

# UN World Wildlife Crime Report-2020

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## In news

According to the United Nations World Wildlife Crime Report, India and Thailand are the two main countries which are the suppliers of the illegal tiger products in the world.

## About the report

- The 2020 World Wildlife Crime Report takes stock of the present wildlife crime situation with a focus on illicit trafficking of specific protected species of wild fauna and flora and provides a broad assessment of the nature and extent of the problem at the global level.
- It includes a quantitative assessment of markets and trends and a series of in-depth illicit trade case studies.
- While the **first Report in 2016 was UNODC's initial global assessment of the state of wildlife crime, this second edition is rather an evaluation of trends and changes.**

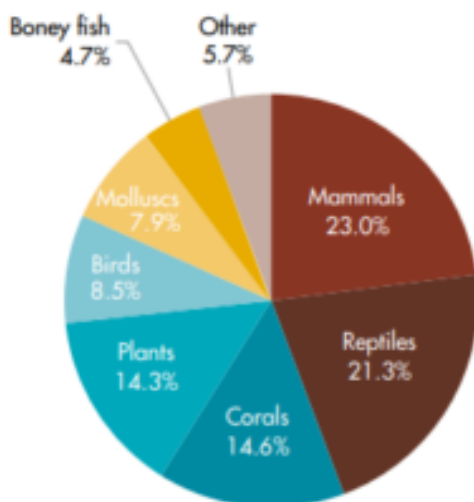
## Key highlights of the report

- The World Wildlife Crime Report 2020 launched by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasizes the threat that wildlife trafficking poses to nature and the biodiversity of the planet.
- The report highlights the trafficking of some wild species – pangolins, birds, turtles, tigers, bears and many more.
- When wild animals are poached from their natural habitat, butchered and sold illegally, the potential for transmission of zoonotic diseases – those caused by

pathogens that spread from animals to humans – is increased.

- The report notes that pangolins, which were identified as a potential source of coronaviruses, are the most trafficked wild mammals in the world, with seizures of pangolin scales having increased tenfold between 2014 and 2018.
- The report draws heavily on UNODC's World WISE database, which contains almost 180,000 seizures from 149 countries and territories.
- The database shows that nearly 6,000 species have been seized between 1999-2019, including not only mammals but reptiles, corals, birds, and fish.

**Fig. 2** : Share of all seizure incidents in World WISE by taxonomic category, aggregated 1999-2018



- It also shows that no single species is responsible for more than 5 per cent of the seizures, no single country was identified as the source of more than 9 per cent of the total number of seized shipments and that suspected traffickers of some 150 nationalities have been identified.
- This data underscores the global nature of the issue. Wildlife crime affects all countries through its impacts

on biodiversity, human health, security and socio-economic development.

- Stopping the trafficking in wildlife species is a critical step not just to protect biodiversity and the rule of law, but to help prevent future public health emergencies.

## Key details

### The illicit market for ivory and rhino horn in decline:

- The report outlines key global wildlife crime trends and analyses markets for illicit rosewood, ivory, rhino horn, pangolin scales, live reptiles, big cats and European eel.
- It suggests that demand for African ivory and rhino horn is in decline and that the size of the illicit markets for them are smaller than previously suggested.
- Annual illicit income generated from ivory and rhino horn trafficking between 2016 and 2018 was estimated at US\$400 million and US\$230 million respectively.
- Demand for tropical hardwood timber, on the other hand, has grown significantly in the past two decades, with illegal African rosewood entering some legal supply chains, such as the international wood furniture trade.
- Seizures of tiger products have also risen in recent years, as has traffickers' interest in other big cat parts that can be used as substitutes for these products.

### Wildlife crime going digital:

- The report explains that, like many other markets, trade in wildlife and wildlife products have also expanded into the digital sphere.
- Sales of certain products, like live reptiles and tiger bone products, have shifted to online platforms and encrypted messaging apps as traffickers have found new

ways to connect with potential buyers.

- The online trade is particularly difficult to address due to lack of transparency, inconsistent regulatory frameworks, and limited law enforcement capacities.

### **Strengthening criminal justice systems:**

- The report further argues the need for stronger criminal justice systems focusing on improving legal frameworks and strengthening the prosecutorial and judicial process.
- The report illustrates that criminal networks have diversified the resources they exploit and traffic and use the same corrupt networks to move different wildlife products, such as African elephant ivory and pangolin scales, together.
- To combat these challenges, the report frames the need to improve international cooperation, cross-border investigations and suggests that States make greater efforts to define wildlife crime as a serious crime under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).

### **About the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**

UNODC is a United Nations office that was established in 1997 as the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention by combining the United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division in the United Nations Office at Vienna

It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and was renamed the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in 2002

These are the main themes that UNODC deals with: Alternative Development, anti-corruption, Criminal Justice, Prison Reform and Crime Prevention, Drug Prevention, -Treatment and Care, HIV and AIDS, Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, Money Laundering, Organized Crime, Piracy, Terrorism Prevention.