



RISING TO THE CHALLENGE: TACKLING ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Illegal wildlife trade is a complex global challenge worth billions of dollars each year, and is one of the biggest threats to many of the world's most iconic species. When including timber and fisheries, illegal wildlife trade is reported to be the fourth largest global illegal trade after trafficking of narcotics, humans and counterfeit products.

Growing demand for wildlife products, increasing access to wildlife and improved global transport links are fuelling unsustainable trade and pushing many species towards extinction. For example:

- Elephant poaching has more than doubled since 2007. Tanzania alone lost 60% of its elephants – more than 85,000 animals – to poaching between 2009 and 2014.
- Poaching for trade in Asian pangolins is considered the main cause of estimated population declines of up to 80% in some species over the past 20 years.
- A minimum of 110 tigers have been seized annually across range states since 2000, and this represents only a proportion of the illegal trade. An estimated 3,800 tigers remain in the wild, and subspecies like the Sumatran tiger, which is thought to number fewer than 500 individuals, are perilously close to extinction.

The western black rhino, officially declared extinct in 2010 due to poaching fuelled by demand for its horn, shows that the threat of extinction from illegal trade is very real.

Despite dominating the headlines, elephants and rhinos are not the only species being wiped out at alarming rates. Geckos, hornbills, orchids, seahorses and many other species large and small are also being targeted.

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THE HUMAN COST

Illegal wildlife trade also carries a high human cost. Since 2003, more than a thousand rangers have been killed, 80% of them by poachers or armed militia groups. The scale of illegal wildlife trade also increases opportunities for transmission of infections from animals to humans, posing a serious threat to human life.

Wildlife crime depletes vital wildlife resources on which poor people depend and which are important for national development. For example, it is estimated that economic losses from reduced tourism in Africa due to elephant poaching total around US\$25 million per year.

Wildlife trafficking is increasingly recognised as a form of organised crime involving international criminal networks. As with other forms of high-value illicit trade, the threat of violence surrounding organised wildlife crime can undermine human rights, good governance and stability.



HOW IS FFI RESPONDING?

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) was founded over a century ago. Our work spans across more than 50 countries in Africa, Asia, Eurasia and the Americas, where we have been leading effective, on-the-ground responses to stem illegal wildlife trade for more than fifteen years.

Taking a practical, field-based approach on a range of key species – including elephant, rhino, tiger and saiga antelope – FFI focuses on securing wild populations and preventing poaching for illegal trade.

To achieve this, FFI is:

- Building capacity for effective enforcement and prosecution of wildlife crime, and improving inter-agency cooperation and information sharing.
- Working with the authorities, community leaders, wildlife consumers, policy-makers and corporations to prioritise and address wildlife crime.
- Engaging communities as active and motivated partners in species protection and law enforcement.
- Strengthening community rights and capacity to use, manage and benefit from wildlife, and mobilising communities to take action against poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

Our site-based focus and established networks of local partners allow us to maintain an up-to-date and nuanced understanding of local contexts, enabling us to tailor and adapt our strategies to tackle illegal wildlife trade and identify and respond to emerging markets for wildlife products.

Our focus on working through long-term strategic partnerships and developing local leadership helps to make our strategies to combat illegal wildlife trade locally relevant and sustainable.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Since 2002, FFI has supported the management of Mozambique's Niassa Reserve, and since 2012 has managed the nascent Chuilexi Conservancy. Niassa Reserve has been heavily impacted by poaching, with Chuilexi Conservancy at the fore of this threat, losing an

estimated 75% of its elephant population since 2006. Since creating conservancy-wide anti-poaching coverage, elephant poaching in Chuilexi has been reduced with only eleven illegally killed carcasses recorded in 2016.

- In 2004, FFI established one of Africa's leading conservancies for critically endangered rhinos: Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya – where the number of rhino calves born outweighed losses to poaching in 2016 thanks to anti-poaching ranger units, a canine defence force and the latest technology – provides critical security for the largest population of black rhinos (more than 100 animals) remaining in East Africa.
- FFI is a founding partner of the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) and also directly supports four of its 33 community conservancies across Kenya. In contrast to poaching trends, 2016 saw a reduction in elephant poaching and no reported rhino poaching across NRT conservancies. This is a result of NRT's dedicated community rangers, mobile rapid response teams, and effective partnerships with the authorities.
- In Sumatra's Kerinci Seblat National Park, FFI has worked with authorities and communities for over 15 years to pioneer approaches that are now highly regarded tiger protection strategies. Despite a dramatic spike in poaching for trade between 2012 and 2015, Sumatran tiger densities in the core of the park are stable thanks to this work.
- Since 2000, FFI has been working to reduce illegal hunting and trade of saiga antelope in the Ustyurt Plateau, which straddles the border of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. FFI has pioneered a sniffer dog programme, that has made important finds of saiga horn, and is scaling up this programme to deter and detect illegal wildlife trafficking.
- Since 2002, FFI has been working to stem poaching, illegal trade and consumption of marine turtles and their eggs on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua. Data indicates that more than 95% of Nicaragua's marine turtle nests are now protected at two of the three known leatherback turtle nesting beaches and two major nesting sites for hawksbill turtles thanks to conservation action.

SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK:

STEMMING TRAFFICKING IN SUMATRA

Sumatra's Kerinci Seblat National Park is home to 25% of remaining wild Sumatran tigers, estimated at fewer than 500 individuals, making it of global importance for tiger conservation.

Sumatran tigers are severely threatened by poaching for illegal trade of body parts and pelts to supply Asian markets. Between 2012 and 2015, FFI witnessed a dramatic spike in poaching threat due to increasing demand, soaring black market prices (more than 300%) and the involvement of organised wildlife trafficking syndicates.

COLLABORATIONS THAT WORK

Since 2000, FFI has worked in close partnership with Kerinci's park authorities and local communities to pioneer approaches that are now highly regarded tiger protection strategies. Central to this are the highly trained Tiger Protection and Conservation Units (TPCUs) led by national park rangers alongside rangers drawn from forest-edge communities.

This partnership stems poaching and illegal wildlife trade by:

- Addressing and reducing poaching threat through routine and intelligence-led forest patrols. Over the past 15 years, TPCUs have patrolled more than 23,000 km and removed almost 6,000 snares which indiscriminately trap tigers and other species.
- Investigations-led law enforcement and support for case preparation to ensure successful prosecution. The project has contributed to 55 successful prosecutions for wildlife crimes.

- Developing open and covert forest-edge community information networks to channel information about poaching threats to law enforcement agencies. This has increased snare detection by over 40%.
- Mitigating human-tiger conflicts to protect tigers and people.
- Working with the Indonesian Government to develop and implement multi-year, multi-stakeholder tiger conservation and population recovery plans and to scale up innovative law enforcement networks focused on stopping poaching and illegal trade of tigers.

FFI is now extending these strategies to strengthen intelligence-driven law enforcement for Sunda pangolins and helmeted hornbills.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Strengthening community rights and capacity to use, manage and benefit from wildlife can be a powerful force in motivating communities to take action against poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

In Kerinci's buffer zone, FFI is helping local people to gain the rights and responsibilities to sustainably manage their forests. This is being achieved through enabling communities to secure 35 year renewable Village and Customary Forest licences from the forest authorities. Over 700 km² of forest have been brought under community management in this way.



Credit: Dan Challenger



Credit: Mauro Pinto

SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK: SECURING CHUILEXI CONSERVANCY

Northern Mozambique's 42,000 km² Niassa Reserve harbours 40% of the country's estimated 9,605 elephants.

FFI has supported Niassa – and impoverished communities whose livelihoods depend on the reserve's natural resources – for 15 years. Working with local partner Sociedade para Gestão e Desenvolvimento da Reserva do Niassa (SGDRN) from 2002 to 2012, we made tremendous strides towards reversing declining wildlife populations after years of conservation neglect.

The end of SGDRN's management tenure at Niassa in 2012 coincided with an exponential rise in elephant poaching for ivory in Mozambique that claimed more than half of the country's elephant population in just five years. FFI took the strategic decision to secure a key area of the reserve at the forefront of the poaching threat and with the greatest wildlife densities. Chuilexi Conservancy – comprising three contiguous concessions of 5,868 km² and representing 14% of Niassa Reserve – was the result.

BUILDING BLOCKS

FFI's immediate priority in Chuilexi was to combat the poaching onslaught by establishing conservancy-wide anti-poaching coverage. Today, rangers effectively patrol Chuilexi thanks to a vehicle fleet, surveillance aircraft and nine airstrips, a state-of-the-art radio communications system, an extensive 750 km road network and six permanent ranger outposts.

This infrastructure enables Chuilexi's growing ranger force to carry out anti-poaching and law enforcement activities throughout the conservancy and in all seasons.

Outside Chuilexi, poaching continues to take a heavy toll on Niassa's wildlife; unprotected and empty neighbouring concessions are inexorably losing elephants. In contrast, ivory poaching within the conservancy has been reduced to a fraction of previous levels, with elephant casualties down to eleven recorded illegally killed carcasses in 2016.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

FFI is laying foundations for positive, long-term community engagement in Chuilexi by creating transparent institutions and incentives to protect the wildlife through social and economic benefits.

- Tourism enterprise in Chuilexi is increasing employment opportunities, especially for women, and generated over US\$50,000 of income across three communities in 2016.
- We are constructing and rehabilitating local primary schools, offering scholarships to support attendance at secondary school, and improving healthcare through the creation of a flying doctor scheme.
- The conservancy has installed a seven-kilometre electric fence to reduce human-wildlife conflict in a known hotspot.



SNAP SHOT OF OUR WORK: TACKLING SAIGA HORN TRAFFICKING

The saiga antelope has roamed the grassland steppes of Central Asia for millennia and is uniquely adapted to survive the region's weather extremes. However, the global population has declined dramatically from more than a million individuals in the early 1990s to fewer than 140,000 in 2016. This is primarily due to poaching for international trade in saiga horn (used in traditional Asian medicine), which is the greatest threat to the species' survival. Only male saiga have horns so poaching has skewed the sex ratio and lowered the saiga's reproductive rate, reducing their capacity to withstand environmental shocks or disease.

The saiga is in imminent danger of extinction but, should poaching abate, the species is incredibly productive and has enormous potential to recover.

FFI and local conservation authorities believe that increasing detection is key to disrupting saiga horn trade networks. Seizures of horn are rare but substantial. For example, between 2012 and 2016 just three seizures at the Kazakh and Kyrgyz borders with China yielded 11,800 horns valued at an estimated US\$11 million.

Anti-poaching capacity and enforcement must also be strengthened. Currently, government anti-poaching teams are spread thinly across vast territories and lack coordination with limited information exchange between enforcement agencies. This results in rangers regularly being out-manoeuvred by better resourced and organised illegal trade networks. Penalties for those involved are low or unenforced.

EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT

FFI is establishing effective enforcement to halt further decline of saiga in Kazakhstan, home to 85% of the global population, and specifically the Ustyurt population, which fell to fewer than 2,000 animals in 2016. We are:

- Strengthening anti-poaching capacity and effectiveness through support to state rangers and the creation of an independent enforcement team.
- Increasing risk of detection at borders through strategic deployment of highly trained sniffer dog teams and stronger border capacity.
- Promoting transboundary cooperation and communication between enforcement agencies.
- Engaging authorities and prosecutors to prioritise wildlife crime and successfully prosecute the perpetrators.

SNIFFER DOG SUCCESS

In 2014 FFI and partners deployed four sniffer dog teams in Kazakhstan to find trafficked saiga horns with the customs service.

“ Kazakhstan's use of dogs to detect the smuggling of wildlife was a first in Central Asia, and was also the first time this method had been used for saiga anywhere in the world. If the programme is extended, the dogs can play an important role in stopping the export of not only saiga horn, but also saker falcons, tortoises, and snow leopard skins.” *Head of the Regional Dog Training Centre.*

The sniffer dogs have made important finds of saiga horn – the first in many years – and the Kazakhstan Customs Service has reported signs that this is deterring wildlife trafficking. Following this success, we are deploying a further eight sniffer dog teams to police Kazakhstan's borders in 2017.

OUR ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE INITIATIVE: OBJECTIVES 2017–2020

■ STEMMING SUPPLY

We are strengthening our responses to poaching and illegal trade at our existing project sites and expanding to new priority sites and species, including those receiving less conservation attention. For example, FFI is:

- Developing strategies to address poaching and illegal trafficking in Ulu Masen, Sumatra, and the Tanintharyi-Lenya Forest Corridor in Myanmar.
- Extending law enforcement capacity in Kerinci Seblat National Park in Sumatra to combat trade in helmeted hornbills and pangolins.
- Supporting partners in the Caribbean to prevent over-exploitation of endemic island geckos and iguanas for the pet trade.
- Incorporating saker falcon and steppe tortoise into existing actions to address illegal trade in saiga antelope.

■ INFLUENCING DECISION-MAKING OF CORPORATIONS, POLICYMAKERS AND CONSUMERS

We are working to reduce the impacts of corporate operations on illegal wildlife trade, reduce demand for products from target species, and strengthen policy for the protection of species threatened by unsustainable trade. For example, FFI is:

- Strengthening national legislation and its implementation to address ivory trade in Cambodia.
- Building on our existing partnerships with the extractive industry to incorporate safeguards to reduce the impact of associated infrastructure development illegal trade in wildlife.
- Developing behaviour change strategies that target consumers of marine turtle eggs and shell in Nicaragua.

■ DEVELOPING ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS TO LEAD INNOVATIVE ACTION

We are exploring innovative technologies and financing mechanisms, and developing organisational and individual capacity to address the challenge of illegal wildlife trade more effectively. For example, FFI is:

- Hosting WildLabs, a multi-partner initiative focused on delivering technology-enabled solutions to conservation challenges, including wildlife crime.
- Assessing the feasibility of outcomes-based financing to ensure sustainable funding for critical conservation areas, using rhinos as an initial focus.
- Supervising students of the FFI-supported MPhil in Conservation Leadership at the University of Cambridge to undertake research placements focused on improving responses to illegal wildlife trafficking.

The challenge of illegal wildlife trade is vast, global, complex and growing. It is crucial that we invest further to maintain and build on our successes so far.

