

KILL THE TRADE

In August 2012, we launched our global conservation campaign against the illegal wildlife trade under the banner “kill the trade”

The world’s wildlife is in crisis. Poaching has escalated dramatically, mainly to meet rising consumer demand in Asia, jeopardizing decades of conservation work. Illegal wildlife trade is now the greatest threat to many of WWF’s flagship species:



>4000%
INCREASE IN RHINO
POACHING IN SOUTH
AFRICA, 2007-2012

- Rhino poaching in South Africa has risen more than 4,000 per cent since 2007.
- Tens of thousands of elephants are killed each year for their ivory.
- Only 3,200 tigers remain in the wild, yet poaching continues.

And this deadly trade doesn’t just affect wildlife. With an estimated global value of around US\$19 billion (including fish and timber), it’s one of the world’s most lucrative criminal activities. Illegal wildlife trade has ties to organized crime, including illicit arms, drugs, terrorism, human trafficking, corruption and money laundering. It destabilizes societies and funds violent conflicts. It kills people as well as animals.

Yet illegal wildlife trade isn’t given the priority it deserves. Laws exist to prevent trade in endangered species, but they’re all too easily flouted. As long as governments lack the will to take action, wildlife criminals will continue to profit as species and societies suffer.

Our campaign against the illegal wildlife trade aims to change this – fast. Along with our partner TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, we’re calling for effective deterrents against poaching, smuggling and illegal sales, and prominent efforts to reduce demand for endangered species products. By raising public outcry, we can spur governments and international institutions to treat illegal wildlife trade like the serious crime it is.

By July 2013, we want:

- Heads of state of key countries where threatened animals are being killed or consumed to make public declarations of action to improve enforcement, increase prosecution rates, reduce demand and reform legislation;
- Influential governments to state their own commitments to treating illegal wildlife trade as a serious crime, and hold other governments to account.

This year has already brought encouraging progress. The UN recognized wildlife trafficking as a form of transnational organized crime and a threat to the rule of law. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton emphasized that it was a major foreign policy and security issue and called for a “concerted global response”. Gabon publically burned its ivory stockpile and announced a policy of zero tolerance for wildlife crime. Russia closed legal loopholes that had allowed tiger poachers to escape with small fines. And we recognized the achievements of anti-wildlife crime activist Ofir Drori, whose tireless efforts have resulted in hundreds of arrests and prosecutions of wildlife criminals across West and Central Africa, by awarding him our top honour, the WWF Duke of Edinburgh Conservation Medal.

We know we face a huge challenge. But we believe we can meet it.



From the forests to Facebook, we're taking the fight to wildlife criminals: WWF staff explain their roles in the campaign

Viet Nam – tackling demand for rhino horn

“In 2010, Viet Nam lost its last native rhinoceros – a victim of the illegal wildlife trade and the huge demand for rhino horn in our country, where it is seen as everything from a hangover remedy to a cure for cancer. We cannot bring our rhinos back – but we will do everything we can to stop Africa's rhinos from suffering the same fate.

In 2012, a record 668 rhinos were killed by poachers in South Africa. We know that Viet Nam is the main destination for rhino horn, and WWF has been working hard to bring the two countries' governments together to tackle the issue. In December, they signed a memorandum of understanding to promote collaboration on natural resource management, wildlife protection and law enforcement.

Now we need a public commitment at the highest political level to stamp out illegal trade and consumption of rhino horn in Viet Nam. If we can achieve this, it will strengthen all our efforts to improve law enforcement and reduce demand among consumers to help to save rhinos in South Africa and elsewhere in the world from extinction.”



Hien Tran Minh
Country Director
WWF-Viet Nam

Action for elephants in Central Africa

“Elephant poaching in Central Africa, fuelled by the galloping international demand for ivory, is totally out of control. It has become a threat to national and regional stability, and if it is not stopped, we will lose our last elephant populations. We're seeing poachers bringing AK47s from conflict zones into peaceful countries like Gabon and Cameroon, decimating entire herds and also killing wildlife protection personnel. The lucrative trade brings corruption too – if you want to export ivory you need to bribe a lot of officials along the way. And it's also eroding the potential of developing ecotourism.

Preventing poaching and illegal wildlife trade can't just be left to forestry or environment departments. It needs a proper coordinated response. We're pushing for an official declaration from regional heads of state that will provide the political momentum needed to make this happen.

Communications provide another powerful tool. Governments are concerned about their international image, and will act quickly when they know the eyes of the world are upon them. So we're keen to publicize good news stories, but we're also ready to call governments to account. The illegal wildlife trade campaign is helping us do that.”



Bas Huijbregts
Head of Policy
Engagement,
Central Africa
Regional
Programme Office
Yaounde, Cameroon

Mobilizing millions online

“Digital communications has been a crucial part of the illegal wildlife trade campaign – and we're constantly experimenting with how to make the most of it as a campaigning tool.

With social media, we can reach a huge audience. Across the WWF network, we have more than 3.3 million fans on Facebook and more than 2 million followers on Twitter.

That's impressive in itself – but if they then share things with their friends and followers, it means we have the potential to influence hundreds of millions.

The digital communications team has focused hard on the wildlife trade campaign. In the first two months of the campaign, visits to panda.org were up by 29 per cent on last year, and views of pages about wildlife trade doubled. WWF International's digital materials are being used around the network – helping us to speak with one voice, but in a way that resonates with local audiences.

All this helps raise awareness of the issues and engage people with WWF. Then we can get them to become more actively involved – for example, to sign the petition we launched in early 2013 calling for an ivory ban in Thailand.”



David Drodge
Head of Digital
WWF International