

## Illegal Ivory Trade

Ivory, the material that composes the tusks of elephants, is considered a highly desirable luxury product for most of the world. It makes up various products, such as chopsticks, jewelry, ornaments, and hair accessories. However, the ivory trading is also dangerous because elephants have to be killed for their tusks to be harvested, and the desire for ivory is driving elephants closer and closer to the brink of extinction.

The killing of elephants to fuel the ivory trade has long been a widely debated issue. In fact, in 1989, the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which consists of 179 nations, approved a worldwide ban on ivory trade. Initially, this ban did help decrease levels of elephant poaching, but recently many nations have fought against this ban, which opened the door for ivory traffickers. Ivory trade has, once again, become a controversial issue.

Recently, the volume and scope of ivory trafficking has reached a relative high. As many as 35,000 African elephants are killed every year for their tusks, leading to approximately 170



tons of ivory being trafficked between 2009 and 2014. The most recent spike in ivory trafficking began when countries such as Namibia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe pushed for a rebirth of very limited ivory trade to countries like China, Japan, and the United States. This new, but limited ivory trade,

opened the door for ivory traffickers to begin illegally trading huge amounts of ivory, pushing African elephants to near extinction in the process.

The problems related to ivory trafficking are not solely related to environmental concerns. The extinction of African elephants would devastate the economies of many

Sub-Saharan countries dependent on tourism. Additionally, the continuation of the ivory trade allows terrorist groups to persist in many of these same countries. Internal terrorists and organized crime groups, prevalent issues in many of these African countries, fund their illegal activities in large part through ivory trafficking. Terrorist groups have steadily gained more and more revenue through black market ivory trade: the average price of a kilogram of ivory has increased from five dollars in 1989, when the ban was introduced, to 2100 dollars on the black market today. Crime groups who poach elephants for their ivory also pose a threat to the lives of wardens and wildlife staff living in Sub-Saharan Africa who attempt to oppose the ivory trade.

In light of this rising crisis, the governments of both the United States and China, the two largest importers of ivory, have both taken steps to stop ivory trafficking in their respective countries. Both countries are enacting more restricting laws concerning ivory trafficking, including trafficking both into and within the country. In addition, these countries are working hard to really enforce laws against ivory trafficking.

However, ivory trafficking can be difficult to police. This is primarily because the general public doesn't see any issues with ivory trafficking. Recent surveys have shown that as much as 70% of the general public believes that ivory fall out naturally, like teeth, instead of being forcibly taken from dead elephants. The other main problem is the corruption in many governments paired with a fear of terrorist groups. Many governments in Sub-Saharan Africa don't necessarily want to stop this ivory



trafficking. As such, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) encourages the UN and many various organizations, such as the World Bank and Interpol, to do more to combat ivory trafficking.

### Works Cited

"Attack on Kenya Conservationist Steps up Conflict in Illegal Ivory Trade." *RSS*. CSR News, 1

July 2009. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.

"China, US Agree to Halt Ivory Trade." *African Wildlife Foundation*. African Wildlife Foundation,

25 Sept. 2015. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.

"Elephants under Threat as Trade in Illegal Ivory Triples over past Decade, UN Report Says."

*UN News Center*. UN, 06 Mar. 2013. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.

"Ivory Trade - Animal Rights Action." *Animal Rights Action*. Animal Rights Action, n.d. Web. 22

Oct. 2015.

"Stop the Ivory Trade." *Bloody Ivory*. Bloody Ivory, n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.

Worland, Justin. "Obama Announces Major Restrictions on Ivory Trade." *Time*. Time, 25 July

2015. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.

## Illegal Trade in Wildlife

Illegal trade of wildlife is quickly becoming a serious crime and issue in the world today. The global crime costs about 200 billion dollars annually because International networks are trafficking wildlife and animal parts like drugs and weapons are trafficked. In the last 40 years, 52% of the world's wildlife has been killed, and many scientists claim that the world is currently in its "sixth period of mass extinction"; however, unlike in the past five extinctions, the cause of this sixth extinction is not a natural phenomenon but humans. Humans have accelerated the rate of species extinction to 1000 times faster than what it was before.

The important thing to realize is that while not all wildlife trade is illegal, a problem is created when most of the trade done is illegal and unsustainable. Such trafficking of wildlife threatens the conservation and survival of species around the world.

The increasing human population has led to an increasing demand of wildlife products such as seafood, leather goods, timber, medicinal ingredients, and textiles. People in developed countries demand for these good, and people in poverty see the wildlife as expensive trading items needed for their survival. For example, Rhino horn, elephant ivory, and tiger textiles are highly demanded and highly priced especially in Asia. Vietnam's belief that rhino horns can cure cancer caused a massive poaching in South Africa. The lack of protection by law or weak protection systems have allowed illegal trafficking of wildlife to thrive. In many cases, only the poachers, poor locals, are caught while the "real masterminds" of the illegal trade networks are safe.



Due to the illegal trade, animals such as the Sumatran Rhino, Javan Rhino, Indian Elephant, African Elephant, Amur Leopard, Amur Tiger, Bengal Tiger, Malaysian Tiger,

Indochinese Tiger, Black Rhino, Green Turtle, Hawksbill Turtle, Leatherback Turtle, and Orangutan are threatened and endangered. Illegal trafficking of wildlife is especially a critical



problem in the “wildlife trade hotspots” which include China's international borders, trade hubs in East/Southern Africa and Southeast Asia, the eastern borders of the European Union, some markets in Mexico, parts of the Caribbean, parts of Indonesia and New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands.

The environmental impact are not the only impacts. A United Nations-INTERPOL report by UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and INTERPOL was released at the UN Environment Assembly in Nariobi in June of 2014. The report shows that illegal wildlife trade finances criminals and terrorist groups, threatens the security of nations, and hampers the sustainable development of countries such as the countries in sub-Saharan Africa. A terrorist group in East Africa makes between \$38 and \$56 million per year from the illegal trade in charcoal. Ivory provides income to militia groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic as well as gangs in Sudan, Chad, and Niger. The report *Environmental Crime Crisis* recommends increased awareness and reaction to the global crisis but also increased action against the criminal networks

Despite the severity of the issue, there are forces and actions fighting against the illegal trade. On July 30, 2015, the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/69/314, a resolution committing countries to increase their efforts in tackling and stopping the global poaching crisis. Furthermore, nongovernmental organizations such as Wildlife Alliance, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Environmental Investigation Agency, TRAFFIC,

Conservation International, and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) are continuously working to fight animal poaching and conserve species.

#### Works Cited

- Good, Kate. "10 Shocking Facts About How the Illegal Wildlife Trade Drives Species Extinction." *One Green Planet*. Our Green Planet, 30 Dec. 2014. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.
- "Illegal Trade in Wildlife, Timber Products Funding Criminals, Armed Groups – Joint UN Report." *UN News Centre*. United Nations, 24 June 2014. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.
- "Illegal Wildlife Trade." *WorldWildlife.org*. World Wildlife Fund, n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.
- "These 8 Organizations Refuse to Let the Illegal Wildlife Trade Win." *One Green Planet*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.
- "UN Adopts Resolution on Tackling Wildlife Trafficking." *TRAFFIC - Wildlife Trade News - UN Adopts Resolution on Tackling Wildlife trafficking*. TRAFFIC HEADQUARTERS OFFICE, 30 July 2015. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.