Forum: Environment Commission 1  
Issue: Combating the illegal wildlife trade between East Africa and Southeast Asia  
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**Introduction**

Currently being the third largest illegal activity only behind the trading of drugs and arms, illegal wildlife trading has tormented the world with the slaughtering of innocent animals for their parts every single day. As the human population continued to grow, manufacturers present people with more exotic product options in order to keep up with their extravagant lifestyles. These options include seafood, leather goods, fur-coats, traditional medicine ingredients, of which most are extracted from animals. On the other side of the spectrum, the high profit margins made through illegally trading of animal species has been an incentive for many people with financial difficulties to join this “business”. As the demand for more extravagant animal products and traditional medicine items increases, this crime continues to increase with the high growth.

Wild life trading is wide spread and it affects not just a few species in the animal kingdom, but almost all species, which in turn affects civilization and mankind in very negative ways if tempered with. The food chain is where animal species higher up the hierarchy are presumably more dominant, carnivorous and will eat species lower in the chain. This creates a balance; the cascading effect also controls the population of all living species around us. Illegally tempering with this delicate chain at any level will cause species lower in the chain to multiply resulting in surplus of a particular kind that can disturb the living equilibrium. An example would be in the food chain of Man – Fish – Insects. If man continues to overfish, it will not only lead to the endangerment of different fish species but will result in more insect species continuing to roam the earth without fishes consuming them to control their population. Tempering with the food chains of different species will backfire, impacting humans in a very negative way.

Illegal wildlife trading has also caused a variety of animals from becoming endangered and eventually lead to extinction if no control measure is placed. In 2011, about 23 metric tons of ivory was seized, this represented 2,500 elephants killed just for the luxury and benefits of people in the world. The poaching of these animals had affected the overall population of the animal kingdom, with top-of-the-hierarchy animal species such as the tiger reaching an all time low as many were hunted, with only an estimated 3,200 of these majestic species living in the wild. Despite countless of efforts in recent years to curb this illegal behavior, the world continues to deal with the growth in endangered animal species as the result of illegal wildlife trading. This illegal activity was estimated to reach several billion dollars a year in profit. Without quick and decisive resolutions in the both East Africa and
Southeast Asia regions, all damages resulted from illegal wildlife trading will continue to deepen, and the end result would be the extinction of many species, which later generations can only see in museums and books.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Illegal Wildlife Trade:**

Illegal wildlife trading is the act of catching animals from the wild and selling them to consumers as food, pets, accessories, souvenirs, traditional medicines, and many more. As people grow richer, more people start to purchase products and medicine made from illegal wildlife traded species to show off their wealth and status in society. All of these have resulted in an increased in illegal wildlife trade in the last two years, thereby putting many conservational practices in jeopardy.

**Extinction:**

Extinction, in this context, refers to animal species no longer being in existence in the world due to the inability to sustain or multiply as a result of illegal wildlife trade.

**Combating:**

Combating in this context refers to a person or a group of people taking action to reduce or prevent something, in this case preventing illegal wildlife trade.

**Between East Africa and Southeast Asia:**

This is referenced to trading illegal wildlife creatures in the regions of both East Africa and Southeast Asia specifically.

**Background**

Illegal wildlife trade has plagued the world for many generations. Every year, a few hundreds of millions of animal species are being poached and sold to consumers to use as leather, tourist curios, souvenirs and traditional medicine to name a few. With millions of people selling wild animals or wild animal parts illegally, the number of animals in the world is in a downfall while the amount of animals that have been labeled as critically endangered is steeply rising. Organized crime can be found whenever money is involved, and illegal wildlife trading is certainly no different. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes, “Well-organized criminal groups have turned environmental exploitation into a professional business, with high revenues encouraging the poaching of endangered and protected species in national parks.” With organized crime groups getting involved, the number of poached animal species has skyrocketed. A key example of this would be there are only about 3,200 tigers left in the wild, a huge downfall from the estimated 100,000 tigers there were at the beginning of the 1900’s.
With the evolution of the Internet, the demand and opportunity to obtain illegal wildlife species has grown. In a recent report, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) discovered over 10,000 advertisements featuring over 33,000 animals, on 280 websites selling wildlife body parts, which had a total value of over $11 million. There is a well-known saying in the conservation organization World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in relation to illegal wildlife trading, “Demand Drives Crime” These three words perfectly sum up the main reason many people are willing to dive into the illegal wildlife trading “business”, so they will be able to earn an easy buck.

**Why Do People Get Into the Illegal Wildlife Trading Business?**

Many people get into this illegal business to earn more money. The regions in East Africa and Southeast Asia rank among the poorest regions in the world. When people are in extreme poverty, they start to make rash decisions and do anything to keep themselves and their family afloat. A person in this situation will see illegal wildlife trade as a way of income needed for subsistence, barter for trade to get easy money and to finally be able to support themselves and their family. Recent reports have also shown that many terrorist and criminal organizations have started joining the illegal wildlife trading business, trading million of animals for extra money to fund their weapons, and to finance other projects. Some locals in small communities may also be forced to join this business, with big illegal organizations forcing these locals to be the poachers of animals and making them the frontline culprit of this business. The police will eventually catch these locals, leaving the real ringleaders in the dark and to continue other operations in this unlawful business.

**Illegal Wildlife Trading in Southeast Asia**

Many environmental conservation organizations have stated that the most acute problem in illegal wildlife trading is in Southeast Asia. These organizations have also found numerous trade routes that start in Southeast Asia and ends in numerous other regions around the world. The demand of more extravagant goods has caused the illegal wildlife trade business to grow. The growth of this industry created many trade hubs that smugglers use to transport the illegal animal parts and animals they poached, most notably the Suvarnabhumi airport in Bangkok, which provides airplanes for smugglers. Liz Bennett who works for the Wildlife Conservation Society states that “[illegal wildlife trade] has exacerbated by Asia’s rising living standards and rapidly growing population.”

**Big Illegal Wildlife Trading Incidents in Southeast Asia:**

1. At least 1,669 large cats were killed in the years 1991-2014, this includes 1,428 of their skins and a further 2,000 body parts transported to numerous parts of the world.
2. In a recent report by the regional director of TRAFFIC, the number of shops selling wild animal parts in Mong La, a city in Myanmar close to China, rose from just 6 in 2006 to nearly 4 times the amount with 21 shops in 2014.
3. Bangkok airport customs officers seized half a ton of ivory on a flight from Kenya that was valued as 700,000 USD.
Illegal Wildlife Trading in East Africa

East Africa is one of the top regions for illegal wildlife trading in the world, which somewhat contradicted the fact that Kenya is also renamed for inventing the word Safari, and ushering the conservation of the “Big Five” animals, the lion, the buffalo, the rhinoceros, the elephant and the leopard. The famous Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) was one of the big success stories back in the 1980’s, when they were able to stop the dwindling numbers of elephant when they adopted a new system and appointed the elephant as their new KWS logo to add additional inspiration. However the wildlife service had been on a decline yet again with many KWS rangers actually getting involved and helping poachers and smugglers. This was mainly due to the poor working rates and unattractive monthly salary for a KWS ranger, which was a mere $160, barely anything compared to a middleman smuggling a kilogram of ivory out of the country who would earn over $2000. This clearly showed that wildlife rangers were distinctly underpaid, and weren’t adequately funded to effectively monitor wildlife and to prevent wildlife decimation.

Big Illegal Wildlife Trading Incidents and Results in East Africa:

1. June 2013, the Kenya Wildlife Service suspended 32 senior officers suspected to have helped and participated in poaching activities.
2. July 2013, David McNevin, a former US defense attaché, was caught with illegally smuggled ivory in his luggage during the baggage check in the national airport, he was subsequently only fined $350 and set free.
3. June 2014, 2 suspects of illegal wildlife trading and 2,152 kilograms of ivory were seized in Mombasa, the second largest city in Kenya.

Effects On Animals

Illegal wildlife trade directly affects animals, with people killing and poaching animal species for their skin and other animal parts. When people start poaching specific types of animals, they will not only harm that animal but will also influence the livelihood and survival of other animals in their food chain.

The animal food chain is one of the most important aspects in the living world. If a certain animal type is to go extinct, it will affect other species in the food chain, causing a ripple effect of destruction for animals. Food chains show what animal species primarily eats, which is usually other animal species. If a type of species becomes endangered or extinct, probably due to illegal wildlife trading, it will affect other animals above and below the food chain. Animals above this species will have less or no animals to eat, while animals below this species will not have their population controlled as much anymore, which results in a surplus of their number and will also cause the animal specie below them to get eaten more.

Here is a real example of how an endangered or extinct animal will affect its food chain:
Hawk – Snake – Grasshopper – Grass

If the snake becomes endangered or extinct through illegal wildlife trading in the food chain above, it will subsequently affect other species in the chain such as the hawk and the grasshopper. If there are not enough snakes, the hawk will not simply turn their attention to another animal specie as their primary source of food, instead they will fight for their share of the remaining snakes. From this and from their hunger, the hawk population will also slowly dwindle, causing them to be endangered as well. This certainly shows that when animal species starts to become endangered or extinct mainly through illegal wildlife trade or other means, in due course, it will affect other animals as well. Illegal wildlife trade will harm the balance of nature and create major disruption in the web of life.

Effects On Humans

Illegal wildlife trade not only affects animals, but can also affect the lives of many locals in countries where illegal wildlife trade is evident. Though we are regularly shielded from the reality of others, locals highly value the wildlife as they depend on them for food, comfort, and ingredients for their local traditional medicine, etc. Many locals entirely depend on the availability of wildlife resources that are being stolen and poached from them. As stated earlier on how illegal wildlife trade will affect animals, life is a delicately woven web, when one string or animal species becomes extinct, it causes a ripple effect that will alter the lives of every other specie in the world.

Major Parties Involved

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

The World Wildlife Fund is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that works on many issues to do with the conservation or restoration for different places or species in the environment. The majority of the work WWF have done about illegal wildlife trade has been in collaboration with another wildlife trade monitoring network, TRAFFIC. Providing public education and supporting regulations for illegal wildlife trade in the process. WWF has also advised other organizations such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), when dealing with the illegal wildlife trade of species.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

CITES is a treaty drafted in 1963 at a meeting of the International Union for Conservation of Nature to protect endangered animals and plants. The aim of this treaty is to make sure that trading wild animals and plants does not affect the survival of these species in the wild, preventing them from being endangered or later extinct.
TRAFFIC

TRAFFIC is a wildlife trade-monitoring network, which is famous for using its expertise to create awareness for urgent species trade issues. Since its inception back in 1976, TRAFFIC has specialized in the analysis of wildlife trade patterns, spreading awareness to governments and civilians, and providing key information and advice to different organizations to prevent illegal wildlife trading in the world.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

The International Union for Conservation of Nature is the world’s first global environment organization that mainly focuses on the conservation of nature and deploying solutions to challenges in the world. However recently, IUCN has started to run many projects to do with habitat and species conservation around the world, participating in many efforts to monitor and hinder illegal wildlife trade to protect endangered animals.

ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN)

ASEAN-WEN is a law enforcement network that runs in all 10 Southeast Asian countries. ASEAN-WEN works on three main things, setting up a law-enforcement network to combat illegal wildlife trading, create proactive responses when dealing with illegal wildlife trading, and finally to generate a place where these countries would be able to share valuable information on preventing illegal wildlife trades.

International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

The International Fund for Animal Welfare is an organization that aims to save animal populations and habitats all over the world.
Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>In an IUCN report, the number of endangered animals increased from 5,205 in 1996 to 7,266 animals in 2005.</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>23 tons of ivory seized in 2011 by 13 seizures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, over $30 Million worth of ivory was smuggled from Kenya to numerous countries in East Asia.</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>The Thailand Wildlife Conservation Office reported that 10,700 live animals, 1,348 carcasses and over 3,000 animal parts were seized.</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>A record number 1,020 rhinoceroses were killed in South Africa in 2014 for its horn and ivory, over 3 times the amount of rhinos slaughtered in 2010 (333 rhinos killed).</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>A rhino horn was sold for a record $65,000 in the black market in China, as it is a crucial ingredient in traditional Chinese and Vietnamese medicine.</td>
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<td>February 13th 2014</td>
<td>The London Conference: In 2014, 42 countries gathered to sign the Declaration on Illegal Wildlife Trade. From this declaration, governments secured their commitments to do with illegal wildlife trading. An example of a government securing their commitment would be Germany pledging 16.9 million Euros in an attempt to support wildlife conservation efforts in Cameroon.</td>
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Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

London Conference 2014

There have been a few attempts to resolve this huge issue with many conferences and seminars being hosted by numerous governments around the world. One such significant conference was the London Conference, where the leading nations of the world gathered to “help eradicate illegal wildlife trade and better protect the world’s most iconic species from the threat of extinction” The aim of this conference was to discuss this pressing issue and to convince global leaders to agree upon political commitments that have to be made to solve this issue. There were 3 main objectives during this conference, to tackle the law enforcement during crimes to do with illegal wildlife trading, reduce the demands of these wildlife parts, and to support communities that are affected by the poaching of local animal species.

Kenya Deploying Drones

Other than conferences and seminars to discuss on how to prevent this issue in the long term, many countries have started thinking about short-term ways to counteract with the poachers and smugglers of their countries wildlife. Kenya has started deploying 24-hour surveillance drones in all of their national parks in an
attempt to stop the poaching of elephants and rhinoceroses. This decision was made after a test run where a drone was placed in a single wildlife park. This test run proved successful, with poaching rates down by over 96% when the drone was monitoring the wildlife park. The $103m project, funded by the governments of Kenya, the United States of America, Netherlands, France and Canada, with also prove to be a fear-factor for poachers, being able to watch their every move and catch them before they harm any animals.

**Smartphone Application to Report Illegal Wildlife Trade**

The Taronga Conservation Society Australia, in partnership with TRAFFIC, have also taken the battle to civilians by developing a new smartphone application which would allow people to report on suspected illegal wildlife trade in Southeast Asia. Reports by users would then be analyzed to build data to understand which areas in the region need more enforcement resources.

**Possible Solutions**

There are many ways to address this problem and to prevent illegal wildlife trade from occurring. The following are some possible points of discussion during debate:

- Improving law enforcement with strict penalties for all countries in the world
- Creating global laws and penalties for all individuals to follow if they illegally trade animal, this can be done by creating a treaty to get many countries involved
- Eliminate corruption in Wildlife Service groups so they could effectively monitor wildlife and enforce laws
- Education to the public about illegal wildlife trade, implementing in school education about wildlife trading into the curriculum
- At the individual level, constantly raise awareness to stop the demand for exotic animal products. From this, the supply will eventually be reduced.
Bibliography


