

Research Report | XXV Annual Session

Environment Commission

Preventing illegal hunting and killing of endangered wildlife



MODEL UNITED NATIONS
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

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Forum:	Environment Commission
Issue:	Preventing illegal hunting and killing of endangered wildlife
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Introduction

The illegal hunting of endangered wildlife has become a popular source of income for many hunters all over the world, the leather, fur and bones of endangered species being in high demand and very profitable especially within the tourist industry and on the black market. Overexploitation is the second-largest threat to the extinction of many species, loss of habitat being the first. Illegal hunting is an open gateway for overexploitation and, if continued, will result in a decrease in biodiversity on a global scale.

Wildlife trade refers to the sale and exchange of wild animals, either alive, dead or products thereof. The wildlife trade is monitored at Customs checkpoints between countries, where it is checked and recorded, and, if it is illegal, confiscated and the offenders are prosecuted. Wildlife is often traded in exchange for either money or other useful objects, depending on the preferences of the individuals involved. The fact that the process relies on trade makes cases involving illegally hunted animals difficult to prove legally. Those that keep the wildlife trade alive and developing are the end-consumers interested in animal skin, fur and products. TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade monitoring network, estimates that \$160 billion dollars worth of wildlife products are imported annually all over the world. When it comes to illegal wildlife trade, the assumed cost of imported wildlife is even higher, however, due its covert nature, estimations are difficult to make.

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has conducted research and discovered that the wildlife trade has resulted in millions of wild animals and tens of thousands of different species being hunted and killed worldwide. For example, 100 million tons of fish and 1.5 million birds were traded in just 1 year, indicating the enormous scale of the trade taking place. However, the trade of wildlife is legal, whilst the hunting and killing of specifically endangered wildlife is not. Nevertheless, many animal species worldwide have declined by 40% in population between 1970 and 2000 alone. Since then, the numbers have increased.



As the human population continues to increase, so does the demand for wildlife products. This leads to overexploitation, which harms the balance in nature. The most famous cases of overexploitation include that of rhinoceroses, tigers and elephants. Wildlife is vital for rural populations living in less developed countries, as the communities there depend on wild animals as a source of food, as well as for specific components of traditional medicines. Furthermore, the overexploitation of wildlife puts the food chain out of proportion. For example, overfishing not only influences fishing communities and threatens the extinction of certain species, but it imbalances the entire marine ecosystem. We, as humans, also depend on wildlife as sources of food, household products, clothing and so on.

For the protection of species nearing extinction, trade and hunting laws have been passed to prevent the killing of endangered species. Nevertheless, the demand for the rare materials that are sourced from endangered species continues to rise. This encourages hunters to breach the law and sell the products of endangered animals either on black markets or through smuggling, where the demand and profits are higher and thus more favorable than that of conventional wildlife trade. Due to the complications associated with the trade of illegally hunted animals, the conditions and transport of live species are worse and often torturous for the animal.

Definition of Key Terms

Poaching

The illegal practice of trespassing on another's property to hunt or steal game without the landowner's permission.

Endangered

(Of a species) seriously at risk of extinction.

Wildlife

Animals living in their natural habitat and not within the possession or control of humans.

Overexploitation

The over use of wildlife and plant species by people for food, clothing, pets, medicine, sport and many other purposes.



Black market

An illegal traffic or trade in officially controlled or scarce commodities.

Biodiversity

The variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat, a high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable.

General Overview

The illegal hunting and killing of endangered species has a wide range of consequences for the biodiversity of the Earth, economies, trade markets, and most importantly, endangered species.

Poaching

Poaching is the source of the majority of illegally hunted and killed wildlife. According to WWF, currently there is an unprecedented peak in illegal wildlife trade. For example, illegal ivory harvested from 2500 elephants - 23 metric tons - was seized in 2011. Currently, poaching threatens the lives of the 3200 wildlife tigers left in the world, driving this cherished animal to extinction. The WWF state: "Wildlife crime is a big business. Run by dangerous international networks, wildlife and animal parts are trafficked much like illegal drugs and arms". TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade monitoring network, estimates that the earnings made trading poached animals sums up to hundreds of millions of dollars. The trade of endangered species is escalating, the proportion between the wild and the trafficked animals falling out of proportion, becoming unsustainable and threatening the survival of many species worldwide.

Endangered species

Endangered species are highly marketable due to their exclusivity and high demand. The Great White shark is one of the 8 most endangered species, and many nations have declared them illegal to hunt, with the exception of self-defence. Nevertheless, Great White Shark

sightings have become increasingly rare. The cheetah follows in 7th place of the most endangered species, with

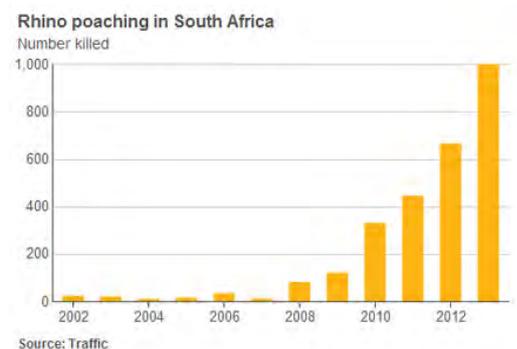


Figure 1 The increasing number of rhinoceroses poached in South Africa

Rhinos killed in South Africa. Digital image. UNIS Hanoi. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Aug. 2015. <<http://blogs.unishanoi.org/mslaughter/>>.

only 12,400 cheetahs remaining in the wild today. In 6th place are hippopotamuses, whose teeth and 15cm thick skin are popular objects of trade. In 5th place come polar bears, which are the centre of debate between all nations located within the Arctic Circle (USA, Russia, Norway, Denmark and Canada). Even during the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to the conservation of these endangered species. Currently, there are only around 20,000 polar bears left. Although strictly illegal to hunt in Norway, the remaining 4 nations of the Arctic Circle permit indigenous Arctic communities to hunt them for survival purposes. The Grizzly Bear comes in 4th place, whilst the African Lion is the third most endangered species. Over the past 20 years the number of African Lions has decreased by over 50%, leaving only 15,000 in the wild at present. The second most endangered species is the African Bush Elephant. Being extremely endangered, there are between 450,000 and 700,000 left in the wild today. In comparison to the 10 million wild elephants in the 1900's, the number of African Bush Elephants in the wild has decreased dramatically. The most endangered species worldwide is the Black Rhinoceros, being poached illegally for its horn, which is shaped into a dagger hilt or ground into powder to be consumed for its medical properties. As depicted in the diagram to the right, the number of poached rhinoceroses continues to increase. In 2010 there were only 2500 Black Rhinoceroses left on a global scale. The number continues to decrease.

Introducing invasive species

Invasive species are introduced to by wildlife traders to prey on, or compete with, native species, with the function of singling out desirable animal breeds. The result thereof threatens the balance in nature.

Incidental killing of non-target species

Often when hunting for illegal species, the used methods are optimized for maximum time-efficiency and product yield. Consequently, species that were not intended for the wildlife trade are also killed, despite being categorized as 'non-target species'. For example, dolphins and seabirds are also killed when caught in fishing nets, whilst the intended targets were mullet fish. The WWF estimates that over a quarter of global marine fisheries catch unwanted fish incidentally and discard them. On land, similar processes take place with animal traps, causing unnecessary damage and deaths to wildlife.

Circuses

Many wild animals are trafficked and illegally sold to circuses due to the lenient regulations involved, allowing for a profitable sales point for animal traffickers. Circuses



change names, locations and acts periodically making them difficult to monitor and regulate. In circuses, the animals are trained to become performers, being poorly fed, regularly abused and living in unsanitary conditions.

Souvenirs

Many tourists, although unaware, purchase souvenirs containing illegally hunted animal parts, such as ivory, reptile skins, tortoiseshell, corals and seashells.

Consequences

The consequences of poaching are influencing the biodiversity of the Earth, economies and trade markets. As a result of illegal animal hunting, the numbers of animal species are decreasing and thus the levels of extinction are increased. The demand and price of specific species on the black market are rising, encouraging poachers and illegal hunting. Over 154 nations have signed treaties regulating the wildlife trade of endangered animals. The trade of over 800 species is banned; however unfortunately, the banning of trade is an encouraging factor for poachers, as it raises the value of animal-related products. Wildlife hunting affects the health and interrupts the breeding seasons of endangered species. This puts future populations of endangered species in grave danger.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is very active within the field of preventing illegal animal hunting and is one of the most successful organizations in the combatting of poaching. The WWF has adopted the mission of “stamping out wildlife crime is a priority for WWF because it’s the largest direct threat to the future of many of the world’s most threatened species”. WWF recognizes several causes for illegal wildlife trade as the high demand for wildlife products, as well as the corruption, unenforced laws, weak judicial systems and light punishments that allow criminal networks to take advantage of the wildlife trade. Among many other projects outlined later in this report, the WWF has a Stop Wildlife Crime campaign with the aims of forcing governments to protect endangered animal populations by increasing law enforcement and imposing stricter repercussions. Furthermore, the campaign assists those affected by poachers by supplying equipment, appropriate training and compensations for the losses made by poachers.



TRAFFIC

TRAFFIC is a wildlife trade monitoring network, a leading organization operating on a global scale, hoping to conserve biodiversity and ensuring sustainable development. Established in 1976, TRAFFIC's core expertise includes analyzing and investigating wildlife trends, patterns, causes and impacts. They also provide the information they gather and use this to advise the private sector on effective and sustainable wildlife practices. TRAFFIC supports and encourages governmental and inter-governmental co-operation and action in regards to the implementation and enforcement of poaching laws. TRAFFIC's mission is "to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature". By the end of 2020, TRAFFIC has the goal "to help reduce the pressure of illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade on biodiversity, and enhance the benefits to wildlife conservation and human well-being that derive from trade at sustainable levels".

Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

The Wildlife Conservation Society has a twofold aim of preventing unsustainable wildlife trade and balancing the subsistent and financial needs of locals depending on wildlife for their survival, with the protection of endangered species. The WCS feels that as the Earth's human footprint expands, the demand for wildlife will increase proportionally. The research conducted by the WCS has proven that the rate of extinction of species, the endangering of ecosystems and the spread of zoonotic diseases (diseases spread between animals and humans), is significantly increasing. Especially in the trade of poached animals, diseases such as the monkey pox, SARS and the avian flu have spread to suppliers and even consumers. The WCS has initiated many of its own projects, an example of which was stationing ecoguards in Central Africa for the purpose of protecting and monitoring national parks and surrounding land. The ecoguards also assist in evaluating the success of international conservation efforts.

Canada

Canada has implemented several laws to protect its endangered wildlife from being hunted, however these are not always suitably enforced. Nonetheless, illegal hunting and the trade of illegally killed animals continue to grow, threatening the extinction of rare species. As wildlife populations start to deplete in countries like South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya, more poachers move to Canada with its vast quantity of wild animals and protected natural parks, ideal for illegal hunters. Specifically in Canada, wild animals are hunted for the purpose of the exotic pet trade, as well as medicines, souvenirs, fur and food. Many animals are hunted



for trophy heads sold at the cost of thousands of dollars, including those of bears, elk, deer, moose, sheep and goats. Elk, for example, is hunted for its antlers, antler velvet, hooves, and tails. Black bear, in comparison, is hunted for their gall bladders whose bile is used in traditional Asian medicine. Since the formation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1975, Canada has worked towards implementing tighter poaching regulations. Unfortunately, many agencies working in the field of illegal hunting do not have the funds or the resources to correctly regulate and monitor the trade of wildlife products in Canada.

China

China is the largest importer of poached animals worldwide. Nevertheless, China is working towards eradicating the import and use of illegally hunted endangered species. Recently, China has agreed to phase out their ivory industry, in an attempt to save the little number of African elephants left in the wild and reduce the demand for elephant poaching. China has committed to completely phase out the legal, domestic manufacture and sale of ivory products. The head of China's State Forestry Administration, Zhao Shucong, stated: "We will strictly control ivory processing and trade until the commercial processing and sale of ivory and its products are eventually halted". Afterwards, a ceremony was held in Beijing where 662kg of ivory was symbolically destroyed. The executive director of anti-trafficking group WildAid, Peter Knights, demonstrates in his report that: "95% of Chinese supported a total ban on ivory sales". Despite having already put a ban on the international trade of ivory in 1989, China seized approximately 40 tons of ivory since. Thus, the commitment of the Chinese government to phasing out their ivory industry is yet to be confirmed. However, China has been making efforts in strengthening their border controls to prevent the smuggling of illegal endangered wildlife, which has proven to be successful. On the 28th of May 2015, the customs police in Hangzhou discovered an attempt to smuggle 270kg worth of ivory and 9kg worth of rhino horn across the Chinese border. China and the United States of America, both countries being the world's largest markets for illegal ivory, are participating in bilateral trade talks with the hopes of collaborating to combat the illegal ivory trade on a larger scale.

United States of America

The United States is also a favorable location for poaching, and the export and import of endangered wildlife is frequent. In fact, the United States is the second largest importer of illegal wildlife, after China. One of the most frequently poached animals in the United States is the black bear. The American black bear is ranked as the 10th most endangered species



worldwide. 34 states in the US have banned the trade of black bear bile and gallbladders, which are used to treat diseases related to the liver, the heart and in some cases, diabetes. One of the only states where black bear poaching is legal is Minnesota, where over 50,000 bears are killed annually. Bighorn sheep are similarly very popular poached animals in the US, their antlers being sold at prices as high as \$20,000 on the black market. Since 1998, the bighorn sheep has been placed on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered List. Shark fins are delicacies, especially in China, where they are used as the main component of 'shark fin soup'. Being illegal, shark fins sell for approximately \$500 on the black market. 'Shark finning', the act of capturing sharks and slicing off their fins, results in the deaths of over 100 million sharks every year. Lastly, deer hunting is a popular sport in the United States. Although the deer population is nowhere near extinction, it is important that hunters respect national laws to preserve and protect animal populations.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1700s	Poaching begins in Europe, as people cannot find another source of food.
1880s	Peasants are permitted to hunt for small game on their own farms.
1900	The Lacey Act is passed by the United States which illegalizes the sale of a poached animal between states.
1918	The United States, Mexico, Russia, Great Britain and Japan implement the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which protects migrating birds from being killed, hunted, exported, or sold for profit.
1960s	An international agreement is created to protect wildlife in trade, as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
1973	The Endangered Species Act (ESA) was created for the conservation of endangered plants and species in their natural habitats



UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Although the United Nations has not been involved in the combatting of illegal hunting and has no resolutions solving the issue at hand, Germany and Gabon have demanded a UN resolution on the issue of poaching.

- Statement of the President of the 69th session of the General Assembly at a luncheon to discuss joint action on Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking, in New York, September 26 2014, see Appendices
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), 1960s
- The Endangered Species Act (ESA), 1973

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The WWF works on a global scale to help develop programs, establish regulations, raise awareness, assist enforcement efforts of illegal hunting laws and fund anti-poaching brigades. Furthermore, WWF assists rural communities all over the world with using their local wildlife as, for example, sources of food, in a sustainable way. These have been very beneficial for developing nations, and similar efforts are encouraged.

In Indonesia a Wildlife Crime Unit (WCU) was set up, to intercept the trade of illegal tiger parts in Sumatra, an Indonesian island. The animal parts are sold in trade chains to illegal markets in China and other parts of Asia. The WCU undertakes investigations and prosecutes individuals proven guilty of poaching and illegal wildlife trade. They also have awareness campaigns to inform the general public of the dangers of wildlife crime and to promote stricter illegal hunting controls.

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) have been a very active party in the prevention of illegal hunting and killing of endangered species. For example, the WCS are partnered with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Cameroon, to prevent bush meat from Cameroonian forests being traded into urban markets. The CAMRAIL, the national train network, is monitored regularly to prevent the transport or smuggling of illegally hunted wildlife.



Furthermore, the WCS is addressing the global issue of the turtle trade, by persecuting illegal wildlife traders, the conscious consumers of poached food, traders of endangered species, and the use of endangered animal parts for the creation traditional medicine. Although turtles have survived the Triassic Era, the WCS estimate that some turtle specie will go extinct by the end of this decade.

Moreover, the WCS has partnered with the United States military to develop, implement and maintain an outreach program that will discourage consumers from purchasing wildlife souvenirs by having personnel stationed at oversea borders. Ultimately, it would be an awareness raising campaign, informing tourists of the souvenirs containing illegally hunted wildlife.

The Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB) logging company in Congo attempts to reduce the demand for gorillas, elephants, and other endangered wildlife by controlling the trade of bush meat, as well as four timber concessions. The CIB logging company is successfully collaborating with the WCS in their Project for Ecosystem Management in the Nouabalé-Ndoki Periphery Area (PROGREPP). Collaborations between organizations and independent companies have frequently been proven to work effectively, where organizations provide their knowledge and expertise, whilst companies fund and execute the projects.

Possible Solutions

From a legal perspective, the prevention of illegal hunting and killing of endangered species can be achieved by having all member states adopt a strict national legislation that bans or limits the trade of endangered species outlined in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). These would be reinforced through appropriate penalties punishing illegal wildlife trade. It is recommended that more developed nations assist less developed nations by supplying equipment, training, and funds for the enforcement of these laws, if necessary.

A dominant cause for the consuming and selling of illegal wildlife and endangered species is the lack of knowledge on the issue. Education should be used as a tool to persuade consumers to make informed choices in regards to the purchase of wildlife-related products. It has been proven that recent fair trade campaigning and the information provided alongside it has significantly steered the food market towards fair trade produce. Information should not be limited to consumers; it should be spread to shopkeepers, suppliers,



manufacturers and so on. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) provide lists of certified, legal wildlife products.

Stationing game wardens in large wildlife preserves or natural parks would complicate the process of poaching and allow for the identification and capture of illegal hunters. These can then be prosecuted by national courts. Furthermore, the game wardens could also be stationed at the customs office at the borders of countries where poaching is frequent. This would prevent the smuggling of illegally hunted endangered species across borders, and simplify the identification and persecution process of those that do.

The descriptions on smoking packages inform their consumers that, for example, 'smoking kills' as on the Marlboro boxes. Similar messages could be conveyed to the consumers of animal-related products, by having their packaging state facts about the risks of extinction. For example, rugs made of tiger skin could have their packaging state "there are only 3200 tigers left in the wild. This was one of them". This would be exceptionally effective with souvenir products, where consumers are unaware of the animal products included. Companies that refuse or agree to comply by these regulations could be either taxed or subsidized by the government, but this would ultimately be up to the individual government's discretion.

In some countries it is legal for pet stores to sell exotic animals, which encourages the trade and sale of wild animals. The exotic pet trade is primarily run by poachers. Therefore, specific 'pet regulations' should to be set to make the ownership of wild animals illegal, especially those regarded as endangered, which are outlined in an endangered specie index provided by the CITES. Appropriate punishments should be determined by the governments of member states, ranging from fines up to prison sentence, depending on the circumstances. If a wild animal is being kept as a pet, the animal would be confiscated immediately and sent to rehabilitation centers after which they would be released back into their natural habitats.

Circuses often purchase poached animals, to avoid government taxes associated with performing animals. Animals are forced to live, work and perform in torturous conditions, damaging their physical and mental wellbeing. Due to the fact the nature of circus business, it is difficult to monitor national legal regulations on the ownership of wild animals. Nevertheless, regulations could be enforced limiting the number of wild animals owned and ensuring that each animal has the appropriate documentation. These could be monitored by regular inspections by trained government officials, resulting in fines or even the confiscation of the wild animals, if proven to be owned illegally.



The application of these solutions will greatly improve the short- and long-term prospects for endangered wildlife worldwide.

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Appendices

Appendix I



Illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade Factsheet provided by the

WWF: http://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/wildlife_trade_factsheet2006.pdf

Appendix II

The role of the European Union in the global wildlife trade provided by the WWF:

<http://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/opportunityorthreat.pdf>

Appendix III

Statement of the President to discuss joint action on Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking:

http://www.un.org/pga/260914_poaching-illicit-wildlife-trafficking/

Appendix IV

Appendices from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild
Fauna and Flora:

<http://www.cites.org/eng/app/appendices.php>

