

OIE - The World Organisation for Animal Health

Poaching and Wildlife Trafficking

Overview

The World Organisation for Animal Health (also known as the OIE) provides a collaborative forum for Global North and Global South countries to address animal-related issues. In these committee sessions, we will be focusing primarily on the dangers of poaching and wildlife trafficking. Animal poaching is the act of illegal trafficking and killing animals for commercial, cultural, and economic purposes. As seen in the OIE's 2022 Terrestrial Animal Health Code, documentation which sets the standard for global animal wellness rights, ethical transportation of animals, along with the recognition of animal handlers' responsibilities, should be stressed as a priority among nations.¹ It is the role of the OIE to bring countries' representatives together in order to deal with this pressing issue.

Poaching Versus Legal Wildlife Trade

It is important to note that the term wildlife trade, which refers to the *legal* "commerce of non-domesticated animals or plants...either as living or dead animals or their body parts"² is different from animal poaching; wildlife trafficking and animal poaching, unlike the legal animal trade industry, is a type of "environment-related crime that involves the illegal trade, smuggling, poaching, capture or collection of endangered species, protected wildlife (including animals and plants that are subject to harvest quotas and regulated by permits), derivatives or products thereof."³ Both the terms wildlife trafficking and wildlife trade have broad definitions and delegates must be cognizant of the fact that a singular species of animal can be hunted, processed, and sold, both illegally and/or legally.

All legal wildlife trade is regulated by the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (also known as CITES), with 184 countries participating in the trade regulation of over 30,000 plant and 5,800 animal species via a

¹ "Terrestrial Code Online Access - Woah - World Organisation for Animal Health." WOA, May 6, 2022. https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/standards/codes-and-manuals/terrestrial-code-online-access/?id=169&L=1&htmlfile=chapitre_aw_sea_transpt.htm.

² "What Is Wildlife Trafficking?" Wildlife Trade. Accessed December 25, 2022. <https://wildlifetrade.wcs.org/Wildlife-Trade/What-is-wildlife-trafficking.aspx>.

³ "What Is Wildlife Trafficking?", page 1.

permitting system.⁴ The legal wildlife trade industry is enormous, and an estimated €100 billion worth of legal wildlife trade alone exists in the European Union.⁵ Without the legal animal trade industry, countries' economies and food stability would greatly suffer, as the trading and “maintaining of a broad variety of wildlife provides enormous ecological, cultural, economic, and aesthetic value.”⁶ At the same time, the animal poaching industry is also infamously large and is among the top five most lucrative illegal trades globally, “worth an estimated 23 billion USD annually.”⁷

Importing vs Exporting

It is principal to note that there are two types of countries within the animal trafficking industry: importing and exporting countries.⁸ Importing countries have a high demand for products derived from poached animals, such as ivory and zebra skin. Some countries that fall into the “importing” category are the United States, France, Italy, and China. Exporting countries are countries where these in-demand products are harvested and extracted; some countries that fall into the “exporting” category are Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa. Understanding this fact, delegates should search to see whether they need to focus on native, vulnerable species being targeted in their land, or if there is a high demand for a particular species to be smuggled through their borders. In some occurrences, countries can be labelled as both importing and exporting, such as China. There is a large demand for tiger claws and live tortoises in the country, causing private groups to outsource these species while also exporting native fish breeds to other countries.⁹

⁴ Hou, Chia-Yi. “Wildlife Trade 101.” NRDC, August 1, 2019. <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/wildlife-trade-101>.

⁵ “Legal Wildlife Trade.” TRAFFIC. Accessed December 25, 2022. <https://www.traffic.org/about-us/legal-wildlife-trade/>.

⁶ Hou, “Wildlife Trade 101.”, page 1.

⁷ Harrison, Paul. “Combating Poaching and Wildlife Trafficking: United Nations Development Programme.” UNDP, March 2, 2015.

<https://www.undp.org/publications/combating-poaching-and-wildlife-trafficking#:~:text=Wildlife%20trafficking%20is%20among%20the,that%20fuels%20conflict%20and%20corruption>.

⁸ “Wildlife Trade and Seizure Maps.” African Mammal Trade: A Look at the African Animal and Animal Product Trade. African Wildlife Foundation . Accessed December 28, 2022.

<https://campaign.awf.org/wildlife-trade-and-seizure-maps/>.

⁹ Jiao, Yunbo, and Tien Ming Lee. “The Global Magnitude and Implications of Legal and Illegal Wildlife Trade in China: Oryx.” Cambridge Core. Cambridge University Press, May 27, 2021.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/oryx/article/global-magnitude-and-implications-of-legal-and-illegal-wildlife-trade-in-china/1111A5279F1771D7A1D0EBAAF42D2737>.

Motivations Behind Wildlife Trafficking

There are numerous reasons why different animal species are poached and trafficked, and why this illicit industry is steadily growing. Firstly, due to the highly corrupt systems and secretive routes trafficking organisations utilise, the transit routes of many international crime networks are ever-changing, exploiting exporting countries' "weak governance and inadequate surveillance."¹⁰ Additionally, frail "judicial systems" and "light criminal sentences" further incentivise companies and organised crime rings to continue trafficking wildlife without regard for the consequences of their actions. As the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) explains, the way in which trafficking is organised causes poachers to be the ones caught, leaving the true higher-ups and their ring members unpunished; thus, the illegal trade is viewed as a "low risk business that attracts high returns."¹¹

Secondly, there is a huge demand for products that derive from precious and rare animals; the sectors driving this market are medicinal, commercial, aesthetic, and criminal. In Central African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, some armed organisations raise money through the sale of animal products and lumber, engaging in animal poaching as a means to "fund their conflict."¹² However, animal poaching from non-criminal organisations can occur within the country too, with some animals being hunted by private poachers and selling for upwards of \$40,000 on the black market.¹³ In other cases, fauna such as squirrel monkeys, Asian otters, and African grey parrots are in demand as exotic pets in Russia, Singapore, and China.¹⁴ Other animals, such as pangolins and sharks, are considered rare delicacies in Southeast Asia; their meat is in demand, causing them to hold great value to countries' tourism industries, along with becoming culturally significant dishes.¹⁵ The most well-known items trafficked, however, rhinoceros horns and elephant tusks, are used in traditional Asian medicines, or as "status symbols... decor... (and) even animal trophies."¹⁶ Delegates should look into which animal species are desired within their country, then research the motivations behind why these animals

¹⁰ "Illegal Wildlife Trade and Poaching - WWF-Australia." WWF. World Wildlife Fund Australia, 2018. <https://www.wwf.org.au/what-we-do/species/illegal-wildlife-trade-and-poaching>.

¹¹ "Illegal Wildlife Trade and Poaching - WWF-Australia.", page 2.

¹² "Illegal Wildlife Trade and Poaching - WWF-Australia.", page 3.

¹³ Smith, David. "Trafficking of Baby Gorillas Poses New Threat to Endangered Species." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 17, 2011. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/oct/17/baby-gorillas-trafficking-increase-congo>.

¹⁴ Hou, "Wildlife Trade 101.", page 2.

¹⁵ Hou, "Wildlife Trade 101.", page 3.

¹⁶ Hou, "Wildlife Trade 101.", page 4.

(or animal by-products) are highly coveted, as well as be cognizant of the fact that their country may have multiple sectors that demand illicit animal trading.

Consequences of Animal Poaching

Animal poaching results in harmful economic, global, environmental, and animal-rights-related consequences. Regarding its environmental impact, animal poaching is the “leading threat to biodiversity, after habitat loss.”¹⁷ To properly illustrate this point, imagine your country to be the home of a rare and highly-desired mammal. When this mammal is poached, a ripple effect begins to cascade as it starts to disappear from its environment. Its predators are now missing their food supply and the mammal’s prey starts to overpopulate. Additionally, the genetic characteristics which contribute to this mammal’s desirability are not going to carry onto future generations, as the animals with these traits are being slaughtered or sold instead of reproducing. Eventually, the remaining offspring of the mammals will be more likely to be inbred, causing the entire remaining species to become susceptible to illness and possible extinction.¹⁸ Ecosystems are highly complex, living and breathing entities with many interrelated components; thus, delegates should be aware of how the extinction and removal of targeted species in their country can affect their “agriculture, water supply, soil quality, and... resources.”¹⁹

More specifically, certain animal species are becoming closer and closer to extinction, with little sign of making a full recovery as of the writing of this guide. Across Africa, there are only an estimated 7,100 cheetahs, 1,000 mountain gorillas, and 2,000 adult Grevy’s zebras remaining as of 2016.²⁰ Further, the black rhinoceros population has gone down by 97.6% since 1960, giraffe populations by more than 40% in the past 30 years, and the lion population 43% in just 21 years, all due to animal trafficking.²¹ In some cases, there are less than a handful of

¹⁷ Hou, “Wildlife Trade 101.”, page 5.

¹⁸ Ferreira, Juliana Machado. “Ask an Amazon Expert: What It Will Take to Stop Wildlife Trafficking.” National Geographic Society. National Geographic Resource Library. Accessed January 10, 2023. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/ask-amazon-expert-what-it-will-take-stop-wildlife-trafficking>.

¹⁹ Ferreira, “Ask an Amazon Expert: What It Will Take to Stop Wildlife Trafficking.”, page 2.

²⁰ “Africa’s Poaching Crisis.” AWF. African Wildlife Foundation. Accessed January 10, 2023. <https://campaign.awf.org/poaching-infographic/>.

²¹ “Wildlife Trade and Seizure Maps.” Index of / African Mammal Trade. African Wildlife Tradition. Accessed January 11, 2023. <https://campaign.awf.org/wildlife-trade-and-seizure-maps/>.

animals from a particular species in the world; take for example Mexico, a country where only 10 vaquitas remain, making them the most endangered aquatic mammal species in the world.²²

Wildlife trafficking poses substantial risks to public health, in addition to permanent biodiversity loss, economic losses through ecosystem degradation, and other negative environmental effects. This illegal practice has the capacity to trigger epidemics, with SARS and Ebola being two illnesses connected to the arrival of undocumented wildlife trade, along with the arrival of invasive species in other lands.²³ With regards to other negative consequences, trafficking serves as a threat to vulnerable Indigenous communities as many use wildlife sources for aesthetic, medical, functional, and monetary purposes.²⁴ Without them, the livelihood of local Indigenous persons would be at stake as these species' occupation in their native land is "an important economic sector in many developed and developing countries, either directly or indirectly, e.g. through tourism." The poaching industry impacts the entirety of some countries' Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and delegates should be aware that although wildlife trafficking can generate money for some, it also can be economically detrimental to others.²⁵

Current Solutions Addressing Illegal Wildlife Trade

International Strategies

The OIE has collaborated with other internationally recognized bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to come together and find sustainable, long-term solutions addressing illegal wildlife trade; together, they assisted in banning the international commercial trade of pangolins, "the most-trafficked mammal on the planet," and an almost total ban on ivory in the United States.²⁶ Aside from this, they have created and regularly update the Terrestrial Animal Health Code (as mentioned earlier), which is a set of guidelines that teaches member nations how to address animal-related issues. The OIE also hosts various animal welfare conferences in countries such as France, Egypt, and Malaysia, gathering member nations together to bring to light recent news regarding animal rights, share new scientific findings and update guidelines within their 'Global

²² Henry, Leigh. "Vaquita." WWF. World Wildlife Fund. Accessed January 11, 2023. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/vaquita>.

²³ Felbab-Brown, Vanda, and Bradley S. Porter. "The Global Poaching Vortex." Brookings. Brookings, July 29, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/03/02/the-global-poaching-vortex/>.

²⁴ Bradley S. Porter etc. "The Global Poaching Vortex." page 2.

²⁵ Bradley S. Porter etc. "The Global Poaching Vortex." page 3.

²⁶ Hou, "Wildlife Trade 101.", page 6.

Animal Welfare Strategy.²⁷ Additionally, they are striving to create an “open access repository of critically assessed research” that will allow member nations to understand better how to undertake the issue of poaching specifically.²⁸

National Strategies

Different countries, while following the OIE’s guidelines, have enacted legislation and developed other animal rights protection groups in order to put an end to animal poaching and wildlife trafficking. Around countries in Africa, scouts from private organisations and non-government organisations (NGOs), like the African Wildlife Foundation, are being trained and supplied with satellite phones and all-terrain vehicles to protect wildlife, and stop poachers from entering protected areas.²⁹ They also conserve sections of land between wildlife parks in order for animals to safely enter and exit between different areas, among other efforts such as educating the public with numerous campaigns and classroom visits.³⁰ In America and Canada, organisations such as the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the World Animal Protection branch of Imagine Canada have focused on diversifying rural livelihoods and expanding economic opportunities for persons affected by animal poaching, in addition to working with the government to “commit to curbing the commercial wildlife trade and to champion wildlife protection at global policy forums.”³¹ Delegates should seek out whether there are governmental policies being put into place within their countries to put a stop to animal poaching, as well as if there is more of a focus on educational programs, expanding economic opportunities in rural countries, or putting a stop to crime syndicates.

The legal animal trade industry is needed within countries for economic, cultural, environmental and political reasons. Stating this, in this committee, the distinction between illegal and legal animal trade must be clearly made as legislation improving the legal animal trade industry is not the main issue being discussed. Rather, animal poaching, both its causes and

²⁷ “Communication with Stakeholders - World Organisation for Animal Health.” WOA. OIE, January 2, 2023. <https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/communication-with-stakeholders>.

²⁸ Stephan, Craig. “A Rapid Review Of Evidence On Managing The Risk Of Disease Emergence In The Wildlife Trade.” OIE, February 18, 2021. https://web.oie.int/download/WG/Wildlife/OIE_review_wildlife_trade_March2021.pdf.

²⁹ “Africa's Poaching Crisis.” page 2.

³⁰ “Africa's Poaching Crisis.” page 3.

³¹ “Animals in the Wild.” World Animal Protection, January 3, 2023. <https://www.worldanimalprotection.ca/our-work/animals-wild>.

horrific consequences, specifically regarding animal welfare, should be prioritised in order for countries to come to a unified solution which takes into account all member nations' opinions.

Questions to Consider

1. Are there measures within your country that already address animal poaching? If so, how effective are these solutions? If they are not effective, is there a certain reason why better solutions/legislation have not yet been proposed?
2. How does animal poaching affect your country's flora and fauna?
3. Does animal poaching negatively or positively affect your country's economy? Further, how important of a role does animal poaching occupy within your country's economy?
4. Are there solutions your country can implement that allow citizens to continue practising cultural traditions without infringing on animal rights?
5. Does your country respect animal rights within other industries?
6. How have animal rights evolved in your country over time?

Useful Delegate Resources

<https://www.woah.org/en/home/>

<https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/standards/codes-and-manuals/terrestrial-code-online-access/>

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/03/02/the-global-poaching-vortex/>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/traffic>

<https://www.wwf.org.au/what-we-do/species/illegal-wildlife-trade-and-poaching>

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/poaching>

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<https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/communication-with-stakeholders/>.

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<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/oryx/article/global-magnitude-and-implications-of-legal-and-illegal-wildlife-trade-in-china/1111A5279F1771D7A1D0EBAAF42D2737>.

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<https://www.traffic.org/about-us/legal-wildlife-trade/>.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/oct/17/baby-gorillas-trafficking-increase-congo>.

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https://web.oie.int/downld/WG/Wildlife/OIE_review_wildlife_trade_March2021.pdf.

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