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ENDANGERED WILDLIFE FOR SALE  
IN NEW ZEALAND



IFAW

International Fund for Animal Welfare

A close-up photograph of a horse's tail, showing the texture of the brown and white hairs. The tail is the central focus of the image, with a white blaze running down its length. The background is a solid orange color.

Trade in endangered species is regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES). Around 34,000 species are protected by CITES globally.

### **CITES APPENDIX I**

Species that are threatened with extinction and which are affected by international trade are placed on Appendix I of the Convention, offering the highest level of protection. With a few exceptions, commercial international trade in these species is prohibited and any shipments allowed are regulated by a system of matching import and export permits. Globally 600 animals are listed on Appendix I.

### **CITES APPENDIX II**

Species that are not immediately threatened with extinction but may become so unless their trade is subject to strict regulation are placed on Appendix II of the Convention, meaning that export permits are required for international sales. Globally 4,400 animals are listed on Appendix II.

# 01 //

# INTRODUCTION

Wildlife crime ranks among the most lucrative of serious and organised international crimes along with human trafficking, drug running and illegal arms and in many ways can be just as dangerous and damaging.

Various organisations and reports estimate that the trade is worth at least NZ\$22 billion per year worldwide<sup>1</sup> and the threat it poses to many of the world's most iconic species including elephants, rhinos and big cats is now widely recognised.

The illegal wildlife trade clearly impacts the welfare and conservation of endangered animals but it can also threaten national and global security through the increasing involvement of organised crime syndicates in the trade.<sup>2</sup> The safety of entire communities in targeted wildlife range States can be compromised by poachers and at least 1,000 rangers were killed in 35 different countries over the last decade.<sup>3</sup>

Illegally imported animals and plants can also carry diseases or become pests with significant negative impacts on human health and agriculture. The highly dangerous H5N1 avian flu virus appeared for the first time in Europe when it was discovered in a smuggled pair of eagles seized in Belgium in 2004.<sup>4</sup>

New Zealand is a global biodiversity hotspot with most native animals found nowhere else in the world and this makes them an attractive target for smugglers.<sup>5</sup> In a recent study of illegal wildlife trade seizures in New Zealand, Australia and the UK, New Zealand had the highest number of incidents, with almost double the number of seizures compared to the UK and over ten times more than Australia.<sup>6</sup> Several recent seizures of illegal ivory as well as an attempted export of jewelled geckos indicate a continuing trade.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) has carried out regular assessments into online trade in endangered species since 2004. IFAW's largest survey, *Killing with Keystrokes: An investigation of the Illegal Wildlife Trade on the World Wide Web (2008)* recorded 7,122 online auctions, advertisements and classifieds in 11 countries but did not include New Zealand.

**Since that global survey, the illegal international trade in endangered species has continued to grow at an alarming rate.<sup>7</sup> In particular, the levels at which elephants are being killed is alarming - it is estimated that at least 25,000 elephants and as many as 50,000 are slaughtered each year for their ivory<sup>8</sup> meaning that one elephant is killed for its ivory every 15 minutes. Rhino horn is now fetching record prices and rampant poaching has brought some rhinoceros subspecies to the verge of extinction.<sup>9</sup>**

This report details the research IFAW carried out in 2013 to assess for the first time, levels of trade in endangered wild animals and their products on web platforms hosted in New Zealand and accessible to the public.



**Trademe hosted 20 advertisements for Appendix I products, including 17 ivory figures and jewellery, one tiger claw and two marine turtle shells.**

# 02 //

# NEW ZEALAND'S TRADE IN ENDANGERED WILDLIFE

IFAW scanned a number of websites hosted in New Zealand including Trademe, Gumtree New Zealand, Skykiwi and Adoos.

Over the survey period, Trademe hosted 20 advertisements for Appendix I products, including 17 ivory figures and jewellery, one tiger tooth claw and two taxidermy marine turtle shells. One seller who has been trading on the site since 2008 was responsible for eight ivory items and the two turtle shells.

**Thirteen advertisements for Appendix II items were also posted on the site including 11 reptile products (crocodile and python skin accessories as well as an entire stuffed crocodile), an entire stuffed bear and a bear rug with skull.**

The total value of all Appendix I species advertisements was NZ\$12,405 and NZ\$10,216 for Appendix II. Only one of the advertisements for a farmed crocodile skull referenced CITES documentation.

All sellers noted in New Zealand offered national shipping only, perhaps because Trademe specifies that sellers can only trade with Australian and New Zealand buyers.

## A APPENDIX I ITEMS NEW ZEALAND

Websites	Total ads	National sellers	Overseas sellers	Total elephant (ivory) ads	Total turtle ads	Total big cats (tiger) ads
Trademe	20	20	0	17	2	1

## B CATEGORY OF ADVERTISEMENTS FOR APPENDIX I ITEMS NEW ZEALAND

Type of species	Sales	Percent
Elephant (Ivory)	17	85%
Turtle products	2	10%
Big cat products (tiger)	1	5%

## C APPENDIX II ITEMS NEW ZEALAND

Websites	Total ads	National sellers	Overseas sellers	Total reptile ads	Total bear ads
Trademe	13	13	0	11	2

## D) CATEGORY OF ADVERTISEMENTS FOR APPENDIX II ITEMS NEW ZEALAND

Type of species	Sales	Percent
Reptile products (crocodile / alligator / python)	11	84.62%
Bear	2	15.38%

## WEBSITES HOSTED OVERSEAS

### New Zealanders buying and selling on Australian websites

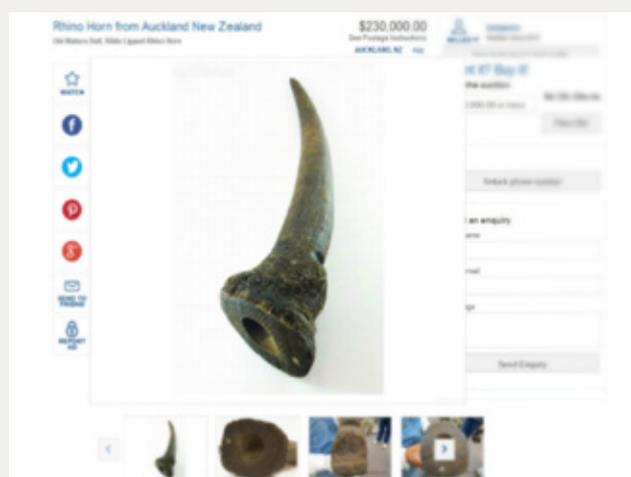
This IFAW research looked at items offered for sale on New Zealand hosted websites, however because there are so few of these, many New Zealanders may be buying from overseas trading platforms.

### IFAW's simultaneous research into Australian trading platforms found an Auckland-based seller offering a rhino horn on Quicksales.au at a cost of AU\$230,000.

The seller claimed that the horn was 'quite old', that it had been collected in the 1960s and offered to help international buyers apply for export/import permits.

National enforcement authorities report increasing trade in worked ivory products over the last five years. Many of these products have been purchased on eBay Australia advertised as 'faux ivory' or 'ox bone' and then sent to New Zealand in packages marked as containing low value resin.

In one recent case that resulted in New Zealand's first prosecution for illegal ivory trade, the defendant pleaded guilty to eight charges of trading in ivory without a permit. He had bought items on Trademe and on eBay Australia and then sold them on to China via his own website.<sup>10</sup>



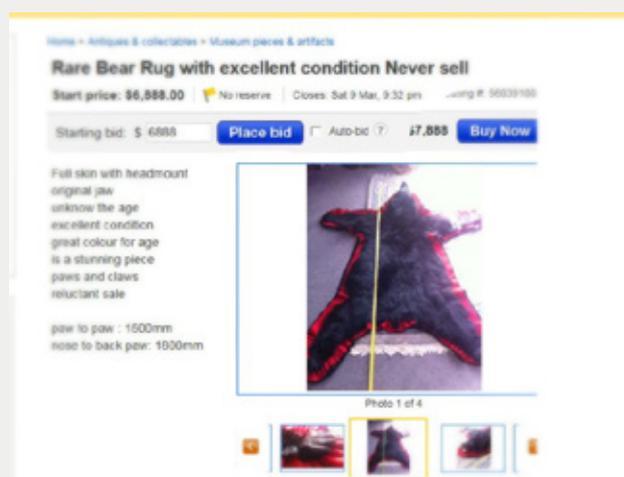
### The Alibaba example

IFAW also surveyed items available on Alibaba, a Chinese-hosted website, to allow researchers to assess the trends in the wildlife items available to consumers from just one of the wider range of websites hosted outside the region. They found 109 Appendix I wildlife product advertisements.

The majority of items were reptile skin products including crocodile and alligator handbags, belts, briefcases, wallets or simply lengths of skin to order in bulk. All listings were posted by overseas sellers, many individuals offering a large number of products for shipment to New Zealand or other international locations with no reference to the legality of the item or CITES permits required for sale, despite the fact that site policy prohibits sale of any product protected by CITES.

### Appendix I items for sale on Alibaba

Type of species	Sales
Reptile (crocodile and alligator) products	83
Vicuna products	13
Elephant (ivory) products	6
Big cat products	3
Bird products	1
Other ungulate products	2
Turtle products	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>



## LEGISLATION GOVERNING WILDLIFE TRADE ON THE INTERNET

New Zealand's legislation governing trade in endangered species is relatively strong although not as strict as Australia's, which has stronger controls on imports.

The rise of online trading opportunities represents a significant challenge for effective law enforcement as it creates a large pool of online shoppers with access to wildlife products who may be unaware of the laws governing this trade. Online trading also creates a pathway for those with criminal intent to utilise trading platforms and the international postal systems to evade detection and prosecution.

The legislation pre-dates the massive expansion of the online trading world and this, together with the international nature of the trade, can allow traders to evade or abuse legislation in various jurisdictions. There are no requirements for sellers to provide proof of an item's legality when offering it for sale, making it difficult for the customer to know whether a wildlife product or live animal is a legal or illegal specimen.

While the legislation currently makes it an offence to import, export or have possession of an illegally imported CITES listed specimen, it has no specific prohibitions for commercial activities that reflect the reality of the internet trade in which illegal items are offered for sale, bought and sold before the specimens are actually exported, imported or delivered. In this way the existing measures fall short in capturing the sort of illegal wildlife trade

activities taking place. This may impede successful prosecutions and fails to create a legal requirement for trading platforms to adopt more effective control measures for potentially illegal trade.

In 2010 the CITES Conference of the Parties passed a resolution in relation to e-commerce, (CITES Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev CoP15)) which recommends:

"CITES Parties evaluate or develop domestic measures to ensure that they are sufficient to address the challenges of controlling legal wildlife trade, investigating illegal wildlife trade and punishing the perpetrators, giving high priority to the offer for sale of specimens of species listed in Appendix I".

The EU has stricter measures in place to make commercial activities such as offer for sale, offer to purchase and display and transport for sale an offence and this allows these provisions to be used as a basis for prosecution of illegal online activities.

Currently only one country, the Czech Republic, has put in place specific measures to control illegal wildlife trade on the internet. Among other things, the legislation requires the seller to include a notice 'CITES obligatory documents' as part of any online advertisements for Appendix I specimens, the website platform must make sure this information is made public and enforcement agencies are able to take down any non-compliant advertisements.<sup>11</sup>

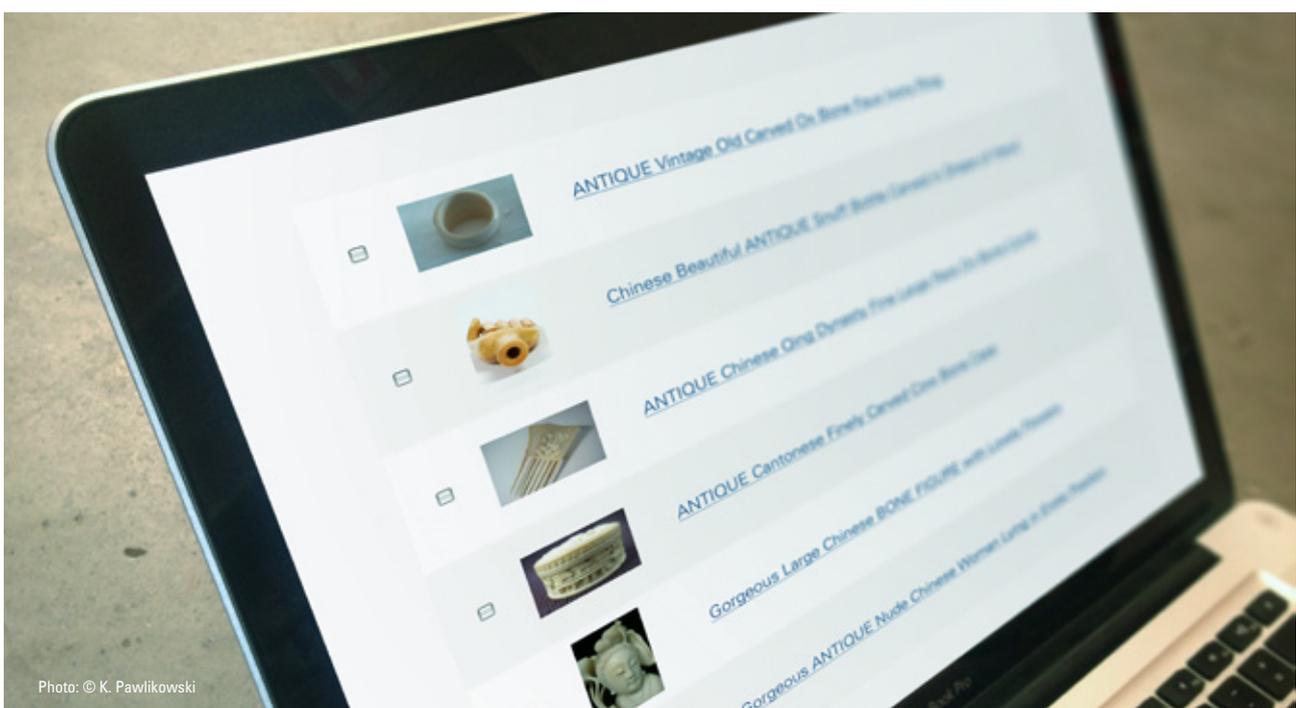


Photo: © K. Pawlikowski



**All website providers should take additional steps to reduce the potential for illegal trade in CITES-listed species on their sites.**

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Urgent action is needed to counter illegal wildlife trade which has profoundly negative impacts for endangered species protection, biodiversity conservation and for the welfare of wildlife trafficked for the live animal trade.

The internet, with an ever growing number of users, is the world's largest marketplace. Always open for business, it offers relative anonymity to sellers, making policing and enforcement more difficult than traditional methods of sale. Combined with a low level of awareness amongst buyers about the laws regarding trade in protected wildlife, the internet continues to offer a route for traders to conduct illegal wildlife transactions.

This research demonstrates that wildlife products are being traded on the internet on New Zealand hosted websites, with no requirements in place to demonstrate an item's legality or provenance.

IFAW would like to see strict policies adopted on all websites selling wildlife specimens and welcomes the policies adopted by eBay, Alibaba and other websites to protect elephants and other wildlife. It is disappointing to see traders flouting site bans and attempting to avoid detection: clearly more needs to be done to stop this practice. IFAW is committed to helping website companies ensure their policies are effectively enforced by sharing intelligence of suspicious traders and trading practices with both law enforcers and website companies.

In order to shut down opportunities for potential illegal trade in endangered wild animals on nationally hosted websites, IFAW urges the following action:

### All website providers should:

- As a matter of urgency take additional steps to reduce the potential for illegal trade in CITES-listed species on their sites.
- Institute and implement a total ban on all sales of ivory and rhino horn on their sites and take necessary steps to enforce these policies to prevent illegal trade in these species from occurring.

- Actively monitor listings of all wild animals and their products and develop new filters and enforcement guidelines to recognise potential trade in endangered and protected species and prevent sellers from evading company policies and national legislation.

- Provide easy to find information on their site on wildlife crime, the rules around selling wildlife products and the threats facing endangered wildlife. Specifically a link to the New Zealand Department of Conservation webpage on CITES species <http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-doc/role/international/endangered-species/cites-species>.

- Work proactively with national law enforcement authorities to:

Implement compulsory 'pop up' notices (or similar warning/advisory methods) to traders at the point of sale warning them that they may be breaking the law by buying or selling wildlife products and requiring traders to confirm that they have read and understood their responsibility under the relevant legislation before proceeding to buy or sell CITES-listed species.

Review the format of sales advertisements to incorporate a requirement for inclusion of permitting information in all advertisements for CITES-listed species.

Identify suspicious trading behaviour that may relate to breaches of CITES-related laws and report this promptly to national enforcement authorities.

Where a breach of a CITES-related law is suspected, provide full identification details of sellers promptly to national enforcement authorities.

### The New Zealand government should:

- Review current national legislation governing the trade in wildlife products and adopt strengthened provisions which implement CITES Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev CoP15) by:

Explicitly prohibiting the offering for sale of CITES Appendix I specimens without a valid permit.

Placing legal responsibility on potential sellers to provide access to relevant documentation for their products and to inform buyers of their obligations under wildlife trade legislation.

- Provide enhanced support to national wildlife enforcement authorities so that they have capacity to guarantee the widest compliance with legislation and policies in a rapidly evolving online marketplace.
- Continue to recognise the importance of international cooperation amongst wildlife enforcement agencies, including via INTERPOL's Environmental Security Sub-Directorate and ensure adequate resourcing for national enforcement agencies to contribute to and benefit from such coordinated international action to combat illegal wildlife trafficking online.

### All buyers should:

- Recognise the difficulty in ascertaining the provenance and legality of wild animals and products listed for sale online, especially from overseas sellers. Exercise caution and if in doubt, do not buy.
- If considering a purchase, at a minimum, ensure that each advertisement for the sale of a wild animal or wildlife product offers the appropriate evidence proving the legality of that specific product.
- Report advertisements which may contravene the website policy and/or the law to the site provider and to the national enforcement authorities responsible for that site's jurisdiction.

IFAW researchers also found a large number of 'scam' advertisements in this survey, fake advertisements that most commonly offer birds and bird eggs, particularly on websites that offer free classified advertisements, encouraging buyers to pay for products that don't exist. This was most prominent on the Adoos website for exotic birds such as hyacinth macaws. Such advertisements provide an additional challenge to enforcement officers attempting to identify genuine examples of illegal wildlife trade.





Photo: © IFAW/D. Gadomski

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