

Myanmar torches \$1.3m of illegal wildlife parts

October 4 2018



Ivory and animal horns were among hundreds of kilos of confiscated wildlife parts torched in Myanmar

Elephant skins, clouded leopard remains and tiger bones were among a \$1.3 million haul of illegal wildlife incinerated Thursday in Myanmar's

first ever public event of its kind against the illicit trade.

Trafficking and selling endangered animals is rampant across Myanmar, especially in border areas which serve as a key hub in the \$20 billion a year global wildlife trade.

Much of the demand is fuelled by a long-held belief in neighbouring China that rare animals have medicinal value.

Elephant parts—including chunks of skin—are the most lucrative for poachers in Myanmar.

Thursday's ceremony in the capital Naypyidaw saw 850 kilograms of seized contraband set ablaze, including [elephant ivory](#), tiger bone and skin, antelope antlers and pangolin scales.

"Rare wildlife including Myanmar's [elephants](#), tigers, bears and pangolins are the natural heritage of our country," Nyi Nyi Kyaw, director general of the Forest Department, said in a statement.

He noted an alarming increase in elephant poaching by gangs who have moved from southern Myanmar into the northern and western regions of Rakhine—a migratory path for wild elephants to Bangladesh.

The Forest Department would "take action" and confiscate their weapons whenever possible, he added, saying new forensic kits to identify fingerprints from seized ivory would help the crackdown.



Myanmar sounded the alarm over an increase in elephant poaching by gangs who have moved to their migratory paths

Myanmar faces an uphill battle against poachers who rake in cash from its long unregulated wildlife trade, a business which thrives in the lawless eastern periphery and border regions.

Sapai Min of WWF Myanmar said the government is making "good progress in the struggle against wildlife crime", and pointed to the increase of rangers patrolling poaching hotspots.

But critics say the government has shown a lack of political will to tackle a sophisticated network of criminals who are thought to be armed and funded by powerful "kingpins" in China.

Edwin Wiek of Wildlife Friends Foundation in Thailand said the burning ceremony was timed to coincide with a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meeting in Russia.

"More important for me is the people involved with the confiscation of the \$1.3 million (of wildlife parts)—who were these people, have they been found guilty or fined or given jail terms?" he said.



Wildlife parts worth more than a million dollars were destroyed at the Myanmar ceremony

"If that is the case, then that would show a real change of policy."

Myanmar is a signatory to CITES, which means that hunting [wildlife](#) is illegal in the country.

© 2018 AFP

Citation: Myanmar torches \$1.3m of illegal wildlife parts (2018, October 4) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-10-myanmar-torches-13m-illegal-wildlife.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.