

Illegal Trafficking of Wildlife

Our topics for this week are::

- **The size of illegal trafficking in wildlife criminal activity**
- **Collateral effects of illegal trafficking of wildlife**
- **How to help combat illegal trafficking of wildlife**

The international illegal wildlife trade is more lucrative than drug smuggling, because of easier bribery of wildlife and customs officials in many countries than drug enforcement officials and the ease of altering of documents, such as faking captive breeding. The risks of being caught are low and existing fines are insufficient deterrents. The preferred animals for smuggling are reptiles since most are small, resilient, and require infrequent access to food and water. Rare species command very high prices.

Wildlife Demand

At the core of illegal wildlife trafficking is a rapidly expanding demand for a variety of products around the world: bushmeat; ingredients for traditional Eastern medicine; exotic pets; jewelry, trinkets, and accessories such as chess sets; furs for uses ranging from coats to traditional costumes; and trophies.

Wildlife trade is regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which currently has 184 Parties, including 183 countries and the European Union. The United State's Lacey Act, enacted in 1900, also protects wildlife, fish and plants that are illegally taken, possessed, transported or sold. Illegal wildlife trafficking is estimated to be between \$7.8 billion and \$10 billion per year.

Wildlife Trafficking's Impact

The effects of trafficking wildlife to make money also it impacts our country and our world in other ways, such as:

- Wildlife trafficking grows the market for endangered animals.
- Importing invasive species can devastate our ecosystems.
- Wildlife trafficking robs countries of tax revenues that could have been generated through legal wildlife importation.

- Criminals use profits from wildlife trafficking to fund other criminal enterprises.
- Local ecosystems are threatened by over-fishing, pollution, dredging, deforestation and other forms of habitat destruction.

The Path Forward

Wildlife trafficking is often connected to transnational criminal organizations and terrorist groups. These environmental crimes threaten national security, public health and safety, and the U.S. and global economies while:

- Contributing to border destabilization.
- Hindering sustainable economic development.
- Accelerating biodiversity loss.
- Increasing public corruption.
- Undermining our laws.

Why should we care?

Latin America is vulnerable to wildlife trafficking because of its biodiversity. Ecuador has about 1,600 species of birds. Brazil's Institute of Environment and Natural Resources estimates that at least 12 million wild animals are poached there each year.

In Congo, wildlife declined by more than 25% in a single 3-week period after a forest was opened up by a logging company; and in forested areas in Malaysia, which had been accessible by a logging road for at least a year, no large mammals remained. As soon as a road goes in, outside hunters and weapons also go in and wildlife flows cheaply and rapidly down to distant towns where it is either sold directly or linked to global markets through ships and planes.

If you suspect you have received illicit goods or believe you know of illicit goods that are being trafficked, contact the:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

Call the FWS TIPS line at 1-844-FWS-TIPS (1-844-397-8477)

Submit a law enforcement tip online

Homeland Security:

Call 1-877-4-HSI-TIP

Submit a tip using the HSI Tip Form

Humane Society International (HSI)

Call 1-866-347-2423, fill out the HSI Tip Form online, or contact the closest HSI field office.

Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online:

Report suspected illegal wildlife products online
Complete a form and provide details about the listing

Wildlife Sentinel app

You can also report suspected animal trafficking to the Wildlife Sentinel app if you work in the aviation sector.

What to include when reporting animal trafficking

If reporting online trafficking, include the full website URL and take screen captures of the potentially illegal sale

Provide details about the listing you'd like reviewed

Let the Coalition know if you think you've found an illegal wildlife product for sale online

If you have comments or you're interested in particular animal handling subjects, contact us at CBC@BetterAnimalHandling.com

Now let's recap the key points to remember from today's episode:

- 1. Approximately \$10 billion of wildlife are illegally trafficked annually.**
- 2. Local economies of origin countries are often destroyed by illegal wildlife trafficking.**
- 3. Evidence of illegal wildlife trafficking should be reported the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for law enforcement.**

More information on animal handling can be found in my books, *Animal Handling and Physical Restraint*, *Concise Textbook of Small Animal Handling*, and *Concise Textbook of Large Animal Handling* all published by CRC Press and available on Amazon and from many other fine book supply sources.

Additional information is provided at: www.betteranimalhandling.com . This website has more than 250 past podcasts with notes on handling of dogs, cats, other small mammals, birds, reptiles, horses, cattle, small ruminants, swine, and poultry.

Don't forget, serious injury or death can result from handling and restraining some animals. Safe and effective handling and restraint requires experience and continual practice. Acquisition of the needed skills should be under the supervision of an experienced animal handler.