



WILDLIFE TRADE AND TRAFFICKING IN LATIN AMERICA

Although wildlife trade and trafficking in Latin America has not reached the crisis levels that it has in Southeast Asia and Africa, the illegal hunting, trapping, and trading of wild species is nonetheless a direct and pervasive threat to biodiversity in the region. The **WCS Latin America & Caribbean Program** is taking action through scientific studies of wild meat markets in the Amazon, work with communities to reduce illegal hunting at the source, campaigns to educate people on wildlife crimes, and efforts to build law enforcement capacity.

THE NATURE OF THE WILDLIFE TRADE IN LATIN AMERICA

Commercial hunting for wild meat in the Amazon region

- **Targeted species:** ungulates such as peccaries, tapirs, and deer; large monkeys; marine mammals; large rodents such capybara and paca; armadillos; cracids; and river turtles
- **Destination:** Amazonian cities and urban centers

Hunting of wild animals for subsistence is distinct from commercial, profit-oriented hunting, which is generally unsustainable (depending on the species) and illegal in most countries.

Trapping of animals for the international pet trade

- **Targeted species:** psittacines such as macaws; reptiles; ornamental freshwater fish
- **Destination:** developed nations such as the US, Europe, and Japan

Illegal hunting for furs, skins, or other animal products

- **Targeted species:** spectacled bears; wild cats, including the jaguar; reptiles such as caiman, snakes, and tegu lizards
- **Destination:** the international black market, often in Southeast Asia, but also in North America and Europe



ACROSS LATIN AMERICA, MONKEYS ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO ILLEGAL HUNTING FOR THE WILD MEAT TRADE

THE MARKET CHAIN

Throughout much of Latin America, the increasing development of transportation infrastructure, coupled with a shift in the labor force towards extractive industries, has led to increased market access and cash-based local economies. These rapid economic shifts have many unintended social and ecological consequences; one being the involvement of local and indigenous people in the illegal wildlife trade. Tropical forests and their waters are the main source of the wildlife traded in the illegal wildlife market. Wild species and their products are taken by **local hunters** who have excellent knowledge of forests and their native species. New roads facilitate access to previously inaccessible locations of the forest. The incentive for profit, combined with the use of modern weapons that are much more efficient than traditional hunting methods, lead hunters to empty forests on a far greater scale than they would for subsistence hunting.



Wildlife is transferred to **middlemen** who tend to be boatmen, farmers, and truck and bus drivers. Roads facilitate easy transportation of traded species and their products to markets.



When the destination is international, such as is the case for live macaws or jaguar skins, the wildlife / wildlife product eventually makes its way to **major traffickers**, who tend to be from the countries of purchase. Smuggling routes and methods are often the same as those used for drug trafficking, and wildlife may be moved across country borders in cars or trucks, and/or using false permits that rely on law enforcement officials' low capacity to identify illegally traded species.

Data on the magnitude of the wildlife trade in Latin America are scarce and incomplete. One estimate suggests that 12 million wild animals are illegally hunted and trapped each year in Brazil alone.



ENDANGERED SPECIES SUCH AS THE LOWLAND TAPIR ARE DISAPPEARING ALONG ROADS AS A RESULT OF THE WILD MEAT TRADE



COMMUNITY PATROLMEN IN GUATEMALA SEIZE AN UNFORTUNATE VICTIM OF POACHERS

WCS ACTIVITIES

REGIONAL: WCS has led the development of global tools to support rangers such as SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) to improve protection effectiveness, increase ranger efficiency and to evaluate overall progress in wildlife crime prevention. In Latin America, SMART is currently being implemented in Belize, Colombia, and Guatemala, and pilot implementation is taking place in Peru and Ecuador.

ANDEAN AMAZON: With support from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland's BioCAN project, WCS executed a regional grant in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, focused on developing institutional and technical capacities of local and national governments to combat and prevent wildlife trade, manage conflicts surrounding wildlife use, and protect priority species.

GUATEMALA: WCS Guatemala has worked with the Guatemalan government to detect illegal activities in the Maya Biosphere Reserve using aerial surveys. WCS has been working for over a decade to eliminate illegal trapping of macaws for the international pet trade. High profile "busts" of poachers years ago were incredibly successful in stemming the tide of massive macaw trapping, through the present day. WCS Guatemala also works to reduce consumer demand for meat from the critically endangered Central American River turtle.

PERU: Funded in part by a grant from the USAID PREDICT program, WCS Peru has been studying Peruvian wet markets from a health perspective. Through this project, we have generated important data on the wildlife trade in these markets, including information about circulating pathogens and potential health risks. These data have been shared with local authorities to improve management and build capacity.

ECUADOR: WCS Ecuador has been surveying wild meat markets in the Ecuadorian Amazon for over a decade, while helping local commercial hunters develop alternative livelihoods and protein sources. WCS also heads a community-based conservation project that protects river turtles, which are threatened by overharvesting of their eggs for human consumption. WCS is also supporting the Ecuadorian government in the development of national wildlife management strategies for seven core areas of the country, focusing on the conservation of fifteen species including the mountain tapir, black caiman, and white-lipped peccary.

BOLIVIA: WCS Bolivia has been working to protect the spectacled caiman from illegal hunting in the Tacana indigenous land for over a decade. WCS Bolivia has also provided help to Bolivian authorities in developing a baseline of wildlife trade routes, providing information on health issues related to the wildlife trade, and developing a legal framework for sustainable caiman harvest and ornamental fish management.

BRAZIL: WCS Brazil works to promote a sustainable trade in ornamental fish, and is assisting with the creation of an education center aimed at curbing the wildlife trade in Manaus.

WCS FOCAL SPECIES / GROUPS

- River turtles
- Monkeys
- Ungulates (tapirs, peccaries)
- Psittacines (parrots, macaws)
- Ornamental freshwater fish
- Jaguar
- Caiman



WCS BOLIVIA HAS HELPED PROTECT THE SPECTACLED CAIMAN FROM ILLEGAL HUNTING FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS

The WCS Latin America & Caribbean Program has been pioneering strategies to reduce the impacts of the wildlife trade for over a decade

CHALLENGES

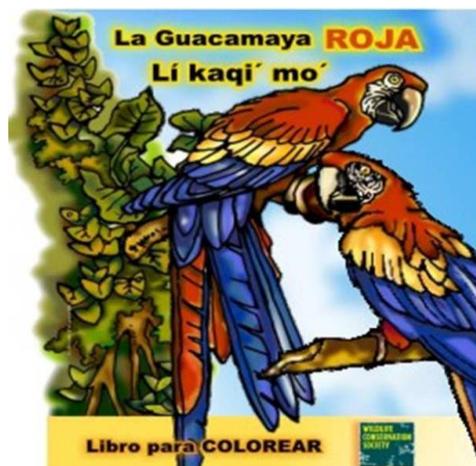
- Infrastructure development, such as roads, facilitates both access to and transport of wildlife species
- Low capacity of law enforcement officials to track and catch wildlife criminals
- Wildlife criminals perceive their activities as low risk-high reward
- Lack of resources and strong government support to enforce and punish wildlife crimes
- Cultural practices, beliefs, and traditional uses of wild species which persist even in an urbanized setting
- Limited livelihood options for local people
- Lack of scientific studies showing the impact of illegal hunting and trade on wild populations
- International demand for wildlife products, which makes it difficult to target consumers
- Lack of consumer awareness in developed countries regarding wildlife products, laws and the impact that demand for wildlife products has on wild animal populations

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Full roll-out of SMART in Peru and Ecuador, and pilot implementation of SMART in Argentina and across Central America
- Continued studies of wild meat markets, and the potential effects of the wildlife trade on human and wildlife health
- WCS Guatemala is initiating a bi-national effort to eradicate the illegal wildlife trade between Belize and Guatemala
- WCS Peru is working with the Government of Peru to develop a national strategy to combat the wildlife trade



AMAZON RIVER TURTLES ARE THREATENED BY HUMAN OVERCONSUMPTION OF THEIR EGGS. WCS ECUADOR PROTECTS THESE TURTLES THROUGH COMMUNITY BASED CONSERVATION PROJECTS.



EDUCATION AND AWARENESS BUILDING ARE KEY TO ENDING DEMAND FOR WILDLIFE PRODUCTS

WCS'S GLOBAL WORK ON WILDLIFE TRADE AND TRAFFICKING

WCS is actively engaged across the globe in working to end the illegal wildlife trade through 4 primary actions:

1. **Documenting the crisis** through surveys and research, publication of data, and involvement in programs such as CITES MIKE and ETIS which have had a huge impact in mitigating the ivory trade
2. **Stopping the killing**, particularly through support to law enforcement efforts, and the development and roll-out of SMART
3. **Stopping the trafficking** by training police and customs officials and developing intelligence gathering networks to identify and arrest poachers, middlemen, and traders -- especially in Africa and Asia. WCS's CEO Cristián Samper advises the US government as a member of the Federal Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking.
4. **Stopping the demand** for illegally-acquired, high-value products such as ivory through promotion and enforcement of legal moratoria and bans and social media campaigns to effect changes in purchasing behavior by potential consumers.

Our work in Latin America uses the same 4-pronged approach:

1. We conduct studies of wild meat markets, as well as publishing wildlife population trend data and data on illegal hunting.
2. We work to stop killing at the source by training protected area managers and park rangers in the use of SMART, supporting law enforcement responses by government authorities, and working with local communities to develop alternative livelihoods to illegal hunting.
3. We work to curb the illegal wildlife trade by supporting government and law enforcement efforts.
4. Locally, we are reducing demand for wild meat through awareness building campaigns and community based conservation projects. Internationally, WCS is working to reduce demand in consumer countries.

“Environmental crime is time sensitive and most often irreversible”

- Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime