Impact Report

Wildlife Crime: A global problem, a global solution

How IFAW is fighting back against wildlife crime

A troubling report on illegal trafficking

Exclusive interview with
Polen Cisneros, Programme Manager of Wildlife Crime

Be part of the solution:
ways you can help

ifaw
International Fund for Animal Welfare

A car trunk with 216 parrot chicks, seized in January 2021, Santiago del Estero province, Argentina.

Authorities seized 216 poison dart frogs hidden in photographic rolls destined for Germany.

Minimal protection for wildlife species

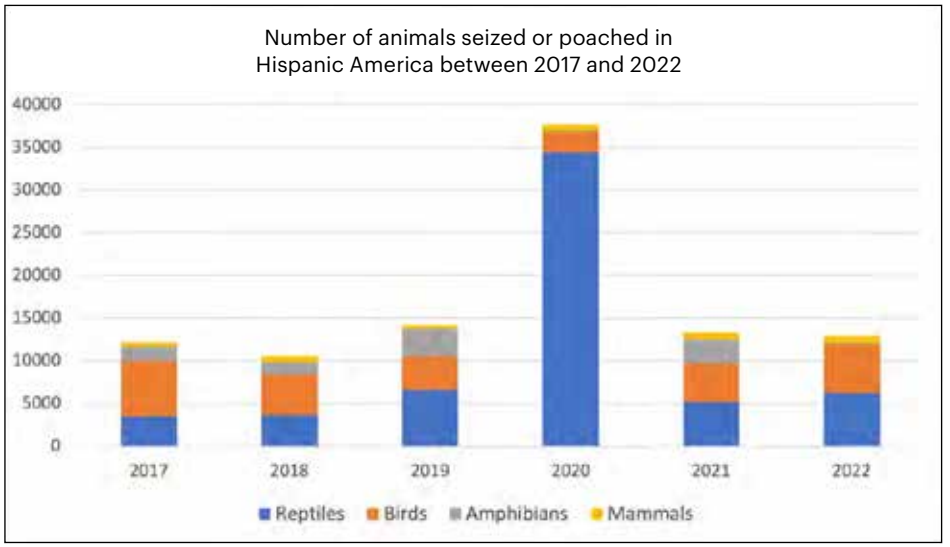
Forced into toothpaste boxes. Stuffed in film canisters. Packed tightly in luggage. These are some of the horrendous ways wildlife traffickers are smuggling wild animals into countries around the world.

Earlier this year, IFAW released a report detailing the seizures of animals in 18 countries in Hispanic America. The findings were tragic: Between 2017 and 2022, a minimum of 102,577 wild animals from 690 different wildlife species were found through 1,945 recorded seizures. And these were just the incidents recorded by the media. This research only represents a fraction of the number of animals actually being trafficked on a daily basis.

More than half of these species are not protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meaning that many of these animals are not covered by national wildlife protection laws.

In the European Union, more than 94% of seized wildlife were live animals intended for the exotic pet trade. This is because illegal smugglers have been exploiting these legal loopholes for less-protected species. In fact, seizures bound for the EU, USA, or Asia often contained rare species, highlighting how foreign demand is damaging already vulnerable wildlife populations.

What is CITES? Scan our QR code to read our detailed blog



Wildlife seizures from all 18 Hispanic American countries.

Want a deeper look into our research?

Scan the QR code to access our wildlife crime report and international dashboard covering wildlife seizures from all 18 countries in Hispanic America.

Wildlife seizures from all 18 Hispanic American countries

Regional distribution of seizures and poaching incidents reported between 2017 and 2022.

Bird market in Paris, France.

20 projects across 34 countries

IFAW's Wildlife Crime programme spans the entire world.
Here is a snapshot of our global programmes:

Photo: Samuel Mutua / © IFAW

Frontline law enforcement officers working at the border between Uganda-DRC and Uganda-South Sudan participate in a rapid response training.

Frontline officer training

Southern and Eastern Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Southeast Asia, East Asia

IFAW provides training seminars to wildlife rangers, officers, and other first responders to advance their skills in evidence collection (including collecting DNA samples) and how to present their findings during a trial. Over two years, more than 1,300 law enforcement, prosecution, or judicial officers have received training from IFAW. We have also provided confiscator kits to frontline officers in Guyana, Indonesia, and Congo, designed to help safely and humanely handle rescued animals, lessening their stress and thus improving their survival chances.

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A marmoset rescued from the illegal wildlife trade.

Live Animals Seized in Trade

Global

When animals are successfully seized from smugglers, frontline officers are often left questioning where the confiscated wildlife can be placed. As a result of these gaps in knowledge, many rescued animals are tragically euthanised. Through our Live Animals Seized in Trade program, IFAW is working to create post-rescue guidelines, collaborating with wildlife authorities and the scientific community to determine whether a rescued animal can safely and humanely return to life in the wild or be transferred to a wildlife sanctuary, rescue centre, or zoo instead of turning to euthanasia.

© Donal Boyd

A community ranger in Mgeno Wildlife Conservancy with snares collected during the past six months.

Anti-poaching efforts

Southern and Eastern Africa

IFAW is dedicated to stopping wildlife crime before it has the chance to begin. Through our Room to Roam initiative, we're investing in projects that strengthen ranger welfare and help to reduce wildlife crime in our supported areas. Together with our partner, Dete Animal Rescue Trust, we've helped fund many snare patrols throughout Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park. Between February and August 2024, 675 illegal wire snares were recovered, and 26 tons of telephone wire (often used to make snares) were confiscated outside the park.

With ZimParks, we have invested in the K9 Unit, where dogs are trained in three areas—sniffer, tracker, and security—to reduce wildlife crime throughout Zimbabwe. These training practices are now setting the standard for canine units across the country.

Scan here to meet Themba and Wana from the K9 Unit

Photo: Shaun McMinn / © IFAW

Themba and Wana are the newest recruits to ZimPark's K9 unit, where they work to track potential poachers in Hwange National Park.

Photo: David M. Hillis / © IFAW

An iguana with its front legs tied around its back lying on top of other iguanas as they are illegally shipped from Honduras to El Salvador.

From source to destination

Since 1987, IFAW's Wildlife Crime programme has evolved into a global system that works to stop the global supply chain of illegally trafficked animals across every avenue—starting from the places they inhabit all the way to potential buyers. With the market for illegal wildlife products and live animals worth up to $20 billion USD annually, we're effectively deterring sellers and potential buyers by making the online wildlife trade industry as unprofitable as possible.

Together with TRAFFIC and WWF, we launched the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online in 2018, working to unite the tech industry in the reduction of wildlife sales.

Collaborating with over 40 companies across 50 digital platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, eBay, and TikTok, the Coalition has blocked or removed over **24.1 million** prohibited wildlife listings and suspected illicit sellers. **3,050** staff members across our company partners have received wildlife content detection training, which helped to block **12.5 million** sales (over 50% of blocked listings) over the last three years.

We're also turning to AI to give a powerful boost in online detection. IFAW has partnered with Baidu, a leading AI and internet technology company in China, to develop the AI Guardian platform. With traders

IFAW won a silver 2025 Edison Award for AI for Environmental Sustainability thanks to our work with Baidu and the AI Guardian tool.

Scan the QR code to learn more about our work with AI

developing new tricks like using code words or emojis to avoid detection, the AI tool can filter out targeted images that may involve illegal trade. With an **86%** accuracy rate, AI Guardian has successfully detected **21,271** images of targeted species, leading to the deletion of **7,853** illegal postings.

The unfortunate truth is that wild animals are being trafficked everywhere in the world, pushing thousands of species closer to the brink of extinction. But with over 30 years of learned expertise, our Wildlife Crime team continues to influence each aspect of the illegal wildlife market and minimise the reach of traffickers.

© JAAN

Mano, one of two sun bears rescued from illegal trade in Indonesia, is currently undergoing rehabilitation with our partner JAAN Indonesia.

How to report a suspicious post

As everyday consumers, you have the power to stop illegal wildlife trafficking. If you ever suspect you've seen a post or illegal ad for live wildlife or its parts, please report it. Feel free to share this page with friends and family to help expand the global network of educated consumers.

Report a suspicious post on Facebook

Report a suspicious post on YouTube

Report a suspicious post on Twitter/X

Report a suspicious post on TikTok

Report a suspicious post on Instagram

Together, as a global community, we can put an end to the illegal sales of wild animals online.

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