

# Instability of wildlife trade does not encourage trappers to conserve natural habitats

March 7 2018, by Dan Worth

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Much of the global wildlife trade originates in nations with rich biodiversity and high levels of poverty as the act of trapping and trading local wildlife allows people to generate extra income.

Researchers from the University's Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology, within its School of Anthropology and Conservation, and the School of Economics, examined the extent to which this is the case in Madagascar, one of the world's most important [biodiversity hotspots](#).

They interviewed people in several villages in the country to ascertain how many were involved in the legal trade in animals. They found around 13% of households they surveyed were engaged in live animal collection - usually reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. From this they earned an average of \$100 per season. This accounted for a quarter of their yearly income.

However, despite the [economic benefits](#) this can have on their lives, the researchers found no difference in opinions between trappers and non-trappers on how important they perceive conservation of the local habitat and its wildlife to be.

Furthermore, the research found that trappers perceive the work they do as risky and without stable financial guarantees. As such the income derived from the trade, while important, is not enough to create

incentives for species and habitat protection at a local scale in Madagascar.

The researchers hope the findings can lead to a better understanding of the social and economic benefits of wildlife trading to people in Madagascar and apply to other biodiversity-rich nations too.

This could help create policies for [biodiversity conservation](#) that better recognise the realities of the [wildlife](#) trade to local people. This in turn could help better incorporate them into on-the-ground action so that there is more engagement at a local level.

**More information:** Janine E. Robinson et al, Supplying the wildlife trade as a livelihood strategy in a biodiversity hotspot, *Ecology and Society* (2018). [DOI: 10.5751/ES-09821-230113](https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-09821-230113)

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