

Vietnam seizes two tonnes of ivory and pangolin scales

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Even though their scales have been scientifically proven to be medicinally useless, the pangolin has become the world's most trafficked animal

Vietnam seized more than two tonnes of ivory tusks and pangolin scales hidden inside wooden boxes shipped from Nigeria, state media reported Tuesday.

The bust comes at the end of a year of big wildlife seizures destined for communist Vietnam, a hotbed of the illicit but lucrative trade in animal parts from elephants, pangolins, tigers and rhinos.

Authorities in northern Hai Phong city found 330 kilograms (730 pounds) of ivory and 1.7 tonnes of [pangolin scales](#) after checking three container shipments from Nigeria, according to Hai Quan Online, the official mouthpiece of Vietnam's customs department.

The manifest listed the goods as high-end lumber, the online site said, adding that the haul was hidden in boxes at the back of the containers.

Published photos showed a rectangular wooden box full of pangolin scales, with elephant tusks mixed in.

Both items are highly sought after on the multibillion-dollar illegal wildlife [market](#).

Vietnam outlawed the ivory trade in 1992, but the illegal market still persists and shops sell items pre-dating the ban for decorative and [medicinal purposes](#).

The pangolin is considered the most trafficked animal on the planet, and over one million have been snatched from Asian and African forests in the past decade.

They are destined for markets in China and Vietnam, where their scales are used in traditional medicine and their meat is bought on the black market.

Hanoi has vowed to crack down on the illegal wildlife trade, but conservationists say it persists thanks to weak law enforcement.

In May, Vietnamese police found 5.3 tonnes of pangolin scales hidden in a shipment from Nigeria at a southern port.

Some two months later in July, authorities in Singapore seized nearly nine tonnes of [ivory](#) and a huge stash of [pangolin](#) scales destined for Vietnam.

During the same month dozens of live pangolins smuggled from Laos were discovered dehydrated and weak on a bus in a central region of the country.

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