

# Wildlife Trade and the COVID-19 Pandemic

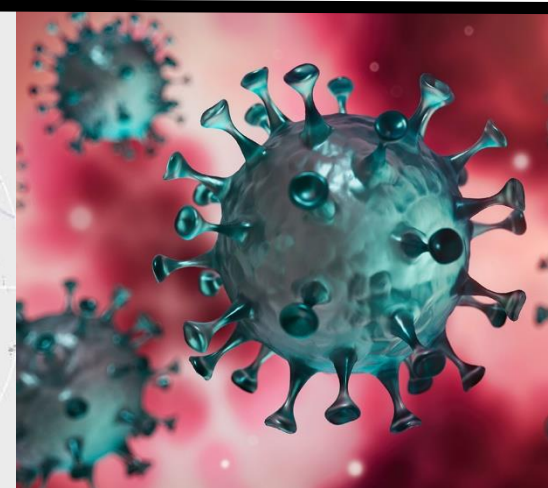
Alice Stroud, Africa Policy and Capacity Building Director

14 May 2020



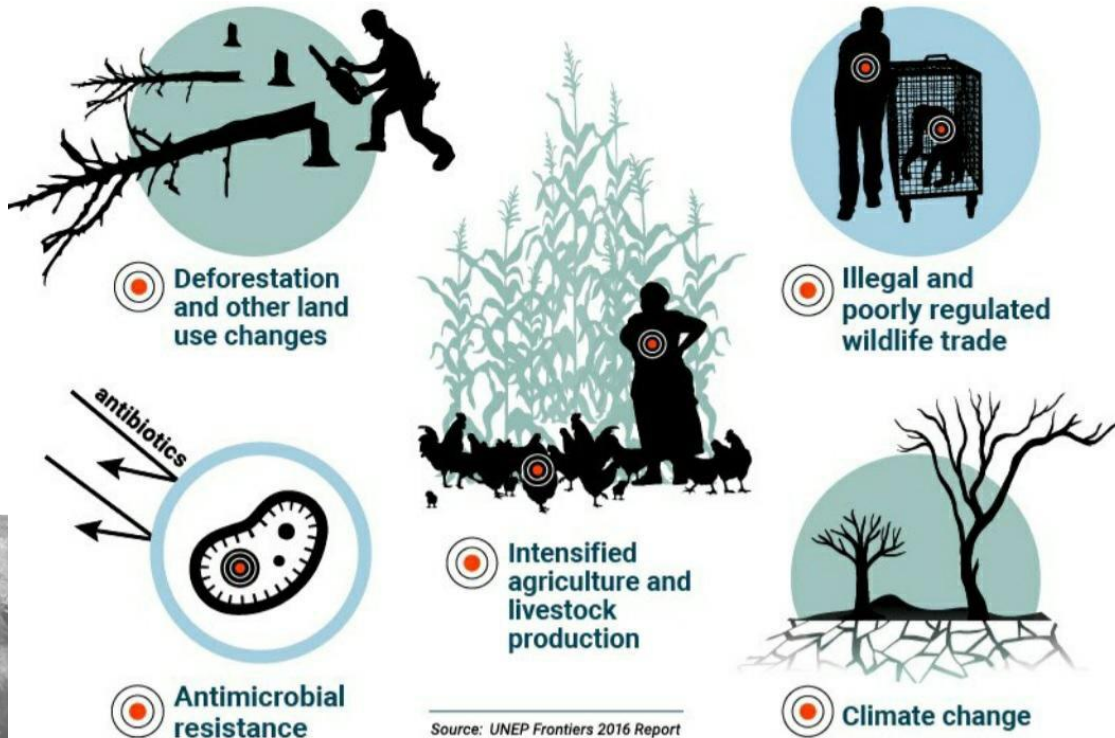
# Outline

- Links between zoonotic diseases and biodiversity threats
- Impact of wildlife trade
- Born Free USA response – the *Global Nature Recovery Initiative*
- Q&A



# Zoonotic Diseases and Biodiversity

What factors are increasing zoonosis emergence?  
(Diseases transmitted from animals to humans)



**URGENT**

60% of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic and 70% of these are thought to originate from wildlife

The spread of zoonotic diseases is exacerbated by threats to biodiversity

Response to Covid-19 must integrate a response to threats affecting biodiversity

#COVID19

UN  
environment  
programme



# World Biodiversity Assessment

15-28  
October 2020



2020 UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE  
COP 15 - CP/MOP 10 - NP/MOP 4  
Ecological Civilization Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth  
KUNMING, CHINA

Ambitious post-2020  
framework



Convention on  
Biological Diversity

Mass Extinction Event  
Nearly 1 million species at  
risk of extinction from  
human activities

Nature is declining globally  
at unprecedented rates

75% of the land-based environment and 66%  
of the marine environment significantly  
altered + over 85% of wetlands (by area)  
have been lost.

Biodiversity  
Crisis

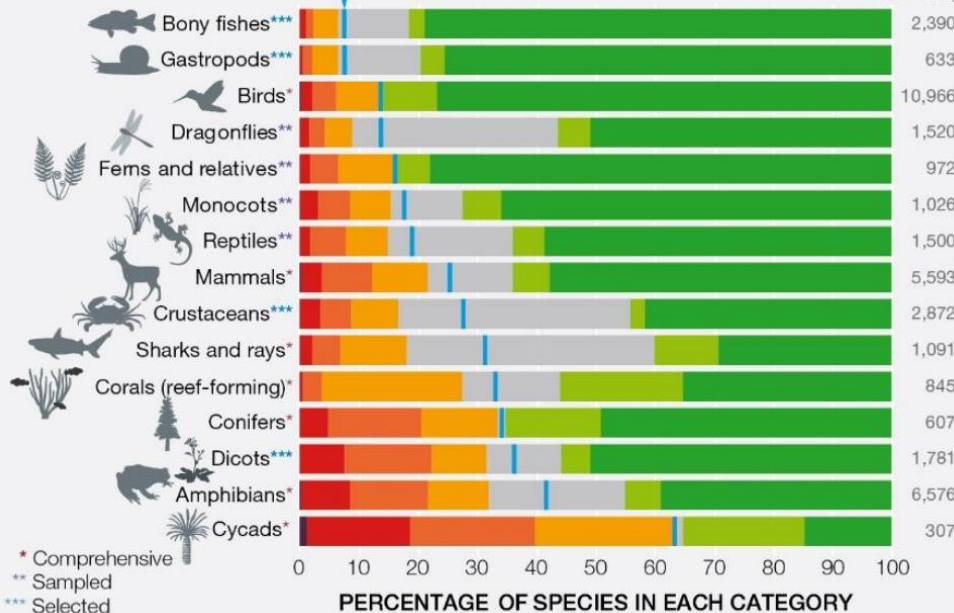
Loss of biodiversity  
increases the challenge  
of limiting climate  
change

Climate change is  
intensifying biodiversity  
loss

## A Current global extinction risk in different species groups

Estimate of percentage threatened

Total number of extant  
assessed species



### IUCN Red List categories

Data Deficient

Non-threatened

Least Concern

Near Threatened

Threatened

Vulnerable

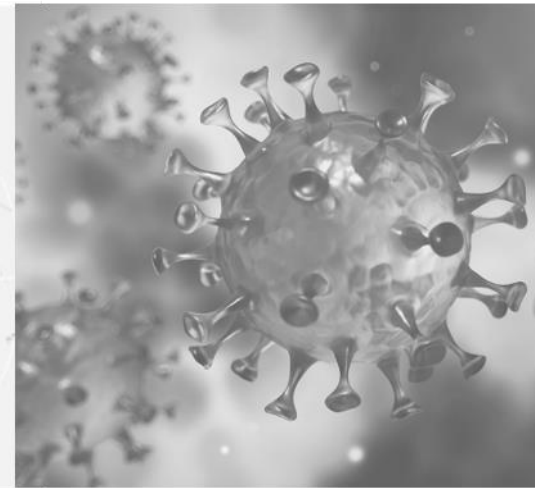
Endangered

Critically Endangered

Extinct in the Wild

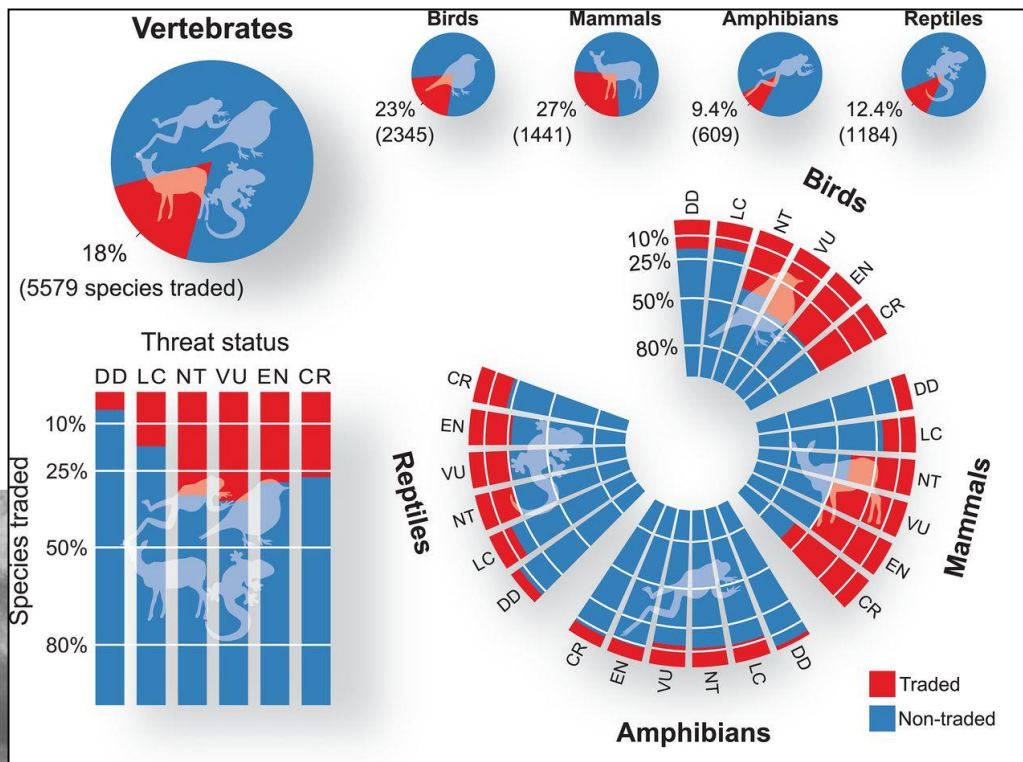
Greater extinction risk

Source: 2019 Report of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on the work of its seventh session

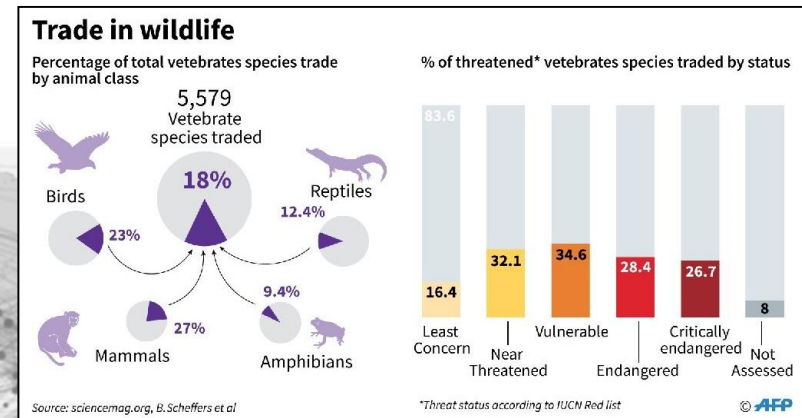


# Impact of Legal Wildlife Trade

Traded species are more likely to be endangered than non-traded ones – wildlife trade has the ability to decimate affected species in just a few years



## Example of terrestrial vertebrates and CITES trade



Data produced through a search algorithm that mined the IUCN's and CITES's databases for trade records of land animals. Source: "Global Wildlife Trade across the Tree of Life," by Brett R. Scheffers et al., in *Science*, Vol. 366; October 4, 2019.

# Wildlife Crime

“Acts committed contrary to national laws and regulations intended to protect natural resources and to administer their management and use”

International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime

## Wildlife crime

Illicit exploitation of natural resources (poaching, illegal logging, etc.)

Processing of animals and plants into products, their transportation, offer for sale, sale, possession

Concealment and laundering of the financial benefits made out of these crimes

Violations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)



All African countries are Party to CITES except for South Sudan and Western Sahara





# Wildlife Crime in West Africa



## Species most commonly trafficked in West Africa

- Rosewood
- Pangolin scales
- Elephant ivory
- Live birds
- Primates (live, bushmeat)
- Big cat products (skins, teeth, claws, bones)
- Reptile products
- Sea turtles (shell, eggs, meat)
- Shark fins

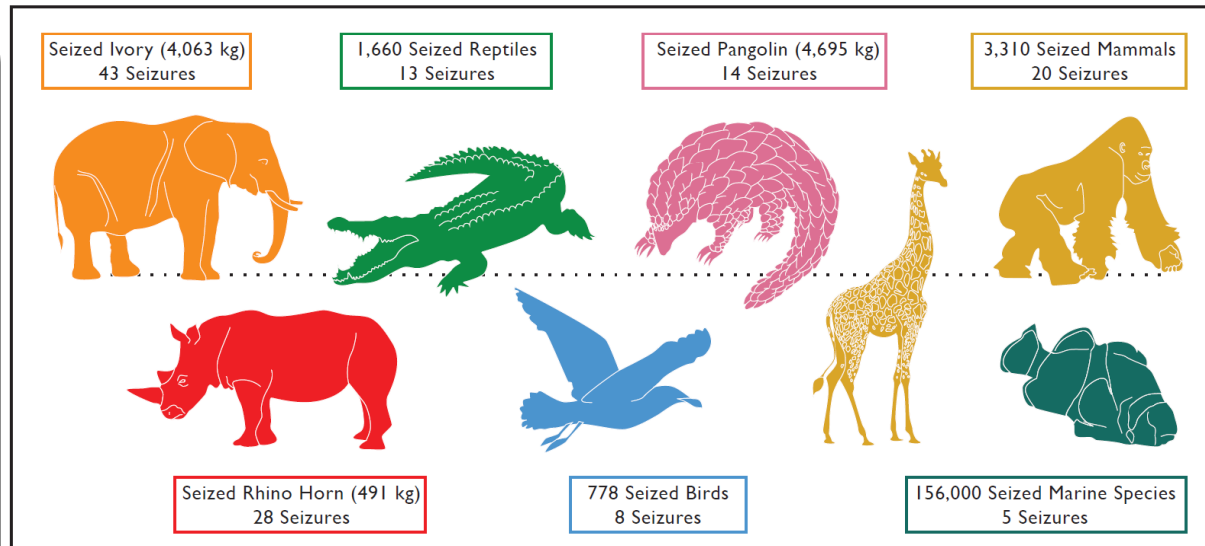
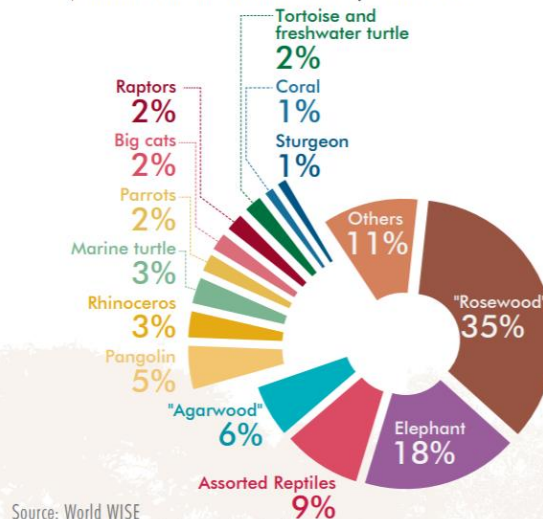


Figure 3. Number of seizures in Africa of each type of wildlife or wildlife product (2016 – 2018)

**Fig. 4** Share of type of wildlife among total seizures (aggregated on the basis of standard value\*) 2005-2014



Source: World WISE  
\*see online methodological annex for details

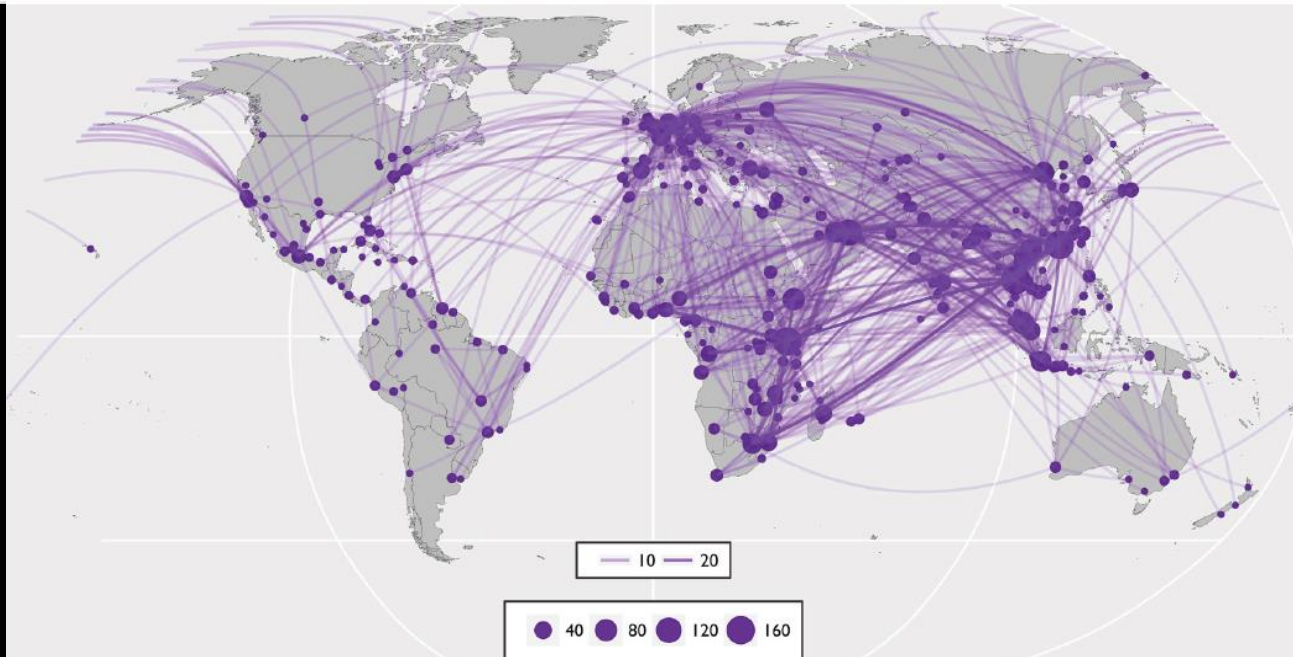
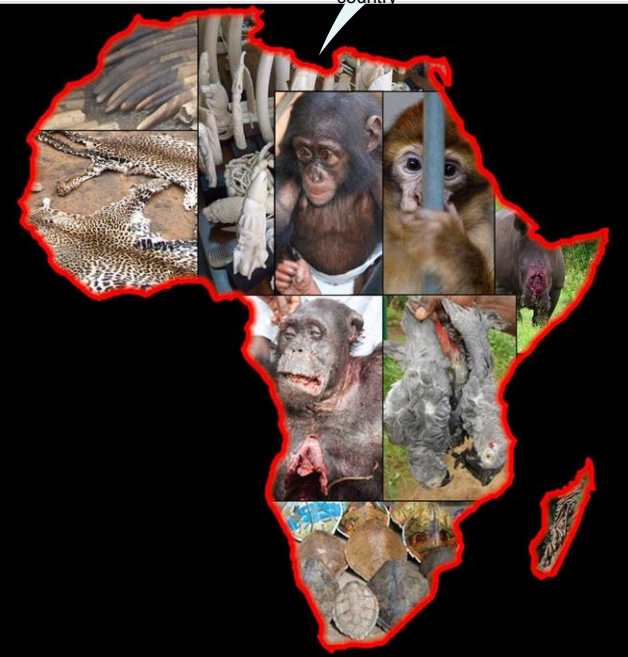
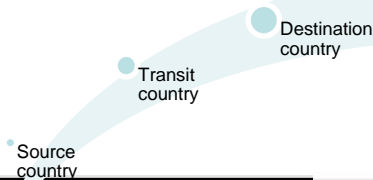
Source: Run Away to Extinction, Wildlife Trafficking in the Air Transport, ROUTES 2019

**350 million  
specimens  
sold on black  
market  
each year**

# Wildlife Crime in West Africa



- Long distances from source to destination
- Animals are crowded with cages often stacked on top of each other, facilitating exposure
- Stressed/injured animals shed more viruses and are more susceptible to infections
- Different species are maintained in close proximity in unhygienic conditions



Trafficking routes by air for wildlife products between 2009 and 2017. *Source:* In Plane Sight: Wildlife Trafficking in the Air Transport Sector - C4ADS & ROUTES, 2018



# Wildlife Markets

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20510

“Wet” markets in particular pose a threat to global public health because wildlife comes from many different locations without any standardized sanitary or health inspection processes. Market vendors cage animals of different species in close proximity, where the animals are likely to urinate, defecate and potentially bleed or salivate on the animals below them. The risk to food buyers can also be through the slaughter of animals in front of customers, releasing disease carrying fluids like blood, saliva, and excrement into the air, which can then splash or splatter on nearby people, be consumed or inadvertently inhaled by humans.


*70 Democrats and Republicans from both chambers of Congress calling on WHO, the UN, and the World Organization for Animal Health to permanently ban live wildlife markets*



Photo: Asia times

- Wildlife markets vary from well-regulated to unregulated or poorly regulated
- Sale of live animals, fresh meat, wildlife products, traditional medicine
- Combination of legal and illegal specimens
- Unhygienic conditions with animals killed on site
- Often vast industrialized centers cramming thousands of live animals

# Evolving Illegal Wildlife Trade



## Security implications of illegal wildlife trade

**Links to Organized Crime:** According to a series of U.N. studies on the illicit traffic of wildlife, wildlife experts claim that Chinese, Japanese, Italian, and Russian organized crime syndicates are “heavily involved in illegal wildlife trade.” Elephant ivory, rhino horns, tiger products, whale meat, sturgeon and caviar targeted among many others.

**Links to Drug Trafficking:** Key illicit drug production and distribution countries coincide with major source states for endangered wildlife; illicit wildlife has been found to be smuggled along the same routes as narcotics as a subsidiary trade for drug traffickers; wildlife, both legal and illegal, are also used as the means to conceal illegal drugs.

**Links to Terrorism:** According to U.N. reports and Interpol officials, some insurgent groups and possibly terrorist groups are reportedly engaged in illegal poaching for profit in several areas of Asia and Africa. It is possible that terrorist groups or other criminal entities in regions of high biodiversity are taking advantage of porous borders, weak states, and criminal sympathizers.

# Complexity of Wildlife Enforcement

Geckos found in hollowed-out book in 2009 (© Australian Customs Service)



31 pangolins found in secret compartment of a car at Malaysia border in

Sedated tiger found among stuffed tiger toys in Bangkok airport (© Wildlife Checkpoint Suvarnabhumi Airport, Thailand)

Use of **forged or stolen trade permits** to give the false impression that the contents are being legitimately traded

Use of **secret compartments** of luggage, shipping containers, or clothing

Methods used for traffic in live animals and wildlife products

Use of **common delivery services** (postal services, Fedex, DHL, etc). Also **diplomatic luggage** which is not subject to scrutiny

**Mis-declaration** on customs forms and trade permits :  
\*Fraudulently identifying look-alike non-protected species  
\*Under reporting the declared number of items shipped  
\*Changing the declared value of items  
\*Declaring wild species as captive-bred species

Use of the **Internet**, where traders are reportedly using chat rooms and auction websites, such as eBay, to engage in illicit wildlife sales

Source: Wyler and Sheikh, CRC Report for US Congress, *International Illegal Trade in Wildlife: Threats and US Policy*, 3 March 2008

14 pythons in socks seized in Norway in 2009 (© BBC)

Apron filled with 51 tropical fish inside plastic bags intercepted by Australian customs (© AP)

14 Asian song birds seized in Los Angeles valued at USD 1000 each (© Department of Justice / AP)



# Country Support: Wildlife Crime Threat Assessments



## List of priority enforcement needs and recommendations

- Policies, laws and field
  - Country level
  - Regional level
- government validated*



## Information on how illegal wildlife trade works

- Species targeted
- Nationalities involved
- Trade routes
- Links to other crimes



## Understanding its impact as a compounding threat

- Biodiversity assessment
- Impact on most endangered species and ecosystems

**SOUND POLICY DECISIONS**

# Threat Assessment Expansion



# Trainings



## Customs officers

- 3 training workshops of 6 days
- 2 customs officers and 1 CITES MA representative
- Benin, Cabo Verde, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo



## Rangers working in park W

- 1 training of 15 days
- 30 rangers and 6 instructors (Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger)
- Specialized counter-poaching and counter-trafficking skills



## Judges and prosecutors

- 2 training workshops of 5 days
- 1 judge, 1 prosecutor and 1 CITES MA representative
- All English and French speaking ECOWAS Member States



# Identification Manuals

## PANTHERA LEO

Lion, African Lion (AN) Lion d'Afrique (FR)

CITES ANNEXE II\*

UICN: Vulnérable



Forme dans le commerce: Corps, os, griffes, pieds, poils, vivants, squelettes, peaux, crânes, spécimens, trophées.  
 \*(Un quota annuel d'exportation zéro des spécimens d'os, morceaux d'os, produits d'os, griffes, squelettes, crânes et dents prélevés dans la nature et exportés à des fins commerciales. Des quotas annuels d'exportation pour le commerce des os, morceaux d'os, produits d'os, griffes, squelettes, crânes et dents à des fins commerciales, résultant de l'activité d'élevage en captivité en Afrique du Sud seront établis et communiqués chaque année au Secrétariat de la CITES.)

## HYAENA HYAENA

Striped Hyaena (AN)  
 Hyène rayée (FR)

CITES ANNEXE III\*

UICN: Quasi Menacée



Forme dans le commerce: Vivants, crânes, trophées.  
 \*(Par le Pakistan)

## AONYX CAPENSIS

Cape Clawless Otter, African Clawless Otter (AN)  
 Loutre à joues blanches (FR)

CITES ANNEXE II\*

UICN: Quasi Menacée



Forme dans le commerce: Vivants, peaux, crânes, spécimens. \*(Inscrite à l'Annexe II sauf pour les populations du Cameroun et Nigéria qui sont inscrites à l'Annexe I)

## CITES Identification Guides (paper):

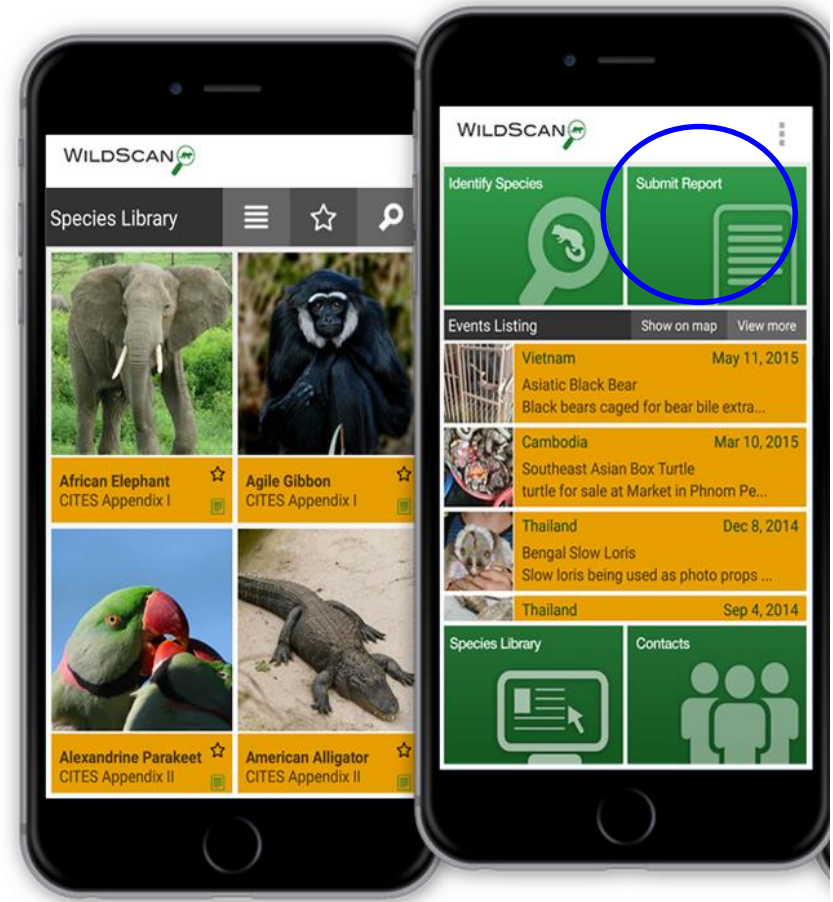
- The scientific name of the species and vernacular in English and in French
- IUCN listing and CITES Appendix
- The form of the species in trade including products that are trafficked
- Information about CITES, CITES permits controls, the impact of wildlife crime
- Information relative to marine species and their identification for coastal countries
- List of useful enforcement contacts within the CITES Secretariat, subregionally and nationally



# Wildscan West Africa



**Make the knowledge needed to identify protected species and respond to wildlife crime easily accessible in the right language**





# Outreach

The image displays a collection of CITES enforcement materials, including posters and leaflets, along with the logos of CEDRO and ECOWAS.

**Posters (English):**

- USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:** CORREL WITH THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES) AND YOUR COUNTRY'S NATIONAL LAWS. WHEN IN DOUBT, DO NOT IMPORT OR EXPORT WILDLIFE! All commercial international trade is prohibited for: The 1,245 species and subspecies of animals and plants listed in CITES Appendix I and their parts and products (such as elephant ivory\*, leopard skins, pangolin scales, whales, cheetahs, corals, de tortugas, etc.).
- USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:** CUMPLA A CONVENÇÃO SOBRE O COMÉRCIO INTERNACIONAL DE ESPÉCIES AMEAÇADAS DA FLORA E FAUNA SILVESTRES. SE ESTIVER EM DÚVIDA, NÃO IMPORTE OU EXPORTE ESPÉCIES SILVESTRES! Todo comércio internacional é proibido para: Animais e plantas retratados legalmente da natureza. As 1.245 espécies e subespécies de animais e plantas listadas no Apêndice I da CITES, assim como suas partes e produtos (como marfim de elefante\*, peles de leopardo, escamas de pangolins, baleias, papagaios-cinzentos, gorilas, chimpanzés, corais de tartarugas, etc.).
- USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:** CONFORMEZ-VOUS À LA CONVENTION SUR LE COMMERCE INTERNATIONAL DES ESPÈCES DE FAUNE ET DE FLORE SAUVAGES MENACÉES D'EXTINCTION (CITES) ET AUX LÉGISLATIONS NATIONALES. EN CAS DE DOUBTE, N'IMPORTÉZ PAS OU N'EXPORTÉZ PAS LES ESPÈCES SAUVAGES! Toutes les transactions internationales à fins commerciales sont interdites pour: Les animaux et les plantes protégés légalement dans la nature. Les 1.245 espèces et sous-espèces d'animaux et de plantes de l'Annexe I de la CITES et leurs parties et produits (comme l'ivoire d'éléphant\*, les peaux de léopards, les écailles de pangolins, les baleines, les perroquets gris, les gorilles, les chimpanzés, les carapaces de tortues de mer, les cornes de rhinocéros\*, les lamantins, les poissons-scorpions, certaines corallines, fougères et certaines espèces d'arbres). Les animaux vivants transportés dans des conditions subhumanes. Bien que certaines populations de rhinocéros et d'éléphants soient inscrites à l'Annexe II du commerce de leurs produits, s'il est avéré qu'ils sont en danger de disparition, ils ne peuvent être exportés que dans des circonstances limitées et contrôlées.

**Leaflets (Portuguese):**

- USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:** NÃO SE TORNE UM CRIMINOSO AMBIENTAL. NOSSO PAÍS PROTEGE ESPÉCIES AMEAÇADAS E PUNE O TRÁFICO DE ESPÉCIES SILVESTRES. DESCUBRA QUAIS ESPÉCIES SÃO PROTEGIDAS E... (Includes images of various species like pangolins, elephants, and birds.)
- USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:** NE DEVEZES PAS UN CRIMINEL NUISANT AUX ESPÈCES SAUVAGES. NOTRE PAYS PROTÈGE LES ESPÈCES MENACÉES ET SANCTIONNE LE TRAFIC DES ESPÈCES SAUVAGES. RENSEIGNEZ-VOUS POUR SAVOIR QUELLES ESPÈCES SONT PROTÉGÉES ET... (Includes images of various species like pangolins, elephants, and birds.)

**Leaflet (Spanish):**

- USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:** LE COMMERCE ILLÉGAL DES ESPÈCES SAUVAGES EST SANCTIONNÉ PAR DES AMENDES ET DES PEINES DE PRISON. Aidez à faire respecter la loi. Signalez toute activité illégale aux autorités nationales. (Includes images of various species like pangolins, elephants, and birds.)

**Logos:** CEDRO (Central Environmental Defense Organization) and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States).

A CITES enforcement poster and a leaflet + a series of 8 targeted species enforcement posters (pangolins, elephants, primates, timber, reptiles, marine species, birds, big cats)



# Impact of Covid-19 in the Field

- Freeze in urgently needed capacity-building activities
- Increase in poaching (food security, confinement orders, sudden decrease in enforcement funds, opportunism)
- Increase in trafficking:
  - Approximately 1,603 endangered vultures found dead in Guinea Bissau in February-March 2020 (traffic in vultures parts)
  - 200 kg of pangolins scales headed for China seized by Liberia at Liberia-Guinea border on 30 March 2020
  - 75 crocodile skins and 58 python skins seized by Burkina on 3 April 2020
- Emergency appeals from sanctuaries needing immediate support to avoid closures

# Activities Led in Response



World Health  
Organization

Joint Appeal from 239 NGOs calling on WHO to recommend permanent ban of live wildlife markets and the use of wildlife in traditional medicine



Continued and expanded enforcement support



**Global Nature Recovery Investment Initiative**

# Global Nature Recovery Initiative



## International

- Halt / reverse biodiversity loss
- Expand / strengthen protected areas
- End commercial wildlife exploitation and trade
- Develop alternative livelihoods
- Strengthen wildlife law enforcement coordination



## Country-level

- Ecosystem restoration
- Species recovery
- Strengthening and implementing laws
- Closure of wildlife markets
- Support for local communities
- Demand reduction
- Strengthening public/NGO engagement

**BFUSA CALLING FOR CHANGE OF SCALE IN WORLD INVESTMENT RESPONSE**



# How You Can Help



Spread the Word and encourage those who are fighting



Provide financial support if you are able



Stay healthy because we care about you and the animals need you!

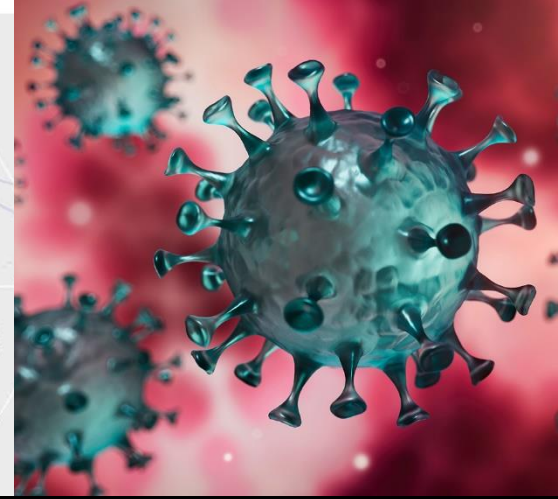
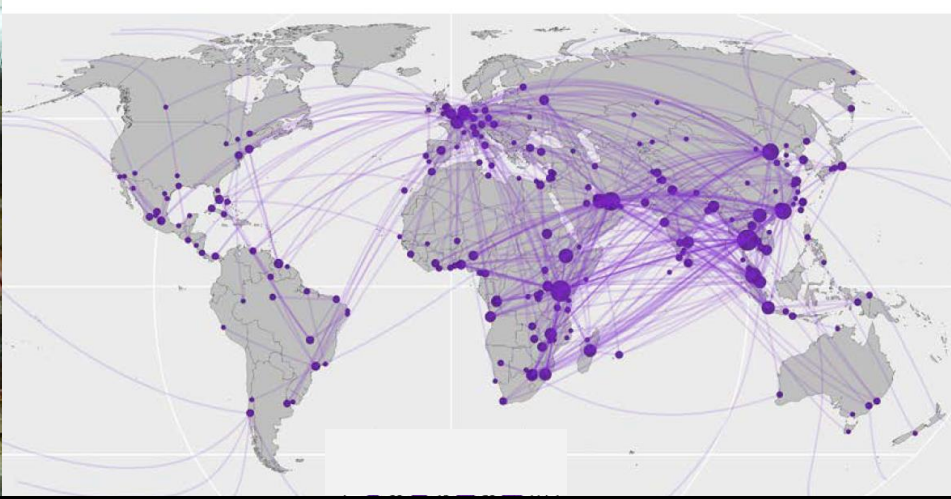


# Questions

Alice Stroud, Africa Policy and Capacity Building Director, Born Free USA  
alice@bornfreeusa.org







# THANK YOU!

For donations: [www.bornfreeusa.org/covid19](https://www.bornfreeusa.org/covid19)

