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## Nigeria: Concerns As Wildlife Trafficking Continues in Nigeria



Elephants

**Daily Trust (Abuja)** (<http://www.dailytrust.com.ng>)

By *Terkula Igidi*

Amidst the growing devastating impact of climate change on the Nigerian environment, conservation efforts are being threatened by the trafficking of wildlife.

There are concerns that the high pressure on Nigerian wildlife may further endanger some of the exotic wildlife species that are critical to the country's biodiversity.

The World Bank estimates the illicit trade at \$7.8 billion to \$10 billion a year, making wildlife crime the fourth most lucrative illegal trafficking and weapons.

An investigation by Nigeria's Premium Times and Mongabay has found evidence of systematic failure by Nigerian law enforcement to prosecute wildlife poachers and traffickers accountable.

Analysis of official wildlife crimes data by the media organisations, supported by numerous interviews with prosecutors, environmentalists and wildlife markets in Lagos, Cross River, Abuja, Ogun and Bauchi states, found a near-total reliance on minor out-of-court settlements.

Despite numerous high-profile multimillion-dollar trafficking busts at Nigeria's ports since 2010, no one has faced jail term for trafficking wildlife.

A week ago, the Kebbi Area Command of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), intercepted about 1,390 sacks of donkey meat with a value of N42,500.

Officials of NESREA and National Park Service display a lion cub rescued from wildlife traffickers in Abuja in February.

The Controller of the Area Command, Comptroller Joseph Attah, while addressing journalists in Birnin Kebbi last week, said the seizure was part of the endangered species that were prohibited from being killed.

According to him, the driver of the truck and owner of the goods had been arrested and they would soon be charged to court, adding that the seizure was part of the endangered species that were prohibited from being killed.

"Kebbi Area Command, while on routine patrol, intercepted a trailer with Registration Number ARG 323 XA loaded with donkey meat. The driver and owner of the vehicle were immediately arrested and brought to the command's headquarters with the offending item.

"Physical examination of the truck revealed that it was loaded with 1,390 sacks of donkey meat with a Duty Paid Value of N42,500.

"Illegal trade on endangered species such as donkeys is a contravention of Section 63 (b) of CEMA CAP C.45 LFN 2004," he said.

Also, early last month, the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) rescued a lion cub from a wildlife trafficker in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

According to a statement issued by the agency, a combined team from NESREA, the Nigeria Police Force, and the National Park Service rescued the cub and arrested the suspects as they tried to sell off the animal for N6 million.

Speaking on behalf of the Director-General of NESREA, Prof Aliyu Jauro, the Director of Environmental Quality Control, Mr. Ayulola, said the animal was among the endangered species listed in the extant wildlife laws including International Conventions.

"Lions, like other endangered species are prohibited from illegal possession and open sale both locally and internationally under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1992."

"Nigeria is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). We have signed the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Control of International Traffic in Endangered Species) Regulation 2011, and the Endangered Species (Control of International Traffic in Endangered Species) Regulation 2016. [English \(/misc/site-map/categories.html\)](#) [En Français \(https://allafrica.com/\)](#) [\(/commerce/user/manage/\)](#)

"This is a criminal offence. Such acts bring disgrace to Nigeria in the International Community if not curtailed. We always carry out environmental issues, and we enlighten hunters on endangered species," he said.

He warned citizens to desist from environmental crimes as the agency would continue its war against perpetrators, saying, "People and plants that are conserved so they don't go into extinction."

According to a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s 2020 World Wildlife Crime Report, pangolins, forest elephants, and other species are traded both domestically and internationally.

"Animals are hunted for their bushmeat and body parts, such as pangolin scales and elephant ivory tusks. The country's deforestation has led to the loss of many endangered animals.

"Nigeria is not only a source of wildlife products but also a major transit country. There appears to be geographic consolidation of wildlife markets, with Nigeria emerging as a key source/transit country for many shipments of protected species and products," part of the report stated.

The report stated that in 2019 alone, at least 51 tons of pangolin scales seized globally originated from Nigerian ports, compared to all seizures of pangolin scales worldwide could be traced back to Nigeria in 2019.

Data also proposes an increasing role of Nigeria in the illicit ivory trade. Though there's been a global decline in trafficking in ivory, Nigeria remains a major trading hub evidenced in the growing number of incidents recorded over time.

"The January 2021 seizure at the Apapa Ports by the Nigeria Customs Service of a 20 feet container conveying the remains of various animals, including pangolins, highlights and buttresses these findings in the WWCR 2020.



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"The container included 2,772 pieces of elephant tusks of different shapes weighing about 4,752kg; 162 sacks of pangolin scales; dried and fresh animal bones; 103kg of skulls suspected to be of lions and other wild cats; and 76 pieces of timber (semi-processed)."

UNODC, through its Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime and the Corruption and Economic Crime branches, provides tools to support wildlife management authorities in the country.

The tools are meant to strengthen the authorities' capacity to lessen the risk of corruption that prevents them from achieving their goals.

Thus, at the request of the Nigerian government, UNODC rendered support for interventions to tackle wildlife crime, including the assessment (CRA) for the wildlife and forestry sectors.

In March 2021, UNODC in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Environment, NESREA and ICPC undertook the first workshop on wildlife crime assessment and management activities.

A second workshop was held in April of the same year which focused on building capacity for the Nigeria Customs Service.

**Read the [original article \(https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/concerns-as-wildlife-trafficking-continues-in-nigeria\)](https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/concerns-as-wildlife-trafficking-continues-in-nigeria) on Daily Trust.**

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