

Wildlife trade threatening unprotected animals

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The red-eyed crocodile skink (*Tribolonotus gracilis*) is endemic to New Guinea. Trade is only recorded by the US and EU, with recent import numbers indicating local wild harvest quotas are likely being exceeded by exporters. Credit: Adam Toomes, the University of Adelaide.

International trade in animals not regulated by multilateral agreements is putting them under increasing threat. More than three times the number of unregulated animal species are being imported into the United States compared to the number of regulated species.

Closer monitoring of trade in these [species](#) is urgently required so that they may be protected.

University of Adelaide researchers have looked at the number of species not listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) that are entering the United States.

Freyja Watters, who led the study, is a Ph.D. candidate from the University of Adelaide's Invasion Science and Wildlife Ecology Group in the School of Biological Sciences.

"The international wildlife trade is currently one of the leading threats to global biodiversity conservation and environmental security," she says.

"The [global trade](#) in live terrestrial vertebrates, mainly for pets, is increasing, and we found a growing demand for unregulated and novel species entering the United States, which is the largest global importer of wild species for the exotic pet market.

"Using a decade of importation data on wild harvested, live animals entering the United States, we found 3.6 times the number of unlisted species in U.S. imports compared with CITES-listed species (1,366 versus 378 species)."

Of the 1,366 species of amphibians, birds, mammals and reptiles not listed in the CITES appendices which were imported into the United States, these included species at risk of extinction, yet traded in large

numbers, such as the golden gecko (*Gekko badenii*) and Chinese water dragon (*Physignathus cocincinus*), or species with small and fragmented geographic ranges (

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