

Wildlife Smuggling

CAN DISAPPEARING SPECIES BE SAVED FROM POACHERS?

Traffickers are slaughtering some of the world's most beloved endangered or threatened animals for their body parts — including elephant tusks, tiger penises and bear gall bladders — to supply the booming black market in souvenirs, trophies and traditional Chinese medicine. Other animals are shot by African hunters to meet the burgeoning demand for “bushmeat,” both to feed the hungry in refugee camps and to satisfy the tastes of city dwellers. Thousands of other animals, including exotic birds and rare monkeys, are trapped to meet the growing demand for exotic pets. Using satellite phones, helicopters and the Internet, the increasingly sophisticated smugglers — often part of organized crime syndicates — generate up to \$20 billion annually, making wildlife trafficking the world's third-most-lucrative illegal trade. Experts suggest two controversial solutions: banning all ivory trade and “farming” tigers and other exotic species to supply the seemingly insatiable demand for their body parts. While international conservation treaties have slowed the carnage, experts say tougher enforcement is needed before some of the Earth's last wild creatures disappear forever.

Officials examine the body of a rhinoceros killed by poachers in Kaziranga National Park in India's northeastern Assam state on Feb. 24, 2010. Rhinos are killed for their horns, which some cultures believe have medicinal or magical properties.



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Wildlife Smuggling

BY ROBERT KIENER

THE ISSUES

It was a scene straight out of a Hollywood horror movie. Call it “Snakes (Almost) On a Plane.” On August 26 at Malaysia’s Kuala Lumpur International Airport, a suitcase burst open as it trundled down a luggage conveyor belt. As Malaysian Airlines staffers picked up the damaged suitcase they were horrified to find it packed with 95 wriggling baby boa constrictors, two rhinoceros vipers and a mata-mata turtle. The notorious “Lizard King,” Anson Wong, had struck again.

Once considered “the world’s most-wanted smuggler of endangered species,” Wong had been sentenced in 2001 to 71 months in a U.S. federal prison for animal trafficking.¹ As his snake-packed suitcase proved, the Malaysian smuggler was back at his old game.

Arrested at the airport for attempting to export snakes from Malaysia without a permit, Wong was eventually sentenced to six months in jail and fined the equivalent of \$61,000.²

While the Lizard King’s brazen smuggling attempt made headlines around the globe, it is just one example of the global problem of wildlife trafficking. Not to be confused with the legal wildlife trade, trafficking in endangered or threatened wildlife was outlawed by the 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Trafficking involves not only well-known endangered or threatened animals — such as tigers or elephants — but also countless lesser-known species, ranging from black



More than 5,000 tigers are being raised on special farms in China, such as this one at the Guilin Xionsen Bear and Tiger Farm. The tigers are killed for their body parts, which are used to make traditional Chinese medicine. Proponents say breeding endangered species like tigers in captivity reduces illegal trafficking. Conservationists say it has just the opposite effect.

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cobras to pangolins (the nearly blind endangered scaly anteaters native to Africa and Asia).

While there are traditional wildlife trafficking hotspots, today it is a growing problem across the globe. News reports of illegal wildlife trafficking incidents abound. During just one week in July, *Scientific American* listed 10 major cases reported in the world’s media, including:

- Thai authorities seized six pallets, containing 117 elephant tusks worth an estimated \$1.2 million.
- Chinese officials seized more than

2,000 frozen pangolins from a fishing vessel on Gaoland Island. The animals are a favorite delicacy and their scales are used in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) as a cure for everything from poor blood circulation to skin infections.

- Using a helicopter, tranquilizer guns and a saw, poachers in South Africa hacked off the horn of the last female white rhinoceros in the Krugersdorp Game Reserve, leaving the rhino to bleed to death.

- Malaysia’s Department of Wildlife and National Parks over a four-day period intercepted 1,050 endangered animals and 111 endangered animal parts such as tiger claws, elephant tusks and python skins.³

Due to its clandestine nature, no one really knows how much money wildlife trafficking generates, but estimates range up to more than \$20 billion a year and growing.⁴ That would make it the third most valuable illegal trade in the world, after drugs and weapons.⁵

Much of the increased demand is coming from China, which leads the world in demand for smuggled wildlife products, followed by the United States and the European Union.

Experts attribute the increase to higher disposable incomes in booming China and Southeast Asia, where animal parts are used in traditional medicines, and to the demand for everything from exotic pets to luxury fashion items in Europe and North America.⁶

“The economics are as easy to understand as an art auction: the rarer the item, the higher the price,” noted reporter Bryan Christy, author of *The Lizard King*, an exposé on Asia’s illegal wildlife trade. “Around the globe

Wildlife Smuggling Spans the Globe

Trafficking in endangered species occurs on every continent, but it is most prevalent in Southeast Asia, Africa, the Amazon and Central America. While many smuggled animals are destined to become luxury goods, food or pets, the explosive growth in demand for Chinese traditional medicines made from exotic animal parts has fueled much of the recent increase in trafficking. For instance, the demand for tiger bones and other animal parts used in traditional Asian medicine has helped reduce the world's tiger population to 3,200.

Where Commonly Trafficked Wildlife Originate (With current population of each species)



nature is dying, and the prices of her rarest works are going up.”⁷

Other factors contributing to the growth in illicit wildlife trafficking include:

- Growing disposable incomes in Latin America, where keeping wild animals as pets is popular.
- Poor people, still reeling from the global recession, turning to killing wildlife as a way to make money to feed their families.

- The advent of new technology, such as the Internet and satellite phones.
- Lack of enforcement funding in countries across the globe.

Wildlife trafficking may trail the illicit drug trade, but it produces more bang for the buck. Drug kingpins “would kill” for the kind of profits made from trafficking, wrote Christy.⁸ Endangered animals command higher and higher prices on the global market, says con-

servationist Laurel Neme, author of *Animal Investigators*, which profiles the world's first wildlife forensics lab.

“Ounce for ounce, products like rhino horn or deer musk can be worth more than gold or cocaine,” she says.

Indeed, a rhino horn may sell for up to \$25,000 per pound, a bear gallbladder (used in TCM as a treatment for gallstones, among other things) for up to \$8,500, a live Orangutan for \$50,000 and a lemur for \$90,000.⁹

(See chart, p. 245.) Ivory is a good example of how illegal wildlife parts have boomed in price. The wholesale price of a pound of elephant ivory has jumped from about \$50 in the late 1990s to more than \$400 today.¹⁰

“When you think that an African poacher may get only a few hundred dollars for a rhino horn that, when ground up and processed into traditional Chinese medicine, could be worth over half a million dollars in the Asian market, you begin to understand how lucrative this trade can be,” explains Neme. “A return on investment of over 1,000 percent is not unusual.”

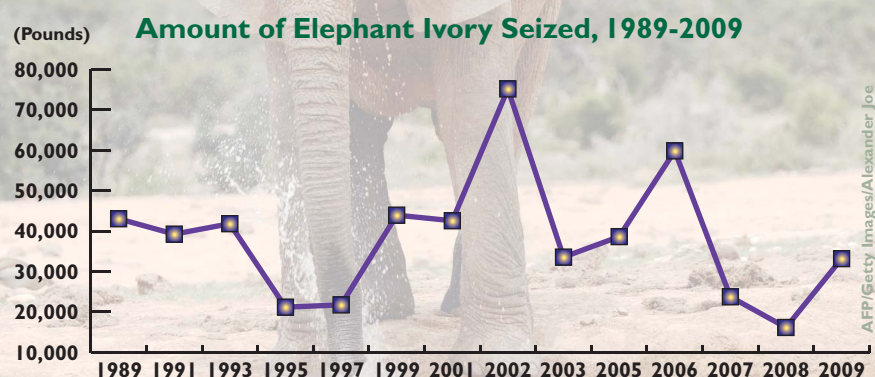
Given the potential for such massive returns it's not surprising that wildlife trafficking has begun to attract organized crime and, according to some experts, international terrorists. Describing the growing evidence of organized crime in wildlife trafficking, Peter Younger, director of Interpol's wildlife crime division, based in Lyon, France, said, “Once we start to dig into these things we find that not only are they smuggling wildlife, for example, but they'll be smuggling narcotics, or diamonds or gold bullion. . . . Once you have that pipeline open then you can smuggle pretty much anything down it.”¹¹

Officials say some militia groups, such as the Janjaweed in Sudan, have begun poaching elephants in Chad and have sold the tusks to Asians or traded them for weapons. “Lured by easy money, the Janjaweed have expanded their killing fields to endangered species,” according to *Newsweek*.¹²

“This is easy money for these groups; it's untraceable,” says Kelvin Alie, Program Officer for Wildlife Trade at the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). Al Qaeda-linked extremist groups in India have also reportedly been involved in elephant and rhino trafficking.¹³ Some liken the ivory trade to the illicit trade in so-called blood diamonds — the gems used to finance civil wars in diamond-producing countries in Africa.

Ivory Seizures on the Upswing Again

Customs officials around the world seized more than 16 tons of elephant ivory in 2009 — more than double the amount seized the year before. Some experts think the jump may have been due to a legal sale of 108 tons of tusks from sustainably managed African elephants in 2008, which may have boosted demand for ivory and fueled an increase in poaching. The modern-day peak was in 2002, when seizures amounted to 37 tons.



“As more massive illegal shipments of contraband wildlife are intercepted, it's clear that these trafficking operations require substantial upfront investments,” says Neme. Poachers must be recruited and paid, the goods must be packaged and shipped large distances across numerous borders and corrupt officials must be paid off.

“Officials responsible for the issuance of CITES permits and certificates have been threatened, harassed or bribed,” explained John Sellar, Geneva-based CITES senior enforcement officer. “Smugglers have been known to offer officials prostitutes to provide sexual favors in return for the issuance of trade authorization documents.”¹⁴

For example, illegal ivory-trading syndicates have developed a very sophisticated structure to move the ivory. “We're talking about quantities of around three tons a shipment,” said Younger. “Now that's not something you can stuff in a suitcase and carry on an airplane.”¹⁵

Smugglers use three main methods of exporting live animals and wildlife products: hiding them in secret compartments inside shipping containers or luggage; using forged or stolen trade permits to bypass customs or falsifying what's in a shipment. Trafficked animals are “mis-declared on customs forms and trade permits by fraudulently identifying look-alike, non-protected species, changing the declared number of items shipped, changing the declared value of items or declaring wild species as captive-bred species,” said a Congressional Research Service report.¹⁶

Of course some smugglers try less sophisticated methods. On August 27, Thai authorities at Bangkok's international airport discovered a baby tiger in a woman's baggage. The cub, about three months old, had been drugged and placed next to a toy stuffed tiger in the suitcase.¹⁷ In October 2009, a Norwegian man was arrested after trying to smuggle 14 snakes and 10 lizards

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into Norway. The snakes were inside socks, taped to his chest. Trafficked wildlife and animal parts have also turned up in FedEx, postal service and even diplomatic luggage.¹⁸

Although policing the illegal trade in wildlife falls largely to individual countries, some international agencies such as Interpol help investigate and nab offenders. In the United States the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is re-

facing extinction and are thus banned from trade. A second group of about 32,500 species in Appendix II — including the American black bear, the green iguana and the African grey parrot — may be threatened if traded, so their trade is regulated by CITES. Finally, the 170 species in Appendix III are not yet threatened but have been designated by member countries as needing their trade regulated.



AFP/Getty Images/Stephen Shaver

A vendor displays a dried tiger claw and other animal parts, including a dried tiger penis and black bear gall bladders, at a trading post along the Yangtze River in China's Sichuan Province. China banned the hunting of tigers and other endangered animals in 1993, but poaching is still rampant in the country's far-flung provinces.

sponsible for monitoring and detecting wildlife trafficking, under the auspices of the Endangered Species Act and the Lacey Act. The U.S. Customs and Border Control also police international shipments for illegal items.

Since 1973, when 80 countries adopted CITES, the number of signatory countries has grown to 175. The treaty classifies 5,000 species of wildlife into three groups, listed in the CITES appendices. The 800 species in Appendix I — including gorillas, leopards and the Asian elephant — are considered to be highly endangered and

Under CITES, member states must pass legislation that enforces CITES recommendations, a process that some say has become increasingly politicized, and thus weakened.

As wildlife trafficking threatens the existence of rare and endangered species around the world, here are some of the questions being asked:

Is CITES an effective tool to combat wildlife trafficking?

When CITES came into force in 1975, it was hailed by many as being ahead of its time and a savior for the planet's

endangered species. Indeed, many have referred to it as “a Magna Charta for Wildlife,” and it is considered “the most successful multilateral environmental agreement out there,” said conservationist and author Neme.¹⁹

However, as wildlife trafficking endangers even more animals, CITES has its share of critics.

“Has CITES had its day?” asked a recent BBC News headline.²⁰ Mark Jones, the article's author and a program director for U.K.-based Care for the Wild International, complains that CITES has become too politicized. He and others argue that stronger member states, such as Japan, often put economic and political pressure on smaller, weaker states to convince them to sway their votes.

“The process of decision making has become intensely political,” wrote Jones, describing a recent CITES conference in Doha, Qatar, where members debated “down listing” some species to noncritical Appendix III status. “Parties choose to use scientific evidence to support their positions when it suits them, and refute the validity of science when it doesn't.”²¹

But CITES Secretary-General John Scanlon says, “The CITES Secretariat places the best possible science and factual information before the parties to assist them in their decision making process. But the ultimate decision is up to them. . . . As with other environmental agreements, such as climate change, the science does not always prevail in all respects, and states may take a variety of factors into account when adopting their decision. We should not be surprised that there is a ‘political’ element to a conference . . . that includes 175 sovereign states.”

Conservationists accuse Japan of pressuring other states to oppose adding bluefin tuna to the CITES Appendix I, which would ban its trade. Many conservationists say bluefin tuna are being overfished — primarily because of the global popularity of sushi — and that

the species may disappear without a ban. “How cynical was Japan’s approach to the tuna proposal?” asks IFAW spokesman James Kinney. “They made it a point to serve bluefin tuna at a reception!”

Another observer noted that Japan’s actions set the tone for what he termed, [the] “worst wildlife trade meeting ever.”²²

“Greed and short-term national interests have been trampling over science and conservation at the meeting,” said a *Guardian* editorial.²³

“The March meeting was a game-changer,” notes Neme. “It was the first time in the CITES agreement process that trade decisions were based on politics and commerce instead of science. The marine trade commercial interests won over the scientists when it came to high-value species such as bluefin tuna.”

CITES proponents note that it is a democratic treaty; every issue is put to a vote. Further, each member, no matter how small or large, has an equal vote. That may be, notes IFAW’s Alie, “But pro-trade nations and industry representatives try to weaken CITES by reframing it to advance trade instead of protecting wildlife.”

Other observers complain of other CITES shortcomings, such as:

- The lack of economic or professional expertise in some countries to determine the endangerment status of their native species. Some threatened species thus remain unlisted. Scanlon disagrees, pointing out that proposals to list species in the CITES appendices come from both countries where such species originate and from consumer nations that observe high levels of trade. Plus, he said, the countries receive information from conservation organizations and wildlife trade monitoring organizations.
- Heightened demand for species once they’re listed in CITES. The listing often serves as a “red flag,” alerting smugglers to a species’ rarity. But without CITES, says Scan-

Internet Facilitates Illegal Wildlife Trafficking

Illegal trafficking in endangered wildlife is extensive worldwide, according to a comprehensive investigation by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), which looked at 183 publicly accessible websites and online auctions in 11 countries. The United States was responsible for more than two-thirds of the trade in wild animal products and live animals, including primates, birds, reptiles, big cats, bears, elephants, rhinoceros, sharks, Tibetan antelopes and sturgeon. One Chinese site, Taobao.com, offered products ranging from a bowl made from rhinoceros horn — which sold for \$23,317 — to a polar bear skin rug that sold for \$25,825. The trade in live exotic birds accounted for 20 percent of the illegal activity. But the sales pitches were dominated by ads for elephant ivory, for which poachers slaughter an estimated 20,000 elephants a year. Although eBay banned cross-border trading in elephant ivory in 2007, the site was found responsible for more than three-quarters of the ivory and nearly two-thirds of all illegal online animal trading.

Wildlife Trafficking on the Internet

(Among selected countries during a six-week period in 2008)

Country	No. of Websites	No. of Ads	No. of eBay Ads	No. of Ads for Elephant products	No. of Ads for Exotic Birds
U.S.	28	5,028	3,690	3,921	1,025
U.K.	22	551	289	285	217
China	5	544	n/a	376	17
France	11	380	249	325	10
Canada	11	244	167	178	34
Germany	14	151	39	90	28
Russia	24	144	n/a	35	43
Australia	11	82	35	13	42
Total*	126	7,122	4,470	5,223	1,416

* Totals do not include data from Argentina, Colombia and Mexico

Source: “Killing with Keystrokes,” International Fund for Animal Welfare, 2008

lon, there would be “a free-for-all where illegally and unsustainably harvested animals, plants or products would enter into trade in a manner that would drive species to extinction.”

- Spotty enforcement. About 30 percent of the supposedly legal global wildlife trade violates either CITES or national laws, according to the British group TRAFFIC International. And because CITES

covers only international trade, policing trade in endangered or threatened species within countries is up to individual nations.

Those who say CITES does not go far enough in enforcing and policing wildlife trafficking admit that the treaty was never intended to replace national laws. Each member country is expected to enact laws guaranteeing that CITES regulations are enforced within that country.

"The CITES Secretariat works closely with other agencies, such as Interpol, the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Customs Organization to support national efforts and to build capacity in developing countries," says Secretary-General Scanlon. "It does this through the provision of technical assistance, specialized guidance and training materials."

CITES' most glaring loophole, say

many, is its lack of protection for animals bred in captivity. "CITES, after all, applies to *wild* life," pointed out reporter Christy.²⁴ Wildlife advocates have been alarmed by the emergence of so-called "animal farms," where breeders raise otherwise endangered species for sale.

Despite all its shortcomings, CITES is still the only major tool for fighting wildlife trafficking and preserving en-

dangered and threatened species. And while the treaty clearly needs reform — such as a powerful secretariat focused on science — "at least it exists," said an editorial in *The Guardian*.²⁵

Does animal farming reduce wildlife trafficking?

In China, with more than a billion people who view the tiger a symbol of strength, 2010 is being celebrated

Is That a Porcupine in Your Luggage?

Bushmeat smuggling threatens Africa's wildlife.

During a recent 18-day period at Charles De Gaulle Airport in Paris, inspectors searched the bags of 134 passengers on 29 flights arriving from Africa. Nearly half were carrying some type of bushmeat — a total of 414 pounds of Nile crocodiles, red river hogs, primates, porcupines, pangolins and other species — 39 percent of it from species that are endangered or threatened with extinction.¹

Based on inspection results, researchers estimate that nearly five tons of bushmeat are being smuggled into Paris each week.²

Bushmeat is meat from wild animals that live in the forest, or the "bush," in Africa. Originally sought by subsistence hunters, bushmeat today is sold throughout the continent, generating an estimated \$50 million annually. Africans consume from 1 million to 3.4 million tons of bushmeat a year, sold primarily in urban markets.³ The largely illegal commerce is fueled by demand from relatively prosperous, urbanized African populations and a growing African diaspora that values bushmeat for its flavor, protein and "wild" status.

"We see bushmeat coming into the U.S. illegally to feed demand from expatriate African communities," said Leigh Henry, a senior policy officer at World Wildlife Fund and TRAFFIC North America in Washington, D.C.⁴ Last summer federal wildlife agents raided an African art store in Chicago and seized a shipment of monkey heads and dead cane rats, destined for stew pots in the United States.⁵

Conservation officials say the ravenous market for wild pigs, rodents — and even primates and elephants — has led to what amounts to an all-out attack on Africa's wildlife. The bushmeat trade is "the most significant immediate threat to the future of wildlife in Africa," according to the Bushmeat Crisis Task Force, a U.S.-based consortium of conservation organizations and scientists.⁶

While not all bushmeat comes from endangered animals, importing it is illegal in most industrialized countries. "Bushmeat can . . . carry potentially devastating diseases — from anthrax to ebola, monkey pox to retroviruses — that may have

dangerous impacts on livestock and far-reaching consequences for human health," wrote Mark Jones, program director at Care for the Wild International, a U.K.-based conservation organization.⁷

The latest proof that the bushmeat trade has reached crisis proportions comes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where researchers estimate that 440 chimpanzees are being slaughtered each year for local markets, representing "the be-



A woman cuts up monkey bushmeat at a market in Lodja, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Getty Images/National Geographic/Lynn Johnson

ginning of a massive ape decline," according to Alice Macharia, director of East Africa programs for the Arlington, Va.-based Jane Goodall Institute.

"In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has the largest population of chimpanzees in the world, the bushmeat trade . . . remains one of the greatest threats to their survival."⁸

Population growth is adding to the pressure on wildlife in Congo. The population has tripled in size to 70 million in just 30 years, making the competition for bushmeat especially intense. And animal habitat is shrinking as 10 million acres of Africa's trees vanish each year due to logging, mining and development. In some places up to 90 percent of the wildlife has disappeared. Hunters have been eating their own dogs, according to John Hart, an Africa-based conservationist.⁹

Congo-based pygmies, long dependent on bushmeat for their livelihood and survival, may be threatened by the growing scarcity of wildlife. While Mbuti pygmies used to sell only half of the meat they had hunted for, they now sell virtually all of it to traders who re-sell the meat in the cities. Surveys show up to a 40 percent drop in the region's antelope population, the most commonly hunted bushmeat animal.

"The forest just doesn't produce enough to meet the demand," said Conrad Aveling, a British environmentalist who has worked in Congo for years. By over-hunting bushmeat animals, he said, the pygmies "are sawing off the branch on which they are sitting."¹⁰

— Robert Kiener

¹ Sharon Begley, "Is that an alligator in your suitcase?" *Newsweek*, June 18, 2010, www.newsweek.com/2010/06/18/is-that-an-alligator-in-your-suitcase.html.

² "Five tonnes of illegal 'bushmeat' being smuggled into Europe each week," *Guardian*, June 18, 2010, www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/jun/18/illegal-bushmeat-smuggled-europe.

³ Liana Wyler and Pervaze Sheikh, "International Trade in Wildlife: Threats and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, Feb. 2, 2009, p. 14.

⁴ Anneli Rufus, "Endangered species on the grill: the black market in illegal meat flourishes in the US," *AlterNet*, Feb. 15, 2010, www.alternet.org/food/145668/endangered_species_on_the_grill%3A_the_black_market_in_illegal_meat_flourishes_in_the_us.

⁵ "African bushmeat seizure in Chicago," UPI, July 25, 2010, www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2010/07/25/African-bushmeat-seizure-in-Chicago/UPI-86511280078388.



AP Photo/Rebecca Blackwell

A young pygmy hunter — his net balanced on his head — shows off his day's kill: a forest antelope from the Okapi Wildlife Reserve in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Pygmies have traditionally been subsistence hunters, but the booming demand for bushmeat — both in African cities and abroad — has led the pygmies to begin hunting commercially. Now their traditional hunting grounds have been nearly emptied of animals.

⁶ Mark Jones, "Is wildlife being eaten to extinction?" BBC, Aug. 3, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8877062.stm>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ "Congolese chimpanzees face new 'wave of killing' for bushmeat," *Guardian*, Sept. 7, 2010, www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/sep/07/congo-chimpanzees-bushmeat.

⁹ Todd Pitman, "In Congo forest, bushmeat trade threatens pygmies," *The Associated Press*, July 3, 2010, www.msnbc.msn.com/id/38076131/#.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

as the Year of the Tiger. But only about 50 of the majestic animals are left in the wild in all of China, putting them on the knife-edge of extinction.

Less than 3,200 wild tigers exist on Earth, with 1,400 of them in India, which has the world's largest wild tiger population. That is about half as many tigers as lived in India a decade ago and a fraction of the 100,000 that lived there in the early 20th century.²⁶ Most of the

rest of the world's approximately 2,000 wild tigers live in Bhutan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Burma and Nepal.

While shrinking habitat is a major culprit, the biggest threat to tigers is the insatiable appetite for tiger parts, which are used in many traditional Asian medicines as cures for everything from impotence to skin infections to rheumatism. (*See sidebar, p. 248.*)

Nearly every part of the tiger is sought as "souvenirs" or by traditional-medicine practitioners. A tiger pelt can fetch \$20,000, a single paw \$1,000, and a full set of tiger bones up to \$7,000.²⁷ Although Appendix I of CITES bans all trade in tigers or their parts, tigers and tiger products continue to surface on the black market.

While many applaud China for clamping down on illegal trade in tigers

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and tiger products, many conservationists accuse the country's traditional medicine practitioners of perpetuating the demand for tiger parts.

"All the demand for tiger parts is coming from China," said Belinda Wright, executive director of the Wildlife Protection Society of India. "Unless the Chinese change their attitude, the tiger

TRAFFIC East Asia/China Program. In 2007 there were 175 criminal cases of smuggled endangered species in China, up from 77 in 2005.²⁹

To help supply the growing demand, China and other nations — including India, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand — have begun "farming" captive tigers.³⁰ The farms fall under a CITES

"Animals, tigers included, are renewable resources and harvesting them can be extremely valuable," says Barun Mitra, director of the New Delhi-based Liberty Institute think tank. "A single captive bred tiger may fetch as much as \$30,000-\$70,000. Tiger-breeding facilities would ensure a supply of wildlife at an affordable price and eliminate the incentive for poaching wild tigers." Mitra also believes that prices for tiger parts would fall as "captive bred" tiger parts enter the market legally.

Chinese officials agree. At a Global Tiger Forum their mantra was, "To save the tiger you have to sell it." The Chinese argue that the country's 1993 ban on the internal trade in tiger parts has cost the country more than \$4 billion and trafficking has not stopped. The solution, they say, is to sell products from farm-bred tigers.³²

"Market economics favor the tiger," says Mitra. "If we unleash the animal's commercial potential, we might be able to use some of those returns to protect and make them more secure in their kingdom."

Conservationists disagree, arguing that breeding wild animals in captivity is "cruel" and that wild animals belong in the wild. Furthermore, they claim, commercial wildlife farms increase the market for endangered species parts. "Research has shown that farming leads to increased poaching of wild animals, because they can be laundered through the legal animal farm channels," says author and conservationist Neme.

"In practice, smugglers establish fake breeding facilities, then claim that animals and plants poached from the wild are captive bred,"³³ explained reporter Christy, who helped expose an Asian-based wildlife smuggling syndicate that used fake captive breeding. Researchers recently surveyed 78 commercial wildlife farms in Vietnam and discovered that 42 percent of them were regularly restocking species from wild populations.³⁴



AP Photo/Department of Justice

When Customs agents pulled up this man's pants at Los Angeles International Airport in March 2009, they discovered he was trying to smuggle endangered songbirds into the country by strapping them to his legs. He later was sentenced to four months in prison and a \$4,000 fine. Exotic birds are some of the species most commonly smuggled by wildlife traffickers.

has no future on this Earth."²⁸ As China's economy improves, the demand for tiger parts increases. "Illegal wildlife trade is alive and dynamic. We have noticed an increasing amount of trade and consumption in wildlife, including bear paws, tortoises, pangolins and monitor lizards," said Xu Hongfa, director of World Wildlife Fund's

loophole, because the treaty does not regulate trade in species bred in captivity or intra-country trade. In China alone, according to the IFAW, more than 5,000 tigers are being raised on registered tiger farms.³¹

Farm operators and proponents claim the breeding programs will help reduce the illegal trade in tiger parts.

The World Bank considers tiger farms counterproductive and has said they should be shut down. "Our position is that tiger farms as an animal practice are cruel. They fan the potential use of tiger parts," said Keshav Varma, the bank's New Delhi-based program director for the Global Tiger Initiative. "That is extremely dangerous, because they would continue to spur demand." ³⁵

However, argues Mitra, "When trade is outlawed, only outlaws trade."

But farming proponents say breeding animals would remove criminals from the trade. "Shutting down China's captive breeding would reinforce the criminal monopoly on trade in tigers by eliminating potential alternative sources," explained South Africa-based environmental economist Michael't Sas-Rolfes. "Given the persistent demand for tiger products and rhino horn and the dwindling numbers of wild tigers and rhinos — in spite of trade restrictions — it is time to explore options that would legally satisfy demand, save wild animals and undermine organized crime." ³⁶

Conservation groups such as TRAFFIC and others favor closing the tiger farms, arguing that by encouraging the trade in tiger parts the farms end up encouraging poaching. "It costs a lot to keep a tiger in captivity, and next to nothing to kill them in the wild," said Sue Lieberman, former director of species programs for the World Wildlife Fund International. ³⁷

Will a total ban on ivory sales help save endangered elephants?

Throughout history elephants have been admired, loved and even revered as gods. They've also been trained as beasts of burden and worked tirelessly for their human keepers. Countless others have been hunted down, killed and butchered nearly to extinction for their ivory.

"Mankind should be ashamed for the way it's treated elephants," says

Exotic Animals Fetch Vast Sums

Illegally trafficked wildlife can fetch tens of thousands of dollars on the black market. A live tiger, for example, sells for up to \$50,000. Bile from Asiatic black bears — which is used in Chinese medicine to treat fever, liver problems and gallstones — sells for 200,000 a pound. A dagger handle made from rhino horn — highly prized in Yemen — sells for \$14,000, while rhino horn used in traditional Chinese medicine sells for \$50,000 a kilogram (about two pounds). A set of tiger bones, a key ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine, sells for up to \$7,000.

Estimated Black Market Prices for Selected Species

Bear bile	\$200,000/pound
Bear paw (price for trafficker)	\$50
Bear gall bladder	\$250-\$8,500
Clouded leopard	\$5,700 in China
Chinese alligator	\$15,000
Black Asiatic bear (dead)	\$4,500 in Taiwan
Geckos from New Zealand	\$1,300 in Europe
Gorillas	\$8,000
Ivory	\$1,800/kilo
Jaguar skin	\$20,000
Komodo dragon	\$30,000
Lear macaw	\$60,000-\$90,000 (mature breeding pair)
Orangutan	\$45,000-\$50,000
Pangolin	\$100 in China
Rhino horn	Up to \$50,000/kilo
Rhino horn dagger	\$14,000
Tiger (dead)	\$5,000
Tiger (live)	\$50,000
Tiger bones	\$3,300-\$7,000 per set
Tiger skin	\$35,000

Sources: Havocscope Black Markets online database; "International Illegal Trade in Wildlife: Threats and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, Feb. 2, 2009

Sangduen Chailert, a Thai conservationist who runs The Elephant Nature Park, a sanctuary for elderly and abused elephants in northern Thailand. "It breaks my heart to hear about the tens of thousands of elephants who have been slaughtered for their ivory."

Known as "white gold," elephant ivory has long been treasured as a medium for carving and as an ingre-

dient in traditional Asian medicine. As the 1st-century writer Pliny the Elder wrote, "The tusks fetch a vast price and supply a very elegant material for images of the gods." ³⁸

Today demand shows no sign of slowing, and the price of wholesale elephant ivory has jumped to \$5,000 per pound, ³⁹ from around \$50 per pound in the late 1990s. ⁴⁰

The lure of ivory and loss of habitat have devastated elephant populations. From 1.2 million in the 1970s there are fewer than 500,000 elephants today.⁴¹ Alarmed by the wholesale slaughter of elephants in the 1970s and 1980s, CITES listed the Asian elephant on Appendix I and added the more numerous African elephant in 1990. It also totally banned the international trade in ivory in 1989.

The ivory ban was widely hailed as a victory for elephants. "That was a great success for CITES," says IFAW's Alie. "Virtually all poaching stopped, most of the ivory trade disappeared and elephants began recovering." In fact, many elephant populations increased to the extent that today in some regions overpopulation is becoming a concern.

Although conservationists hailed the ivory ban, some African nations considered it unfair to prevent the sale of legally obtained ivory, especially in countries that said they were being such good stewards of their elephant populations that overpopulation was becoming a problem. Bowing to pressure from those countries, CITES allowed Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe — nations CITES deemed to have effective elephant conservation programs in place — to carry out a one-time auction of stockpiled tusks in 2008. The 231,000 pounds of ivory sold earned the four countries more than \$22 million.⁴²

But many conservationists and wildlife experts claim the auction reinvigorated the ivory trade by fueling demand for ivory, opening the floodgates for poachers who were ready to feed the revived illegal trade. "The sudden availability of a significant amount of ivory revitalized a market that had disappeared," said noted Kenya-based conservationist Richard Leakey. "Now, there is no way that legal ivory could satisfy demand in this enlarged market. Illegal ivory, consequently, found a new outlet and

soon started fetching better prices at the source," and elephant poaching in Africa "has been increasing at an alarming rate."⁴³ Indeed, in Kenya alone elephant poaching jumped from 47 killed in 2007 to 204 last year.⁴⁴

"The correlation between this rise in elephant poaching and ivory seizures and the one-off sale of stockpiles by CITES can no longer be ignored," explained Africa-based IFAW program director James Isiche.⁴⁵

Further, DNA evidence has shown that traffickers are mixing in illegally obtained ivory with sanctioned ivory: Some tusks sold "legally" to Asian buyers did not come from the CITES-approved countries.⁴⁶

Other African nations, such as Tanzania and Zambia, also oppose the ban. At the recent CITES meeting in Doha, both countries proposed one-time sales of their ivory stocks, mostly from elephants that died from natural causes. Tanzania argued that it should be permitted to sell its ivory to raise funds for an elephant conservation program and to support "development activities of communities living within the elephant ecosystems." Zambia also argued against the ban. Both were turned down, however, in part because of their poor elephant conservation and policing efforts.⁴⁷

"Despite a ban on domestic sale, ivory is easily obtainable and available in volume" in Zambia, according to a recent report by the Environmental Investigation Agency, a London and U.S.-based organization that investigates the illegal wildlife trade. "EIA investigators found that Zambia . . . is host to some of the world's most sophisticated ivory traders and networks."⁴⁸

Judith Mashinya, Zimbabwe-based program manager of Africa Resources Trust, a community development organization, also argued for ending the ban. "Zimbabwe has lots of economic problems now. If we are not allowed to sell this ivory . . . there will

not be sufficient funds toward conservation for the elephants," she said.⁴⁹ Other African nations, including Botswana, claim ivory sales will help them pay for existing poaching enforcement. Continuing the ivory ban, they argue, will only lead to more trafficking.

But many experts argue that had the ban never been instituted, African and Asian elephants would probably be extinct today. Last December Sierra Leone lost its last elephants and there are fewer than 10 left in Senegal.⁵⁰

"The ivory ban has saved lives," says Thailand's Chailert. "The world's elephants' survival depends on keeping it in place." ■

BACKGROUND

Soaring Demand

While illegal wildlife trafficking is a relatively new phenomenon, its roots date back to the centuries-old animal trade, which ultimately was so overexploited it had to be restricted. Ivory, tiger skins, rhino horns, furs and exotic bird feathers were traded for hundreds of years between Asia, Europe and the United States.

As writer Ben Davies noted, "In 1663 one shipment of ivory between Siam [modern-day Thailand] and Japan reportedly totaled 3,000 kilograms. Later shipments were significantly larger. In 1821, 18,000 kilograms of ivory was exported from Siam to China by eight ships which additionally carried unknown quantities of wildlife parts including rhino horns, elephant skins, buffalo skins and leopard skins."⁵¹

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Chronology

1890s-1960s

As dwindling wildlife becomes evident, nations begin limiting the trade in exotic animals.

1895

Wildlife Conservation Society is formed in United Kingdom (U.K.).

1900

President William McKinley signs Lacey Act, prohibiting trade in illegally hunted wildlife.

1911

North Pacific Fur Seal Convention regulates seal overexploitation. U.K. passes Protection of Animals Act, making animal cruelty a crime.

1918

U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act regulates hunting and trade in birds and makes it a crime to “take” migratory birds, their eggs, feathers or nests.

1940

Convention on Nature Protection and Wild Life Preservation in the Western Hemisphere is signed to urge nations to establish national parks, wilderness areas and national reserves.

1968

African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers Convention) calls for African countries to conserve the continent’s natural resources, including its endangered species. It is ratified in 1973.

1969

Endangered Species Conservation Act becomes effective, prohibiting the importation into the United States of species “threatened with extinction worldwide.”

1970s-1990s

International treaty to control wildlife trafficking goes into effect. All trade in elephant ivory is banned. Poaching of elephant, rhino and tigers heats up.

1972

India outlaws the hunting or harvesting of protected species.

1973

U.S. Congress passes the Endangered Species Act, which identified 1,950 endangered or threatened species. . . . Eighty countries develop the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which seeks to eliminate the trade in endangered and threatened wildlife around the globe. Eventually, 175 countries sign onto the treaty.

1975

CITES enters into force; bans trade in Asian elephant ivory.

1985

Elephant poaching leads CITES parties to establish ivory-monitoring unit.

1988

U.S. Congress passes African Elephant Conservation Act, which provides financial assistance for elephant protection programs.

Late 1980s-1990s

In India and China, a growing demand for tiger parts used in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) results in the killing of thousands of tigers.

1989

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory opens to help investigate wildlife trafficking. . . . CITES bans trade in African ivory.

1993

After tiger populations are decimated, China bans trade in tiger bones.

1999

CITES allows Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe to sell 49 metric tons of ivory to Japan in a one-time “experimental” sale.

2000s

The illegal wildlife trade grows increasingly more sophisticated as the Internet offers new avenues for sales of banned items. A growing enforcement network addresses the illegal trade.

2005

Several governments and non-governmental groups establish the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT) to publicize international poaching and help train regional enforcement groups.

2007

Under pressure from International Fund for Animal Welfare, eBay bans international sales of products made from elephant ivory.

2008

Four southern Africa countries legally auction off 108 tons of elephant ivory they say was sustainably culled from their herds.

2009

Brazilian airport police confiscate 1,000 live spiders being smuggled out of the country in a suitcase.

2010

Infamous wildlife trafficker Anson Wong, “the Lizard King,” is charged with wildlife smuggling in Malaysia.

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Seemingly inexhaustible stocks of wildlife were decimated to supply the fashion industry and the practitioners of traditional medicine.

"From 1870 to 1920, tens of millions of birds died around the world to adorn high-fashion hats and clothing, with over one million skins of either herons or egrets, the species most severely damaged, sold between 1897 and 1911, according to a single London auction record," according to author Neme.⁵²

A 1597 Chinese medicine text, *Pen Ts'ao Kang Mu*, listed elephant tusks, skin, bone and bile as key ingredients in various medicinal concoctions.⁵³ Even today, many Chinese

believe crushed tiger bone can cure everything from boils to rheumatism. (See sidebar, p. 248.) Folklore also helped to fuel the trade in exotic animals: Many Asians, for example, still believe that eating tiger parts will bestow strength.

The demand for ivory, used for centuries for artistic carvings, soared in the 1800s when it became coveted as an industrial commodity — a precursor to plastic. Ivory was fashioned into everything from combs to buttons to billiard balls. Between 1850 and 1910 Britain imported 500 tons of ivory a year. In 1922 alone, some 4,000 elephants were killed just to supply the U.S.-based billiard ball industry.⁵⁴

Commercial interests often trumped conservation concerns. As one observer said at the time, "Some thin-skinned person might question the killing of this large number of elephants to provide . . . recreation, but on second thought . . . all animals have been created for man's special use, and for his good, and this includes the elephant and his ivory."⁵⁵

Early Legislation

As America expanded westward, settlers devastated much of the country's wildlife, either by over-hunting or destroying habitat. Wolves were virtually eliminated from New England by 1800 and in much of the West a cen-

Traditional Chinese Medicine Fuels Wildlife Traffic

Tigers and other exotic species are being decimated.

The disturbing video shows a wildlife trader dumping a bag filled with hundreds of tiger bones onto the ground and shops in China selling an array of traditional medicines, such as Tiger-bone Plasters and Tiger's Bone Rheumatism Pills.¹

Another grisly video shows street vendors in Myanmar selling bear paws and gall bladders and a warehouse where catheters are used to "milk" bile from the gall bladders of live, caged Asian black bears.²

Tiger bone, bear bile, deer musk and rhinoceros horn are just a few of the thousands of animal ingredients in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), used for more than 3,000 years to treat everything from arthritis and impotence to bacterial infections.

TCM has spread throughout East and Southeast Asia, where it is used by both the local Chinese and non-Chinese communities. The popularity of traditional medicine combined with rising incomes in Asia have boosted the demand for animal-part ingredients in the past two decades. Experts say TCM is leading to the decimation of the populations of some of the world's most exotic and endangered animals.

Perhaps the most threatened are tigers, which represent strength and vitality in Asia. "Tigers began to disappear," said *National Geographic* writer Geoffrey Ward. "It was eventually discovered that they were being poisoned and shot and snared so that their bones and other body parts could be smuggled out of India to supply the manufacturers of traditional Chinese medicines."³

Of the 3,200 wild tigers left on the planet, fewer than 50 are in China, and India has fewer than 1,400 — down from 100,000 in the early 20th century.⁴ Alarmed by the disappearing tiger population, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) outlawed the trade in tiger parts in 1993.

"Most experts agree that the trade in tiger bone for medicinal purposes was a major factor fueling a tiger conservation crisis in the 1980s and 1990s," according to the World Wildlife Fund.⁵ Although China banned the harvesting of tiger bones and outlawed all trade in tiger parts in 1993, tiger smuggling continues.

In 2007 China lobbied the CITES governing body to remove its ban of the trade in tiger parts, arguing that tiger farming could supply the demand for tiger parts needed for traditional medicine. But conservationists objected strenuously.

"Reopening any legal trade in tiger parts would be an enormous step backwards for tiger conservation," said Leigh Henry, senior policy officer for TRAFFIC North America. "A legal market in China would muddy the waters for enforcement officials and provide smugglers with a convenient cover for laundering wild tigers, since farmed and wild products are indistinguishable."⁶ The proposition failed.

Continued pressure from governments and conservation organizations prompted China's TCM industry recently to remind manufacturers of the ban on using parts from endangered species in traditional medicines. At a recent symposium in Beijing, Huang Jianyin, deputy secretary of the World Federation

of Chinese Medicine Societies, urged manufacturers to look for substitute ingredients for animal parts.

"Tiger conservation has become a political issue in the world," he said. "Therefore, it's necessary for the traditional Chinese medicine industry to support conservation of endangered species, including tigers."⁷

Conservationists welcomed the comments and reiterated their call for an end to tiger farming. "The existence of tiger farms and increasing illegal trade in tiger products is seriously threatening this precious species, said Ge Rui, Asian regional director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare. "In [this] Year of the Tiger, we should be doing more."⁸

— Robert Kiener

¹ "WWF Wildlife Trade — Shops selling wildlife products," World Wildlife Fund, www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nnf6RoUvT1&feature=player_embedded.

² "Grisley Wildlife Trade Exposed," *National Geographic*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtEJHQUlCQ&feature=fvw.

³ Richard Ellis, *Tiger Bone and Rhino Horn* (2005), p. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ "Traditional Chinese Medicine," WWF, www.worldwildlife.org/what/globalmarkets/wildlifetrade/traditionalchinesemedicine.html.

⁶ "Lifting Chinese tiger trade ban a death sentence for wild tigers, say wildlife experts" *Science Daily*, March 13, 2007, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/03/070312231736.htm.

⁷ "Chinese medicine societies reject tiger bones ahead of CITES conference," *Science Daily*, March 15, 2010, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/03/100312164653.htm.

⁸ Yang Wanli, "Thirst is building for tiger bone wine," *China Daily*, March 1, 2010, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90778/90860/6905319.html>.



Reuters/Will Burgess

A woman in Guangzhou displays traditional Chinese medicinal products made from powdered tiger bone. While Chinese around the world celebrate "The Year of the Tiger," conservationists say China's appetite for aphrodisiacs and other tiger-bone elixirs is helping to decimate the world's wild tiger population. Only about 20 wild tigers survive in China, and fewer than 3,200 exist on Earth.

tury later. The Atlantic gray whale was extinct by 1750. By the beginning of the 20th century the Eastern elk, sea mink, giant deer mouse and others had become extinct.⁵⁶ Other animals, such as the buffalo, had been almost slaughtered to extinction.

In South Africa the blue antelope went extinct in 1799, the South Africa giraffe in 1830, the Cape warthog in 1900. Portugal's Portuguese Ibex disappeared in 1892, Iceland's Great auk in 1844 and the red-throated wood rail went extinct in Peru a year earlier.⁵⁷

With devastation came concern. In the United States, for example, the early 1900s ushered in a new conservation ethic and legislation to match. President McKinley signed the Lacey Act

of 1900, the first far-reaching federal wildlife protection legislation. Named after its sponsor, Iowa Rep. John F. Lacey, the act prohibited trade in any wildlife that had been illegally hunted, transported or sold.

The measure made it a federal crime to poach listed animals in one state and carry them over state lines to sell in another. Early cases provide snapshots of the immensity of the trafficking problem at the time. For example, 48 men were charged in 1901 with illegally shipping more than 22,000 ducks, grouse and quail into Illinois. In another case, New York wildlife officials recovered more than 4,000 illegally traded game birds in a Brooklyn cold storage unit.

"The Lacey Act had an immediate impact on the rampant commercial exploitation of wildlife by giving game wardens a powerful enforcement tool," former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark said.⁵⁸ Later, the United States passed the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act, regulating hunting and trading of wild birds and their parts, and in 1935 extended the Lacey Act to cover wildlife imported into the United States.

The British government made the first effort to forge an international treaty to regulate wildlife trafficking. At the turn of the 20th century the quaintly titled 1900 London Convention Designed to Ensure the Conservation of Various Species of Wild Animals in



AFP/Getty Images

Malaysian wildlife officers display some of 280 endangered pangolins — scaly anteaters that curl up into a ball when threatened — seized in the southern state of Johor, along with three suspects believed to be part of an international trafficking ring. The pangolins were being smuggled to restaurants in China, where they are a delicacy.

Africa Which Are Useful to Man or In-offensive was never implemented because not enough countries ratified it.

Regional treaties have met with similar failure. “The problem of gaining full support from all parties and adequate enforcement has proven to be a persistent one,” noted Neme. Two regional treaty proposals — the 1940 Washington Convention on Nature Protection and Wild Life Preservation in the Western Hemisphere and the 1968 Algiers African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources — were never effectively implemented by either

the Organization of American States or the Organization for African Unity.⁵⁹

With few restrictions in place, the international trade continued unabated. For example, the South American caiman was so abundant in the 1950s that millions were killed and exported to the United States and Europe to supply the shoe, handbag and luggage industries. Demand grew so much that African, Australian and Asian crocodiles soon came under pressure.

“The depletion of wild crocodiles which began in the 1950s caused rep-

tile hide traders to turn to turtle skin, lizards and snakes, continuing their record of massive overexploitation,” explained the *Endangered Species Handbook*. In the 1950s and ’60s the American alligator and many other crocodile species nearly became extinct, with 6 to 8 million skins traded each year. “One Brazilian state exported 5 million hides in 1950 [and] 12 million black caiman (*Melanosuchus niger*) skins were taken from the Amazon basin.”⁶⁰

In the early 1950s China’s State Council passed laws and regulations related to “the Protection of Rare Animals and Plants.” By the late 1960s, Brazil and many other South American countries had prohibited the export of wildlife. In England the World Wildlife Fund was created in 1961 by a group of like-minded conservationists intent on conserving the world’s wildlife. And in the United States, concern with the possible extinction of the whooping crane and other wildlife led the government to enact the nation’s first list of threatened animals, which led to enactment of the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966. It established a list of endangered species and allocated funds for habitat acquisition.

In 1969 the U.S. law was beefed up to prohibit the importation of foreign wildlife that was threatened. And it mandated that the United States hold an international conference on protecting the globe’s threatened wildlife and encourage foreign countries to conserve threatened fish, wildlife and plants. This effort would eventually lead to the first international treaty to defend threatened and endangered species, or CITES.

CITES Is Born

Throughout the 1960s representatives from many U.N. member countries concerned about the globe’s disappear-

On March 3, 1973, 21 countries signed the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which was both a conservation and a trade treaty. It established legal guidelines and a licensing and permit procedure for the trade of threatened or endangered wildlife, their products and plants and derivatives. “Legal CITES trade is based on two preconditions: a legal acquisition finding and a finding that the trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild,” author Neme explained.⁶¹

While some countries, such as Germany, have comprehensive legislation that allows for full implementation of CITES regulations, not all countries do. Many African nations have weak or nonexistent wildlife trafficking legislation.

- **Appendix I** — Threatened with extinction and banned from trade except in “exceptional circumstances.”
- **Appendix II** — Not immediately threatened with extinction, but trade is strictly regulated.

- No animal or plant listed in any of the three CITES appendices can be traded unless accompanied by

A photograph of a display table at a market stall. On the table are several items: a brown leather boot with metal buckles, a zebra mug, a zebra hat, an elephant hat, and a zebra necklace. Informational cards from IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) are placed near the hats, with the text "THINK TWICE" and "www.ifaw.org". The background shows a busy market stall with various goods.

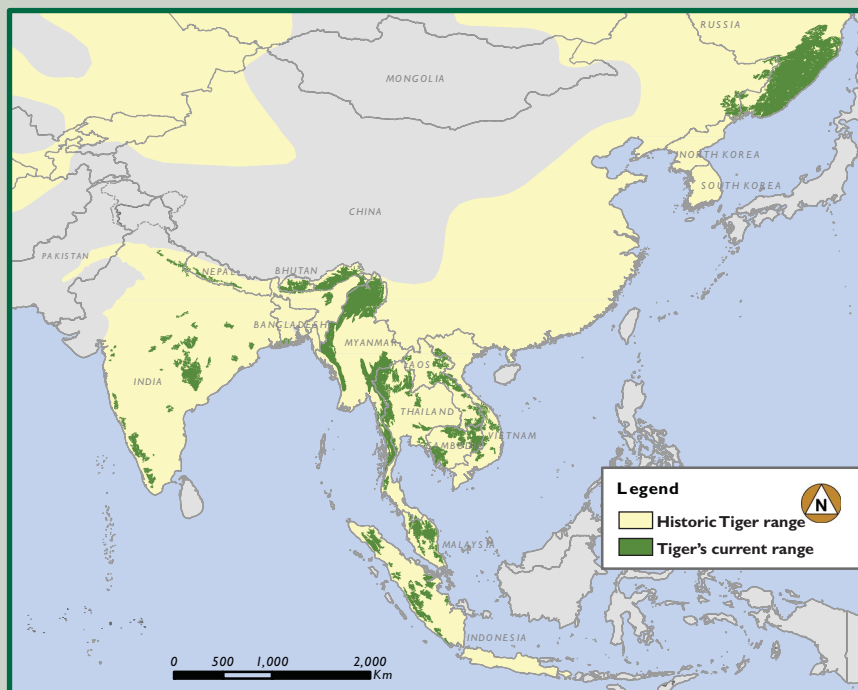
Souvenirs made from endangered species — including an elephant-foot stool with a zebra-skin cover, ivory jewelry and an elephant-skin boot — are just some of the hundreds of illegally trafficked items seized every year at Heathrow International Airport from travelers trying to smuggle the products into Britain.

To succeed, CITES depends on effective enforcement. In the 1990s several organizations were created to help

Regional cooperation and training are more important than ever. As demand for their disappearing product grows, traffickers are getting more sophisticated and more daring every day. ■

Tiger Habitat Shrinks as Poachers Close In

Wild tigers once roamed over much of Asia, but in this Year of the Tiger, fewer than 3,200 still exist on Earth, with 1,400 of them in India. That is about half as many tigers as lived in India a decade ago and a fraction of the 100,000 that lived there in the early 20th century. Tigers are threatened not only by loss of habitat, but also by the surge in demand for tiger bones and other body parts used in traditional Chinese medicine.



Source: World Wildlife Fund

CURRENT SITUATION

Organized Smuggling

A nson Wong's boas-on-a-conveyor-belt escapade is a reminder that professional wildlife trafficking is not slowing down, but also that traffickers have little fear of detection or prosecution. And now there is mounting

evidence that organized crime is taking notice.

Shortly before Wong's reptile-crammed bag burst open, Malaysian police had discovered 42 stolen vehicles and a mini-zoo of exotic and endangered animals such as albino pygmy monkeys, leopard cats and thousands of rare birds, including endangered Birds of Paradise. The stolen cars indicate that wildlife trafficking is linked to organized crime, according to Elizabeth John, Southeast Asia spokesperson for TRAFFIC. "The police should start looking at wildlife trafficking as a serious crime," she said.⁶²

Other recent seizures also point to more sophisticated and organized crime involvement in wildlife trafficking. Last May, American and Thai officials busted a sophisticated, international ivory smuggling ring that spanned three continents.⁶³ Interpol recently admitted that the Russian mafia has been involved in the illicit trade of caviar from endangered Beluga sturgeon, and Asian gangs have moved into trading rhino horns.⁶⁴

The recent seizure of 2,000 frozen pangolins by Chinese customs authorities also confirmed that big money is being spent by organized crime: The boat's crew had received instructions from smugglers via satellite phone and were transferring their cargo at sea. "The use of satellite phones and trans-shipment of cargo at sea are indicative of the increasingly sophisticated methods being used by the organized criminal gangs involved in wildlife crime," said James Compton, TRAFFIC's Asia Pacific coordinator.⁶⁵

"The money associated with narcotics, human trafficking is huge. They have so much money they don't know what to do with it," said CITES' Selar. "They can't wash it fast enough. They've obviously been looking into areas where they can get into — ivory is one, caviar is another."⁶⁶ Because the chance of getting caught smuggling wildlife is so small, criminals view it as a "safe" way to launder money.

Catching smugglers is difficult, because enforcement staffing is woefully inadequate. Interpol has only a handful of personnel who investigate wildlife trade. In Ecuador, which supplies much of the illegal wild bird trade, only nine police officers monitor wildlife trafficking. "We do not lack laws against the trade," said Maria Fernanda Espinosa, former director of Quito-based International Union for Conservation of Nature in South America. "But there is a lack

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Are trade bans an effective deterrent to wildlife trafficking?



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without trade bans, exploited animals such as rhinos, tigers, elephants, sea turtles and great whales would likely be extinct today. For wildlife threatened by commercial exploitation, trade bans are effective and necessary when taking a precautionary approach to conservation. Combined with strong law enforcement and high penalties, such bans can halt the worst effects of wildlife trade on species under duress and provide an opportunity for recovery.

The precautionary principle states simply: “When in doubt, don’t do it.” Like a doctor’s oath to “first do no harm,” the principle requires halting exploitation if it could threaten endangered wildlife.

Bans work. In 1989, experts believed that if ivory trade continued, elephants would be extinct by 2010 — this year. But as a result of the ban on ivory sales, elephant populations began to recover. Similarly, tigers might very well be extinct today if the world community had not banned the trade in tiger parts and derivatives in 1987 and if China had not banned its domestic trade in 1993. Wild tigers are barely hanging on today, but their continued existence allows hope for future recovery.

But too often decisions regarding international wildlife trade are based on short-term profits rather than long-term conservation and sound science. Trade bans can be controversial, and some interests seek to subvert them before a species has recovered.

Recent sales of stockpiled elephant ivory, which were approved under an international wildlife conservation treaty, have damaged the integrity of the 1989 ivory trade ban. Scientists say proposals to sell ivory stockpiles correlate strongly with increased elephant poaching and higher black market prices for ivory. These ivory stockpile sales have created confusion in the market place and caused enforcement difficulties by providing opportunities for illegal ivory laundering.

Tigers could face a similar situation. At the urging of wealthy “tiger farm” owners, Chinese officials have considered lifting the country’s 1993 tiger trade ban, which had successfully reduced the use of tiger bone in traditional medicines. But the world’s top tiger experts agree that a legalized tiger trade in China would almost certainly mean the end of wild tigers in just a few years.

Trade bans are an essential part of wildlife protection strategies for endangered species. Coupled with effective enforcement and supported by strong political will and public commitment, wildlife trade bans can, and do, save species — if they are allowed to work.



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SEPTEMBER 2010

despite trade bans and restrictions, many wildlife species today are more threatened than ever before. So we have the paradox of extremely valuable wildlife, such as tigers or rhinos, threatened with extinction while economically less valued farmed animals, like chickens and cows, are thriving.

By banning the wildlife trade, it is driven underground, often with the aid of corrupt officials. This gives us the second paradox: Trade restrictions increase the prospect of illicit profit, which attracts the worst elements to take the risk and reap huge benefits.

For decades, efforts have focused on saving wildlife such as tigers, elephants, rhinos and others, yet these animals remain on the edge of extinction. On the other hand, commercially bred and traded animals, such as crocodiles, thrive. More than a million crocodiles are harvested and traded for their skins each year across the world, from Australia to the United States. The availability of freely traded crocodile skins has virtually wiped out crocodile poaching in a country like India, where the animal still remains endangered and may not be farmed or traded. Poachers stop poaching because they can simply not compete, in terms of price and quality, with legally traded animals.

Today, a dead tiger could fetch from \$30,000 to \$60,000, for its skin, bones and other organs, which are used in traditional Chinese medicinal products. Similarly, rhino horn powder is said to be more valuable than gold to Chinese consumers.

Yet wildlife in its natural environment can be a very valuable resource for the surrounding community and the country. In the United States, environmental recreation — including nature trails, bird watching, camping, etc. — generates more than \$100 billion a year. Fishing and hunting contribute another \$20 billion. With proper ownership and management, the potential economic benefit from the wildlife and natural environment could be immense for Africa and Asia.

Unfortunately, it is fashionable today to preach the non-economic values of nature, while some of the poorest people in the world languish in abject poverty amidst amazing environmental wealth. This is clearly unsustainable. When people do not gain from the wildlife around them, they have little interest in managing those resources properly. Thus, the single biggest threat to wildlife is the conflict between man and animal.

Commerce can easily save our wildlife by eliminating that conflict. Commerce and conservation are not mortal enemies as often portrayed; they can easily complement each other, if only we allow it.

Continued from p. 252

of resources, and that means it is not a conservation priority.”⁶⁷ The picture is the same in many other countries.

To combat the increasingly sophisticated criminals, more nations must follow South Africa’s example, say wildlife experts. Shocked by a sophisticated, well-organized poaching attack that used helicopters and high-powered rifles and claimed 185 rhinos in the first eight months of 2010, the country is fighting back. Authorities plan to create a national high-tech wildlife crime unit that will include both members of Interpol and staffers

“We are dealing with unprecedented high levels of organized crime. . . . We have worked hard as a country, to bring this species back from the brink of extinction and we will continue to defend it even if we become the last man standing.”⁶⁸

Poaching by Internet

Trading in protected wildlife — including ivory carvings, endangered parrots, nearly extinct salamanders and thousands of other wildlife and products from endangered species — is

Appendix I wildlife products (79 percent) or live animals (21 percent). (See chart, p. 245.) More than half of the listings (57 percent) were classified as “possible violations” because they made a claim of compliance but failed to provide any supporting documentation. Another 34 percent contained no reference to compliance or documentation. Only 7 percent were deemed to be legally compliant.⁶⁹

The trade was dominated by elephant products and live exotic birds. However, as the report noted, “Investigators also found that the Internet was a conduit for a variety of other categories or protected wildlife including primates, big cats, reptiles, sharks, rhinoceros, sturgeon and others.”⁷⁰

Ivory items are forbidden for sale in the United States unless they can be shown to be antiques or legally imported. But they regularly pop up on online selling sites like Craigslist. “It’s very easy to comb through Craigslist’s ads and find ivory items for sale that are most probably prohibited by law,” says IFAW’s program manager Todd. “Policing these listings and proving whether or not the ivory item is legal or illegal is close to impossible.”

Although large online auction sites such as eBay and China’s taobao.com have prohibited trade in ivory and live wildlife, sellers do their best to keep one step ahead of the law. Some, for example, use less obvious descriptions such as “made from the teeth of the world’s largest mammal.”

Another ruse, explained IFAW’s Barbara Cartwright, is: “I put up an ad for a chimpanzee, you call me, and then we talk about what I really have.”⁷¹

Both police and conservation sources admit the Internet is now one of the main challenges facing CITES. “The Internet is becoming the dominant factor overall in the global trade in protected species,” said Todd. “There will come a time when



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Hundreds of ivory tusks from African elephants were returned to Kenya after being seized by Customs officials in Singapore. More than 16 tons of elephant ivory were seized worldwide in 2009 — more than double the amount seized in 2008.

from South Africa’s organized crime unit. It will use DNA forensics, helicopters and tracking devices to help pursue the killers.

“Perhaps it is no longer appropriate to refer to this spate of illegal killing of rhinos as poaching, given the levels of sophistication, violence, precision and the money behind it,” explained David Mabunda, chief executive of South Africa National Parks.

booming on Internet auction sites, chat rooms and elsewhere.

“The Internet has offered wildlife traffickers a ready-made marketing tool to sell their illegal wares,” says author and conservationist Neme. “It’s a vast, global marketplace that is growing and is very hard to police.”

In an 11-country investigation of 183 publicly accessible websites, IFAW found 7,122 ads offering either CITES

country-to-country trade of large shipments between big buyers and sellers in different countries is a thing of the past.”⁷²

Success Stories

International cooperation is crucial to cracking organized crime syndicates that smuggle wildlife. For example, Interpol recently coordinated a global investigation that nabbed \$13.6 million worth of illegal animal and plant products destined for use in traditional medicine. Operation Tram included national wildlife enforcement authorities, police, customs and specialized units from 18 countries on five continents.⁷³

“This level of cooperation is good news in the war against trafficking,” says IFAW’s Alie.

Recently formed regional and local wildlife policing units are also joining forces. Cambodia’s new Wildlife Enforcement Coordination unit will work with its local enforcement division, the Wildlife Rapid Rescue Team, to investigate trafficking. It’s part of the successful ASEAN-Wildlife Enforcement Network. Set up by 10 ASEAN countries in 2005, the group last year finally formed its Special Investigation Group, a cross-border interagency investigation team that includes Interpol and other partners.

Wildlife experts say that despite some encouraging regional successes, the war against trafficking needs more cooperation and funding. “The international coordination of the efforts to protect wildlife and to support national authorities is woefully inadequate and often overwhelmed by the demands placed upon the very few individuals involved,” explained CITES enforcement officer Sellar. “At the national level, the front-line staff suffers from a lack of legal authority, equipment, training, inter-agency cooperation and access to modern policing

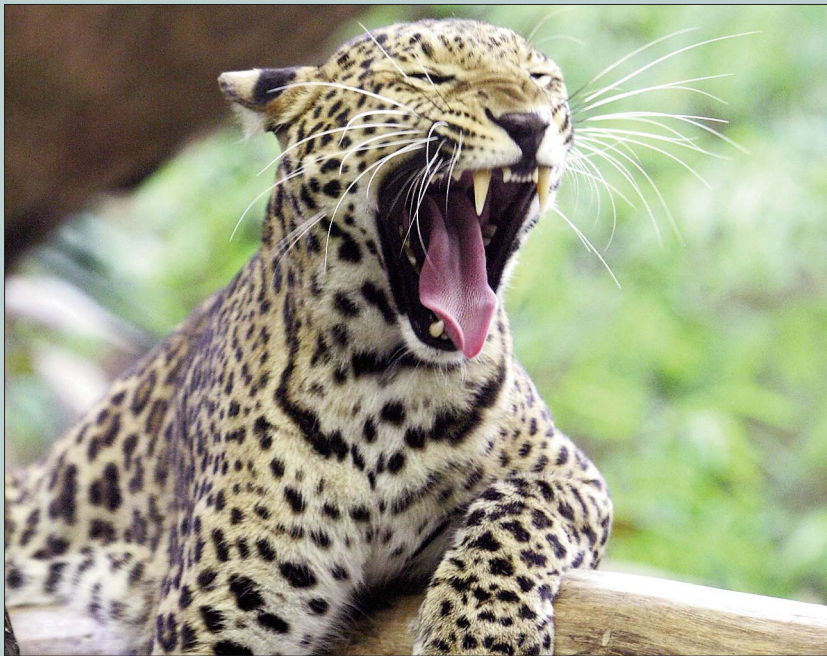


Thai officials exhibit a collection of body parts from endangered animals, including tiger skins and bear paws, seized in a raid at a house in northern Bangkok, where police also found several live tigers, bears and orangutans.

methods. Attempts to plug the gaps and to deliver assistance have tended to be haphazard.”⁷⁴

Many hope the partners of the recently formed International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime — Interpol, CITES, the World Bank, the World Customs Organization and the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime — can bring a new internationally coordinated effort to combating wildlife crime.

“There will be a level playing field and . . . a new era of wildlife law enforcement is introduced: an era where those who rob countries and communities of their natural resources will face a determined and formidable opposition,” said Willem Wijnstekers, former secretary-general of CITES. “It is high time that more wildlife criminals end up behind bars, where they belong.”⁷⁵



AFP/Getty Images/Saeed Khan



AFP/Getty Images/Andrew Yates

Facing Threats

Leopards and Komodo dragons — the world's largest lizards — are disappearing due to illegal hunting and habitat loss. As threatened or endangered species, they cannot be traded under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an international treaty with more than 144 member countries. Leopards are medium-size cats found throughout much of Asia and Africa. Meat-eating Komodo dragons grow to 10 feet in length and are found on a few Indonesian islands north of Australia. The CITES treaty bans trading in some 800 species, including gorillas and Asian elephants.

OUTLOOK

Funding Gaps

A plethora of high-profile non-governmental organizations — including TRAFFIC, the World Wildlife Fund and the International Fund for Animal Welfare — continues to research and publicize illegal wildlife trafficking that threatens millions of endangered animals. Partly as a result of its investigations, eBay has clamped down on ivory sellers, more nations have enacted national wildlife laws and anti-trafficking efforts have been strengthened.

But why aren't individual nations doing more? "One of the biggest problems in fighting wildlife trafficking is the lack of funding that nations have committed to solving the problem," explains conservation writer Neme.

Conservation experts say wildlife trafficking will only grow unless more nations increase funding for wildlife research and enforcement, institute and strengthen national trafficking laws and educate the public about the long-term effects of the illegal trade. "Governments need to make bigger investments in enforcement and education," notes IFAW's Alie. "Happily, there is more impetus coming from increased public awareness."

Optimists cite several recent examples of international cooperation as a sign that wildlife trafficking enforcement is being taken more seriously. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has conducted enforcement-training programs in Africa, Southeast Asia, Mongolia and other regions. The Department of Justice is educating foreign judges and prosecutors. And governments and NGOs have joined forces to help set up, educate and train regional wildlife enforcement personnel.

High-tech tools will also play a greater role in investigating the illegal trade. For example, DNA can pinpoint the origin of elephant tusks, enabling investigators to distinguish legally sold ivory from smuggled ivory. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Forensics Laboratory is leading the world in developing high-tech methods to combat trafficking.

While stricter enforcement and heftier penalties are helping to combat trafficking, many conservationists agree that education is the best defense against the continued slaughter. "Once people value the sustainability of future populations, the calculus changes so animals are worth more alive than dead," explained Neme.⁷⁶

Changing behaviors is challenging. Poachers, rural poor and government officials in developing countries must realize that they can earn more by conserving animals than by killing and selling them. Costa Rica, for instance, has built a thriving eco-tourism business by carefully preserving its exotic wildlife species. "It is not enough to tell people what to do; they must be convinced that it is in their own best interest," noted a World Bank report. "[They] need to know why they should change their behavior, and how they may do so without having to incur major losses."⁷⁷

A new Cambodian eco-tourism program offers a tantalizing glimpse into what many hope will be more commonplace in the future. In the rugged, mountainous, heavily forested region of Monduliri, the Cambodian government has begun an eco-tourism development project. Forty-five former wildlife hunters have been recruited to lead visitors on eco-tours and help the environment recover from years of trafficking.

"Before, whenever I saw an animal in the forest, my first thought was to shoot it," said one of the guides, former poacher Chran Thabb. "I don't do that anymore. The animals would become extinct, and I want the next generation to see them."⁷⁸

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Wild Aid, 744 Montgomery St., Suite 120, San Francisco, CA 94111; (415) 834-3174; www.wildaid.org. An international nonprofit organization that works to reduce demand for threatened and endangered species products and increase public support for wildlife conservation.

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The Next Step:

Additional Articles from Current Periodicals

Bushmeat

“Congolese Chimpanzees Face New ‘Wave of Killing’ for Bushmeat,” *Guardian Unlimited (England)*, Sept. 7, 2010.

Local taboos about eating bushmeat have broken down in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, threatening the country’s chimpanzee population.

Grierson, Jamie, “Why the Earth May No Longer Be a Planet of the Apes,” *Belfast (Northern Ireland)*, Feb. 18, 2010.

The illegal wildlife trade and commercial bushmeat hunting are bringing nearly half of the world’s primates to the brink of extinction.

Ihucha, Adam, “Poachers Kill Four Giraffes in Game Park,” *The Guardian (Tanzania)*, Jan. 12, 2010.

Poachers have killed four giraffes in a Tanzanian national park, reflecting a growing appetite for bushmeat in the region.

Redfern, Paul, “Future of Mountain Gorilla Trips in Danger,” *The East African (Kenya)*, May 31, 2010.

Mountain gorillas in Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are facing endangerment due to the growing bushmeat trade.

Chinese Medicine

“China to Work With India on Curbing Tiger Poaching,” *The Hindu (India)*, Sept. 4, 2010.

China and India have agreed to cooperate on sharing intelligence on the illegal trade in tiger parts, which traditionally make their way into therapeutic Chinese medicines.

“Chinese Customs Officials Seize Thousands of Dead Pangolins,” *Guardian Unlimited (England)*, July 13, 2010.

Chinese authorities have intercepted one of the largest ever hauls of illegally smuggled pangolins, which were likely to be incorporated into medicines or exotic dishes.

Jacobs, Andrew, “Tiger Farms in China Feed Thirst for Parts,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 13, 2010, p. A4.

Despite a government ban on the trade since 1993, a robust market for tiger bones thrives in China, prized for their alleged healing and aphrodisiac qualities.

CITES

“CITES Toughens Up on Illegal Wildlife Trade Online,” *Al Bawaba (Jordan)*, March 23, 2010.

Stricter measures to control the spread of illegal wildlife trade over the Internet were endorsed at the latest CITES meeting in Doha, Qatar.

“Environmental Conference Aims to Protect Rare Species,” *Vietnam News Agency*, Nov. 25, 2009.

Vietnamese environmental police are being trained by CITES experts to spot illegal wildlife trade.

Jolly, David, “U.N. Group Rejects Protections for Sharks,” *The New York Times*, March 24, 2010, p. A12.

CITES delegates have voted down three of four proposals to protect sharks from poachers, handing victories to Japan, China and other countries opposed to the involvement of international authorities in the regulation of ocean fish.

Ivory Sales

“Southern Africa Seeks CITES Approval for Sale of Ivory Stocks,” *Southern African News Features (Zimbabwe)*, March 18, 2010.

Southern African countries are seeking to legitimize the sale of their ivory stocks at the latest round of CITES talks.

McCarthy, Michael, “UK to Oppose Proposed Sale of Ivory From Tanzania, Zambia,” *The Post (Zambia)*, Jan. 28, 2010.

Great Britain is expected to vote against the proposed sale of stockpiled ivory from Tanzania and Zambia, which conservationists fear would lead to an increased slaughter of African elephants.

Walker, John Frederick, “Selling Ivory to Save the Elephants,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 17, 2009, p. A15.

An estimated 37,000 elephants are poached every year across the African continent in pursuit of their ivory tusks.

CITING CQ GLOBAL RESEARCHER

Sample formats for citing these reports in a bibliography include the ones listed below. Preferred styles and formats vary, so please check with your instructor or professor.

MLA STYLE

Flamini, Roland. “Nuclear Proliferation.” *CQ Global Researcher* 1 Apr. 2007: 1-24.

APA STYLE

Flamini, R. (2007, April 1). Nuclear proliferation. *CQ Global Researcher*, 1, 1-24.

CHICAGO STYLE

Flamini, Roland. “Nuclear Proliferation.” *CQ Global Researcher*, April 1, 2007, 1-24.

Voices From Abroad:

PHAM VAN LINH

**Vice Chairman, Party
Central Committee's Com-
mission for Publicity and
Education, Vietnam**

Tourists must be educated

"Raising awareness among travelers regarding wildlife protection laws will be essential in halting the illegal and unsustainable trade that is pushing many species towards extinction in Vietnam and across Southeast Asia."

*Vietnam News Agency
May 2010*

WILL TRAVERS

**CEO, Born Free Founda-
tion, England**

Legal sales make it worse

"Far from lessening the market's demand for ivory, the evidence suggests strongly that legitimate sales of ivory only make the dealers want more. The last so-called 'one-off' sale of stockpiled ivory was just over a year ago and all the indications are that this only made the poachers eager to get in on the act."

*The Express (England)
February 2010*

NICK HERBERT

**Environment Secretary,
England**

Problems at home need to be addressed

"At home, we need to tackle the domestic trade, which often comes across our borders unchecked, hav-

ing been bought online. A Conservative government would create a code of practice for online retailers to ensure they're not facilitating the sale of illegal ivory and we should reinforce our borders with a new UK Border Police force, which would take action to combat smuggling and illegal trade of all kinds."

*The Independent (England)
January 2010*

HAJI YAHYA BIN HJ IDRIS

**Controller of Royal Brunei
Customs and Excise**

All suffer

"Everyone is affected by wildlife crime. Illegal activities damage our environment as well as endanger many of the species that inhabit our planet. In wildlife crime, the direct victim is the plant or animal that is exploited, rather than an individual or group of people."

*Borneo Bulletin (Indonesia)
April 2010*

HA CONG TUAN

**Deputy, General Depart-
ment of Forestry, Vietnam**

The entire region is affected

"The wildlife illegal trade is threatening many wild species of animals and plants, not just in Vietnam but also the region."

*Vietnam News Briefs
April 2010*

BELINDA WRIGHT

**Executive Director, Wildlife
Protection Society India**

China must change

"All of the demand for tiger parts is coming from China. Unless the Chinese change their attitude, the tiger has no future on this Earth."

*The New York Times
February 2010*

WATANA VEPAYAPRASIT

**Director, Wildlife and Flora
Conservation Division
Thailand**

Tough to distinguish

"Trade in ivory from wild elephants is illegal. The challenge which authorities face in enforcing the law is

that traders mix ivory from wild elephants with ivory from domestic ones, so it is difficult to separate them."

Bangkok Post, April 2010

JULIUS KIPNG'ETICH

**Director, Kenya Wildlife
Service**

Chinese responsible for poaching

"Poaching has risen sharply in areas where the Chinese are building roads. Is that a coincidence? Ninety percent of the ivory confiscated at Nairobi airport is in Chinese luggage. Some Chinese say we are being racist, but our sniffer dogs are not racist."

*Sunday Telegraph (England)
March 2010*



**I've had my tusks surgically removed:
Now, I'm of no value to poachers...**

Hagen