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against
environmental
crime

Illegal wildlife trade online

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TRAFFIC

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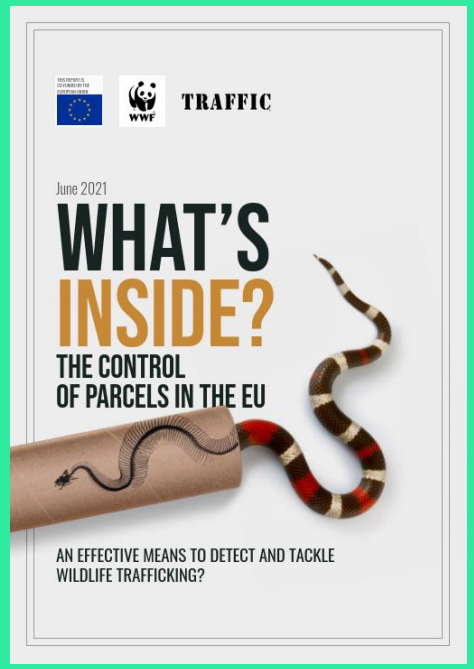
Illegal wildlife trade online – background



https://www.traffic.org/site/assets/files/12970/stop-wildlife-cybercrime-en.pdf
https://www.traffic.org/site/assets/files/12970/tackling-wildlife-cybercrime-how-technology-can-help.pdf

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Objective

Disrupt criminals and organised crime networks **trafficking in wildlife**, timber and waste in and via the EU, and to **recover the assets** generated from these illegal activities.

- Financial investigations
- Cyber investigations

Supporters

EUROPOL, CEPOL, AT, BE, BA, CZ, DE, GE, MK, MT, NL, PL, SI, UA (in addition to ES, FR, HU, IT, SK)

2 YEARS

DECEMBER **2021** » DECEMBER **2023**

Work Packages

WP 1 **Management and Communication**

WP 2 **Strategic Intelligence** on Illicit Waste and Wildlife/Timber Trafficking

WP 3 **Tools and Training**

WP 4 **Transnational investigations & operations** on waste trafficking

WP 5 **Transnational investigations/operations against** wildlife & timber trafficking

WP 6 **Law Enforcement Cooperation** with third countries in Southeast Europe & Asia

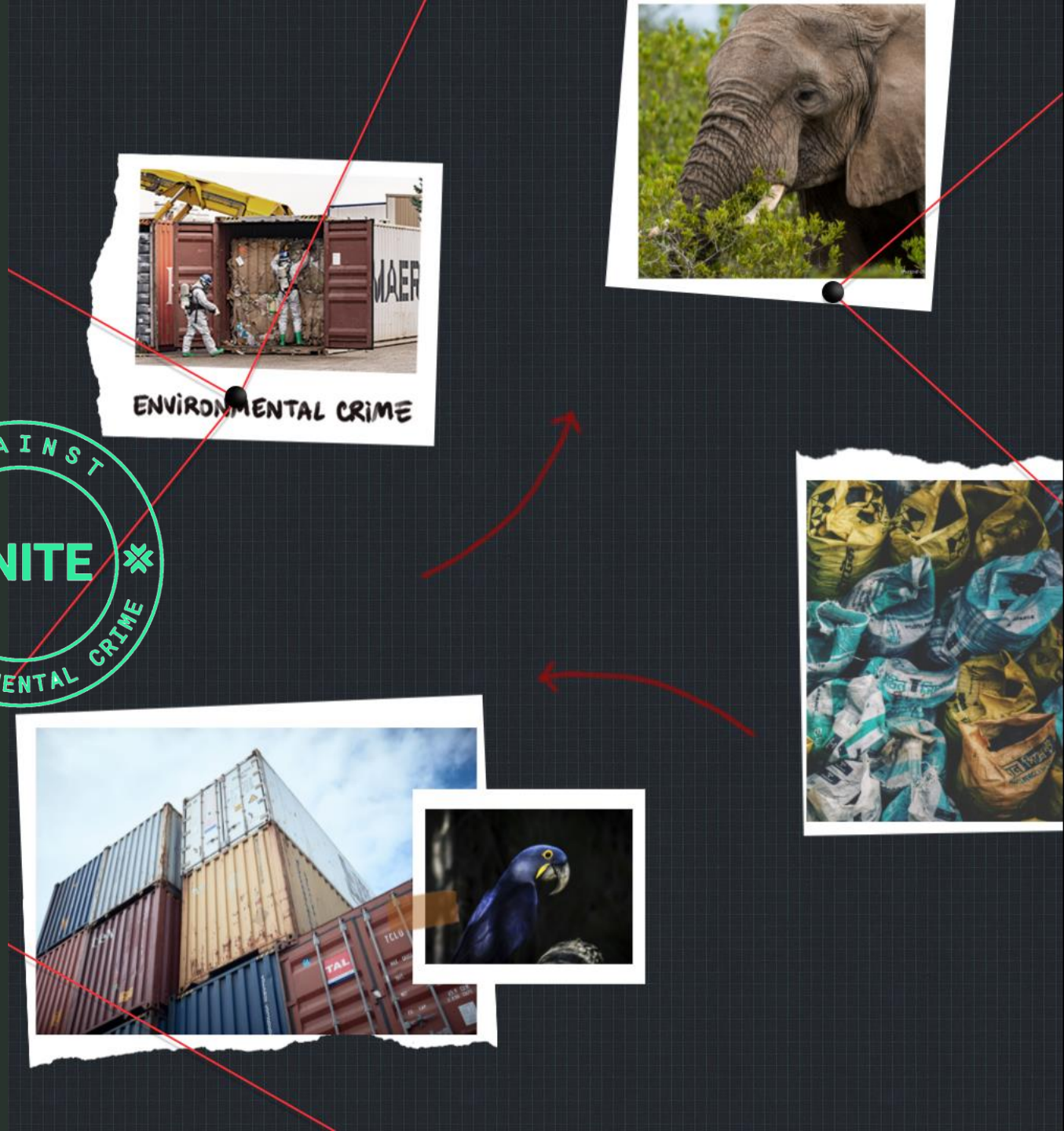
WP 7 **Engaging the financial & private sectors**

Work package #1

Awareness raising

1 campaign on Wildlife Trade rules
1 campaign on waste trafficking

Campaign on social media reaching targetting the public in 2023



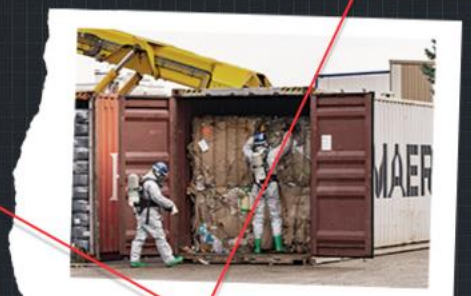
Work package #2

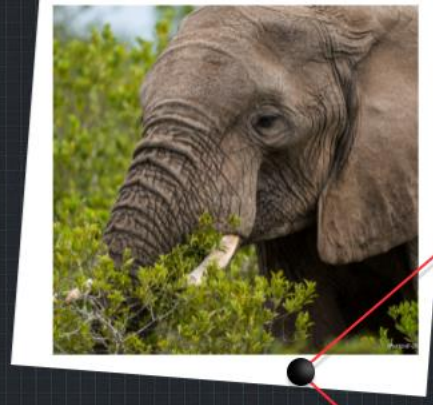
Strategic Intelligence
on Waste, Wildlife
& Timber Trafficking

AGAINST UNITE ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME

Strengthen knowledge to

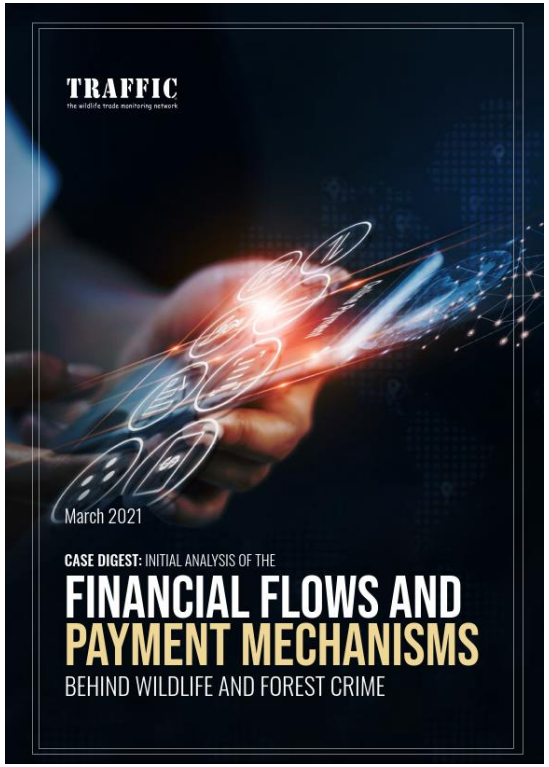
- inform evidence-based and targeted actions by enforcement authorities (WP4 and 5)
- design trainings (WP3)
- be shared with 3rd countries to strengthen capacities (WP6)

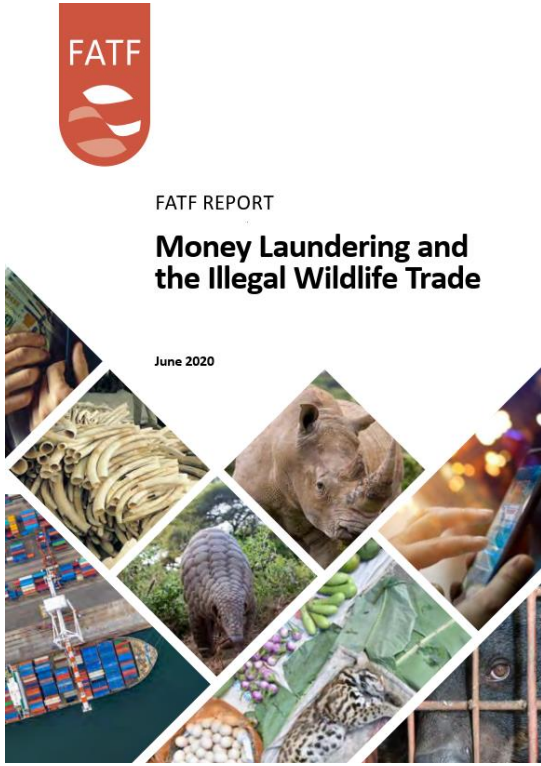




Financial crime in IWT report

- Undertake analysis on financial crimes linked to wildlife and timber trafficking in the EU to highlight trends and patterns to date, financial typology of wildlife/forest crime cases and to share best practices.





Ivory trafficking report

- Undertake an analysis of trade data and intelligence on illegal ivory trade in the EU to highlight latest trends, routes, modus operandi, and application of the new rules for trading ivory in and from the EU entered into force in January 2022.

Timber trafficking report

- Carry out an analysis on timber trafficking in the EU to identify routes, recent trends, modi operandi, criminal groups and propose options to improve efficiency of targeted controls and criminals investigations.

Working Group on Technology (WGT)

- Set-up a WGT to develop guidelines and recommendations for effective software development to detect wildlife trafficking on the internet in the EU.
- Serve as a discussion and information sharing forum between the different types of stakeholders.

Work package #3

Tools and Training

Provide strategic and pre-operational training

- new tools, methods, and best practices
- online training
- training workshops

Work package #5

- Transnational investigations and operations against wildlife and timber trafficking
- Emphasis on conducting financial investigations, detect criminals and OCGs

Operation related to live specimen trafficking on the Internet

- Integrated in EMPACT operational action on cyberpatrolling, criminal investigations, financial investigations (2022)

- NGO online monitoring wildlife trafficking to identify traffickers' **modus operandi**, **online adverts**, **websites**, and **sellers** of concern in **five countries** (DE, ES, FR, IT, NL) and on targeted EU online platforms. With the aim to provide actionable information for further investigation by LEAs. **Not a statistical monitoring.**

Manual and training on financial investigations

- A manual for environmental crime investigators on the basics of financial investigations related to wildlife and waste trafficking disseminated to all EU Member States.
- Series of online training on financial crime investigation related to wildlife and waste trafficking via the CEPOL platform (2023)
- train-the-trainers' workshop on financial crime investigations related to wildlife trafficking (2023)

Pre-operational cyberpatrolling training

- Mix pre-operational training workshops and operational cyber patrolling activities
- Participants from several EU Member States + Latin American countries

Cyberpatrolling

- TRAFFIC, WWF and IFAW mobilize **a group of country surveyors** with expertise in online monitoring/investigation and CITES/EUWTRs
- All relevant information will be shared with **EUROPOL**
- NGOs will also share the info directly **with law enforcement** contacts

Timeframe
2 rounds of survey in the course of 2022

Work package #7

Engaging the financial and private sectors

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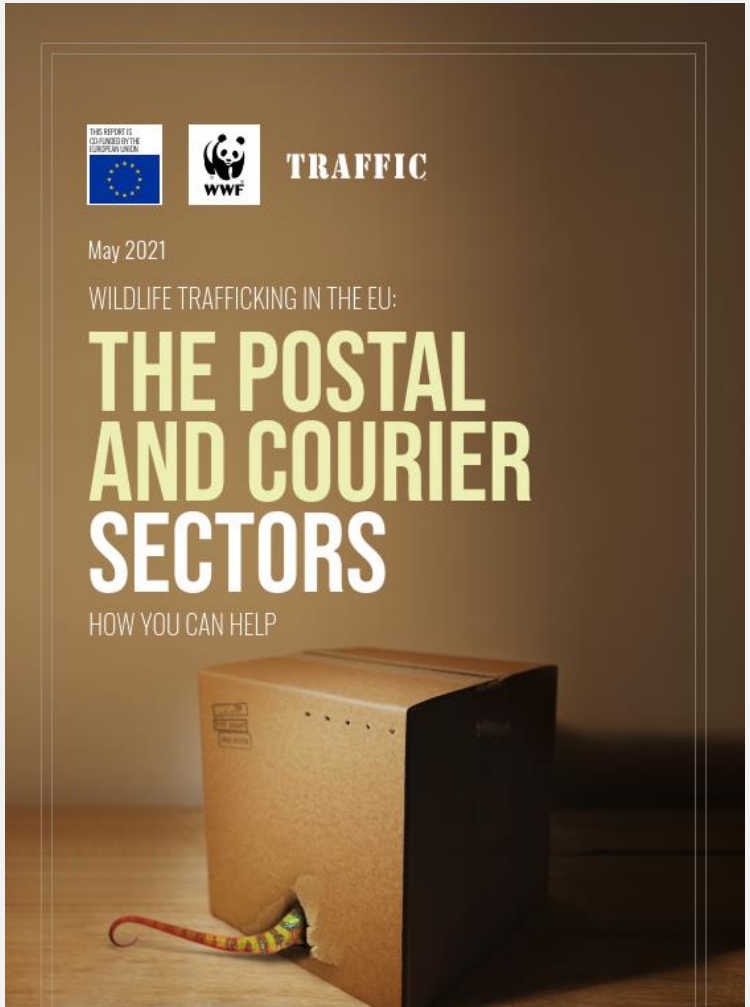
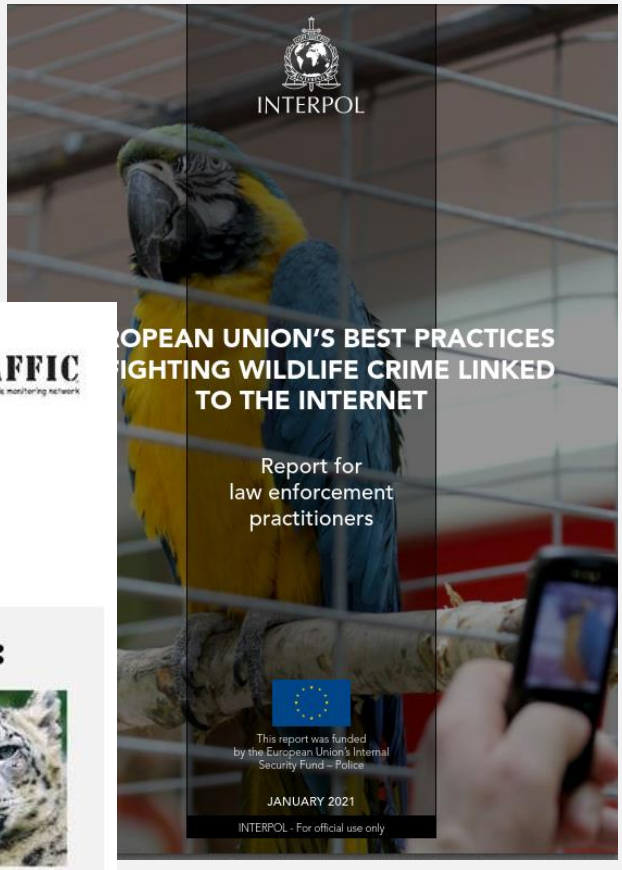
- Cooperation with financial institutions, online & transport companies engaged in combatting wildlife trafficking
- Collaboration between law enforcement agencies and waste companies
- Participate in company training opportunities and develop awareness raising materials

COALITION TO END WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING ONLINE

47 company partners across Americas, Asia, Europe and Africa

Building on previous achievements





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Online monitoring: Preparation and methods

1. Determine focus species

- Consult with relevant experts (e.g., CITES Management Authority)
- Know the market: which species are in demand in your country, breeding, rarity, price
- Look at **CITES trade data** and EU seizures reports (based on EU TWIX) (e.g., https://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/reports/2020%20EU%20seizures%20report_FINAL.pdf)
- **IUCN** Red List assessments (conservation concern)
- Previous wildlife trade **monitoring reports** (e.g., by IFAW, TRAFFIC)

- Keep a manageable number of species depending on your resources

2. Know the rules applying to your species focus

- **Annex A**: **wild-taken specimens** of species are *generally* **not allowed to be used for commercial purposes** and their movement inside the EU is also regulated.

- **Exemptions**: Specimens allowed to be traded internally within the EU if:
  - Specimens were **born and bred** in captivity.
  - **A certificate** (for commercial use of animals born and bred in captivity) has been issued by a CITES Management Authority, in consultation with the Scientific Authority.

- **Marking**: live specimens of Annex A-listed vertebrates have to be uniquely marked:
  - Closed **leg-ring** for **birds** when possible
  - Unalterable **microchip** transponder conforming to ISO Standards for all other **live vertebrates**

2. Know the rules applying to your species focus

- **Annex B:** CITES permits generally not required for commercial activities **inside the EU**

- **However**, documentary evidence required/may be requested showing that the specimens kept and/or used commercially were **legally obtained or introduced**. Traders are advised to keep copies of the import documents or other proof that the specimens were legally obtained (i.e., a certificate from a national CITES Management Authority).

- Due to concerns over avian influenza, the **EU has banned the import of live birds since 2005**. Only captive-bred birds from approved breeding facilities and countries can be imported into the EU.

- Consult **The EU Wildlife Trade Reference Guide** for more information: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/CITES%20Reference%20Guide%20December%202020%20FINAL.pdf

3. Determine your market focus

In our current monitoring survey, we focus on:

- **Online platforms** aimed specifically at German, French, Italian, Spanish or Dutch markets, such as national classified advertisement sites;
- Sellers/traders **located in or/with shops** in one of these 5 countries (these could be posting on “international” sites, social media, or sites with domains in other countries);
- Sellers/traders **offering services to these countries**’ residents (e.g., with shops in other countries, but publishing listings specifically in the searched languages and/or offering delivery to these countries);
- Interested **buyers/persons** resident in these countries (wanted listings)

4. Identify your key search words

- **Scientific and common names** in relevant languages + **sales language**
- abbreviations
- photos

Key search words database

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Acknowledgements: This data was compiled by IFAW with support and input from WWF, TRAFFIC and the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE)

Wildlife Cybercrime key words, phrases and code words – explanatory note

Research and enforcement actions have highlighted that online marketplaces, social media platforms and groups, as well as messaging devices are being used to facilitate wildlife trafficking online. Advances in technology and connectivity across the world, rising buying power, and demand for illegal wildlife products have increased the ease of exchange from poacher to consumer between continents.

Under the auspices of the Global Wildlife Cybercrime Action Plan and The Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online over 3,000 keywords and phrases associated with wildlife trafficking online have been collated. The key words are designed to aid the detection of trade in Appendix I and II (Annex A and B) species offered for sale over the internet. The terms span 23 languages.

The key words include common terms to describe a genus or species grouping, species, phrases describing parts and derivatives, known code words used to evade detection, other key phrases and social media hashtags. These terms are dynamic and will evolve over time based on consumer demand and traffickers needs to disguise items to avoid detection by enforcers or online technology companies. This list, therefore, will be updated on a rolling basis.

The excel data base includes guidance notes as well as key words in Afrikaans, Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, Dutch, English, Filipino, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Lao, Malay, Nigerian – Yoruba, Nigerian – Igbo, Nigerian – Hausa, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Thai and Vietnamese.

These terms are shared with enforcement agencies, Inter-Governmental Organisations, online technology companies, NGO's and academic researchers in order to improve the detection and disruption of wildlife cybercriminals.

For further information on the key words excel database or to flag new emerging key words please contact Tania McCrea-Steele, International Project Manager for Wildlife Crime, at the International Fund for Animal Welfare at tmccrea@ifaw.org .

5. Build your survey team

Combine different expertise: enforcement, CITES MA, and wildlife experts, in particular you will need, among others:

- **Species** identification skills
- **Wildlife trade** expertise
- **Online investigation** skills
- Good **background knowledge** of the trade, legal status, breeding and/or conservation characteristics of the target taxa

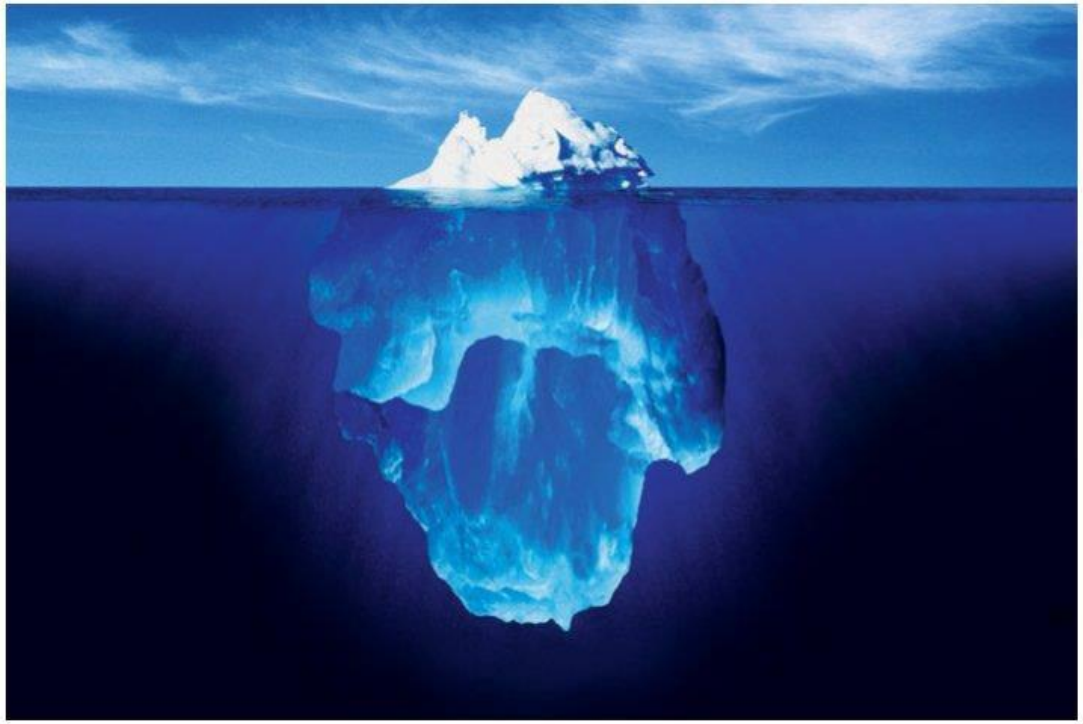
Online survey challenges

3 main challenges:

- Determining the legality, or illegality, of the specimens offered for sale due to **many exemptions** to trade prohibition, and mis-declarations of the source of specimens
- Most adverts **do not mention** the source of the specimen, CITES documentation, marking, etc.
- Even if the adverts state that specimens are correctly marked and have CITES paperwork, this may be a **false declaration**, and vice versa

Indicator species

- Species which have most potential to help you identify cases of illegal trade
- Indicators species may help to identify specific sellers of concern



Criteria for good indicator species

- Species for which **all trade is banned** and for which there are no exemptions: e.g., live primates and big cats.
- Species which have been listed in the CITES Appendices/EU Annexes for several decades and for which there were no or **very few legal imports**, making the availability of “legal” captive-bred specimens very unlikely.
- Species which are known to be **very difficult to breed in captivity** (ask CITES Scientific Authority for advice).
- Species that are not currently listed in the CITES Appendices/EU Annexes but **are known to be protected nationally and in demand internationally**.

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THANK YOU

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Co-funded by
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