



WWF's 'Most Wanted' List Highlights 10 of the Most Widely Traded Endangered Species in the Markets of the Golden Triangle

Bangkok, November 2, 2017 -- Tigers, elephants, bears and pangolin are four of the most widely traded species in the Golden Triangle -- the border area where Thailand, Laos and Myanmar connect -- according to a report from [WWF](#). Rhinos, serow, helmeted hornbill, gaur, leopards and turtles round out the list of endangered species that are openly sold in a region that is Ground Zero in the [illegal wildlife trade](#).

The Top 10 Most Wanted list is based on surveys by WWF of illegal wildlife markets, shops and restaurants, and reports from [TRAFFIC](#), the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network. They represent species most often seen for sale in a criminal trade that threatens wildlife across Asia and into Africa. A major driver of the trade is tourists from China and Vietnam traveling to areas such as MongLa and Tachilek in Myanmar, and border areas such as Boten and the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone in Laos.

"Illegal, unregulated, and unsustainable trade is driving wild populations of hundreds of species into endangerment, not only in the Greater Mekong but around the world," said Chrisgel Cruz, Technical Advisor on Wildlife Trade for WWF-Greater Mekong. "Border areas like the Golden Triangle are where this trade thrives and where we must work hardest to protect the defenseless."

Many of the Asia's poached and farmed **tigers** pass through the Golden Triangle, where they end up in tiger wine, on dinner tables, in dubious medicines or as luxury items and jewelry. The growing trade in elephant skin, combined with continuing demand for ivory, is threatening **elephant** populations from Asia to Africa. **Bear** farms are rampant across the region, where both Sun Bears and Asiatic Black Bears -- mostly captured in the wild -- are kept in tiny cages while their bile is collected for traditional medicine and folk remedies.

"Bear farms and tiger farms, along with wide open wildlife markets across the Golden Triangle, are a menace to wild populations of these species and should be closed," said Bill Possiel, WWF-Greater Mekong Regional Conservation Director. "This region has a deserved reputation as both a destination and source of some of the world's most endangered species and that has to stop or these species could go extinct."

African **rhinos** are being poached at the rate of three per day to feed the demand for their horns in places such as Vietnam, where it is mostly consumed as a symbol of wealth, as well as for traditional medicine. It supposedly cures hangovers and fevers but rhino horn is in fact made from the same material as human nails, with no medicinal value. A more recent trend in rhino horn jewelry and carved horns is also threatening rhinos.

Another species covered in keratin is the **pangolin**, which is in high demand in China and Vietnam for its scales and is considered the most trafficked animal in the world. The **helmeted hornbill** has a massive helmet-like structure on its head that is ideal for carvings similar to ivory. Demand from China has led to a steady decline in populations.

The **serow** may not be well known, but this mountain dwelling goat-like species is highly prized for its meat and body parts, which are used in traditional medicine in Laos. **Leopards**, which were once widely found across Southeast Asia, are now poached for their skin and skulls, which are found in high numbers in the markets of the Golden Triangle.

Turtles are widely sold, both alive and as decorative objects, usually ending up on dinner plates. Finally, the world's largest species of cattle, the **gaur**, is declining globally thanks to demand for its impressive horns, which collectors like to have as trophies on their walls.

WWF is working with Governments, partners such as TRAFFIC and local NGOs, the private sector and enforcement authorities to address illegal wildlife markets in the Golden Triangle and beyond. This includes raising awareness across Asia on the need to close at least 20 markets by 2020 – whether they are physical markets, restaurants, shops or online markets. In addition, WWF is pushing for increasing enforcement and penalties for illegal wildlife crime, as well as sharing data so authorities know where the trade is concentrated.

"TRAFFIC's expertise in wildlife trade issues will underpin our collaboration with WWF as we mount a comprehensive effort to address trans-boundary wildlife trafficking in this critically important region," said James Compton, Senior Programme Director with TRAFFIC.

WWF is also providing support to the first line of defense against illegal wildlife trade – the rangers who put their lives on the line trying to protect endangered species from poachers. Critical needs include basic equipment, training and high tech equipment to match the sophistication of the organized criminal gangs behind the trade.

Notes: The report, photos, background information and infographics can be found here:

<http://bit.ly/2iBVt9U>

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About WWF Greater Mekong: The Greater Mekong is home to some of the planet's most endangered wild species, including the tiger, saola, Asian elephant, Mekong dolphin and Mekong giant catfish. A total of 2,409 new species of plants, birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and reptiles have been discovered in the Greater Mekong since 1997. WWF-Greater Mekong works on conservation initiatives through country programmes in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. WWF-Greater Mekong's mission is a future where humans live in harmony with nature. To learn more about WWF's activities, please visit us at www.greatermekong.panda.org