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WILDLIFE CRIME REPORTING 101



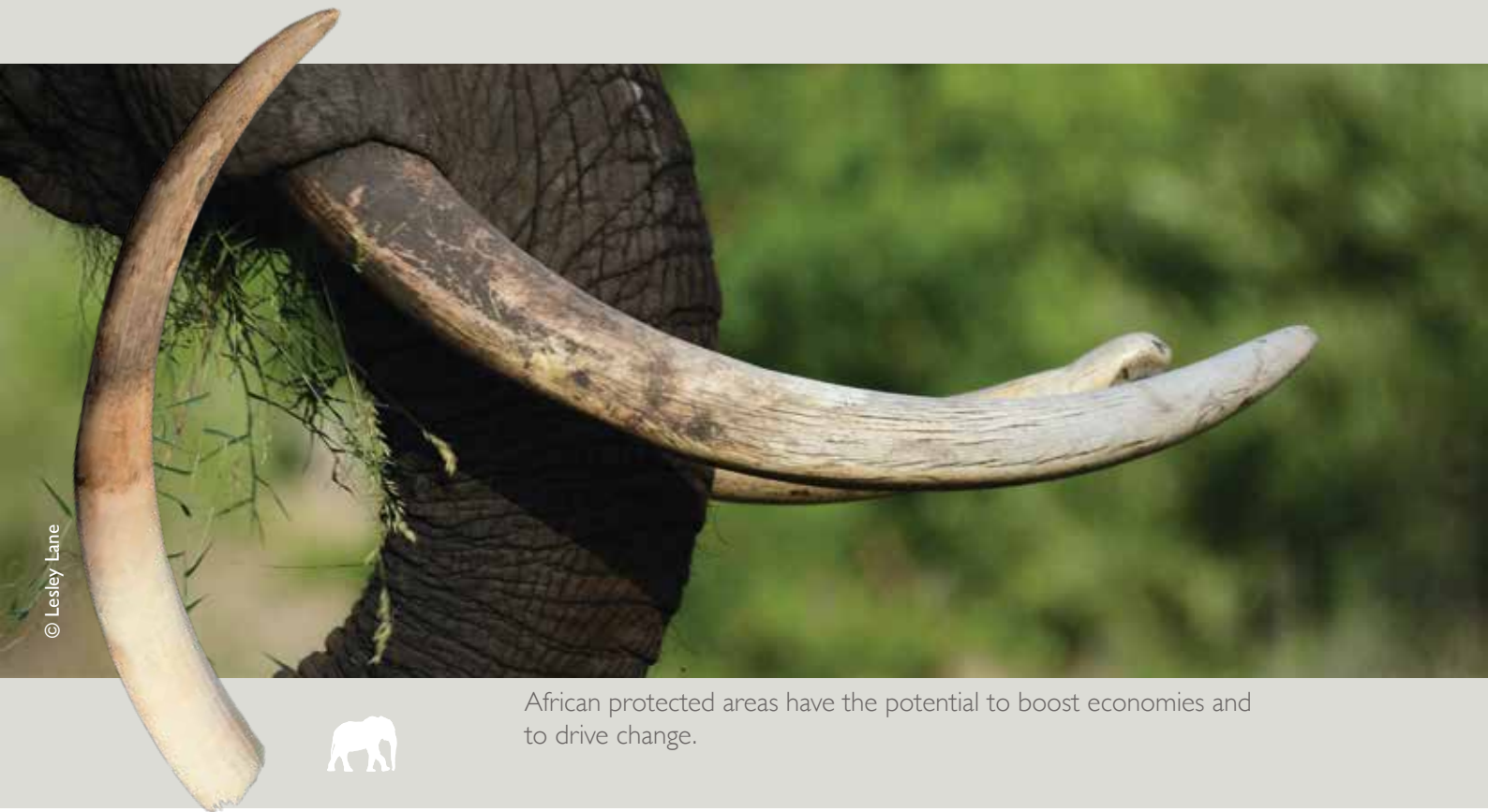


© Paola Bouley - Gorongosa National Park

Protecting pangolin, the most trafficked wildlife species. Gorongosa National Park established Mozambique's first pangolin rescue facility.

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African protected areas have the potential to boost economies and to drive change.



“Unfortunately, wildlife crime is currently a lucrative form of organized crime, comparable to that of drug and weapons trafficking. It is estimated to be worth some US\$23 billion per year.”

Purpose

This handbook is intended to act as a starting point for those journalists and other members of the media who have an interest in reporting on wildlife crime.

The aim is to create a deeper appreciation of the complexity of wildlife crime and the sophistication of wildlife crime syndicates and networks, offering insight to those reporting on a wildlife crime incident, or wanting to produce a story that dives deeper into the drivers or impact of wildlife crime. Additional resources are included at the end of the handbook for those who wish to learn more than this introductory text can offer.

An Introduction to Wildlife Crime

Wildlife crime is a multi-billion-dollar illicit business that is decimating Africa's iconic wildlife species and undermining the economic prosperity and sustainable development of countries and communities throughout southern Africa. It threatens the region's natural capital and undermines economic gains from legal nature-based enterprises such as ecotourism. Wildlife crime also threatens social stability and cohesion as it robs citizens of their cultural and natural heritage, while its organized criminal networks threaten regional peace and security.

The poaching, trafficking, and selling of Africa's protected wildlife is a problem that has continued to grow despite global efforts to curb the demand and supply of illegal animal products. Unfortunately, wildlife crime is currently a lucrative form of organized crime, comparable to that of drug and weapons trafficking. Wildlife crime crosses borders and can leave devastating effects on the environment, local communities, and regional security. Ultimately, wildlife crime undermines African development and needlessly exploits the most vulnerable.

One of the most heavily publicized approaches to tackling wildlife crime focuses on militant anti-poaching initiatives that aim to eliminate the supply of illegal animal products. However, despite the best efforts of anti-poaching initiatives, this approach has led to a significant increase in violence between poachers and



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Crop protection strategies such as beehive fences reduce human-wildlife conflict and the potential for associated wildlife crime around Gorongosa National Park.



rangers. As poachers become more heavily armed and aggressive with their methods, rangers have had to adapt to meet those threats. This has caused an arms race between poachers and rangers.

These anti-poaching initiatives have enjoyed some success in bringing poachers to justice, but this approach alone cannot end the entire illegal wildlife trade. Dismantling the criminal networks that facilitate wildlife crime requires a lot of dedicated resources and effort. Sadly, law enforcement officers, especially those who are responsible for border control, have not been supported well enough to make a significant impact on the supply of illegal wildlife products. While a lack of logistical resources and adequate training hampers efforts to fight wildlife crime, corruption across the ranks plays a critical part in maintaining the flow of illegal goods. Corruption can be considered one of the strongest driving factors allowing wildlife crime to increase since it rots away the ability of law enforcement to effect lasting change. Weak law enforcement not only plays a significant role in creating and maintaining wildlife crime networks, but it also fails the communities and legal markets it is meant to protect.

Many countries and organizations have set plans in motion to address wildlife crime and the networks that allow it to flourish unchallenged, such as strengthening legislation and policies or creating specialized law enforcement units. Since these transnational organized criminal networks are so quick to adapt, it is essential that law enforcement efforts evolve as well in order to meet the threat.

Wildlife crime poses a serious threat to the wellbeing of entire ecosystems and communities. Ultimately, the only way to make a meaningful impact on the illegal wildlife trade is to leverage the power, knowledge and experience of border control, law enforcement officials, conservation groups, and policymakers. Co-ordinated international partnerships are essential for building capacity and sharing crucial information.

Though iconic species such as elephants and rhinos receive the most attention, the illegal wildlife trade is much more extensive, including a variety of birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, mammals, invertebrates, and plants. Wild animals and

“If a herd of elephants is regularly trampling your crops and endangering your children, efforts aimed at protecting elephants might not have much appeal.”



© Lesley Lane



Though iconic species such as elephants and rhinos receive the most attention, the illegal wildlife trade is much more extensive, including a variety of birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, mammals, invertebrates, and plants.

“Co-ordinated international partnerships are essential for building capacity and sharing crucial information.”

plants are poached and trafficked for a variety of commercial purposes, including the illegal pet trade, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), trophies, collections, accessories, and curios, such as carvings made from ivory or rosewood.

The Impacts of Wildlife Crime

Ecological impacts

The ecosystems that our livelihoods depend on are delicate and complex. In upsetting the balance by diminishing or removing populations – such as elephants, pangolins, abalone, etc. – we risk introducing a variety of far-reaching ecological problems, many of which we cannot even anticipate or plan for. Some of these represent keystone species, which are species that have a disproportionately large impact on the environment relative to the size of their population. Elephants, for example, play important roles in dispersing seeds, trampling ground to create natural fire breaks, and creating water access for smaller animals through their digging. Their loss would have a cascading effect on the environment, other animal species, and human populations.

In another example, throughout many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, pangolins eat ants and termites, acting as a natural check to keep these populations from multiplying out of control.

Similarly, abalone feed on kelp, acting as a natural ‘predator’ of the kelp forests that sprinkle the southern African coastline. Kelp forests act as a barrier for the shoreline, dampening the impact of tidal swells and limiting the impact of erosion by ‘fencing in’ sand. If abalone were removed from this marine ecosystem, the entire system could be thrown out of balance, altering natural processes of tides and erosion.

The knock-on effects of biodiversity loss are complex, occur in stages, and are not always clearly visible. In the long run, the rapid animal loss we are currently witnessing will likely impact land habitability, food production, and water supplies in significant ways.



© Chris Kruger - Deposit Photo

Dehorning rhino dramatically reduces the incentive to poach. The risk remains high but the potential yield is considerably less.



Political impacts

Illicit economies, such as the drug or illegal wildlife trade, contribute to corruption while also undermining democracy and the rule of law.

Often-times, transnational crime syndicates are involved in multiple illegal economies: drugs, arms smuggling, human trafficking, and wildlife trafficking. Additionally, syndicates may pay poachers in drugs – such as methaqualone or ‘mandrax’ – rather than cash. In this way, illicit economies become mutually reinforcing.

The skills needed to traffic contraband, unfortunately, are incredibly transferable. However, it’s also important to keep in mind that the success of these cartels depends upon corruption at every step along the way.

By stealing a country’s natural resources and illegally trafficking contraband across borders, national security and autonomy are threatened by outside actors seeking to make financial gains. At the same time, the expansion of illicit activity spreads law enforcement, prosecutorial, and judicial resources thinly – making the entire system function less effectively.

For many would-be poachers and traffickers, the perceived benefits of engaging in wildlife crime currently outweigh the potential costs. This is incredibly problematic, and we need to ensure that this is reversed, so that the costs of engaging in the illegal wildlife trade far outweigh the potential rewards. The only way to do this is to ensure that arrests and convictions are swift and that sentences are severe enough to not only reflect the gravity of the crime, but to also deter others from participating.

Economic impacts

Two significant economic impacts of the illegal wildlife trade are:

Loss of wildlife tourism

Wildlife tourism is a significant economic contributor to countries throughout

“For many would-be poachers and traffickers, the perceived benefits of engaging in wildlife crime currently outweigh the potential costs.”



Pangolins are now the world's most trafficked mammal.

“In the long run, the rapid animal loss we are currently witnessing will likely impact land habitability, food production, and water supplies in significant ways.”

the SADC region. The impact of tourism is much further reaching than may be immediately apparent, as it supports and creates jobs in numerous sectors from hospitality, to restaurants, to transportation; and it encourages international investment (for example, through international hotel chains, rental car companies, airlines, etc.). This is all in addition to the money tourists spend directly on lodging, food, and gifts.

While southern Africa boasts many natural wonders, from Victoria Falls to Table Mountain, the majority of international tourists come to see our wildlife. This wildlife represents an important and irreplaceable part of our national heritage, which is under threat not from internal pressures, but from foreign market demands.

Loss of revenue due to tax evasion

Every wildlife crime involves financial crimes. As is the case in all illicit economies, financial transactions take place ‘under the table’ and often include bribes and various payoffs at every step.

Because the financial transactions are concealed to avoid detection, the profits from wildlife crime remain undeclared and untaxed. This strips important financial resources from southern Africa and transfers them to illicit or foreign markets. Capital that could otherwise be invested in infrastructure, development, and education never makes its way into state coffers, holding back both our countries and our people.

Understanding the Illegal Wildlife Trade Value Chain

One way to look at the complexity of the illegal wildlife trade is to use the concept of a value chain. While we often focus on the moment of poaching when discussing wildlife crime, it is important to recognize that it is just one link in a much larger chain that makes up the illegal wildlife trade. Criminal networks are highly adaptive, and each step in the chain is integral to the functioning of the overall system. The links in this chain could include:



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Following the massive reduction in Asian pangolin numbers, wildlife traffickers have shifted their focus to Africa. Gorongosa National Park has initiated a research and monitoring program.



Transnational crime syndicates

As discussed above, the illegal wildlife trade is operated – at the highest levels – by transnational crime syndicates. These are complex, dispersed networks with clearly defined hierarchies and roles. To end wildlife crime, those in the top tiers of these hierarchies need to be identified and brought to justice. While only the bottom tiers are directly involved in the actual poaching and trafficking (and are, as a result, most often the target for arrests), those in the middle and at the top can still be implicated in a variety of national and international crimes including money laundering, tax evasion, racketeering, and organized crime.

“To end wildlife crime, those in the top tiers of these hierarchies need to be identified and brought to justice.”

Poachers

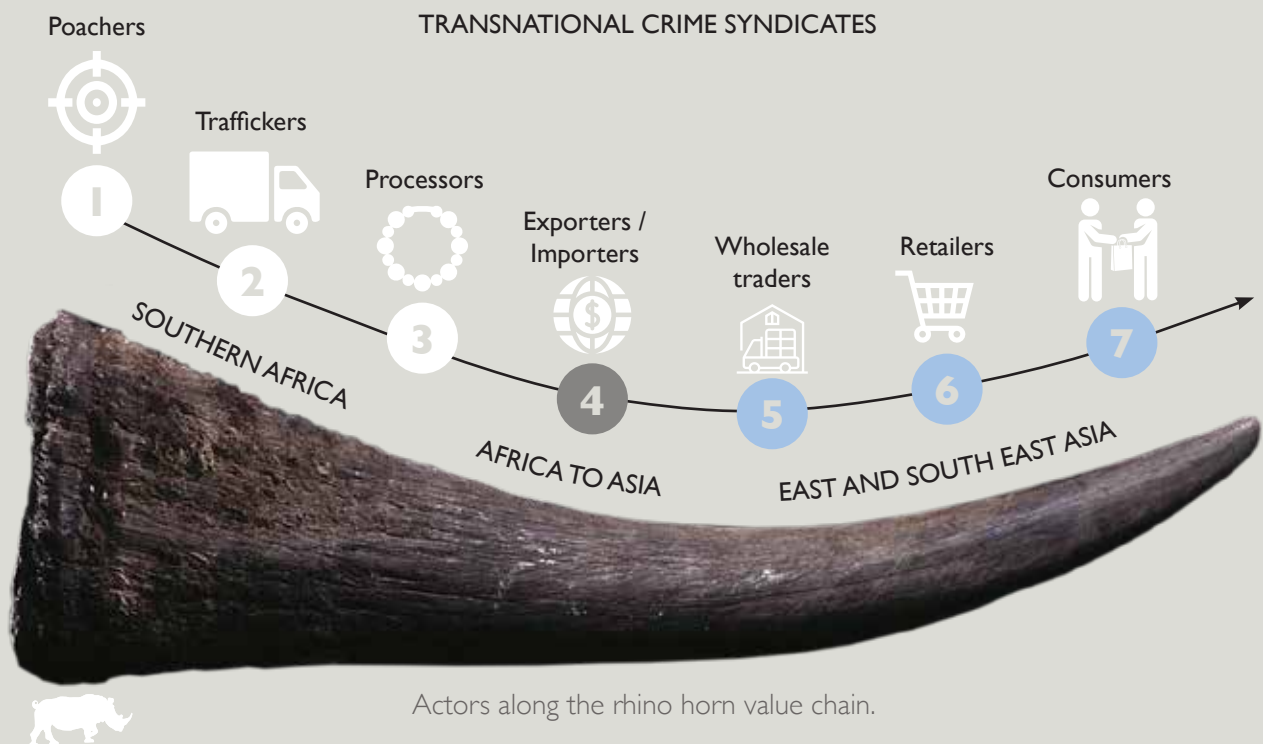
The popular representation of poachers is that they are pulled from impoverished local communities and commit crimes out of economic desperation.

This is usually not the case. Members can include former scouts, soldiers, and rangers, who are skilled in both tracking and handling weapons. One large poaching gang, which operated in Niassa Reserve in Mozambique, even included a member who was dedicated to monitoring and evaluation. He didn't participate in the killings but kept detailed records of the gangs' movements and kills.

Some smaller animals, such as pangolins – the world's most trafficked mammal – are generally victims of opportunity rather than organized poaching rings. The shy pangolin's natural defense mechanism, curling up in a ball, works against it as poachers can easily grab and conceal the animal in bags or cars. Because this is often a crime of opportunity, many pangolin poachers are caught when trying to sell their catch.

Traffickers

Like poachers, traffickers are highly skilled and resourced. They are experts at concealing illegal animal products and finding ways across borders and checkpoints without eliciting attention.



Actors along the rhino horn value chain.

“The chemical make-up of rhino horn is the same as human fingernails, so it hardly needs stating that the claims of its medicinal properties are entirely without scientific basis.”

Because these skills are transferable to all kinds of trafficking, they are often involved in other illegal activities, including drug, human, and arms smuggling.

Processors

As the detection of illegal animal parts, such as elephant tusks, rhino horns, and pangolin scales, has become more effective in recent years, trafficking networks have begun setting up processing plants to conceal the items before they leave the continent. This can include processing rhino horn into jewelry, or hiding chunks of ivory in candy bar packaging.

Consumers

The demand for illegal wildlife products is worldwide – with places like the US and Europe being popular destinations for the illegal pet trade. However, the majority of the demand comes from East and Southeast Asia, where animals have historically been prized for their commercial rather than intrinsic values. Part of this demand comes from Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), which is a bit misleading as it is practiced throughout many parts of Asia and amongst Asian communities worldwide, not just in China.

Rhino horn is a primary example of this, as it is believed to have a variety of medicinal uses, including treating cancer and impotence. The chemical make-up of rhino horn is the same as human fingernails, so it hardly needs stating that the claims of its medicinal properties are entirely without scientific basis. Though China outlawed the use of rhino horn in TCM, it is incredibly popular in Vietnam, both amongst the native Vietnamese and visiting Chinese tourists. In fact, today Vietnam has replaced China as the world’s largest importer of Africa’s rhino horn.

Similarly, pangolin scales are used in TCM, and although China has restricted its use, it has not been outlawed. The dwindling Asian pangolin populations have created demand for pangolins stolen from elsewhere, particularly from Africa, where all four African species are now critically endangered.



Rhino horn processed into jewelry and trinkets. Operation-in-Nhi-Khe, Vietnam. Courtesy of Wildlife Justice

Subsistence versus commercial wildlife crimes

A key distinction in the drivers for wildlife crime is whether the crime is committed for subsistence reasons versus for commercial reasons. Typically, wildlife crime committed for commercial reasons is far more complex, and encompasses an illicit value chain that includes activities such as the illegal killing or harvesting (poaching), smuggling, possessing, and trading of fauna and flora. This also includes the various forms of corruption, money laundering and marketing of the illicit goods that are necessary for these transactions to occur.

Subsistence wildlife crime value chains are typically short. Wildlife is poached in a protected area using means that are easy to obtain and inexpensive (e.g. wire or cable snares, bow and arrows, dogs and spears, homemade firearms, or sometimes real firearms). The wildlife is then moved to a local home or village, where it may be immediately consumed, shared with neighbors, or sold or exchanged locally. Sometimes, for example when there are seasonal influxes of wildlife, the meat may be smoked for storage.

Despite this value chain being short and for local consumption, it can still have a large effect on a species or the functioning of an ecosystem. For example, a study in 2002 on the western boundary of the Serengeti National Park, estimated that between 50,000-60,000 people participated in hunting in the surrounding protected areas, and as many as 5,000 young men derived their primary income from bushmeat hunting. These are significant numbers which suggest that traditional economic development activities in the area have been unsuccessful, and are also cause for alarm about the impact that this would have on the species being hunted, and thus on the functioning of this unique and important ecosystem.

Illegal versus legal markets

Some illegally traded wildlife products feed primarily into illegal end-user markets (e.g. ivory and rhino horn), whilst others are retailed through legal outlets, despite an illegal origin (e.g. rosewood and abalone).

“Trafficking networks have begun setting up processing plants to conceal the items before they leave the continent.”



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Lions, both captive bred and wild, have become target species both for Asian medicines and illegal trophy hunting.

“Corruption can be considered one of the strongest driving factors allowing wildlife crime to increase since it rots away the ability of law enforcement to effect lasting change”

Case studies show that when illegally traded wildlife products are introduced into legal commercial value chains, then criminals have access to a much larger source of demand than is available on the black market alone. There are some important anomalies to take into account to understand the complex relationships between legal and illegal trade in wildlife:

- Where there is no international regulation: There are millions of species for which international trade is not yet regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), and sometimes these species are legally traded internationally, despite being harvested or exported contrary to national law (e.g. plants for the orchid or cycad trade, and reptiles and fish for the pet or aquarium trades)
- With fraudulent paperwork: Protected species can be legally traded internationally if accompanied by the correct paperwork, however, permits acquired through forgery, fraud or corruption are used to trade wildlife, and permits are illegally re-used
- From the wild source: Informal and illegal harvesting practices can allow internationally protected wildlife to be illegally introduced into commercial value chains before being legally exported (e.g. wild plants, wild birds and lion bones)
- Farm laundering: Some wildlife farms, captive breeding operations or even zoos may play a role in laundering illegally acquired wildlife.

Categorizing the wildlife crime chain

According to the SADC law enforcement and anti-poaching strategy, the internationally accepted standard to categorize the wildlife crime chain is as follows:



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Outreach education programs involving communities in wildlife management can improve perceptions of, and stimulate empathy for wildlife and its potential contribution to development.



LEVEL	1	These are crimes committed at the field level where a scout/ ranger force trained in paramilitary tactics to patrol protected areas is used to apprehend poachers. Individuals or groups of poachers apprehended are then prosecuted and convicted in terms of the governing wildlife laws and regulations.
LEVEL	2	Refers to incidents where poachers are not apprehended in the field, and the wildlife products are in most cases removed from the protected areas. The products are then hoarded, stored or concealed by local receivers and/or couriers before progressing to the next stage of the crime chain.
LEVEL	3	This refers to the transportation of illegal products by national/ transnational couriers. In the case of high value products (e.g., ivory, rhino horn, leopard skins etc.).
LEVEL	4	These high value illegal products are generally collected until sufficient quantities can be packed in suitable containers for export. All this requires higher levels of organization, financial backing and often protection by corrupt officials at various levels.
LEVEL	5	The final link in the chain is at the receiving end to which the illegal products are destined. At this level importers, traders and consumers constitute syndicated criminals.

“Some wildlife farms’, captive breeding operations, or even zoos may play a role in laundering illegally acquired wildlife.”

Looking at wildlife crime through the lens of value chains helps us break down the complexity of all of the individual acts involved in transnational organized wildlife crime. What may seem like a small and individual act is often part of a complex web of organized criminal activity.

How the Media Currently Reports on Wildlife Crime

The media has a crucial role to play in the collective effort to reduce wildlife crime through how it reports on this issue. The words, images, and angles chosen all have an effect, which can be positive or negative. In order to understand how to write effectively about wildlife crime, it is important to first take a step back and assess how the media currently reports on the topic. What is emphasized and what is left out? Even more significantly, what assumptions underlie the decisions that journalists make in reporting about wildlife crime?



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Illegally harvested, or 'legal' with questionable permits, timber is the most valuable single resource. Unsustainable harvesting transforms ecosystems and impacts myriad species.

“What may seem like a small and individual act is often part of a complex web of organized criminal activity.”

Despite our best efforts at objectivity, every aspect of our reporting is colored and shaped by who we are and the various cultural assumptions we carry. The language we choose to write in and the vocabulary and metaphors we invoke speaks to specific audiences. The way that we frame stories – whether they be about conservation, poachers, anti-poaching efforts, trafficking networks, local communities, etc. – reflects specific historical, cultural, and social realities that we may not even be consciously aware of.

Globally, the media industry is under pressure and faces harsh economic realities that often result in fewer resources in general, and specifically when it comes to specialized reporting on issues such as wildlife crime. Many newsrooms end up relying on wire copy, and often only stories that have national appeal will make the cut. This is also not helped by the fact that environmental journalism is one of the most dangerous areas of reporting.

These pressures can result in reporting that is sensationalized, lacking diverse perspectives on this complex topic, or focused on events without providing context. More information on how the media currently reports on wildlife crime can be found in Christel Antonites' [Analysis of Reports on Illegal Wildlife Trade](#).

Considerations When Reporting on Wildlife Crime

One of the most important things to keep in mind when writing about wildlife crime is that the actual event of poaching occupies only a small moment in a much longer narrative. Thus, by focusing primarily on the poaching itself, we risk losing sight of the trafficking, which involves many more individuals and significantly more time and energy.

By framing efforts at combatting wildlife crime as a “war on poaching” we disregard the much larger web of traffickers that both drives and makes profitable the large-scale killing of wildlife.

In addition to shifting our focus by zooming out to look at trafficking networks, there are also several lessons we can learn from the fields of criminology and behavioral economics that will help us better understand how to approach and write about wildlife crime.



© Andrey Popov - Deposit Photo

Propagation of indigenous trees, sometimes in association with cash crops such as coffee, may help restore overutilised timber resources.



Lessons from Criminology

- Poverty alone does not cause crime – for example, the poorest countries in the world do not have the highest crime rates. Rather, crime increases when there is extreme socio-economic inequality and an observable mismatch between cultural goals and available opportunities. In these situations, we find a condition known as anomie, wherein society provides little moral guidance to individuals and, as a result, social bonds between individuals and their community break down, resulting in increased violence and law breaking.
- Contested illegality – a behavior, defined as illegal by the state or international bodies, which may not be viewed as unacceptable by all members of society. For example, poor rural communities may have a very different relationship with and perspective on wildlife conflict than someone who lives in relative affluence in urban settings. At the end of the day, the poorest bear the biggest consequences of living with wildlife. If a herd of elephants is regularly trampling your crops and endangering your children, efforts aimed at protecting elephants might not have much appeal. In fact, they could even be perceived as placing the rights of animals above your rights as a person. These differing perspectives can lead to conflicting ideas around the legitimacy of killing wildlife.
- Training and messaging meant to deter participation in wildlife crime are usually based on Rational Choice Theory. This is the theory that people are inclined to make rational decisions once they have weighed the costs and benefits. However, Rational Choice Theory does not address or take into account lack of opportunity, nor emotional and social needs. On a rational level removed from other contexts and considerations, an individual might choose not to engage in poaching. However, if that person is disillusioned by unfulfilled promises of economic opportunity and under immense external pressure to financially support their family, their decisions might look very different. Therefore, deterrence messaging needs to be reframed to address the contexts that actually provoke participation in wildlife crime rather than in universal or surface-level appeals to reason.

“About 80% of the region’s [southern Africa] population relies on medicinal plants for its primary health care needs.”



© Lesley Lane



Throughout their range leopards are in rapid decline and the species is now considered vulnerable to extinction. There are no reliable estimates of numbers in the wild.

“Differing perspectives can lead to conflicting ideas around the legitimacy of killing wildlife.”

Lessons from Behavioral Economics

- Promoting awareness and concern does not guarantee behavior change – we may all know that eating nutritious food and exercising is good for us, but that knowledge alone doesn’t always translate into healthier or more active lifestyles. Instead, people respond well to clear, simple rewards. For example, a medical aid company in South Africa offers a free coffee or smoothie every week to people who achieve their exercise goals (through a points system). This is an example of a clear and simple incentive that can affect behavioral change through the promise of a small reward.
- Incentivizing behavior – for incentives to work, there needs to be a direct link between the behavior and the reward, rewards need be delivered regularly (not as a once off or in the distant future), and they should be given for a positive action rather than the absence of a negative action. In the case of wildlife crime, this could mean reporting instances of wildlife crime rather than not taking part in it.
- Nudge theory – developed by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, who describe a nudge as follows: ‘A nudge, as we will use the term, is any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people’s behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. To count as a mere nudge, the intervention must be easy and cheap to avoid. Nudges are not mandates. Putting fruit at eye level counts as a nudge. Banning junk food does not.’ (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008, p 6). The idea behind this is that people respond more favorably to positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions (‘nudges’) than to being told what to do or what not to do.
- Crime prevention – to deter crime effectively, justice systems need to be perceived as swift, fair, and certain, rather than slow, uncertain, and arbitrary. Corruption destroys confidence in swift, fair, and certain justice.

Putting all of this together, we can begin to understand not only what is enabling illegal wildlife trade, but also how we can deter it more effectively by incorporating concepts from criminology and behavioral psychology.



© G.W. Jones - Panthera

Leaders of the Shembe Church worked with Panthera, the global wild cat conservation organization, to create synthetic leopard fur capes that help preserve leopards in southern Africa. The Furs for Life program has also been replicated with the Lozi people of Zambia.



From criminology, we can appreciate the need to look at the larger contexts that drive participation in wildlife crime. We can do this by taking diverse perspectives into account and trying to understand the situation through the lens of local communities. Once we've taken the contexts and perspectives of local communities into account, we can establish more effective ways to talk about and combat wildlife crime by incorporating what we learned from behavioral psychology to focus on encouraging community-based natural resource management.

This would include aligning community incentives with conservation incentives through tangible benefits/rewards and 'nudging' people towards conservation rather than forcing it upon them.

Additionally, by emphasizing the need for policy and legal frameworks that actively discourage corruption and encourage swift and fair justice, involvement in wildlife crime can shift from something that is viewed as relatively low-risk and high-reward to something that presents a high-risk with little potential reward.

To contribute to this as journalists, it's important that you:

- Question/unpack the assumptions: poaching vs trafficking
- Uncover the complexities behind every story
- Make conservation a broader issue – focus less on poaching, more on sustainable resource use
- Find the deeper connections between governance, corruption, and other organized crimes.

One of the most significant roles the media can play in combatting wildlife crime is in actively reframing local communities as allies and change agents.

Remember: you choose whose story you tell. To engage local communities in the narrative effectively, it's important to:

- Frame your story from the community perspective
- Emphasize local communities' lived realities and role in conservation
- Make efforts to counter stereotypes and challenge common misperceptions
- Include a broad range of sources with diverse perspective.

“For incentives to work, there needs to be a direct link between the behavior and the reward, Rewards need be delivered regularly.”



The black-cheeked lovebird is endemic to Zambia and widely sought after.

“Wildlife crime can shift from something that is viewed as relatively low-risk and high-reward to something that presents a high-risk with little potential reward.”

Wildlife Crime Reporting in Action

There are many examples of excellent reporting when it comes to wildlife crime. While we cannot include them all in this handbook, below are a few examples that look to address some of the issues highlighted above:

[The Underworld of Abalone – Kimon de Greef](#)

[Africa’s pangolins will be extinct in 20 years if urgent action is not taken](#)

– Sheree Bega

[Wildlife Crime: Why do local communities poach? - Annette Hübschle-Finch](#)

Resources

[Wildlife Legislation in Sub-Saharan Africa: Criminal Offences](#)

[Communication on rhino poaching: Precautionary lessons about backfires and boomerangs – Ian Glenn, Sam Ferreira, and Danie Pienaar](#)

[eVukaLearn journalists course expression of interest](#)

[Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism](#)

[#WildEye in Europe](#)

[#WildEye Asia](#)

[Rhino Court Cases tracker](#)

[PoachTracker](#)

Glossary of Useful Terms

CITES	The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, known as CITES, provides a framework to protect and regulate international trade in certain species. It does not define wildlife crime, but strongly influences national legislation, and provides a means for cooperation against trafficking. CITES is important because it allows countries to reciprocally protect each other's species according to a common set of rules. Whilst CITES is a trade agreement, rather than a vehicle of international criminal law, it defines the rules that wildlife traffickers seek to get around, and it provides a list of species that the international community has agreed to protect globally. Finally, CITES has a strong compliance mechanism in that non-compliant parties may be excluded from legal trade.
Illicit value chain	The illicit value chain encompasses the domestic and global set of activities (source, transit and market) in which criminal syndicates or criminal enterprises (including systems of functional or business specialties and roles) operate to traffic contraband products. The illicit value chain includes all activities related to the criminal enterprise, comprising supply, logistics, distribution, marketing and the sale of illicit or contraband products in an illicit market. (South Africa's National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking)
Illicit wildlife value chain	The illicit wildlife trade encompasses the illegal value chain of wildlife crime including activities such as the illegal killing or harvesting (poaching), smuggling, possessing, and trading of fauna and flora. This definition also includes the various forms of corruption, money laundering and marketing of the illicit goods that are necessary for these transactions to occur; (South Africa's National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking)
Poaching or illegal harvesting	Poaching refers to the illegal hunting or capturing of wild animals. In southern Africa there are many types of poaching, which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Subsistence bushmeat poaching for household consumption, typically using wire or cable snares, traditional weapons (e.g., bow and arrow, spears) or firearms■ Commercial bushmeat poaching for sale to markets, typically using long snare-lines or firearms■ Capturing live animals for the pet or aquarium trade (e.g., snakes, lizards, birds, cichlid fish from the Rift Valley lakes)■ Harvesting high value marine species (e.g., abalone, sharks for the shark-fin trade)■ Illegally killing individual animals for high-value wildlife products (e.g., rhinos for their horn, elephants for ivory, pangolins for scales, lions for teeth and claws).
Wildlife trafficking	Wildlife trafficking is the catch-all description that we use to describe all steps involved in moving the wildlife product from where it was poached or illegally harvested to the market where it reaches the end-user. This includes smuggling, storage, paying for illegal acts, marketing and selling illicit goods, corruption, and money laundering. These are typically the specialized criminal acts undertaken by organized criminals.