



CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR PROPAGANDA AND
EDUCATION

JOURNAL ON CHALLENGES IN PROTECTING ENDANGERED, PRECIOUS AND RARE WILDLIFE SPECIES

For the internal reference of the Central Committee for Propaganda and Education

Hanoi, Vietnam
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**CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR PROPAGANDA AND
EDUCATION**

Reference Material

**Journal on challenges in protecting
endangered, precious and rare
wildlife species**

*For the internal use
of the Central Committee for Propaganda and Education*

Hanoi, July 2020

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BACKGROUND

Biodiversity in general, and endangered and rare species in particular play a fundamental role in socio-economic development and the environment. They contribute to food security, construction materials, and medicine, and their survival is key to maintaining genetic resources of domestic plants and animals. Acknowledging of the importance of protecting endangered, rare, and precious species to the country's socio-economic development and to the conservation of biodiversity, the Party and the Vietnamese Government have established guidelines and policies to strengthen effective wildlife management. In partnership with domestic and international agencies, the administration has taken practical steps forward on wildlife conservation and outstanding achievements have been made. However, many species are still becoming extinct in the wild or being pushed to the brink of extinction. The illegal hunting, trade, and consumption of wildlife is threatening biodiversity and damaging Vietnam's reputation on the global stage.

To successfully conserve biodiversity and ecosystems, an evaluation should be carried out documenting achievements and limitations in current protections of endangered, precious, and rare species. On the basis of this evaluation, improvements should be suggested. With that in mind, Vietnam Central Committee for Propaganda and Education (CCPE) has decided to publish this journal: "Challenges in Protecting Endangered, Rare and Precious Wildlife Species."

This Journal was developed by the Central Committee for Propaganda and Education to serve as a guide for Vietnamese government communicators to provide information and increase understanding of wildlife protection and conservation among Party members and Government officials. The journal is also published in the official communication channels of the Central Committee for Propaganda and Education. This Journal will be introduced to officials and members of the Central Committee for Propaganda and Education during a workshop supported by USAID Wildlife Asia in Hanoi, Vietnam on July 3, 2020.

PART I

THE IMPORTANCE OF WILD FLORAL AND FAUNA

Vietnam is the home to almost 16,500 vascular plants, terrestrial fungi, and mosses, 30% of which are endemic. It is estimated that the country is home to 10,500 terrestrial species, including approximately 8,000 species of insects and invertebrates, nearly 500 reptiles and frogs, 850 birds, and 312 mammals. Freshwater species include 1,500 species of microalgae, more than 1,000 species of invertebrates, and nearly 600 fish. The country's marine environment hosts an estimated 1,200 seaweeds, grasses and microalgae, more than 7,000 invertebrates, about 2,500 fish, and approximately 50 species of sea snakes, turtles and other animals. Scientists believe that the number of recorded species is far lower than the actual number of species in the wild.

In addition to its vibrant wild ecosystems, Vietnam is also home to broad agricultural biodiversity, including 40 livestock breeds and more than 6,000 varieties of rice. Local livestock and crops have been developed locally for thousands of years and inherited invaluable genetic traits, such as resistance to certain diseases and insects.

Over the past 20 years, the discovery of new species has affirmed the importance of Vietnamese biodiversity to the world. In 1992, Saola *Pseudoryx nghetinhensis* – the largest terrestrial creature to be discovered since the discovery of the Kouprey *Bos sauveli* in 1937. Three new species of animals with antlers were discovered in the past century including: Vietnamese mouse-deer *Tragulus versicolor* Giant muntjac *Megamuntiacus vuquangensis*, and Truong Son muntjac *Muntiacus truongsongensis*.

There are eight pangolin species in the world, four endemic to Asia and four to Africa. Vietnam is home to both the Sunda pangolin *Manis javanica* and Chinese pangolin *Manis pentadactyla* – both listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

Vietnam is also home to elephants. From 1975 to 1980, 1,500–2,000 individuals were recorded in Vietnam. From 1995 to 2000, 100–150 elephants were recorded in 17 provincial areas. From 2006 to the present, 70–130 individuals have been reported in 10 areas. Several individuals and herds are now living in Nghe An, Dak Lak, and Dong Nai province. In Nghe An province, there are 13–17 individuals. In Dong Nai province, a herd of 10 elephants inhabits Cat Tien National Park. Dak Lak province has recorded herds of 83–110 individuals. Domestic elephant populations are also in decline. Currently, Vietnam has a reported 47 elephant individuals, mostly in Dak Lak province.

Many other species were identified and described for the first time, such as: three species of turtles, 15 species of lizards, four species of snakes, 31 species of frogs, 55 species of fish, more than 500 species of invertebrates, and more than 200 species vascular plants¹.

¹Sources from Biology Resource Institute, Biology Magazine, Zoo Taxa Magazine, Crustaceana...

Vietnam is home to six of 238 eco-regions identified by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) as representing the world's most unique, irreplaceable, and biologically diverse regions, these are: Moist forests in the Truong Son Range (Annamites); Indochina dry forests; Lower Mekong region; Northern Indochina subtropical evergreen forests; Xi river and streams (Ky Cung river). A considerable number of protected areas in Vietnam have been recognized as internationally and regionally important, including nine UNESCO world biosphere reserves (Cat Ba Island Biosphere Reserve, Red River Delta, Western Nghe An, Cat Tien National Park, Mui Ca Mau National Park, Kien Giang islands, Can Gio, Cu Lao Cham and Langbian Biosphere Reserve); two UNESCO world heritage Sites (Phong Nha – Ke Bang and Bai Tu Long, Ha Long Bay), eight Ramsar sites (Xuan Thuy National Park; Bau Sau wetlands, Ba Be National Park; Tram Chim National Park; Mui Ca Mau National Park; Con Dao National Park, Lang Sen Wetland Reserve, U Minh Thuong National Park) and five ASEAN heritage parks (Hoang Lien National Park, Ba Be National Park, Chu Mom Ray National Park, Kon Ka Kinh National Park, U Minh Thuong National Park).

Birdlife International has identified 63 important bird and biodiversity areas (IBAs) in Vietnam, representing 5% of the country's total land area. Nineteen IBAs are found in just four provinces: Dak Lak, Lam Dong, Gia Lai, and Quang Binh.

In 2006, the Ministry of Health published the 4th edition of Vietnam's Red List of Medicinal Plants. The book used IUCN Red List criteria to list 139 species, categorizing 18 as endangered species, 54 as threatened species, and 67 as vulnerable species.

Vietnam's biodiversity plays a key role in the country's ecosystems and in the lives of its citizens. Wildlife helps humans meet their basic needs, such as for food and medicine, but also for entertainment, scientific research, and cultural values. The conservation of wildlife is critical to sustainable socio-economic development, and particularly to the protection of genetic resources, biodiversity, and medicinal resources.

Why protecting wild flora and fauna is essential:

(1) Wild flora and fauna are the essence of an ecosystem, giving it balance, maintaining its substance and energy. Flora and fauna are one of the key factors of the food chain to ensure the ecosystem integrity.

(2) Wild fauna and flora are renewable resources that play an important role in human survival and development. Wildlife's invaluable genetic resources can be refined to have higher productivity and optimal resistance to severe conditions for sustainable agricultural growth. An estimated 90% of consumed food has been derived from wild species which were subsequently domesticated.

(3) In addition to supplying construction materials and medicinal ingredients, wild flora and fauna are used for scientific and educational purposes. Humans learn things from wildlife that can improve their own quality of life. For example, ideas for airplanes came from observations of birds flying. The pharmaceutical sector has made huge advancements from animal testing. Today, many wild animals are being tested in

laboratories for the development of vaccines. An estimated 1,400 vascular plants and 10% of marine mammals contain chemical substances which are resistant to cancer.

(4) Many wild plants and animals are important national symbols. An elephant is the national symbol of Thailand. Elephants hold a special position in the history and daily life of Thailand – they have played a critical role in its cultural, religious, and socio-economic development. The elephant is the symbol of Buddhism and the Buddha. According to legend, Queen Maya, the mother of Buddha, dreamt of a white elephant giving her a lotus flower before finding out that she was pregnant. She was told the dream indicated that she would have a special baby. In addition to representing the Buddha, the elephant is also the symbol of the royal family of Thailand. Elephants have been kept by the Thai royal family for hundreds of years and were often present at royal events wearing costumes or painted in bright colors. White elephants had a particularly high status and were believed to bring good luck. Traditionally, all white elephants in the country were given to the king.

Dominica's flag has an image of a parrot in the center. The Imperial Amazon parrot is endemic to Dominica and is listed as Endangered on IUCN's Red List.

The national flag of Papua New Guinea features a bird of paradise, an integral symbol of national culture, especially at religious events. Thousands of years ago, natives began using the bird's skins and feathers to make jewelry with which to perform rituals. Nowadays, the country hosts singing and dancing contests that imitate the birds, using their feathers for costumes.

The Chinese giant panda (大熊猫) is a bear native to central China, inhabiting mountainous areas such as Sichuan province. During the second half of the 20th century, the panda became the national symbol of China and is seen on Chinese currency.

(5) Along with their medicinal, economic, and scientific value, wild creatures provide endless inspiration for artists, poets, and song composers.

Wildlife protection is a critical, urgent task, necessary for human survival. Protecting endangered, rare, and precious animals means protecting both material and spiritual enrichment to human life.

PART 2

WILDLIFE PROTECTION IN VIETNAM

I. Vietnam's efforts in wildlife conservation

I.1. Vietnam participates in and complies with international conventions and agreements on wildlife conservation

Acknowledging the importance of biodiversity and the fundamental role of wild fauna and flora in its national development, Vietnam has signed on to international conventions and agreements on the conservation of endangered, rare, and precious species, such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1989), the Convention on Biological Diversity (1994), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Fauna (1994).

Vietnam is actively engaged in and adheres to the following international agreements: (1) Saint Petersburg Declaration (2010): Vietnam pledged its cooperation against illegal hunting, trading, and consumption of tigers and tiger products through collaboration, regulation, and enforcement. Vietnam agreed to contribute to strengthened law enforcement in the region through bi-lateral and multi-lateral partnerships, such as the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) and South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN); (2) London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade: Participating countries committed to apply or to amend the current regulations, if necessary, to ensure that illegal wildlife trade would be treated as a serious crime; (3) African Elephant Summit in Gaborone, Botswana on December 2013; (4) Ministerial Declaration of the Committee of Ministers APEC 2014; (5) Vietnam has additionally signed agreements on CWT with Laos, South Africa, Cambodia, Indonesia, China and is in continuing discussions with Mozambique, Tanzania, and Kenya. Vietnam has signed a declaration with the Czech Republic on combating illegal wildlife trade; (6) Declarations between Vietnam – US (2016) and Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) label illegal wildlife trade as a serious crime. The TPP includes an Environment Chapter stipulates that members must fully comply with CITES convention and take appropriate measures against illegal wildlife trade.

I.2. The Party and the Government issue wildlife conservation policies

Over times, the Party has promulgated strict guidelines and policies of wildlife conservation. Environmental conservation guidelines and policies in general, and wildlife protection regulations in particular are regarded to be complete and comprehensive.

On June 25, 1998, the 7th Politburo issued Directive No. 36/1998/CT-TW on “Promoting environmental protection in the industrialized and modernized period”. The Directive proposed recommendations for the sustainable usage of natural resources for the protection of biodiversity, with a special focus on ‘expanding areas for conservation and national parks.’ As Vietnam industrialized and modernized, natural resource exploitation posed a serious threat to biodiversity.

Decree No.41-NQ/TW dated on November 15, 2004 by the 10th Politburo focused on “sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity protection”; “recovery of

degraded ecosystems”, “natural resources allocation and effective planning on biodiversity protection and exploitation, active inspection to comprehensively evaluate natural resources and biodiversity”; “protection of wild and nearly extinct species”; the prevention of invasive and GMO species intrusion”, and “rare and precious genetic resource loss prevention”.

On April 26, 2016, the Secretariat Committee issued Conclusion No.02-KL/TW, which summarized the implementation of Resolution No.41-NQ/TW over the previous 10 years. The Conclusion included recommendations for refining legal systems to ensure consistency and coherence, to avoid overlap and conflicts, to meet the requirements of a new developmental phase, to keep pace with international integration, to recover natural forests, and to promote the delineation of protected areas.

A major milestone in Vietnamese biodiversity conservation was the creation of the Biodiversity Law, passed by the National Assembly on November 13, 2008 and enacted on July 1, 2009. The Law was assessed by competent agencies to be progressive, visionary and systematic with full compliance to international biodiversity conservation commitments and standards. It is the first legislation in Vietnam regulating the rights and obligations of organizations, households, individuals with regards to sustainable development and biodiversity protection. Chapter 4 of the Biodiversity Law (from Article 37 to Article 49) regulates wildlife protection.

On January 1, 2018, the 2015 Penal Code (amended and supplemented in 2017) came into effect. Under the amended code, wildlife violations are subject to prison sentences of up to 15 years and fines of up to VND2 billion for an individual. Businesses are subject to fines of up to VND15 billion and/or a suspension in operations from six months to three years or a termination of operations.

The amended Penal Code intensified punishments for illegally hunting, killing, transporting, or trading rare and precious wildlife or wildlife products. Vietnamese law prohibits rhino horn/rhino horn product trafficking. Punishments are imposed on amounts of elephant ivory exceeding 2 kg and rhino horn in excess of 50 g.

Articles in the Penal Code on wildlife violations include Article 234 (violations on wildlife protection), the Article 242 (damages to aquatic resources), and Article 244 (violations on endangered, rare, and invaluable species protection). Particularly, captive-breeding and possessing wild animals and body parts for any purposes are subjected to bring into account. Punishments are imposed violations regarding animal parts or wildlife products on the list of endangered, rare, and precious species regardless of weight, volumes, and monetary values. Penalties are imposed on violations relating to animals on the List of endangered, rare and precious forest plants and animals in Group IB and the Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) of over three mammals, seven birds and reptiles or 10 wild animals. First punishment to violations of endangered, rare and precious forest plants and animals listed in Group IB and Appendix I of the CITES (including aquatic and forest animals) is VND 150 million; violations of other wild animals is 300 million or 50 million dong.

Vietnam's biodiversity is declining under the pressure of population growth, the overexploitation of natural resources, and the priority of economic development. With this in mind, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam passed Resolution No.24-NQ/TW on June 3, 2013 on “proactively tackling climate change, enhancing natural resource management and environmental protection” by identifying “degrading biodiversity, ecosystem imbalance occurring on a large scale, negatively impacting socio-economic development, health and people's lives”.

The Resolution assigned tasks to government agencies, including: (1) Protect, restore, and regenerate natural forests. Promote plantation, especially of mangroves, coastal protection forests, and upstream forests. Prevent deforestation and forest fires. Stop the logging of natural forests; (2) Enhance the management, expansion of qualified nature reserves and promote the establishment of new nature reserves. Prioritize resources for the protection of landscapes, ecosystems and heritage; (3) Strictly protect wild animals, crops, invaluable medicinal plants and rare and precious species. Prevent the growth of invasive species; (4) Enhance risk management of GMO species.

On December 26, 2013, the Central Committee for Propaganda and Education of the Communist Party of Vietnam issued Directive No.98-HD/BTGTW on “propaganda against illegally trading, consuming wild fauna and flora”.

To enhance, protect, and monitor endangered, rare, precious and priority protected species, the Government, Ministries and branches issued important documents, including Decree No. 160/2013/NĐ-CP on November 12, 2013 on identifying and managing species listed as endangered, rare, precious and priority protected animals; National Strategy on Biodiversity to 2020, vision to 2030; National Biodiversity Master Plan to 2020 and direction to 2030, Decision No.539/QĐ-TTg on April 16, 2014 and direction to 2030, Decision No.539/QĐ-TTg on April 16, 2014 approving the National Program on Tiger Conservation from 2014 to 2022 with the objective of protecting and conserving tigers, tiger habitats and tiger prey to recover and increase wild tiger population to 2022 following the defined objectives in the Global Tiger Protection Program to which Vietnam was a signatory; Decree No. 940-QĐ/TTg on July 19, 2012 on approving an urgent action plan to 2020 for elephant protection in Vietnam; and Directive No. 03-CT/TTg on February 20, 2014 by the Government on “Enhancing the direction and implementation of conservation and control measures for endangered, rare and precious wild species”. To date, there have been 10 Decrees by the Government, 12 Decisions by the Prime Minister, and 23 Circulars by Ministers of Vietnam on sustainable biodiversity development, including protecting and developing endangered, rare and precious species² which have been issued and implemented.

With the rapid outbreak of COVID-19, on 28/01/2020, the Prime Minister issued Directive No. 05/CT-TTg on the prevention of acute respiratory infection by the coronavirus. The Directive banned the import of wildlife into Vietnam. On March 12, 2020, the Prime Minister requested the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) coordinate with relevant ministries and branches and lead the drafting of a directive prohibiting illegal wildlife trade and consumption. Currently, the

² Biodiversity Report in the first national Environment Conference

MARD is in the process of organizing collecting feedback from scientists, ministries, and branches before submitting the draft to the Prime Minister.

1.3. Training and propaganda on wildlife conservation for biodiversity protection and sustainable development

With the aim of protecting Vietnam's ecosystems and ensuring the compliance with the law, the CCPE of the Communist Party of Vietnam and TRAFFIC have carried out numerous activities to improve communications on wildlife protection for government officials, party members, businesspeople, and the public. This includes:

- Issuing Guideline No.98-HD/BTGTW dated December 26, 2013 on “propaganda against trading and consuming prohibited wildlife”.
- Publishing a Q&A booklet against the consumption of prohibited wildlife.
- Organizing three capacity-building workshops for more than 400 reporters, propagandists, propaganda officials in provinces and cities, providing and up-to-date information on wildlife trafficking and consumption.
- Launching communications campaigns, including behavioural change communications public service announcements displayed at Le Duan – Cua Nam intersection reaching 67,500,000 people and in the lobby of Noi Bai International Airport reaching 36,500,000 people.
- Releasing a 2016 Lunar New Year Calendar inspiring more than 900 leaders of 35 party agencies, ministries, and branches at all levels.
- Posting two journals in Heritage Magazine (official magazine of Vietnam Airlines) and on official Party websites and magazines.

Currently, the Scientific Council of the Party Central Committee under the Central Committee for Propaganda and Education in coordination with TRAFFIC is developing behavior change communications focused on wildlife protection, these include workshops and conferences attended the Party leaders, members of government agencies, unions and propagandists; and displaying behavior change visuals at the headquarters of Central Party Committee office.

2. Current status of illegal wildlife trafficking and consumption

Transnational illegal wildlife trade is a daunting challenge to wildlife conservation throughout the world, and for Vietnam in particular. International wildlife crime is increasing – the illegal wildlife trade market is now estimated to be worth up to USD20 billion per year. Southeast Asia is considered a hotspot for illegal wildlife consumption, transit, and supply. Over the past 10 years, the illegal trade and consumption of African rhino horns and elephant ivory in Vietnam had persisted as has the consumption of pangolins, tigers and other endangered species.³ African countries (Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo) have been identified as source locations for the majority of violations related to wildlife and wildlife products, while Vietnam and China are destination countries.

³ <https://www.usaid.gov/vi/vietnam/documents/usaid-saving-species-project-vi>

In 2019, numerous massive transnational wildlife violations were processed:

- In January 2019, 8.3 tons of pangolin scales and more than 1,000 ivory trunks were seized by Hong Kong Customs. The contraband was concealed inside a frozen meat container en route from Nigeria to Vietnam.
- On January 31, 2019, 750 ivory tusks and thousands of pangolin scales were seized in South Sudan. Two Vietnamese nationals were arrested.
- On July 23, 2019, Singapore authorities seized 11.9 tons of pangolin scales and 8.8 tons of tusks inside a container from the Democratic Republic of Congo which was headed to Vietnam.
- On March 25, 2019, Hai Phong enforcement officers seized 8.3 tons of pangolin scales from the Mia Schulte ship inbound from Africa.
- On March 26, 2019, officers at Tien Sa Port, Da Nang seized 9.12 tons of pangolin scales and elephant ivory, which had been concealed inside sawn wood containers from Congo.
- On July 28, 2019, officers in Noi Bai International Airport seized 55 rhino horn pieces weighing 125 kg. The horn was concealed in blocks and came on a flight from UAE.
- On October 30, 2019, Hai Phong authorities seized 3.36 tons of shark skins and 2.23 tons of shark fins at Lach Huyen Port.
- On December 25, 2019, 5 tons of wild animals including monitors, geckos and turtles were seized in Ha Tinh province.

In 2019, Vietnamese press agencies reported 1,110 incidences of wildlife trafficking, including 20 in-depth investigation articles, around 153 violations (estimated 13 per month) - 50% of which related to illegal wildlife transport. Authorities recorded seizures of 107,213 wild animals, both dead and alive. In total, authorities seized 76,367 kg of animal body parts and products (3,545 individual items), including 42 tonnes of pangolin scales and 454 pangolins; 23 tonnes of ivory (1,778 ivory items); 222 kg of rhino horn (35 rhino horn pieces); 2,885 primates; 980 turtles; and 18 tigers. Twenty-eight wildlife violations were handled with administrative penalties; 216 suspects received total fines of up to VND1.2 billion, with the highest penalty being a fine of VND660 million- and 13-years' imprisonment⁴.

Suspects illegally transporting and trading wildlife use sophisticated methods. Law enforcement capacity is limited (both human resources and equipment), and the mechanisms and policies can be unclear. Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique share long borders and there are trails and pathways between Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, and Malawi, which create challenges in wildlife protection. Increasing economic incentives for participating illegal wildlife trade in Asian nations and the limited experience of law enforcement agencies in dealing with environmental crimes is another problem. Another issue is insufficient information and

⁴ https://www.facebook.com/wcs.vietnam/posts/3115398451833121?_tn=-R

corruption. Kenya lost nearly 200 rhinos and 2,000 elephants to poaching from 2005 to 2015⁵.

Many nations are involved in illegal ivory and rhino horn transportation and trade. Elephant ivory mostly originates from African countries and is taken to China and Thailand for consumption. Transit nations include Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Laos, and the Philippines. A large-scale study conducted by Wittemyer at Colorado State University in 2014 based on CITES data over 2010-2012, found that 100,000 elephants were killed in Africa, with 96 individuals killed each day. The African elephant population had decreased by two-thirds within two decades, approximately 4.2 million elephants in 2012.

A study on pangolin trafficking by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published on Earth day (April 22, 2020), found that pangolins were the most trafficked mammals in the world with the number of confiscations en route Africa to Asia market increasing 10 times since 2014. Estimating the exact quantity of smuggled pangolins in recent years is a daunting task, as the number of seizures comprises only a small fraction of the total number of pangolins that were trafficked. Over 2014-2018, approximately 370,000 pangolins were confiscated, meaning it is likely that millions more were trafficked and killed⁶.

Wildlife Conservation Society – WCS Vietnam partnered with the Supreme People's Procuracy of Vietnam on a summary report on wildlife crime over 2013-2017. According to the report, Vietnamese authorities uncovered 1,504 violations and arrested 1,461 suspects over than period. A number of wild animals were being illegally transported and traded, including pangolins, snakes, and turtles. Wildlife crimes relating to species from outside of Vietnam, such as rhinos and elephants, accounted for 13.5% (203/1,504) of total violations, 7.43% (1,949/26,221) of arrests, and 44.64% (18.450 kg/41.328 kg) of seized wildlife parts/products.

In Vietnam, through investigations by the People's Public Security Organization and other agencies (i.e: Customs, border guards, forest rangers), even though there are less wildlife confiscations detected and investigated, wildlife violations are not under control and seem to be increasing. Wildlife crimes were mostly uncovered on roads, border gates, airports, and seaports.

Traffickers were seen to take advantage of captive-breeding licenses and CITES permits for Group IIB species to transport and trade these species, such as live and frozen tigers and leopards, or Group IIB species with high economic incentives such as pangolins, which were caught at border crossings, including Cau Treo (Ha Tinh), Mong Cai (Quang Ninh), and Lao Bao (Quang Tri).

On sea routes, wildlife traders used transportation papers, especially for frozen commodities to hide rhino horns, elephant ivory, frozen pangolins, pangolin scales, and

⁵ https://www.facebook.com/wcs.vietnam/posts/3115398451833121?_tn=-R

⁶ <https://www.nhandan.com.vn/khoahoc-congnghe/vi-moi-truong-xanh/item/44309602-te-te-la-%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8Bdong-vat-co-vu-bi-buon-ban-nhieu-nhat-the-gioi.html>

marine turtles...through Hai Phong, Tien Sa (Da Nang), Cat Lai (Ho Chi Minh city) Port.

On air routes, wildlife smugglers were caught transporting rhino horns, ivory, and ivory products through Noi Bai, Da Nang, and Tan Son Nhat International Airport. Wildlife and wildlife product trafficking outside Vietnam border into Vietnam or originating from Vietnam is considered complicated.

The transportation and trade of domestic wildlife was assessed as declining. However, there is a growing trend in captive breeding Group IB and IIB species with high economic incentives, such as king cobras, pangolins, sea turtles in other countries. Management on animals for food is better controlled but still exists.

According to the above statistics, from January 2018 to May 31, 2019, forest ranger forces in coordination with local authorities processed 560 wildlife violations related to endangered, rare, precious species. Of these, they imposed penalties on 41 incidents and put 38 suspects on trial for 27 incidents, with 27 defendants being handed the maximum sentence (seven years and six months).

Illegal wildlife trade does not only affect the environment, the ecosystem, and the survival of certain species, but also deprives locals of their livelihoods and impacts government administration.

3. The impact of wildlife trafficking and consumption on the environment and society

Wildlife trafficking is regarded as one of the biggest threats to environmental conservation, affecting millions of people and species.

- (1) **Reputation:** Vietnam is considered a transit and destination country for elephant ivory and rhino horn, with numerous instances of seizures, trade, and consumption.
- (2) **Economy:** In 2012, according to a report from the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Vietnam imported USD 10 billion in luxury goods. Elephant ivory and rhino horns are considered luxury goods but are illegal, so no official numbers on how the country has to pay for. Meanwhile, the Government had to pay a much higher than that for investigation into and processing of crimes related to wildlife trafficking, particularly those that involved organized crime, which often employs sophisticated methodology and occurs on a massive scale.
- (3) **Conservation:** Along with deforestation, wildlife trafficking is considered one of the gravest threats facing the survival of certain wildlife species. Illicit trade of wildlife products, including elephant ivory, rhino horn, pangolin scale, tiger bone, bear bile, and rosewood has caused major declines to the populations of rare and precious wild fauna and flora.
- (4) **Health:** Wildlife trafficking and consumption can facilitate the spread viruses to humans and other animal species, causing pandemics. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly 70% of infectious diseases over the past 50 years have originated from wild animals, such as HIV, Ebola, H5N1, SARS, chickenpox, rabies, and Marburg virus. Wildlife consumption creates conditions for zoonotic viruses to spread to

human beings and create outbreaks. The COVID-19 virus was detected at the end of 2019 and has spread over the world, devastating millions of lives and ravaging economies.

PART 3

WILDLIFE PROTECTION RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Conservation challenges

I.1. Communication on wildlife protection and the conservation of biodiversity has been rather ineffective. Both the content and the methods of dissemination lack diversity. In particular, communications materials focus on awareness raising rather than changing users' behaviors. For example, on an awareness raising campaign for rhino horn, the message was "Rhino horn is made of the same protein as human hair and nails and does not have healing properties, despite rumors". The message was popular. However, in a consumer survey conducted by CCPE and TRAFFIC, 33% of respondents (who are government leaders and managers) in the in-depth interview, and 28% of them in focus group discussion said that they thought rhino horn can help cure diseases; 92% of them (in in-depth interview) and 91% (in focus discussion group) did not highly appreciate the effectiveness of existing campaigns led by the Government on wildlife conservation ⁷.

Communications campaigns for wildlife conservation have only been launched with the funding from international organizations. State funds for biodiversity conservation in general and wildlife protection in particular have not been allocated. Moreover, mobilizing private resources for behavioral change activities on wildlife protection is challenging. Communication contents are not persuasive and not based on scientific evidence. There is a large number of audiences who are not exposed to behavioral change messaging as well as legal regulations on wildlife protection.

In the context that wildlife trade information is rather a mess on social media platforms, it is critical that the media raise awareness on wildlife conservation, illegal harvesting, transport and trade.

I.2. Illegal wildlife trade is becoming increasingly sophisticated. According to a report from Digital Marketing Vietnam in 2020, as of February 2020, there were 67 million Internet users in Vietnam. Similar to other Internet-based platforms, social media is being could be wrongly used to trade banned goods, including wildlife products.

According to a 2019 Guardian report, leopard cats, frozen pangolins, dead macaques, and frozen tigers are easily found for sale on Facebook and Zalo. Recently, there has been evidence of new platforms advertising illegal wildlife products, especially elephant ivory. A total of three surveys had been conducted (two physical market and one online market survey) during November 2016 to June 2017. Elephant ivory was found on sale in 13 surveyed locations: Ban Don, Buon Ma Thuat, Da Nang, Ha Long, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh city, Hoi An, Hue, Mong Cai, Nhi Khe, Lach, Nha Trang, and Vinh and on three surveyed platforms: social media, e-commerce websites, and online forums. 852 physical stores and 17 platforms were surveyed, finding a minimum of 10,549 ivory items and a maximum of 13,460 ivory products on sale (6,186 items found at physical

⁷ Since April 2019, funded by Save The Rhino International, TRAFFIC coordinated with CCPE to conduct a consumer survey to evaluate KAP on the consumption of rhino horn and other illegal wildlife products amongst government leaders and managers.

stores and 4,363 items advertised by online sellers). The findings have proven online and offline ivory trafficking occur persistently.⁸ Collecting evidence of online wildlife trafficking is challenging as sellers and buyers can easily conceal their identities, advertise items on a large scale and advertise across borders. These are new challenges for law enforcement agencies in preventing and controlling wildlife crime, especially for protected species. Wildlife trafficking should be taken seriously and addressed effectively.

1.3. Wildlife crime needs to be taken more seriously by the Party, administration bodies and citizens in general. The implementation of guidelines and regulations on conservation must be consistent. Management lacks decisiveness, and the punishment of violations needs to be tightened. It is still common for people to use wildlife products as food, medicine, jewelry, fashion, handicrafts, ornaments, and gifts to enhance health, cure illnesses and to symbolize the status of individuals and families.

1.4. The legal framework related to wildlife conservation is incoherent and has overlaps, which poses challenges to implementation. Wildlife laws are not consistently interpreted, which leads to indecisive enforcement. Punishments for violations related to endangered, rare and precious species is light, inconsistent, and the differences between administrative violations and criminal penalties is unclear. The amount of criminal penalties is low (only 1% of the total violations) and administrative fines too low to be effective deterrents.

1.5. The responsibilities of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and central and local administrations are not clearly delineated and frequently overlap, making it difficult to manage natural resources.

There is a lack of coordination in investigating and data sharing, and also a lack of tracking and investigating equipment. Investigations are mostly based on intuition without evidence. Inspection, examination, and processing of violations is limited due to a lack of capacity and equipment. There is a replication on responsibilities and functions between Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE). There is a shortage in sustainable funding for conservation.

1.6. Wildlife populations are in decline. According to the Vietnam Red List, in 1992, there were 365 species listed as rare and precious. In 2014, the number of species in the list had increased to 407, with six of them being species endemic to Vietnam. In the latest publication (2007), the number of species listed had risen to 418, including 116 listed as endangered, and nine shifted to “nearly extinct” (Sumatran rhinoceros *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, Kouprey *Bos sauveli*, Tapir *Tapirus*, Otter civet *Cynogale bennettii*, Saltwater crocodile *Crocodylus porosus*, and Sika deer *Cervus nippon*).

In 1996, there were 356 plant species listed on the Red List of Vietnam. In 2004, the number increased to 450. In 2007, there were 465 plant species on the list, including 45 endangered species.

⁸ www.traffic.org/publications/reports/from-tusk-to-trinket/

Surveys and investigations at national parks and nature reserves have revealed a decrease in wildlife populations over the past few years, including tigers, pangolins, elephants, wild oxen, goats, civets, macaques, and langurs. Statistics show that numerous species are nearly extinct due to overexploitation and habitat loss, especially endemic species, such as the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey *Rhinopithecus avunculus*, with an estimated 190 individuals remaining. In the 20th century, the species was found in four mountainous provinces: Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang, Bac Can and Thai Nguyen. With a population of only 100, Delacour's langur *Trachypithecus delacouri* is only found in Cuc Phuong National Park and Van Long Nature Reserve in Ninh Binh.

The tiger population in Vietnam decreased from 1,000 individuals before 1970 to 80–100 individuals in 2005. By 2010, there were only 30 individuals recorded in Vietnam.

In the early 20th century, there were 500,000 rhinoceros in the wild. Now, there are an estimated 25,000 individuals in Africa, while in Asia, there are less than 4,000 individuals. There are now only five rhino species in the world: Black and White rhinos in Africa, and Javan, Sumatran and Indian rhinos in Asia. In 2013, more than 1,000 rhinos were illegally poached in South Africa, equivalent to three individuals killed each day. Vietnamese Javan rhinoceros *Rhinoceros sondaicus annamiticus* belonged to one of two Javan rhino populations in the world. The Javan rhino became extinct in Vietnam in 2010. The species can only be observed on national stamps.

Deforestation is a large contributor to habitat loss. Wild elephants have destroyed houses, crops, and even killed locals in the Southeast and Central highlands because of habitat loss.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) update in July 2019, 700 threatened species became critically endangered. Nearly 2 million animals including tigers, bears, deers, wild boars, porcupines, anacondas, crocodiles and crab-eating macaques have been captive-bred at 4,000 licensed farms in Vietnam.

1.7. Wildlife traders use sophisticated methods evade detection from local authorities. This includes by restaurants that take advantage of loose regulations on captive-breeding to take animals from the wild. Breeders use captive-breeding permits for wild animals and re-used transportation papers to avoid inspection. CITES permits for wildlife export and import, re-import and re-export have allowed organizations and individuals to take advantage of 'exemption from inspection' and put endangered, rare and precious wildlife and wildlife products in 'free-inspection' goods inside normal containers or boxed like frozen items. Many incidents have been investigated without leading to prosecutions. Often, wildlife transporters only complete the dossier and are hired to transport the items without knowing the commodity is prohibited goods.

1.8. Vietnam has signed bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements and needs to show its commitments in alignment with other nations in preventing trafficking in or consumption of endangered, rare, precious, and wild animals. In the Greater Mekong sub-region including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and China, overexploitation of wildlife (both illegal and legal) is becoming a main threat to many species, even more severe than habitat loss and degradation. In Southeast Asia, Vietnam plays a critical role in illegal wildlife trafficking. With abundant natural resources, Vietnam supplies wildlife for the international market, especially for China.

With a growing number of urban residents having a high level of income, Vietnam is the consumption destination for domestic and international wildlife and wildlife products. Lastly, bordering with China, Vietnam is a transit hub in the Greater Mekong sub-region.

1.9. The potential for wildlife trafficking to facilitate the transmission of viruses such as COVID-19 and SARS poses a serious threat to public health. According to the World Health Organization, at 7 p.m. on May 27, 2020, there were 5,673,692 cases of Covid-19 virus reported, including 351,505 deaths and 2,424,865 recoveries.

According to WWF, the damage COVID-19 has inflicted on individual nations and the world has reached billions of dollars, and the global economy will take years to recover. We need to work immediately to prevent new pandemic.

Conservation organizations, including TRAFFIC, have supported action taken by governments in response to the crisis, such as China's temporary ban on wildlife trade and consumption in February 2020, and measures that Vietnam is considering. TRAFFIC proposes that nations work together to eliminate potential pandemics from wildlife consumption.

Lack of effective measures in tackling the crime and ineffective management scheme are key shortcomings. Both physical and online wildlife trade are posing potential threats to public health and biodiversity conservation.

Communities and wildlife conservation organizations have urged the Government to prohibit wildlife trade permanently. Any new legislation should be thoroughly reviewed before implementation. Issuing new regulations without backing them up with enforcement will result in wildlife trade going underground.

TRAFFIC believes at the present, countries not applying immediate actions in illicit wildlife trafficking may consider doing so. Legislation can be adjusted in the near future after countries can identify and evaluate possible risks. Effective prevention of pandemics originating from wildlife may require countries around the world to review and revise their legal framework relating to wildlife crime. Governments should work to ensure the legality, sustainability, and origin of wildlife specimens and products. Regular trade management can reduce threats.

TRAFFIC's recommendations include:

- Developing strict regulations and mechanisms to monitor the import-export, trade and consumption of wildlife products and derivatives.
- Developing strict regulations and mechanisms to effectively ensure high standards for animal welfare and food hygiene for food sourced from wildlife during manufacturing, processing and distribution, and introduction of animal products.
- Developing equipment and toolkits to enhance traceability on commodities.

Experts including virus researchers, trade specialists, law enforcement agencies, and agriculture experts should be consulted before imposing or enacting any new regulations.

2. Recommendations for the future of conservation in Vietnam

(1) Raise awareness among officials, Party members and citizens about the ideology and policy of the Party and the Government relating to the role of biodiversity, and wild fauna and flora, in sustainable development. Criticize violations related to endangered, rare and precious species protection.

Streamline topics related to environmental and biodiversity protection in the Documents of National Party Congress (XII), guide on the implementation of the Decree No. 41-NQ/TW by the 9th Political Bureau, Decree No. 24-NQ/TW by the Secretariat Member of Party Central Committee, the Conclusion No. 02-KL/TW by the Secretariat on environmental protection and wildlife trafficking and consumption management enhancement; disseminate regulations in the amended Penal Code 2015 (revised 2017) regarding wildlife violations and wildlife protection regulations.

Encourage leaders at all levels, propagandists, and reporters in to disseminate materials on conservation. Commit not to using wildlife. Show zero tolerance on wildlife trafficking and consumption. The propaganda should promote behavioral change messages against the use of illegal wildlife products. Propaganda officials, reporters at all levels should actively spread behavioral change messaging to public servants, businesspeople, Party organizations, and the Government to end wildlife consumption and conserve biodiversity.

Advocate through diverse channels. Advocate on social media platforms. Reach out to Ministries of all levels, including central and local administrations and organizations. Individuals should actively share news, posts, and information on wildlife conservation and the protection of endangered, rare, precious, and threatened species in Vietnam, such as tigers, rhinos, bears and pangolins. Disseminate advocacy materials on websites and social media (Facebook, Zalo, Youtube, VCNET). Promote the role of the press. Share information on official Communist websites and propaganda news. Launch writing contests for wildlife conservation on the official website of the Central Committee for Propaganda and Education of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Raise awareness on the value of biodiversity and regulations on poaching, trading, transporting, and consuming wildlife and wildlife products, emphasizing the fact that using endangered wildlife is illegal and will result in severe punishment. One of the factors driving wildlife product consumption is belief that it benefits health and lifestyle. Therefore, the messaging should highlight solid evidence that these products lack medicinal properties. This can be achieved by inviting reputed doctors and specialists to discuss the issue and to raise awareness about the negative effects of illegal wildlife products.

Insert behavioral change messaging against illegal wildlife consumption into internal regulations and policies. Issue directives requesting officials and public servants strictly abide by wildlife regulations and become actively involved in wildlife conservation activities.

(2) Revise and agree on regulations for wildlife conservation. Conduct research on adjustments and supplements to the legal framework and wildlife conservation policy. Eliminate inconsistencies in legal documents and guides on the enforcement of the

Penal Code. Severely punish those exploiting, poaching, hunting, trading and consuming protected wild animals and plants. Research permits for endangered, rare and precious species captive-breeding to avoid creating opportunities for wildlife traffickers. Research wildlife-driven legal documents to guarantee consistency across Party and the Government policy and to comply with international conventions on wildlife conservation. Demonstrate the commitment of the Party and the Government in creating favorable conditions for wildlife management assignments in Vietnam, ensuring the survival and recovery of wildlife.

(3) Enhance the management of endangered, rare and precious species.

Monitor and take responsibility for delegation and centralization in the administration of endangered, rare and precious species.

Develop an information-sharing system. Create a cooperation mechanism for different forces, including People's Public Security, Customs, forest rangers, marine police, border guard, airport security, CITES Management Authority in Vietnam, INTERPOL, and ASEAN-WEN, to share and process information relating to wildlife traffickers. Enable support of wildlife crime investigation with a focus on wildlife and wildlife product trafficking and transportation.

(4) Enhance the capacity of forces working directly on wildlife conservation. Invest in equipment for supporting units to inspect and detect wildlife crime. Impose strict punishments that will serve as deterrents for others. Incinerate elephant ivory and rhino horns confiscated in Vietnam.

(5) Promote international integration in wildlife crime prevention. Partner with diplomatic agencies, international police and wildlife conservation organizations. Develop and implement international conventions and agreements. Organize and participate in wildlife conservation campaigns for endangered, rare and precious species, including for elephants, tigers, and rhinos.

(6) Actively work with South Asian and Southeast Asian countries and other countries around the world to combat the Covid-19 pandemic in the commitment of tackling wildlife trade and consumption.

(7) Conduct research and apply international experience and communications models to foster successful behavioral change programs with the aim of reducing consumption of illegal wildlife products.