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RESEARCH REPORT

COMMITTEE : UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMM

ISSUE : REGULATING AND COORDINATING ANIMAL TRAFFICKING
ESPECIALLY REGARDING ENDANGERED SPECIES THROUGHOUT
THE WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

Each year, hundreds of millions of plants and animals are caught or harvested from the wild and then sold as food, pets, ornamental plants, leather, tourist curios, and medicine. While a great deal of this trade is legal and is not harmful to populations in the wild, a worryingly large proportion is illegal – and threatens the survival of many endangered species. Many nations have laws that protect conservation-reliant species: for example, forbidding hunting, restricting land development or creating preserves. Figures, trends and species' conservation status can be found in the lists of animals by population.

The illegal trade in wildlife is a lucrative crime. But it is highly destructive, and its scale is threatening the extinction of some of the world's most iconic species. Wildlife smuggling or trafficking involves the illegal gathering, transportation, and distribution of animals and their derivatives. This can be done either internationally or domestically. Estimates of the money generated by wildlife smuggling vary, in part because of its illegal nature. Wildlife smuggling makes an estimated \$7.8bn to \$10bn a year, but the illegal nature of such activities make determining the amount of money involved incredibly difficult. When considered with illegal timber and fisheries, wildlife trafficking is a major illegal trade along with narcotics, human trafficking, and counterfeit products.

The impact of human activity is also questioned in the committee, as it is deteriorating and encroaching gradually and permanently animals' territories.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

2007 : South Africa reported losing just 13 rhinos.

2008 : 83 rhinos were killed in South Africa

2010 : UNODC and 4 other international bodies formed an International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime to bring together the expertise of each agency to support countries combating these crimes.

The 15th Conference of the Parties of CITES was held in Doha, Qatar in March

2012: the IUCN Red List featured 3079 animal and 2655 plant species as endangered (EN) worldwide. The figures for 1998 were, respectively, 1102 and 1197.

13 April 2015: Wildlife and Forest Crime is now considered as a Serious Crime

19 August 2015 : in the GA - Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife == Resolution in a sentence, recognized that illicit trafficking is a serious crime

March 2017: China's agreement about stopping ivory sells.

KEY TERMS

Endangered species : is a species which has been categorized as likely to become extinct. Endangered (EN), as categorized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, is the second most severe conservation status for wild populations in the IUCN's schema after Critically Endangered (CR).

Wildlife trade : refers to the commerce of products that are derived from non-domesticated animals or plants usually extracted from their natural environment or raised under controlled conditions. It can involve the trade of living or dead individuals, tissues such as skins, bones or meat, or other products. Legal wildlife trade is regulated by the United Nations' Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which currently has 170 member countries called Parties. Illegal wildlife trade, however, is widespread and constitutes one of the major illegal economic activities, comparable to the traffic of drugs and weapons.

Illegal logging : is the harvest, transportation, purchase or sale of timber in violation of laws. The harvesting procedure itself may be illegal, including using corrupt means to gain access to forests; extraction without permission, or from a protected area; the cutting down of protected species; or the extraction of timber in excess of agreed limits.

CITES: (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

Animal Poaching: is when an animal is killed illegally. It usually occurs when an animal possesses something that is considered valuable (i.e. the animal's fur or ivory).

BACKGROUND INFORMATIONS



The world is dealing with an unprecedented rise in illegal wildlife trade, threatening to overturn decades of conservation gains. Ivory estimated to weigh more than 23 metric tons—a figure that represents 2,500 elephants—was seized in the 13 largest seizures of illegal ivory in 2011. Poaching threatens the last of our wild tigers that number around 3,890.

Wildlife crime is a big business. Run by dangerous international networks, wildlife and animal parts are trafficked much like illegal drugs and arms. By its very nature, it is almost impossible to obtain reliable figures for the value of illegal wildlife trade. Experts at [TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network](#), estimate that it runs into hundreds of millions of dollars.

Some examples of illegal wildlife trade are well known, such as poaching of elephants for ivory and tigers for their skins and bones. However, countless other species are similarly overexploited, from marine turtles to timber trees. Not all wildlife trade is illegal. Wild plants and animals from tens of thousands of species are caught or harvested from the wild and then sold legitimately as food, pets, ornamental plants, leather, tourist ornaments and medicine. Wildlife trade escalates into a crisis when an increasing proportion is illegal and unsustainable—directly threatening the survival of many species in the wild.

Wildlife trade is a serious conservation problem, it has a negative effect on the viability of many wildlife populations and is one of the major threats to the survival of vertebrate species and biodiversity in general. A growing market, animal trafficking has reached 3rd position in terms of illegal trade.

The illicit profits generated by animal trafficking are an important source of funding for terrorist groups and militias, including Al-Qaeda. Whatever sources are used - reports of international organizations, confidences of police officials, statements by pressure groups or NGOs - a conclusion can be drawn: this traffic continues to grow. The world population of tigers collapsed in a century, from 100,000 in the early 20th century to 4,000 today; 20,000 elephants are killed each year for their ivory; The number of rhinoceros poached in South Africa doubled last year; And at least 12 species of large animals have disappeared in Vietnam over the last forty years.

Some of the most popular species of illegal trading:

- Bears:

Bears are captured to participate in fighting and to take their bile, used in traditional Chinese medicine. Throughout China, the bile is extracted from the gallbladder by an extremely painful process for the animal. There are, however, more than 50 plant substitutes for bear bile.

- Black rhino :

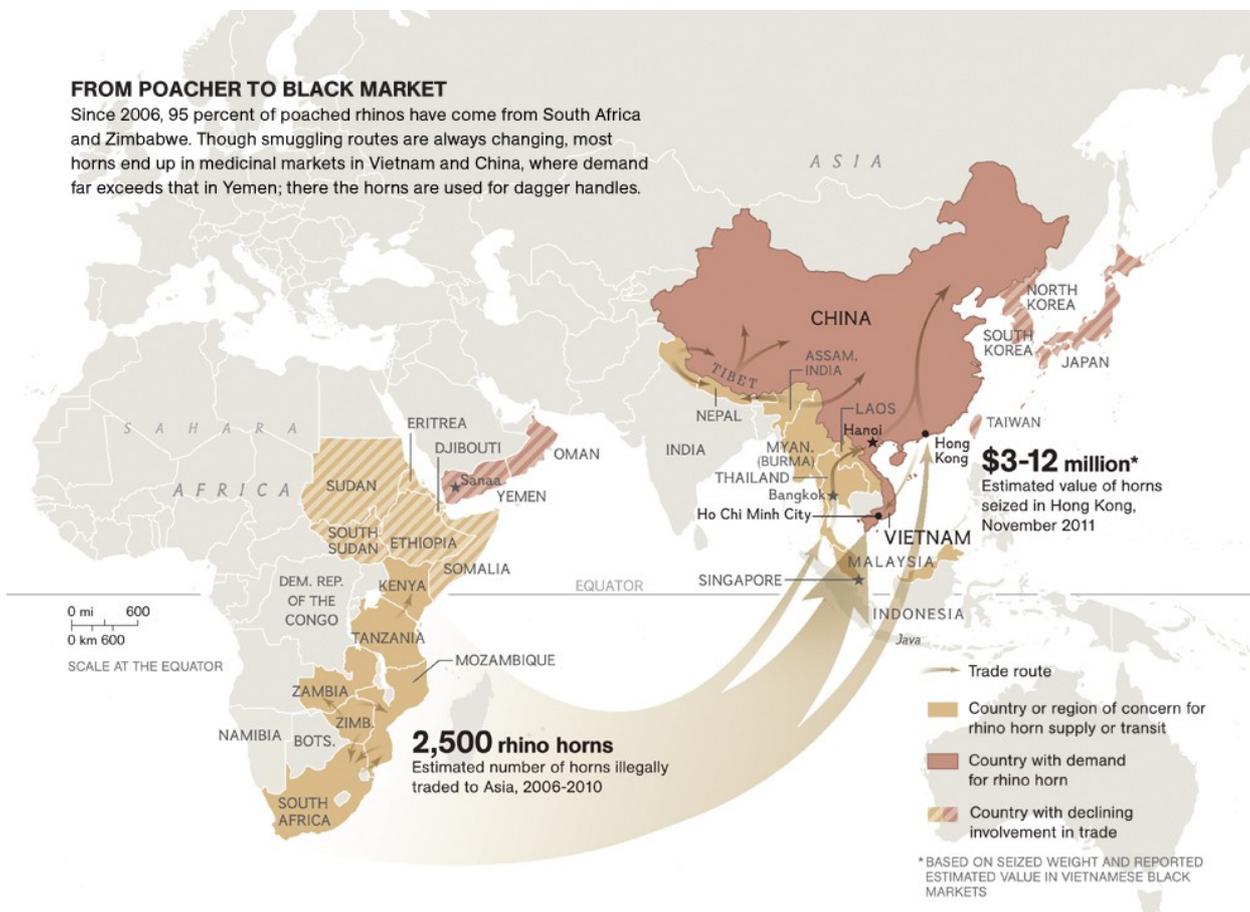
Rhinoceros horns are prized for their supposed medicinal virtues, and the number of these animals has abruptly collapsed over the past forty years. According to WWF, the black rhino population decreased by 96% between 1970 and 1992. Today, black and white rhinoceros populations in Africa are believed to reach barely 18,000 individuals. In 2010, poachers killed 333 rhinoceroses in South Africa, twice as many as the previous year.

- Tibetan antelope

There are only 75,000 to 100,000 Tibetan antelopes in the world, making it officially a threatened species. The importance of the demand for shahtoosh (the wool of these animals) pushes the poachers to massacre this species to sell the furs on the black market. According to the WWF, it takes about four antelopes to make a shawl, the price of which can vary between 700 and 3,500 euros.

- Lear's Macaw

It is estimated that this exotic parrot of the Amazon basin is one of the most traded wild species on the clandestine market. He was rescued from the extinction that threatened him in 1989, with fewer than 100 individuals remaining, but is still considered an endangered species



Another factor that could be mentioned is the illegal logging causing destruction of species' habitat, a cause among many, leading to their progressive extinction.

Deforestation and forest degradation can happen quickly, such as when a forest is clear-cut to make way for a palm oil plantation or a new settlement illegally ordered. It can also happen gradually as a result of ongoing forest degradation as temperatures rise due to climate change caused by human activity. Hence it

seems that many factors generates the endangerment of certain species and sometimes their extinction among many causes we can find :

- Habitat degradation :

Habitat degradation is currently the main anthropogenic cause of species extinctions. The main cause of habitat degradation worldwide is agriculture, with urban sprawl, logging, mining and some fishing practices close behind. The degradation of a species' habitat may alter the fitness landscape to such an extent that the species is no longer able to survive and becomes extinct. This may occur by direct effects, such as the environment becoming toxic, or indirectly, by limiting a species' ability to compete effectively for diminished resources or against new competitor species.

Habitat degradation through toxicity can kill off a species very rapidly, by killing all living members through contamination or sterilizing them. It can also occur over longer periods at lower toxicity levels by affecting lifespan, reproductive capacity, or competitiveness.

Habitat degradation can also take the form of a physical destruction of niche habitats. The widespread destruction of tropical rainforests and replacement with open pastureland is widely cited as an example of this; elimination of the dense forest eliminated the infrastructure needed by many species to survive. For example, a fern that depends on dense shade for protection from direct sunlight can no longer survive without forest to shelter it. Another example is the destruction of ocean floors by bottom trawling. Diminished resources or introduction of new competitor species also often accompany habitat degradation. Global warming has allowed some species to expand their range, bringing unwelcome[*according to whom?*] competition to other species that previously occupied that area. Sometimes these new competitors are predators and directly affect prey species, while at other times they may merely outcompete vulnerable species for limited resources. Vital resources including water and food can also be limited during habitat degradation, leading to extinction.

The golden toad was last seen on May 15, 1989. Decline in amphibian populations is ongoing worldwide

- Climate change :

Extinction as a result of climate change has been confirmed by fossil studies. Particularly, the extinction of amphibians during the Carboniferous Rainforest Collapse, 305 million years ago. A 2003 review across 14 biodiversity research centres predicted that, because of climate change, 15–37% of land species would be "committed to extinction" by 2050. The ecologically rich areas that would potentially suffer the heaviest losses include the Cape Floristic Region, and the Caribbean Basin. These areas might see a doubling of present carbon dioxide levels and rising temperatures that could eliminate 56,000 plant and 3,700 animal species.

- **Modern extinctions :**

According to a 1998 survey of 400 biologists conducted by New York's American Museum of Natural History, nearly 70% believed that the Earth is currently in the early stages of a human-caused mass extinction, known as the Holocene extinction. In that survey, the same proportion of respondents agreed with the prediction that up to 20% of all living populations could become extinct within 30 years (by 2028). Biologist E. O. Wilson estimated in 2002 that if current rates of human destruction of the biosphere continue, one-half of all plant and animal species of life on earth will be extinct in 100 years. More significantly, the current rate of global species extinctions is estimated as 100 to 1000 times "background" rates (the average extinction rates in the evolutionary time scale of planet Earth), while future rates could be much higher. Some groups are going to become extinct soon if nothing is done.

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