

New study sheds light on illegal wildlife trade in Hong Kong

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Hong Kong's illegal wildlife trade is contributing to a global extinction crisis. Every year millions of live animals, plants and their derivatives are illegally trafficked into and through Hong Kong, by transnational companies and organised crime syndicates.

There is an urgent need for the government to enhance its current

enforcement strategy against [wildlife](#) smuggling. Over the last decade, the diversity of endangered species imported into Hong Kong has increased by 57%. At the same time, the estimated value of the trade has increased by 1,600%. Since 2013, seizures of illegal ivory, pangolin scales and rhino horn have been made by Hong Kong authorities, potentially equating to the deaths of 3,000 elephants, 96,000 pangolins and 51 rhinoceros.

Hong Kong's [illegal wildlife trade](#) is increasing in volume, underestimated in value and contributing to the global extinction crisis.

Some members of the Hong Kong Wildlife Trade Working Group (HKWTWG) have joined forces to publish a study focusing on the type and volume of seizures relating to illegal wildlife [trade](#) in Hong Kong over the last 5 years. The findings documented in the 200 page report: *Trading in Extinction: The Dark Side of Hong Kong's Wildlife Trade*, illustrate the city's central role in global wildlife trafficking and the extent and nature of the associated criminality. It identifies clearly, how future policy and enforcement could be improved to provide the urgently required long-term sustainability.

Associate Professor Amanda Whitfort of the Faculty of Law, one of the authors of the report said: "Wildlife crime in Hong Kong remains under-policed and under-investigated. Wildlife smuggling is not regarded as organised and serious crime, under Hong Kong law. Failure to include wildlife smuggling as a [crime](#) under the Organised and Serious Crime ordinance, Cap 455, hampers authorities' powers to effectively prosecute those behind the networks and syndicates that take advantage of Hong Kong's position as a major trading port."

"Our research indicates Hong Kong has become a hub for organised wildlife smugglers, with consequences for the international reputation of our city as well as international biodiversity," said Lisa Genasci, CEO of

ADMCF, adding that "Extinction of elephants, rhino, pangolin and many other species in our lifetime is on the horizon, unless the [illegal trade](#) is stopped."

Provided by The University of Hong Kong

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