

**WILDLIFE
CRIME
RESEARCH
HUB**

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**AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDES
TO ILLEGAL WILDLIFE
TRAFFICKING**

"AUSTRALIA'S WILDLIFE BELONGS IN THE WILD"



86% of Australians
are concerned
about illegal wildlife
trafficking

Illegal wildlife trafficking is not widely recognised as a major issue in Australia, despite widespread concern once people learn about it.

While three quarters (75%) of Australians are aware that native wildlife is trafficked illegally, most (64%) admit they know only a little about the issue, highlighting a significant opportunity to improve public understanding.

Many Australians are aware that reptiles and birds are commonly trafficked illegally, with awareness particularly high among older Australians and much lower among younger Australians.

Knowledge gaps are particularly evident when it comes to the organised criminal networks behind wildlife trafficking. One in two Australians have little or no awareness that illegal wildlife trade is linked to organised crime, despite these links being well established internationally.

**One in two Australians
have no knowledge of the
links between illegal
wildlife trafficking and
organised crime!**

Australians overwhelmingly support action to protect wildlife. More than eight in 10 (86%) Australians are concerned about the illegal trafficking of native wildlife, with almost half (45%) reporting they are very concerned. Preventing animal suffering, protecting threatened species and preserving Australia's unique biodiversity are all seen as compelling reasons to tackle wildlife trafficking.

Australians strongly support practical measures to improve detection and prevention, including expanding wildlife detection capabilities at Australia's airports and increasing public awareness campaigns. A total of 89% of Australians say they would like to see dogs trained to detect wildlife being smuggled at airports.

**THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT
OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE
AWARENESS AND EMPOWER THE
PUBLIC TO HELP PROTECT
AUSTRALIA'S UNIQUE
WILDLIFE.**

Findings suggest that increasing public awareness has the potential to strengthen community support for prevention, reporting and enforcement efforts.



Australians overwhelmingly back stronger detection, tougher enforcement, and expanded public education efforts.

Australians recognise that protecting wildlife requires coordinated action and warrants stronger prevention and detection. Border control and customs agencies are viewed as having the greatest responsibility for preventing wildlife trafficking, while police and other law enforcement agencies are also seen as playing an important role.

Australians are somewhat split on whether it is easy or difficult for someone to illegally traffic Australian wildlife without being caught, with slightly more saying it is difficult (57%) than easy (43%).

80% of Australians support more public awareness campaigns.

Encouragingly, polling indicates that Australians would report suspected wildlife trafficking if they witnessed it, demonstrating a willingness to support enforcement efforts when equipped with the knowledge to do so.

However, awareness of current initiatives remains low. Around one in 10 (13%) Australians recall seeing wildlife trafficking awareness campaigns at Australian airports, despite strong public support for expanding these campaigns.

Communication Matters!

Our research demonstrates that simple, values-based messages resonate most strongly with Australians.

"Australia's wildlife belongs in the wild" emerged as the strongest overall message, performing most consistently across the top rankings. This was followed closely by *"Illegal trafficking of wildlife carries serious penalties"*, which also performed strongly across the top rankings.

Messages focused on protecting Australia's unique wildlife and reinforcing that wildlife belongs in the wild consistently performed better than more technical or policy-focused messaging. Messages highlighting the serious legal consequences of wildlife trafficking also resonated strongly.

Together, these findings provide a clear evidence base for future public awareness campaigns aimed at increasing recognition of wildlife trafficking and encouraging reporting.

**"ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING
OF WILDLIFE CARRIES
SERIOUS PENALTIES"**

About IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare)

IFAW is a global non-profit helping animals and people thrive together. We are experts and everyday people, working across seas, oceans and in more than 40 countries around the world. We rescue, rehabilitate and release animals, and we restore and protect their natural habitats. See how at ifaw.org

IFAW acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country and their connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

About the Wildlife Crime Research Hub (WCRH)

Our pioneering research hub at Adelaide University provides vital research support and training to strengthen enforcement and compliance efforts, while also advancing education and public awareness. We are adopting cutting-edge technologies, shaping regulatory and legal frameworks, and translating our findings into practical tools and resources. The Wildlife Crime Research Hub is bolstering Australia's environmental security and helping to establish a globally exportable wildlife crime technology sector. Website: www.wildlifecrimeresearchhub.org

We respectfully acknowledge the Kurna, Boandik and Barngarla First Nations Peoples and their Elders past and present, who are the First Nations' Traditional Owners of the lands that are now home to our combined campuses located in Adelaide, Waite, Roseworthy, Mount Gambier and Whyalla.



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A YouGov poll commissioned by IFAW surveyed 1,501 Australian adult citizens between 5 and 12 May 2026. The survey was conducted online, and the results are representative of the Australian adult citizen population by age, gender, region, income, education and past vote. Unless otherwise stated, all figures are from YouGov. The maximum margin of error for a sample of this size is approximately ± 2.5 percentage points. The figures are representative of the voting population by age, gender, region, income, education, 2025 Federal Election vote and 2023 Voice Vote.