



Globalisation and the Wildlife Trade

Trade in wildlife, including animals and plants, is a huge global business. The legal trade in wildlife is worth billions of dollars and deals with millions of different animals and plants.

Unfortunately, there is also an illegal trade in wildlife, which is also worth billions of dollars, and deals in rare and endangered species. In fact, animal trafficking is the third largest illegal trade in the world after drugs and arms. It is thought that in Brazil alone 38 million animals are stolen every year. They are then used for medicines, furs, food, pets, ornaments and collectors' items.

Animals and plants are often taken from the wild in poorer countries and sold to buyers in rich countries all over the world, by organised gangs of smugglers. Most exotic pet collectors can be found in Europe, USA and Japan.

Cheaper and faster forms of international transport have made it much easier for smugglers to find and then smuggle exotic live animals in to other countries. Internet trading has also increased the number of specimens traded through the post e.g. elephant ivory ornaments and even some live animals.



Photo: Ash Lux

This illegal trade is leading to some species nearly becoming extinct, for example the tiger. Tigers are being hunted to extinction for their body parts. Tiger bone is used in some kinds of medicines in Asia to help with joint and back pain. Tiger skins are sold on the luxury rug markets worldwide. In the last 100 years, the number of tigers living in the

wild has dropped by 95 per cent, from 100 000 to around 5 000 to 7 200 (WWF Tiger Threatened Species Account).

The illegal trade in wildlife led to countries around the world coming together to sign up to the 'Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species' (CITES). In February 2006 membership of CITES stood at 169 countries. There are around 5000 species of animal and 28 000 species of plant protected by CITES. Each country that has signed up to CITES has to put laws into place in their own country to stop this illegal trade. In the UK our Customs has a number of CITES officers at different ports around the country and has a CITES Enforcement Team at Heathrow Airport.

In the UK illegal wildlife items most frequently found by Customs are:

1. Traditional Chinese Medicine (including tiger, leopard, bear & musk deer)
2. Live reptiles (including snakes, lizards, chameleons, iguanas, tortoises & terrapins)
3. Coral
4. Alligator/ Crocodile products
5. Snake and lizard products
6. Elephant ivory and skin products
7. Plants (including American ginseng, orchids and cycads)
8. Live birds (including parrots, macaws, owls, eagles and kites)
9. Queen conch shells
10. Caviar

http://www.wwf.org.uk/news/scotland/n_0000000409.asp

Definitions activity

The table below contains a number of words from the text 'Globalisation and the Wildlife Trade'.

Using a dictionary, find the definitions for each word and write in the table.

Find sentences in the text that contain each of the following words and write in the table.

As an example, the first one has been done for you.

Word	Definition	Sentence
Endangered	In danger of extinction (The Compact Oxford English Dictionary)	The illegal trade in wildlife led to countries around the world coming together to sign up to the 'Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species' (CITES).
Enforcement		
Extinct		
Exotic		
Illegal		
Law		
Legal		

Rare		
Smugglers		
Species		
Trade		
Traditional		
Trafficking		