation of wetlands habitat for migratory water birds. It was adopted in Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975.

1972 **U.S.-Japan Migratory Bird Convention**  
Signed by Japan and the United States of America, the Convention for

the Protection of Migratory Birds and Birds in Danger of Extinction, and Their Environment addresses the conservation of migratory birds in the U.S., its territories and Japan. Through improved coordination among wildlife managers and researchers on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, it also benefits shorebirds and the critically endangered short-tailed albatross. Migratory Birds Program are active participants in the Convention as are Wildlife Without Border – East Asia who acts as a coordinator for implementation of the Convention, serves as liaison to Japan's Nature Conservation Bureau of the Ministry of the Environment and assists in organizing biennial meetings with Japanese counterparts to review cooperation and plan future efforts.

1975 **Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**

CITES was the only treaty to ensure that international trade in plants and animals does not threaten their survival in the wild. There are currently 181 Parties that have agreed to implement CITES, including the U.S. CITES requires each Party to regularly submit reports on how they are implementing the Convention. The reports can contain information regarding legislation and regulatory changes, as well as law enforcement, permitting, communications, and administrative matters. The reporting process is a valuable assessment to the program, allowing for identification of successes in addition to areas for improvements.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Even though there are various Acts and laws in place to prevent illegal wildlife trafficking, it is still a major issue today. In South Africa 1,175 rhinos were killed in 2015 and even though this is a slight decrease from 1,215 in 2014 this small win was offset by the increase in rhino poaching in neighbouring countries. Just like drug and weapon trafficking, wildlife trafficking is difficult to stop due to the numerous trafficking routes, organizations, and the high demand for the products. The billion-dollar industry is offsetting the balance of nature and destroying habitats of various species, this is in addition to killing certain animals for various products. Trafficking is on par with drug and weapons trafficking but due to the lack of law enforcement and



the increasing power of the people behind the industry, all attempts at stopping it have not been very successful.

## Possible Solutions

In order to end or decrease illegal wildlife trade a decrease in demand is necessary. This can be done through education programs, increase in penalties as well as harsher enforcement of existing laws and better-equipped rangers. By educating people about the dangers of wildlife trafficking through the use of public service announcements, integrating it into the school education, and various other forms of media, consumers as well as potential consumers will understand the dangers and potentially be dissuaded from consuming such goods.

Since large amounts of wildlife are trafficked for medicinal purposes, perhaps explaining how they might not always work and the dangers of those to both humans and eco-systems may be another viable solution to this issue. However, this must be done respectfully as it contradicts many peoples' beliefs. By introducing the importance of wildlife and the environment in education systems, it could potentially deter future consumers, as they would understand the benefits of a plentiful environment. Due to many people not attending educational institutes, the use of public service announcements and posters would help reach and teach them.

It is very important to have a well-equipped law enforcement, particularly rangers who patrol national parks as they are the most at risk for attacks that often result in hospitalization or death. Even though force is never the solution to anything it is better to have trained and properly armed guards who have a strong understanding of the eco-system and how to protect themselves and the animals.

People turn to poaching and wildlife trafficking because of the high rewards they receive. Even with the increase of law enforcement, without a lower unemployment rate the problem will never truly go away. Unemployment is a large issue in the majority of the countries where wildlife trafficking is abundant. In order to combat that an increase in public services such as job centres might help decrease the rate at which wildlife trafficking is occurring.

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