

Study: Wildlife trade figures unreliable

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Wildlife trade reported by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora reportedly differs from government figures.

The Convention is designed to assist governments conserve endangered species by regulating the international sale and transport of wildlife.

Scientists from Conservation International and the World Wildlife Fund say in some cases the figures for trade recorded by CITES vary wildly from records kept by the U.S. Customs Service.

The environmental groups say their research indicated the U.S. system for tracking endangered wildlife fails to register properly the numbers of plants and animals involved.

According to the study the CITES and U.S. Customs figures for imports and exports of certain species should be the same, but vary by as much as 5,200 percent.

"To solve any problem, it's important to understand the problem first. Our findings suggest we don't know as much as we must about the international wildlife trade to conserve endangered species," said Art Blundell, the study's lead author and Center for Applied Biodiversity Science fellow at Conservation International.

The study is detailed in the journal *Conservation Biology*.

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