

Rare coral sold for fish tanks

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British customs officials say the rising popularity of home reef aquariums is boosting an illegal trade in endangered live coral from around the world.

Hundreds of rare corals protected by international conservation laws have been intercepted at airports en route to aquarium shops in Britain during the last year, The Times of London reported Saturday.

For each coral that reaches an aquarium still alive, dozens more die, said Rachel Jones, a spokeswoman for London Zoo's aquarium.

"People who keep corals are very serious hobbyists and most are entirely above board," she said. "But some don't really care where the corals have come from as long as they look good in their aquarium -- for them it is just about collecting the latest cool animal in the latest cool color."

Live coral is one of the top five animal items customs officials search for at airports and sea ports, the Times reported, noting illegal corals from Indonesia worth more than \$100,000 were seized in September from the Manchester airport.

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