

AN OVERVIEW OF SEIZURES OF CITES-LISTED WILDLIFE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Prunus africana

CONTENTS

page 4

INTRODUCTION

page 6

REPORTED SEIZURES INVOLVING THE EU

Case Study: Trade in Medicinal Products	10
Countries/Territories of Departure of Illegal Trade'/Exporters	12
Destinations	13
Internal Seizures	15

page 16

CITES APPENDIX/EU ANNEX LISTINGS

page 19

METHODS OF TRANSPORT

page 20

DETAILS OF KEY SEIZURES REPORTED BY EU MEMBER STATES IN 2020

page 27

BRIEF COMPARISON TO 2019

page 31

Endnotes
Image credits



INTRODUCTION

**AN OVERVIEW OF CITES-RELATED
SEIZURES REPORTED BY EU MEMBER
STATES IN 2020**

A caged Grey parrot (Psittacus erithacus)

This briefing aims to provide an overview of all CITES-related seizures reported by the Member States of the European Union (EU)¹ for the twelve-month period January to December 2020 inclusive, so that these can be shared with key trade partners of the EU and selected third countries, as deemed necessary by EU Member States.

This briefing is based on all seizures reported by EU Member States which have taken place both at EU external borders (airports, maritime ports, land boundaries, and postal centres) and inside the EU (i.e. not at the external borders). The quantitative analysis of these seizures (**'Reported Seizures involving the EU' and 'Brief Comparison to 2019'**) and examples of seizures (**'Details of Key Seizures Reported by EU Member States in 2020'**) are based on seizure records submitted in the 2020 Annual Illegal Trade Reports (including information on prosecutions) submitted to the EU-TWIX² database by EU Member States. Of the 27 EU Member States, 24 provided data on seizures that occurred in 2020³. It was the first year that the UK's seizure data were excluded from the analysis due to their withdrawal from the EU on 31st January 2020. As a result of excluding these data, combined with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Member States reported a significantly lower number of seizures in 2020 compared to the 2017, 2018, and 2019 seizure data.

The emergence and spread of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (designated as the SARS-CoV-2) at the root of the global pandemic that began in early 2020 resulted in worldwide travel restrictions and widespread lockdowns, border closures, temporary closures of physical shops, and limitations on direct contact with other individuals for much of 2020. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimated global merchandise trade to have fallen by 20% for the entire year of 2020. Although international trade performance was uneven across regions, with the sharpest year-on-year downturn in April felt in the Middle East (with registered trade declines of up to 40%), trade also fell in the EU (imports and exports fell by 14%). At the same time, declines in East Asia and the Pacific trade were comparatively less severe (4% decline in exports)⁴. Across all industries, the aviation sector is thought to be among the hardest hit⁵. The travel restrictions associated with this public health crisis led to a de facto shut down of international and domestic aviation to contain the transmission of the virus, resulting in an unprecedented fall in air passenger volumes in 2020 (declines of more than 90% in April 2020 reported in all regions of the world and down by 75% in August 2020)⁶.

On the other hand, as e-commerce volumes accelerated during the pandemic, freight movements through airports were boosted by the sudden decline of cargo space offered by fewer passenger flights, benefitting providers of air cargo transportation⁷. Reductions in the number of arrivals at ports (hereafter 'calls') per cargo type were most profound for passenger-cargo, with the total number of global passenger

ship calls at the end of the second quarter (Q2) of 2020 17% lower than in 2019. By region, Europe also saw the most significant decline in the total number of ship calls, with a drop of 25% in weeks 13 – 24 of 2020 (Q2)⁸. These travel restrictions inevitably impacted law enforcement action, resulting in reduced interceptions. Approximately two-thirds of the typical number of seizure records of species protected under CITES reported by law enforcement authorities each year in the EU were reported in 2020. COVID-19 prevention measures are also likely to have disrupted traffickers' transport methods and modes of operation, in some cases impacting the scale of the operation of trafficking networks due to fewer opportunities for illegal trade⁹. This factor is also likely to have contributed to the reduced number of seizures.

It is important to note that any change in the number of seizures reported over the years and any patterns in illegal wildlife trade observed from the seizure data may be due to varying levels of enforcement effort, which could differ over time by the various EU Member States. These do not necessarily indicate shifts in demand or changes in illegal wildlife trade dynamics. The COVID-19 pandemic also likely had an impact on the number of personnel able to carry out enforcement actions. COVID-19 related staff sickness or self-isolation having been in contact with someone with COVID-19, resulted in a reduced workforce and therefore reduced capacity to detect and report illegal wildlife trade. Conclusions should be drawn with this in mind.

REPORTED SEIZURES INVOLVING THE EU

EU MEMBER STATES REPORTED A TOTAL OF 3977 SEIZURES IN 2020 WITH GERMANY¹⁰, FRANCE, THE NETHERLANDS, AND SPAIN ACCOUNTING FOR 79% OF 2020 SEIZURES.

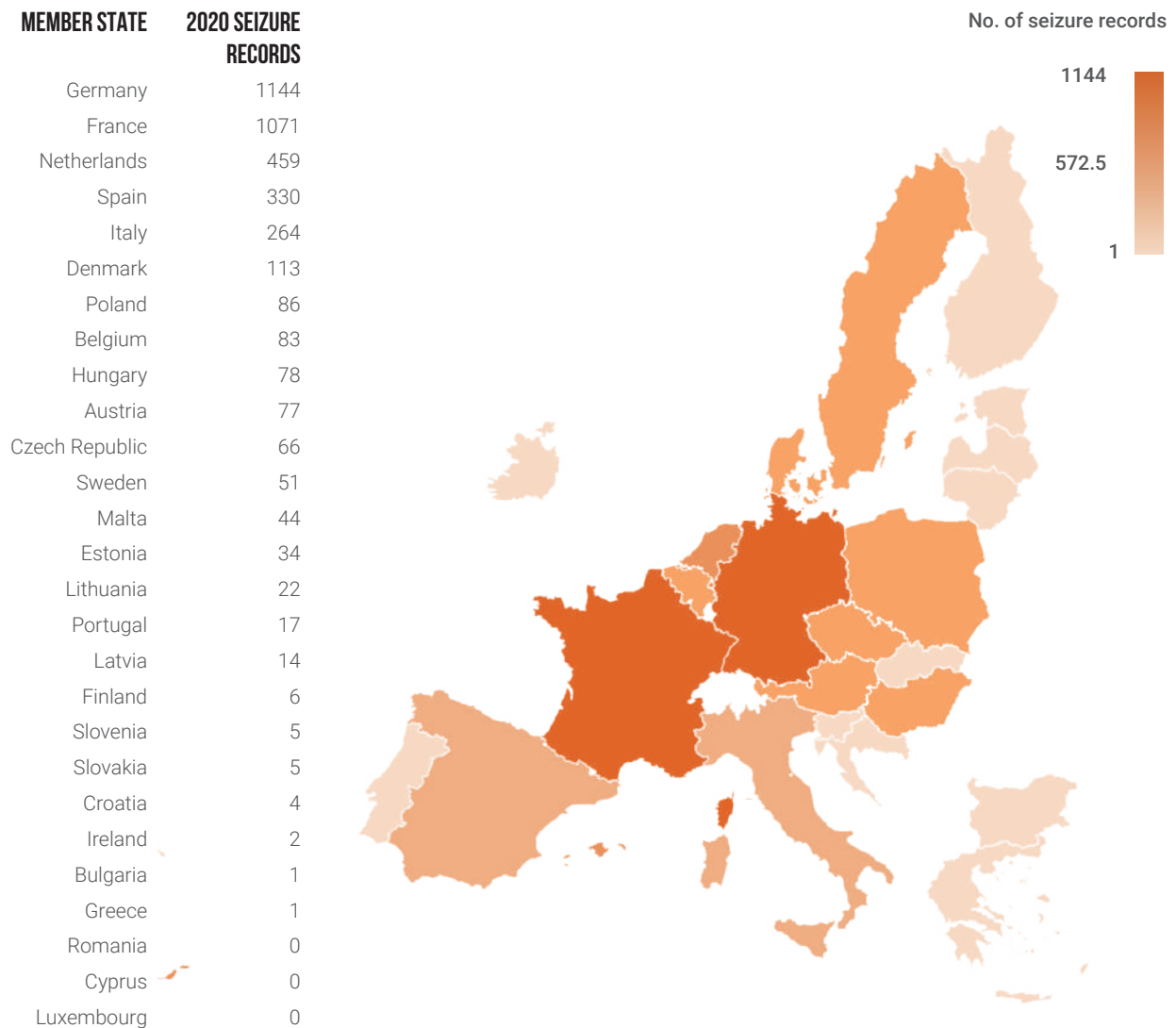


FIGURE 1

Distribution of seizure records across EU Member States, based on the number of total seizure records in 2020 (excluding Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Romania, who reported no seizures in 2020). Source: EU-TWIX database

Note: The designations of geographical entities in this map and publication, and the presentation of the material, do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of TRAFFIC or its supporting organisations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The main types of commodities seized in the EU in 2020 were, in order of the number of reported seizure records (see Figure 2):

i. **Medicinals**^{11,12} including both medicinal products (medicinal products are also understood to include health/food supplements and cosmetics) and parts/derivatives for medicinal use¹³ (1184 seizure records involving 205 571 specimens (e.g. pieces, packets, pills, etc.) and an additional 1425 kg and 22 l). 82% of medicinal seizures were derived from plants (965 seizure records, involving 167 873 items of plant-derived medicinals and an additional ca. 1786 kg and ca. 463 l). A total of 37 698 animal-derived medicinal items (and an additional ca. 58 kg and ca. 1 l) were reportedly seized across 219 seizure records;

ii. **Reptile bodies, parts, and derivatives** (437 seizure records, 15 438 specimens, and an additional ca. 416 kg);

iii. **Live reptiles** (373 seizure records; 1290 specimens);

iv. **Live birds** (343 seizure records; 1255 live birds);

v. **Bird bodies parts and derivatives** (290 seizure records; 2850 specimens);

vi. **Live coral and coral rock** (286 seizure records; 1965 specimens and an additional ca. 109 kg);

vii. **Elephant Ivory** (226 seizure records; 1921 specimens and an additional ca. 129 kg);



Plant-derived medicinals were the most seized commodities

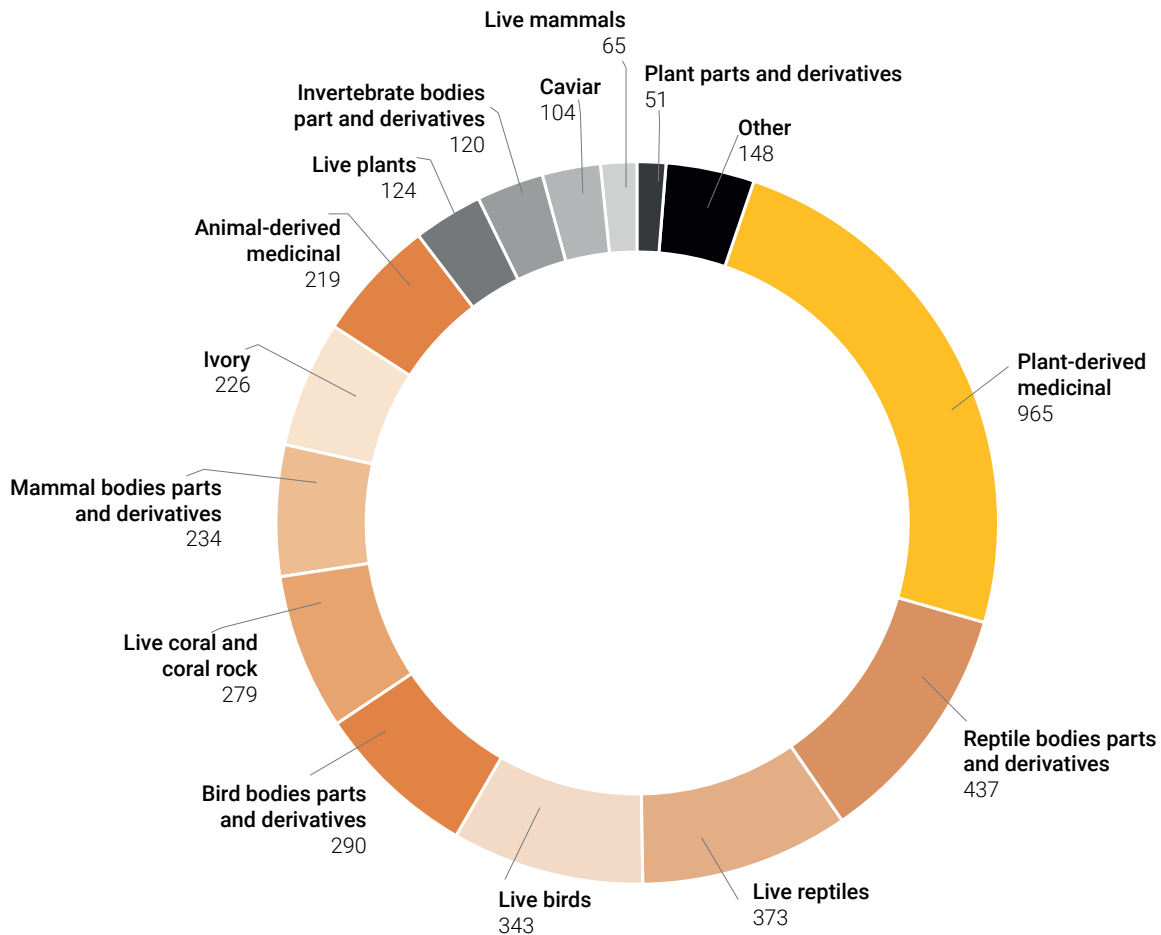


FIGURE 2

Distribution of all seizure records reported by the EU Member States across commodity groups, 2020 (based on the number of seizure records) Source: EU-TWIX database.

Note: "Other" includes the following commodity groups: Fish bodies parts and derivatives, timber, eel bodies parts and derivatives, live eels, live invertebrates, coral parts and derivatives, live amphibians, live fish, bird eggs. Source: EU-TWIX database



Mediterranean spur-thighed tortoise

Important individual seizures reported by Member States across key commodity groups are set out in Section 3.

According to the EU-TWIX database, in 2020, more than 54% (2149 seizure records) were reportedly seized **on import**, followed by **internal seizures** (658 seizure records, 17%), **seizures in transit** (296 seizure records, 7%), and **seizures on (re-)export** (114 seizure records, 3%). For the rest (760 seizure records, 18%), the direction of trade was reported as unknown/other, or no information was provided.

Of the total seizure records in 2020, an estimated value of commodities seized was reported in 850 seizure records, estimated at a minimum of EUR 3.1 million. This report does not attempt to extrapolate the available value information to the whole 2020 seizures dataset, nor does the figure represent the actual illegal wildlife trade market in the EU as the available data are minimal. There may also be differences in the information provided by Member States on values, for example, whether the value provided was the value of the commodities on the legal or the illegal market, and at what point, along the trade chain, the reported value was representing. This reported value decreased from EUR 4.7 million in 2019. The decrease in reported trade values in 2020 could also reflect the decline in seizure records in 2020 resulting from the COVID-19 global pandemic. Compared to the 1104 seizure records where a value for items seized was reported in 2019 (17% of the

total seizures reported in 2019, 6441), 21% of seizure records reported an estimated value of seized commodities in 2020 (850 out of a total of 3977).

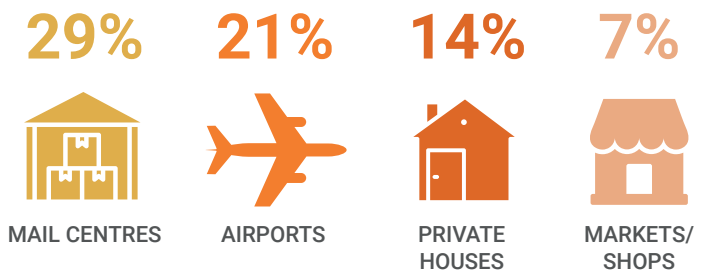
The number of seizure records with a reported value also varied significantly across the commodity groups. For example, EU Member States reported values for 127 seizure records of live birds, while only one value was reported for live invertebrates seized in 2020. As a result, the reported values of the different types of commodities in the 850 seizure records (e.g., Figure 3) only represent those with available information. They do not reflect the actual market value of those commodities in the EU illegal wildlife trade. With the available value (EUR) information submitted in 2020, live eels were the commodity with the highest reported value totalling EUR 835 716 (Figure 3). These data were based on information provided in 14 seizure records. Other commodities with a high reported value were reptile bodies, parts, and derivatives; eel bodies, parts, and derivatives; ivory; and fish bodies, parts, and derivatives (Figure 3). Seizures involving live reptiles, live mammals, and timber were also reported as high-value commodities (based on the ratio of the number of seizure records to the value reported, Figure 3). The number of specimens and the additional reported mass was not included in this ratio.



Over 54%
of seizures
were **seized on
import into
the EU** in 2020

In 2020, Member States reported the type of location where a seizure took place for 3662 seizure records (94%). Most seizures were made at mail centres (1167 seizure records, 29%), followed by airports (835 seizure records, 21%), private houses (548 seizure records, 14%), and markets/shops (286 seizure records, 7%). The remaining seizures were intercepted in other locations, including maritime ports, roads or highways, fairs/exhibitions, land boundaries, and zoological gardens. In 315 seizure records (6%), the type of location was left blank or was unknown.

Type of location where a seizure took place:



Top commodities seized by value (EUR)



Live eels totalling ca. EUR 835 716, based on values given in **14 seizure records** (involving a volume of ca. 818 kg)



Reptile bodies parts and derivatives totalling ca. EUR 445 728, based on **111 seizure records** (involving 618 specimens and an additional mass of ca. 82 kg)



Eel bodies, parts and derivatives totalling EUR 308 726 based on **two seizure records** (involving a volume of 22 000 kg)



Ivory totalling EUR 248 847, based on **99 seizure records** (involving 632 specimens and an additional mass of ca. 18 kg)



Fish bodies, parts and derivatives, totalling EUR 228 347 based on **26 seizure records** (involving 26 specimens and an additional mass of ca. 26 928 kg)

Other high value commodities (EUR)



Live reptiles totalling EUR 226 670 based on **111 seizure records** (involving 347 specimens and an additional mass of ca. 10 kg)



Live coral and coral rocks totalling EUR 174298 based on **43 seizure records** (involving 292 specimens and an additional mass of ca. 83 kg)



Plant parts and derivatives totalling EUR 98 139 based on **27 seizure records** (involving 3638 specimens and an additional 18 066 kg)



Live mammals totalling EUR 77 850 based on **11 seizure records** (involving 29 live mammals)



Timber totalling EUR 75 292 based on **four seizure records** (involving a volume of ca. 6894 kg and one specimen)

FIGURE 3

Top commodities seized by value (EUR), based on 850 seizure records where EU Member States reported the value of the commodity seized in 2020.



Seizures of medicinals

remained constant, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

CASE STUDY: TRADE IN MEDICINAL PRODUCTS¹⁴

In 2020, the most frequently seized commodity type was **medicinals** (plant-and animal-derived medicinals); accounting for 1184 seizure records (30% of total 2020 seizures, representing a slight proportional increase from 29% of total seizures in 2019. In cases where the CITES Appendix listing of the seized medicinal species was reported (54%), most seizures were of CITES Appendix II listed species (72%), followed by fewer seizure records involving CITES Appendix I listed species (28%). The largest exporting countries of medicinals, based on the number of seizure records, were **Thailand** (30%), the **United States of America** (USA) (23%), **Switzerland** (9%), and **mainland China** (8%), with **Germany** (57%), the **Netherlands** (20%), and **Poland** (4%) the most frequent destinations. Medicines, extracts, and cosmetics were the most reported types of animal and plant-derived medicinals seized in 2020.

For plant-derived medicinals, **Costus Root** *Saussurea costus* (App. I/ Annex A) (17%) and **African Cherry** *Prunus africana* (App. II/ Annex B) (7%) were the most reported species. The largest seizure of CITES Appendix I listed (Annex A) medicinals in 2020 was a single seizure of ca. 224 kg of Costus Root *Saussurea costus* (App. I/ Annex A). These roots were exported from Saudi Arabia to France, seized on import at Roissy Charles De Gaulle (CDG) Airport, Paris. In terms of the number of specimens, the largest seizure for a CITES Appendix II listed species (Annex B) involved 54 000 African Cherry *Prunus africana* pills. These medicinals originated from Cameroon, were exported from the USA, and were destined for Croatia. However, the specimens reportedly first transited through Spain as an intermediary stopover, followed by the Netherlands, intercepted at a mail centre in Schiphol International Airport. These were detected during a Customs documentary check.



Ginseng roots



King Cobra

For animal-derived medicinals, **sea horses** *Hippocampus japonicus* (14%) (App. II/Annex B) and **King Cobra** *Ophiophagus hannah* (App. II/Annex B) (8%) were the most reported species.

Of the 1184 seizure records involving medicinals, a total of 93% reported the reason for the seizure was due to a lack of CITES documents accompanying the goods. Illegal possession, illegal acquisition, illegal crossing, and illegal sale/offering/keeping/transporting for sale and illegal purchase/offer to purchase were also reported as reasons for these seizures in 284 records. It is clear based on the reasons for seizures, for both CITES Appendix I and Appendix II listed species that a lack of adherence to CITES permitting is a significant cause of goods being seized.

A likely contributing factor for this proportional increase in trade in medicinal products in the EU in 2020 compared to 2019 is the COVID-19 pandemic and associated heightened health concerns. There have been reports about the use of herbal products as part of the COVID-19 response (both government-promoted and individual's traditional remedies) in most

regions, including Europe, and an increase in trade volume is therefore likely. For example, Traditional Chinese Medicine formulations using plant species (including CITES Appendix II/EU Annex B listed ginseng root *Panax* spp, and Chinese Agarwood *Aquilaria sinensis*) are officially recommended for COVID-19 treatment in China and were exported to Thailand, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic (PDR), and Ecuador¹⁵. Thailand was also the most prominent (re-)exporter of plant-derived medicinal products to the EU Member States in 2020. An alert concerning the detection of a product containing American ginseng *Panax quinquefolius* (App. II/Annex B) marketed to treat COVID-19, and associated pneumonia was also circulated amongst EU Member States law enforcement¹⁶. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the number of wild plant harvesters, including in European households, may increase as an impact of the long-term economic crisis due to COVID-19¹⁷.

AJ ' COUNTRIES/TERRITORIES OF DEPARTURE OF ILLEGAL TRADE'/EXPORTERS

A total of 2470 seizure records (ca. 62%) had countries/territories of export (or 'departure of illegal trade') reported; EU Member States (excluding their overseas territories) were the country of export for 193 seizure records (5% of total seizures), while non-EU countries/territories were reported as the country/territory of departure/export for 2276 seizure records (66%).



THAILAND was the reported exporter in 482 seizure records: a total of 75% of these records involved **plant- and animal-derived medicinals** (359 records comprising 18 695 specimens and an additional ca. 106 kg and 1.2 l) mainly containing Cacti *Cactaceae* spp. (App. II/ Annex B) (252 records, 16 020 specimens, and an additional ca. 101 kg). Live coral and coral rock (39 seizures comprising 360 specimens and ca. 2 kg) and live plants (36 seizures comprising 573 specimens) were the other main commodity types seized.



THE USA was the reported exporter in 372 seizure records: around 69% of these USA records involved plant-derived medicinals (258 records involving 78 538 specimens and an additional ca. 146 kg and ca. 19 l) mainly containing *Cactaceae* spp. (the majority of which was Queen of the Night Cactus *Selenicereus grandifloras* (App. II/ Annex B) and parts and derivatives of African Cherry *Prunus africana* (App. II/Annex B). A significant number of records also involved reptile bodies, parts, and derivatives (51 seizure records comprising 188 specimens).



MAINLAND CHINA was the reported exporter in 133 seizure records: the majority of these records (74%) involved plant- and animal-derived medicinals (99 records involving 6769 specimens [pills, pieces, boxes etc.] and an additional ca. 28 kg and ca. <1 l) mainly containing parts and derivatives of taxa such as American Ginseng *Panax quinquefolius* (App. II/Annex B), Costus Root *Saussurea costus* (App. I/Annex A) or Orchids *Orchidaceae* spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B).



INDONESIA was the reported exporter in 284 seizure records: 69% of records involved reptile bodies, parts, and derivatives, comprising 82 seizure records involving 592 specimens mainly consisting of small leather products derived from Pythonidae spp. (App. II/Annex B). Additionally, 16 seizure records involved plant-derived medicinals (14%, 2637 specimens), mainly orchids *Orchidaceae* spp (App. II/Annex B), including **rhizome** of *Gastrodia elata* (App. II/Annex B), as well as 12 seizure records which involved live corals and coral rocks (117 specimens), mainly consisting of raw corals, particularly of stony coral *Scleractinia* spp. (App. II/Annex B).



SWITZERLAND was the reported exporter in 124 seizure records: most of these involved plant-derived medicinals (103 records involving 47 430 specimens) mainly consisted of Costus Root *Saussurea costus* (App. I/Annex A) originating from India.

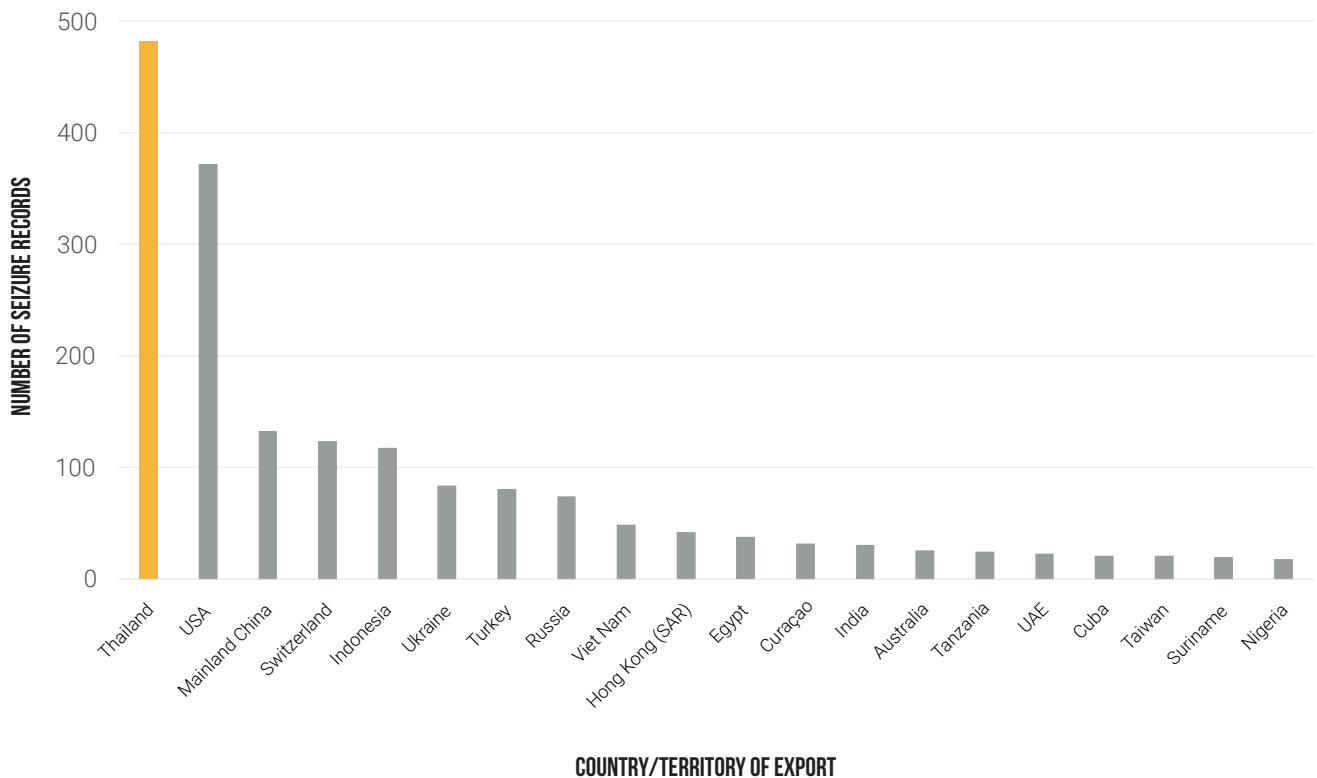


FIGURE 4

Top 20 non-EU countries/territories (including overseas territories e.g. Curaçao) of export or departure of illegal trade as reported by the EU Member States, according to the number of seizure records, 2020. States reported the value of the commodity seized in 2020.

Source: EU-TWIX database. Abbreviations: Hong Kong SAR – Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China, Russia – Russian Federation, Taiwan – Taiwan, province of China, UAE – the United Arab Emirates.

B) DESTINATIONS

A total of 3024 (76%) seizure records had countries/territories of destination reported. EU Member States were the destination of 2755 seizure records (69%)¹⁸, and 269 seizure records (ca. 7% of total seizures) with known destinations were destined for non-EU countries (or overseas territories).

Of the 2755 seizure records destined for EU Member States, Germany was the most reported destination country (968 seizure records), followed by France (627 seizure records), the Netherlands (373 seizure records), Denmark (114 seizure records), and Poland (110 seizure records). These five countries were reported as the destination for 80% of the seizures of wildlife trade destined for the EU.

Of the 269 seizure records destined for non-EU countries or territories, **mainland China** remained the leading destination for

commodities seized upon export/(re)-export from the EU or while in transit in the EU, accounting for 42 seizure records (Figure 5). The United Kingdom (UK) was the second most frequent destination for commodities seized in the EU (27 seizure records, 10% of total non-EU seizures).

A total of 31% of the 42 seizure records destined for mainland China were animal-derived medicinals. Examples of the types of animals reported in these seizures included 416 specimens and an additional 5.5kg of bodies of seahorse *Hippocampus* spp. (App. II/Annex B), as well as 396 specimens and an additional 25 kg and ca. 0.4 l of extract and cosmetics made from sturgeon/paddlefish (order Acipenseriformes spp.) (App. II/ Annex B).

Mainland China was also an important destination country for reptile bodies, parts, and derivatives (12 seizure records comprising of 135 specimens mainly exported from West Africa, including Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Liberia), and African Elephant ivory carvings and jewellery *Loxodonta africana* (App. I/Annex A) (12 seizure records comprising of 292 specimens mainly exported from Nigeria).

In addition, the **UK, USA, Switzerland,** and **Russia** were frequent destinations:

UK - 27 seizure records, mainly involving reptile bodies, parts, and derivatives and plant-derived medicinals.

USA - 26 seizure records, mainly involving timber, reptile bodies, parts and derivatives and mammal bodies, parts, and derivatives.

Switzerland - 20 seizure records, mainly involving reptile bodies, parts and derivatives, and live and rock coral.

Russia - 16 seizure records, mainly live plants and eel bodies, parts, and derivatives. Russia was an important destination for European Eel *Anguilla anguilla* (App. II/Annex B) meat shipments. A total of ca. 99 200 kg of European Eel meat destined for Russia was seized in Lithuania (reported in three seizure records). These seizures occurred at either a maritime port or land boundary at the Lithuanian-Belarus border as the eels were in transit to Russia.

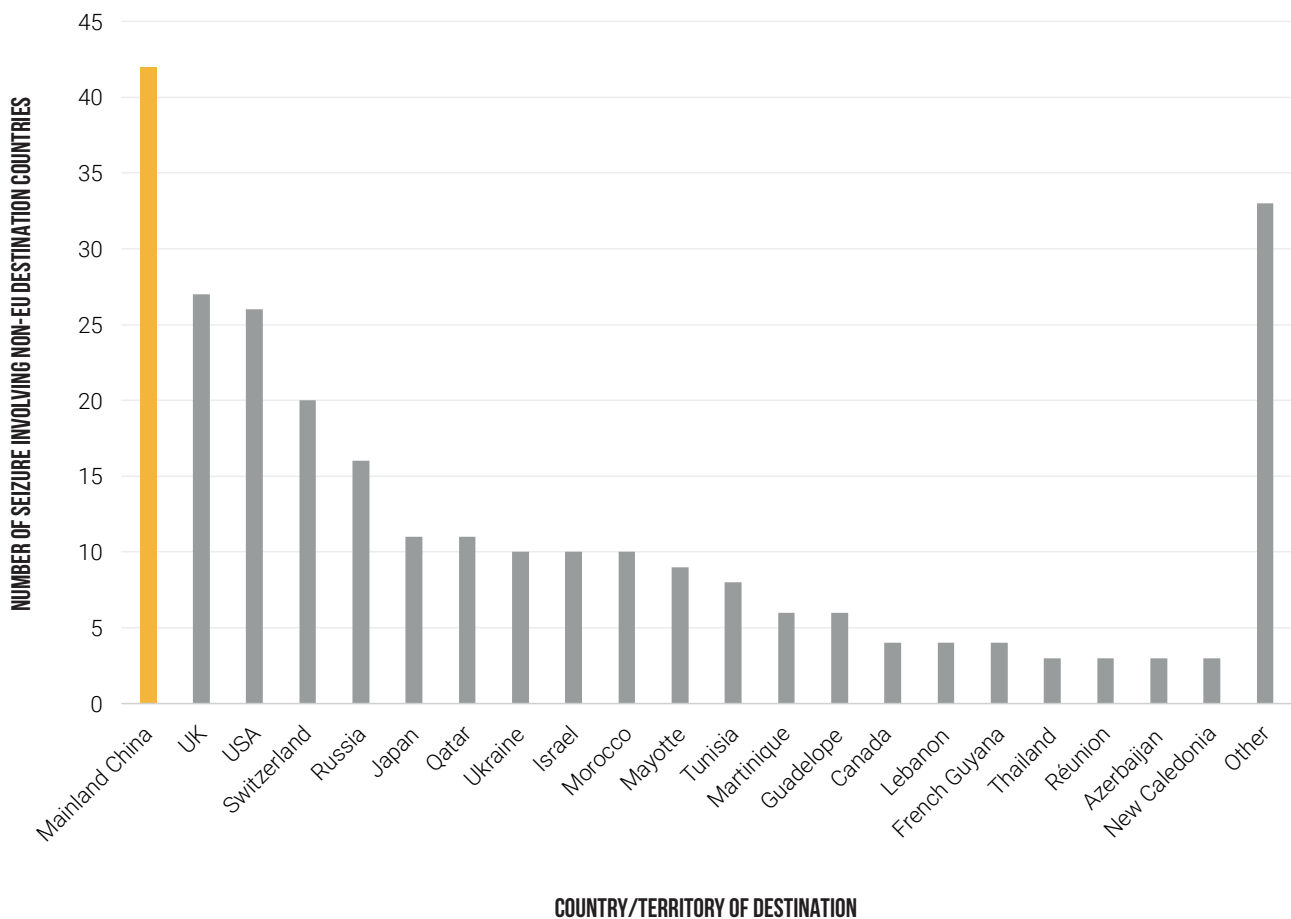


FIGURE 5

Non-EU countries/territories of destination of illegal trade (including their overseas territories e.g. French Guyana, Mayotte, Martinique, Réunion, Guadeloupe etc.) as reported by EU Member States, according to the number of seizure records, 2020.

Source: EU-TWIX database. Abbreviations: Russia – Russian Federation, UK – United Kingdom, USA – United States of America.



Acropora hard corals

C) INTERNAL SEIZURES

A total of 658 internal seizure records were reported by 11 EU Member States (France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Malta, Hungary, Latvia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Estonia, and Finland¹⁹). The main commodity types seized within the EU in 2020 (in order of importance based on the number of reported seizure records) were **bird bodies parts and derivatives (30%)**, followed by **live birds (19%)**, **elephant ivory (15%)**, **live reptiles (14%)** and **mammal bodies part and derivatives (9%)**.

A total of **330 bird bodies, parts, and derivatives** were reported as seized internally, comprising 195 seizure records. These seizures were mainly of bird bodies and trophies. Fifty per cent (97 specimens) were from the order Falconiformes (birds of prey). **France** reported a high proportion of these seizures (70 records involving 173 specimens), most intercepted at markets/shops.

Nine EU Member States reported **127 internal seizure records involving a total of 335 live birds**, 75% were parrots (order Psittaciformes). African Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* (App. I/Annex A) was the most seized species, with 92 individuals found across 26 seizures. France and Spain were the primary reporting countries of live bird seizures. For example, **Spain** reported one seizure record involving 13 live Grey Parrots

seized from a market/shop in Malaga, valued at EUR 18 000.

There were 96 reported internal seizure reports of **elephant ivory**, involving **601 specimens**. While most seizure records did not identify the elephant ivory to species level, ivory from both African Elephants *Loxodonta africana* (24%) and Asian Elephants *Elephas maximus* (18%) was seized (both App. I, II/Annex A, B). France and Spain reported most of these internal ivory seizures (46 and 43 records, respectively). France reported seizures involving 330 specimens of ivory, mainly from fairs/exhibitions/shows/auction houses. Spain reported seizures involving 254 specimens of ivory, mainly from roads/highways/public parking, private houses, or markets/shops.

Hundreds of **live reptiles (299)** were seized within the EU. Sixty-seven per cent of seizure records of live reptiles involved tortoises, followed by snakes and lizards. Hermann's Tortoise *Testudo hermanni* (App. II/Annex A) was the most seized species in terms of the quantity of seizure records (25). Spur-Thighed Tortoises *Testudo graeca* (App. II/Annex A) was the most seized species (94 individuals). Spain and France mainly reported internal seizures of live reptiles.

D) CITES APP./EU ANNEX LISTINGS



A total of 3171 seizure records had information on the CITES document-related offence which resulted in the specimens being seized by officials in the EU reported in 2020. For approximately 73% (2910) of seizure records, Member States reported the **reason was due to a lack of CITES documents accompanying the specimens.**

EU Member States reported a total of 3977 seizure records in 2020. Seventy seven per cent involved specimens of CITES Appendix II listed species (ca. 3048 seizure records), of which 2603 seizure records involved Annex B listed species and 444 seizure records involved Annex A listed species.

Approximately 16% (654) were reported as CITES Appendix I listed species (all Annex A listed species). A further 26 records (<1%) involved CITES Appendix III listed species (80% were also Annex C listed species, with the remaining 20% Annex B listed including six specimens of Walrus *Odobenus rosmarus* teeth, tusk, and ivory carvings).

An additional 23 seizures were recorded as CITES Appendix I/II listed. This reporting scenario was typically because the specimens were not identified to a taxonomic level

that allowed for an exact Appendix listing classification. For example, seizures reported at a higher-level classification e.g. Order, Family, or even Genus, under which Appendix I and II listed species fall within this taxonomic classification. Only five of these seizures were reported to the species level, most of which involved specimens of Lion *Panthera leo*. Only the Range State India populations are included in Appendix I, while all others are included in Appendix II.

In addition, 219 seizure records (6% of total seizures) involved specimens Not Classified (NC) in the CITES Appendices.

- However, 20 of those 219 seizures were reported as listed in EU Annex A (e.g., North African Crested Porcupine *Hystrix cristata* hair, bodies, and meat)
- Three in Annex B (involving a total of 66 live Painted turtle subspecies *Chrysemys picta*), and
- Five seizure records in Annex D (e.g. one live Chinese Water Dragon *Physignathus cocincinus*).
- All of these specimens making up these 20 seizures are collectively afforded a higher level of protection through the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations despite not being listed on the CITES Appendices.





African Elephant

CITES APPENDIX I LISTED SPECIES

As many as 654 seizure records (ca. 16% of total seizure records) involved CITES Appendix I listed species (all Annex A). Out of a total of 100 different species reported to the species-level, **Costus Root** *Saussurea costus* (169 seizure records), **African Elephant** *Loxodonta africana* (80 seizure records), and **African Grey Parrot** *Psittacus erithacus* (59 seizure records) were the most commonly reported species (based on the number of seizure records). These were also the top three reportedly seized CITES Appendix I listed species in 2019. Accordingly, plant-derived medicinals (25% of total Appendix I listed seizures), elephant ivory (15%), live birds (13%), and mammal bodies, parts, and derivatives (12%) were the most commonly seized commodities listed as CITES Appendix I.

Switzerland (15%), **mainland China** (3%), and **India** (2%) were the most commonly reported exporting countries of CITES Appendix I listed species (based on the number of seizure records). Fifty-nine per cent of seizures involving

Appendix I species reported the country of export as unknown or unreported. While **France** (23%), **Germany** (19%), and the **Netherlands** (9%) were the most commonly reported destination countries (based on the number of seizure records). Thirty-two per cent of seizures involving Appendix I species reported the country of destination as unknown or unreported.

Most seizures of CITES Appendix I listed commodities (73%) were made due to wildlife goods having no CITES document, followed by a non-document related offence (4%), a CITES document offence reported as “other” (3%), or an invalid CITES document (ca. 1%). These commodities were mostly seized at private houses (19%), airports (16%), markets/shops (14%), roads (14%) or mail centres (11%) and detected due to intelligence/investigation (19%), customs document checks (18%), routine inspection (10%) or internet monitoring (10%).



169
Costus Root
seizures records

CITES APPENDIX II LISTED SPECIES

In 2020, 3048 seizure records (ca. 77% of total seizure records) were reported to involve CITES Appendix II listed species (444 seizure records involved Annex A listed species, and 2603 seizure records involved Annex B listed species).

A total of 386 different species were reportedly seized, with **Hermann's tortoise** *Testudo hermanni* (104 seizure records), **African Cherry** *Prunus africana* (70 seizure records), and **Spur-thighed Tortoise** *Testudo graeca* (67 seizure records) the most commonly reported CITES Appendix II listed species (based on the number of seizure records). In 2019, American Ginseng *Panax quinquefolius*, Spur-thighed Tortoise *Testudo graeca*, and Queen Conch *Strombus gigas* were the most commonly reported species.



104
Hermann's
tortoise
seizure records



70
African
Cherry
seizure records

Regarding the number of specimens, African Cherry *Prunus africana* was also the most frequently reported CITES Appendix II species. Those specimens of African Cherry reported to species-level totalled 74 761 specimens across 70 seizures. Japanese seahorses *Hippocampus japonicus* (20 441 specimens across 31 seizures) and *Dendrobium nobile* (4400 specimens in one seizure) followed as the species with the highest number of specimens reportedly seized. Regarding seizures reported by volume, European Eel *Anguilla anguilla* was the commonly reported species (involving 100 483 kg across 38 seizure records). Plant-derived medicinals (mainly pieces or pills) (25%), reptile bodies, parts, and derivatives (12%), and live reptiles (11%) were the most common commodity groups seized that involved CITES Appendix II listed species.

Thailand (15%), the USA (11%), and mainland China (4%) were the most frequently reported exporters (based on the number of seizure records) of CITES App. II species, while the most commonly reported destination countries were Germany (27%), France (13%), and the Netherlands (10%), based on the number of seizure records. Specimens of CITES Appendix II listed species were most commonly seized at mail centres (35%), airports (23%), and private houses (13%), and most frequently detected by

routine inspection (34%), physical inspection (9%) and intelligence/investigation (9%).

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of seizures were reportedly made due to a lack of CITES documents, followed by a CITES document offence reported as "other" (3%) and a non-document related offence (3%). There were gaps in these data, as 19% of the seizure records involving CITES Appendix II listed species did not report the reason for the seizure.

Trade in specimens of CITES Appendix II/Annex B listed species is generally permitted²⁰ if the specimens are accompanied by the necessary import and export permits. This raises questions as to why these shipments involving CITES Appendix II/EU Annex B listing species, especially those declared as having no accompanying CITES documents, are non-compliant, resulting in their seizure.

METHODS OF TRANSPORT

The most frequently reported location where seizures occurred was mail centres (29%), with 132 329 specimens and an additional ca. 1761 kg and ca. 21 l seized. **Germany** reported the highest number of seizures at mail centres with 814 seizure records (80% of which occurred at mail centres in Frankfurt am Main Airport and 11% at Leipzig Airport). The **Netherlands** reported the second-highest number of seizures at mail centres (134 seizure records and reported the highest number of specimens to be seized in mail centres, involving a total of 68 685 specimens). Sixty per cent of these seizures took place at Schiphol International Airport and 38% at The Hague. **France** followed with 67 seizures at mail centres, 46% of which occurred at Chilly Mazarin and 39% at a mail centre in Roissy CDG Airport). The most seized commodity group (by the number of seizure records) at mail centres was **plant-derived medicinals** (55%), followed by **reptile bodies, parts, and derivatives** (15%) and **live plants** (8%). Detection methods included routine inspection (75%) and Customs documentary checks (12%).

Transport via mail (primarily airmail) was the most commonly reported mode of transport of apprehended goods seized in mail centres

in the EU in 2020, accounting for 1176 seizure records (35% of the 3335 seizure records with reported information on transport mode). In addition to airmail, air transport also includes transport by mail freight and through general air cargo, or transport by a passenger. Specifically, transport via airmail was the most commonly reported mode of travel, accounting for 26% of seizure records (1044), followed by transport by passenger accounting for 16% of seizure records (628). However, there are gaps in reporting as in 1088 seizure records (27%), the transport details are unknown or blank.

Furthermore, 163 seizures took place at a maritime port, involving a total of 46 603 specimens and an additional 104 861 kg. The most commonly reported commodities seized at EU maritime ports were **plant parts and derivatives** (one seizure of 812 kg of *Dalbergia sissoo* (App. II/Annex B), **eel bodies parts and derivatives** (77 294 kg across 19 seizure records), and **fish bodies parts and derivatives** (26 287 kg across nine seizure records). There are reports of traffickers increasingly relying on maritime transport for moving illicit wildlife products due to COVID-19 related disruptions²¹.





The cargo holding facility at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport, Thailand

DETAILS OF KEY SEIZURES REPORTED BY EU MEMBER STATES IN 2020

Table 1 contains details of crucial seizure records reported by EU Member States from January to December 2020. Seizures were selected based on the following criteria:

- (i) seizures involving particularly large quantities of a commodity type; and
- (ii) seizures highlighting important illegal trade trends involving the EU (e.g. in terms of countries or species involved).

TABLE 1

Details of selected seizures reported by EU Member States for 2020 arranged by commodity type (the country which reported the seizure records is shown in **bold**, and the EU Member States involved in the trade route is shown in CAPITALS).

EXPORT/ COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE	TRADE ROUTE		SPECIES AND QUANTITY SEIZED	DETAILS
	TRANSIT	DESTINATION		
MEDICINALS				
Mainland China	➔	THE NETHERLANDS	2008 specimens containing <i>cactus Cactaceae</i> spp. (App. II/ Annex B) extract were transported by airmail and concealed in a courier parcel.	Detected at the Hague mail centre due to Customs documentary checks (January 2020)
India	➔ Switzerland ➔	GERMANY	41 seizure records involving a total of 16 934 specimens (mostly pills) containing Costus Root <i>Saussurea costus</i> (App. I/Annex A). These were mainly made up of medicine and extract. All specimens were seized after having been transported by road into Germany by delivery vans. The specimens were concealed in freight and postal courier packages.	Detected at a road/highway following Customs documentary checks and routine inspections (December 2020)
Saudi Arabia	➔	FRANCE	Ca. 224 kg of Costus Root <i>Saussurea costus</i> (App. I/Annex A). The shipment was valued at 1075 EUR.	Detected at Roissy CDG airport (May 2020)
Turkey	➔	THE NETHERLANDS	68 seizures involving a total of 325 specimens of orchid <i>Orchidaceae</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B). These were mainly made up of derivatives, medicines, and powder, including coffee with orchid extract.	Detected at Schiphol International Airport due to random checks (2020)

TRADE ROUTE				SPECIES AND QUANTITY SEIZED	DETAILS		
EXPORT/ COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE		TRANSIT				DESTINATION	
Cameroon	USA	SPAIN	THE NETHERLANDS	CROATIA	54 000 pills containing African Cherry <i>Prunus africana</i> (App. II/Annex B). (February 2020)		
Brazil		➔		THE NETHERLANDS	One seizure of 4400 specimens of <i>Dendrobium nobile</i> (App. II/Annex B) root/stem. Transported by airmail and concealed in a courier parcel. (July 2020)		
Ukraine		➔		POLAND	31 seizure records medicine involving 20 641 specimens of medicines derived from seahorses <i>Hippocampus</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B), mostly Japanese Seahorse <i>Hippocampus japonicus</i> . Details on transport and detection were not reported. (2020)		
Senegal	➔	GERMANY	➔	Mainland China	Two seizures involving a total of 248 seahorse <i>Hippocampus</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) bodies. (2020)		
Mainland China		➔		LATVIA	6480 cosmetic specimens derived from <i>Acipenseriformes</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B). Detected at Riga maritime port by Customs documentary checks (February 2020)		
Thailand	➔	Turkey/GERMANY	➔	THE CZECH REPUBLIC	Two tourist seizures of medicinal products (two packages and one tube) derived from King Cobra <i>Ophiophagus Hannah</i> (App. II/Annex B). Detected at Prague airport following a routine inspection (2020)		
India		➔		HUNGARY	540 pills containing Siberian Musk Deer <i>Moschus moschiferus</i> (App. II/Annex B) Detected at Budapest International Airport in a courier parcel as a result of a Customs document check (October 2020)		
Belarus/ Ukraine		➔		POLAND	Two seizures on import totalling 98 specimens derived from bears <i>Ursidae</i> spp. (App. I,II/Annex A,B). These items were reported as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Details on transport and detection were not reported. (February 2020)		
South Korea		➔		FRANCE	1200 specimens of cosmetics derived from <i>Crocodylia</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) recorded as 'huile de crocodiles', transported by air passenger. Intercepted at Roissy CDG Airport (September 2020)		
REPTILE BODIES PARTS AND DERIVATIVES							
Unknown		➔		Unknown	➔	ITALY	13 600 reptile skin pieces derived from <i>Cheloniidae</i> spp. (App. I/Annex A), Reticulated Python <i>Python reticulatus</i> , Burmese Python <i>Python bivittatus</i> , Plain Lizard <i>Varanus salvator</i> , American Alligator <i>Alligator mississippiensis</i> , Black-and-white Tegu <i>Salvator merianae</i> (all App. II/Annex B) and Nile Crocodile <i>Crocodylus niloticus</i> (App. I, II/Annex A, B) valued at EUR 200 000. Detected as a result of intelligence/investigation (February 2020)

TRADE ROUTE			SPECIES AND QUANTITY SEIZED	DETAILS
EXPORT/ COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE	TRANSIT	DESTINATION		
Indonesia	→ Thailand → BELGIUM →	FRANCE	One commercial seizure involving 106 small leather products (53 pairs of sandals) made from <i>Python</i> spp. (App. II/Annex B) (species not specified).	Detected at Zaventem airport, Brussels, through routine inspection (July 2020)
Cambodia	→	SWEDEN	One Indochinese Spitting Cobra <i>Naja siamensis</i> (App. II/Annex B) body was transported in an air passenger's personal baggage.	Detected at Landvetter Airport, Sweden for illegal crossing (2020)
LIVE REPTILES				
Tunisia	→ GERMANY →	Canada	11 live Spur-Thighed Tortoises <i>Testudo graeca</i> , (App. II/Annex A)	Detected at Frankfurt am Main Airport (October 2020)
North Macedonia	→ HUNGARY →	POLAND	Two seizures totalling 24 live specimens of Hermann's tortoises <i>Testudo hermanni</i> (App. II/Annex A). Transported through Hungary by bus, en-route to Poland.	Intercepted on a bus at a highway at the Rösztke-Horgos border with Serbia, detected due to random checks. (July 2020)
Unknown	→ PORTUGAL →	FRANCE	Eight commercial seizure records involving two live African Spurred Tortoises <i>Geochelone sulcata</i> (App. II/Annex B) and 22 live snakes, most of which were <i>Pythonidae</i> spp (e.g. Reticulated Python <i>Python reticulatus</i> , Spotted Python <i>Antaresia maculosa</i> , Sumatran Short-tailed Python <i>Python curtus</i> , and Burmese Python <i>Python moluru</i>); <i>Boidae</i> spp: Boa constrictor (App. II/Annex B); and Yellow Anaconda <i>Eunectes notaeus</i> and Common Iguana <i>Iguana iguana</i> (all App. II/Annex B). The specimens were transported into France in a truck.	Detected at a private house in Loguivy-Plougras, France, following intelligence/ investigation (July 2020)
LIVE BIRDS				
BELGIUM	→	Israel	Two live-Blue-crowned Lorikeets <i>Vini australis</i> (App II/Annex A) were found in the checked-in luggage from two passengers of Israeli nationality due to board a direct flight to Tel Aviv, Israel. The birds were hidden in two packets of "Pringles" found in the bottom of their luggage.	Detected at Zaventem Airport, Brussels. (March 2020)
BELGIUM	→ ITALY →	Tunisia	96 live parrots including 36 Fischer's Lovebirds <i>Agapornis fischeri</i> , 34 Bourke's Parrot <i>Neopsephotus bourkii</i> , 13 Red-rumped Parrots <i>Psephotus haematonotus</i> , three Abyssinian Lovebirds <i>Agapornis taranta</i> , three Eastern Rosellas <i>Platycercus eximius</i> , and one Plum-headed Parakeet <i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i> (all App. II/Annex B).	Detected at Genova maritime port through routine inspection (February 2020)

TRADE ROUTE			SPECIES AND QUANTITY SEIZED	DETAILS
EXPORT/ COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE	TRANSIT	DESTINATION		
United Arab Emirates	➔	ITALY	Two live Shaheen Falcons <i>Falco Peregrinus peregrinator</i> (App. I/Annex A).	Detected at the Leonardo da Vinci Airport in Fiumicino, Italy (2020)
BIRD BODIES PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
Unknown	➔	MALTA	One internal seizure case involving 46 wild-caught bird bodies belonging to the order Falconiformes (birds of prey) e.g. four Honey Buzzards <i>Pernis apivorus</i> , <i>Strigiformes</i> (owls) e.g. two Barn Owls <i>Tyto alba</i> (all App. II/Annex A), and two <i>Ciconiiformes</i> spp. (storks) Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i> (App. II/Annex A) and the Great White Egret <i>Ardea alba</i> (Annex A).	Detected in a private house in Mosta, Malta through physical inspection (July 2020)
South Africa	➔ GERMANY ➔	AUSTRIA	One tourist seizure involving 73 Martial Eagle <i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i> (App II/Annex B) trophies.	Detected in an airport (October 2020)
Namibia	➔	FRANCE	0.7 kg of feathers from the Spotted Eagle-Owl <i>Bubo africanus</i> (App. II/Annex B), two feathers, and an additional 0.1 kg of American Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i> feathers (App. II/Annex A), and one Blue-and-gold Macaw <i>Ara ararauna</i> feather (App. II/Annex B). Two additional seizures involved Ostrich <i>Struthio camelus</i> (App. I/NC, Annex A, NC) specimens, specifically, one large Ostrich leather product and 12 Ostrich eggs.	Detected at Port St Louis Du Rhone maritime port (January 2020)
LIVE AND CORAL ROCK				
Unknown	➔	FRENCH POLYNESIA (French overseas territory)	One commercial seizure involving 67 kg of live coral and coral rock, all <i>Scleractinia</i> spp. and valued at EUR 150 000.	Detected at Papeete maritime port, French Polynesia. (July 2020)
Australia/ Indonesia	➔ THE NETHERLANDS ➔	POLAND	Six commercial seizures at Schiphol mail centre involving 64 live coral and coral rock specimens, including 51 Whisker Corals <i>Duncanopsammia axifuga</i> , one Orange Turret Coral <i>Tubastraea falkneri</i> , and four Lobed brain corals (<i>Lobophyllia</i> spp.) (all App. II/Annex B). Specimens were transported via airmail	Detected due to Customs document checks (2020)
IVORY				
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	➔ GERMANY ➔	Lebanon	Four seizures of ivory jewellery from <i>Loxodonta africana</i> (App. I/II, Annex A, B) in an airfreight consignment, totalling 85 kg.	Detected at Leipzig DHL mail hub as a result of routine inspections (November 2020)
Israel	➔	THE CZECH REPUBLIC	0.2 kg of elephant ivory carvings <i>Loxodonta africana</i> in a mail consignment. The carvings were seven figures.	Detected at Prague Airport during controls of air freight consignments (October 2020)

TRADE ROUTE			SPECIES AND QUANTITY SEIZED	DETAILS
EXPORT/ COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE	TRANSIT	DESTINATION		
MAMMAL BODIES PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
Ethiopia	➔	FRANCE	One tourist seizure on import involving 34.8 kg meat of Green Monkey <i>Chlorocebus sabaues</i> (App. II/Annex B), transported by air passenger.	Detected at Roissy CDG airport (November 2020)
The Faroe Islands	➔	DENMARK	One seizure record involving ca. 22.5 kg of wild Long-Finned Pilot Whale <i>Globicephala melas</i> meat (App. II/Annex A). The specimens were transported in a container by boat.	Detected at Hirtshals maritime port during a routine inspection (September 2020)
LIVE PLANTS				
Guatemala	➔	THE NETHERLANDS	A shipment containing 30 620 live specimens of cacti (<i>Cactaceae</i> spp.) (App. II/Annex B).	Detected by Customs at Rotterdam Port (September 2020)
Japan	➔	THE NETHERLANDS	70 specimens of live orchids (App II/Annex B).	Detected at Schiphol Airport due to Customs documentary checks (April 2020)
PLANT PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
India	➔ BELGIUM ➔	GERMANY	70 wood carvings derived from North Indian Rosewood <i>Dalbergia sissoo</i> (App. II/Annex B) and an additional 812 kg.	Detected at Antwerp maritime port following microscopy (November and December 2020)
Hong Kong (SAR)	➔	FRANCE	2500 keyrings containing cacti species (App. II/Annex B). These keyrings were transported by express carrier.	Detected at Roissy CDG Airport mail centre (August 2020)
TIMBER				
India	➔	THE NETHERLANDS	A shipment containing logs from Red Sandalwood <i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i> (App. II/Annex B), weighing 1415 kg, transported via airmail.	Detected at Schiphol International Airport due to Customs document checks (January 2020)
Mainland China	➔	FRANCE	Two seizures involving 603.65 kg and 6287 m ³ of wood products derived from the Manchurian Ash <i>Fraxinus mandshurica</i> (App. III/Annex C).	Detected at Magny Le Hongre, France (further details on transport and detection were not reported). (September 2020)
LIVE EELS				
SPAIN	➔	Malaysia	314 kg cargo shipment (air freight) of live eels <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App/ II/Annex B) transported on a flight.	Intercepted at Madrid-Barajas Airport due to physical inspection aided by x-ray. (November 2020)
GREECE	➔	Malaysia	245 kg of live/glass European Eels <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App. II/Annex B), in air freight.	Detected at Athens International Airport as a result of a random check. (January 2020)
POLAND	➔	Ukraine	One seizure involving 125 kg of live European Eels <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App. II/Annex B).	Details on transport and detection were not reported. (January 2020)
FRANCE	➔	Unknown	One commercial seizure involving ca. 50 kg of live/glass European Eels <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App. II/Annex B) inside a vehicle involving three offenders.	Detected at La Faute sur Mer maritime port, France, as a result of a physical inspection. (February 2020)

TRADE ROUTE			SPECIES AND QUANTITY SEIZED	DETAILS
EXPORT/ COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE	TRANSIT	DESTINATION		
EEL BODIES PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
SWEDEN	→	POLAND	19 commercial seizures involving a total of eight specimens and 94.4 kg of European Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App. II/Annex B) bodies, transported inside a vehicle aboard a boat. The eel bodies were concealed among mixed species.	Detected at Karlskrona maritime port as a result of intelligence/ investigation. (June 2020)
Mainland China	→ LITHUANIA →	Russia	One commercial seizure involving a total of 77 200 kg of European Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i> (App. II/Annex B) meat, transported inside a container ship.	Detected at the maritime port of Klaipeda through Customs documentary checks and DNA analysis (January 2020)
FISH BODIES PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
Namibia	→	THE NETHERLANDS	A shipment containing 26 220 kg of frozen Shortfin Mako Shark <i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i> (App. II/Annex B) bodies, exported in a maritime container.	Detected at Rotterdam Port as a result of Customs document check (August 2020)
Senegal	→ FRANCE →	ITALY	Two tourist seizures of Shortfin Mako shark <i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i> (App II/Annex B) meat involving 464 kg of mako shark meat and another 179 kg of mako shark meat.	Detected at Roissy CDG Airport, France (February 2020)
Unknown	→	FRANCE	A total of 17 rostrums derived from Sawfish <i>Pristis</i> spp. (App. I/Annex A), including the Common Sawfish <i>Pristis pristis</i> and Smalltooth Sawfish <i>Pristis pectinate</i> , across 12 seizures.	Detected mainly at fairs/ exhibitions/ shows/auction houses due to internet monitoring (2020)
STURGEON CAVIAR/PRODUCTS CONTAINING STURGEON				
Russia	→	ITALY	8.8 kg of sturgeon <i>Acipenseriformes</i> spp. meat, transported by air passenger.	Detected at Verona Airport detected through routine inspection (March 2020)
Qatar	→	FRANCE	A tourist seizure on export involving 0.8 kg of sturgeon caviar <i>Acipenser</i> spp. (App. II/ Annex B)	Detected at Roissy CDG Airport (February 2020)
Ukraine/ Russia	→	FRANCE	Two seizures involving ca. 2 kg and a further 1 kg of <i>Acipenser</i> spp. (App. II/ Annex B) sturgeon caviar, transported by express carrier and by air passenger.	Detected at Hyeres mail centre in France and Roissy CDG Airport (December 2020)
BELGIUM	→	Macau SAR	One seizure, weighing 17 kg, involved cosmetics products containing caviar extract derived from sturgeon <i>Acipenseriformes</i> spp. transported by air mail.	Detected at Brussels Airport Zaventem mail centre due to routine inspection (April 2020)
LIVE FISH				
Brazil	→	FRANCE	One live specimen of Xingu River ray <i>Potamotrygon leopoldi</i> (App III/Annex C), transported by express carrier.	Detected at Fontenay Tresigny mail centre in France (2020)

TRADE ROUTE			SPECIES AND QUANTITY SEIZED	DETAILS
EXPORT/ COUNTRY OF DEPARTURE	TRANSIT	DESTINATION		
LIVE INVERTEBRATE BODIES PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
Turkey	➔	AUSTRIA	0.3 kg of Northern Medicinal Leeches <i>Hirudo medicinalis</i> transported by air passenger	Detected at an Austrian airport (2020)
CROATIA	➔	ITALY	Commercial seizure of 1188 kg of live Black Teatfish <i>Holothuria nobilis</i> (App. II/Annex B) inside a delivery van.	Detected at the Muggia land boundary as a result of a routine inspection. (March 2020)
INVERTEBRATE BODIES PARTS AND DERIVATIVES				
GREECE ➔	ITALY ➔	SPAIN/ FRANCE	Two commercial seizures totalling 281 kg meat of Brown Sea Cucumber <i>Isostichopus fuscus</i> (App. III/Annex C). Moved through Italy by truck and found concealed among other goods.	Intercepted at Ancona maritime port detected through routine and physical inspection. (May 2020)
Unknown	➔	CROATIA	20 kg meat of Date Mussel <i>Lithophaga lithophaga</i> (App. II/Annex B), transported by road.	Detected during a routine Customs examination aided by x-ray at a Zaton Doli land boundary (June 2020)

BRIEF COMPARISON TO 2019

A comprehensive and quantitative comparison of seizures reported in 2019 and 2020 is not possible, primarily due to the outbreak of the new coronavirus in 2020 (SARS-CoV-2 virus), which caused a worldwide health pandemic²².

RESTRICTIONS ON AIR TRAVEL

A significant reduction in interceptions in the EU in 2020 was observed, in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated public health measures imposed to contain the spread of the virus. COVID-19 placed great strain on the air transportation sector, with an unprecedented decrease in passenger demand (together with country-wide flight bans), which led to a halt of most airlines²³. In Europe's air industry, an approximate total loss in international and domestic revenue of EUR 93 billion was estimated for 2020 compared to 2019, the most significant loss for any air carrier region second only to the Asia/Pacific region²⁴. Approximately two-thirds of the typical number of seizure records of species protected under CITES were reported by law enforcement authorities in the EU in 2020 (3977 seizure records reported by 24 EU Member States in 2020 compared to 6441 seizure records reported by 25 MS in 2019)²⁵. Several factors may have contributed to this decrease in seizures.

DIVERTED ENFORCEMENT IN REACTION TO COVID-19

In some cases, this decline can be attributed to law enforcement resources being diverted to enforcing COVID-19-related measures in reaction to the public health emergency, resulting in reduced law enforcement capacity to detect or report illicit wildlife consignments. This decline in interceptions carried out by law enforcement may also be a consequence of the limits on physical inspections due to government restrictions.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AND FORCED SHOP CLOSURES

Less trade triggered by COVID-19 associated

disruptions to air transport, closures of shops, and other modes of transporting or selling goods is also likely to be a contributing factor to this decline, both in terms of fewer tourist seizures and impacting wildlife trafficking dynamics, resulting in transnational trafficking networks operating at a reduced scale²⁶.

BREXIT – UK'S DEPARTURE FROM THE EU

The exclusion of the UK's data also contributed to the decrease in the number of seizure records reported by EU Member States in 2020, compared to previous years' seizure data. These factors meant that the previous analytical approach of comparing patterns between the number of seizure records reported by Member States and the number of specimens, and the quantity of additional mass reported was no longer an informative way of analysing the seizure data.

INCOMPLETE SEIZURE INFORMATION

In addition, a high number of seizure records lacked some information (e.g. direction of trade for 725 seizure records (19%) was unknown/other, or no information was provided in 2020). However, some observations can be made when comparing patterns between 2019 and 2020.


CHANGES TO THE SEIZURES OF DIFFERENT WILDLIFE COMMODITY GROUPS OVERTIME:

EU Member States reported a total of 3977 seizure records in 2020; 38% less than the total of 6441 seizure records reported in 2019. The wildlife commodity groups involved and their order of importance (in terms of the number of reported seizure records) were similar in 2019 and 2020, with **medicinals, reptile bodies parts and derivatives, and live reptiles** included in the top reported commodity groups in both years.


In 2020, seizures of **live reptiles** proportionally increased from 6% in 2019 (399 seizures were made involving 2250 specimens) to 10% in 2020 (373 seizures involving 1290 specimens).



The top commodity groups in trade continue to be **medicinals, reptile bodies parts and derivatives, and live reptiles**



Seizures of eels' bodies, parts, and derivatives increased from 2019 to 2020



Seizures of live reptiles proportionally increased from 2019 to 2020.

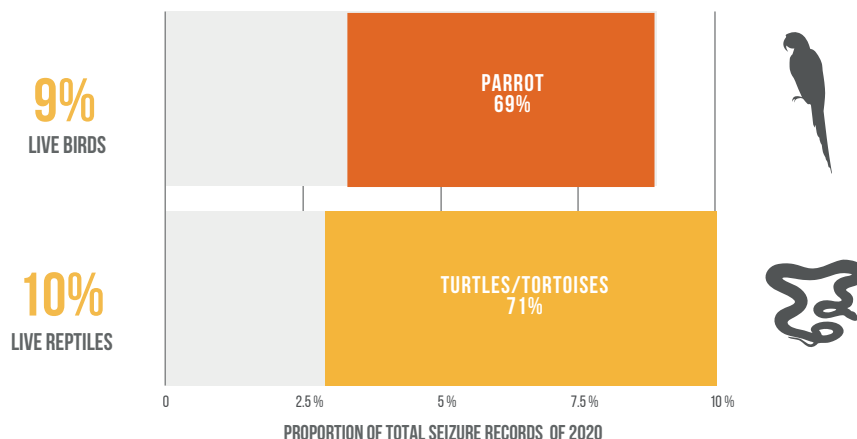
Turtles/tortoises, mainly *Testudo spp.* (App. I/Annex A) accounted for 71% of live reptile seizures, an increase from 63% in 2019. France, Italy, and Spain were the main reporting countries of live reptile seizures. Although most countries of export and destination were reported as unknown, France was both the leading country of export (along with Tunisia) and main destination country. Algeria and Morocco declined as exporters of live reptiles in 2020 (from 6% of seizures in 2019 to 1%). Similar to 2019, live reptiles mainly were seized from private houses (40%) and roads/highways (10%), and increasingly from zoological gardens (11%) and inland (10%) in 2020.

A notable number of seizures of **elephant ivory** continued in 2020 (226 seizure records), involving a total of 1921 specimens and an additional ca. 129 kg. Seizures of ivory constituted 6% of total seizure records in both 2019 and 2020. While more than half of elephant ivory seizures did not report to species level, 34% were reported as **African Elephant** *Loxodonta africana* (App. I/II, Annex A, B) and 10% reported as **Asian Elephant** *Elephas maximus* (App. I/Annex A). In comparison, only 1% of elephant ivory seizures were derived from Asian Elephants in 2019. Ivory carvings accounted for nearly three-quarters of ivory seizure records in 2020 (73%). Based on the number of seizure records in 2020, 42% were internal seizures (compared to 38% in 2019), 15% on import (9% in 2019), and 11% in transit (5% in 2019). Only <1 % of seizure records reported seizures on export (compared to 13% in 2019). The remainder (31%) were unknown, reported as other, or no information was provided. **France** reported the most internal ivory seizure records (48%) in 2020: a total of 46 ivory seizure records involving 330 specimens. These ivory seizures reported

by **France** occurred at various locations, the most common of which were fairs/exhibitions/shows/auction houses, markets/shops, or private houses.

In addition to the ivory seized internally, 110 specimens and an additional ca. 28.4 kg were seized on import in 2020. Although less than the 199 specimens and the additional 40 kg seized on import in 2019, as a proportion of total seizures, 2020 internal seizures were higher (15% on import in 2020, 9% on import in 2019). For seizures of ivory in transit, the 2020 seizure records were similar to 2019 seizures in transit, suggesting the EU continues to be used as a transit location for the smuggling of elephant ivory from **Africa to Asia** (predominantly mainland China as well as Lebanon) (increased from 5% of ivory seized in transit in 2019 to 11% in 2020).

Seizures of live **European Eels** *Anguilla anguilla* (App. II/Annex B) decreased in 2020, from 46 seizures involving 3844 kg and 70 376 specimens in 2019 to 19 seizures involving 1238 kg. However, **eel bodies, parts, and derivatives (BPD) seizures** significantly increased from three seizure records totalling 584 kg in 2019 to 23 seizure records involving 99 294 kg and an additional ten specimens of bodies and meat in 2020. The main countries of export (direction of trade in 83% of records) were **Sweden, mainland China and Tunisia** and **Poland** (83%), and **Russia** (13%), the most commonly reported destinations of eel BPD. For example, a total of ca. 99 200 kg of European Eel meat was seized in Lithuania, destined for Russia (reported in three seizure records). These seizures occurred at either a maritime port or land boundary at the Lithuanian-Belarus border as the eels were transiting to Russia,



exported from mainland China.

One commodity which was reported to have been seized in greater quantities in 2020 than in 2019 was **live birds**. In 2020 there were 343 seizure records of live birds, which involved 1255 live birds. In 2019, a total of 353 seizure records involving 839 live birds were reported. The majority of these were **parrots** from the order Psittaciformes (App. II/Annex B). A total of 37% of seizure records were internal, 8% were on import, 4% were in transit, and 1% were on export, and in the rest of the cases (50%), the direction of trade was unknown/not reported or other. **France and Belgium** were the most commonly reported destinations for live birds. Seizures of live birds at internal locations are likely to have increased, in part due to an intensified focus on internal seizures while international travel was *de facto* halted.

Seizures of **mammal bodies, parts, and derivatives** remained stable in 2020, despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, constituting 6% of total seizures in 2020 (233 seizure records involving 1575 specimens and an additional ca. 107 kg) compared to 5% in 2019 (347 seizure records involving 1399 specimens and an additional ca. 130 kg). The main types of products seized were big cat (mostly *Panthera* spp.) and bear *Ursidae* spp. (both App. II/Annex B) **skins**, primate (App. II/Annex B) and big cat **skulls**, sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus* (App. I/Annex A) and hippo (App. II/Annex B) **teeth**; narwhal *Monodon monoceros* (App. II/Annex A), long-finned pilot whale (both App. II/Annex A) and primate **meat**, primate **bodies**, and feline *Felidae* spp. and canine *Canidae* spp. **fur products**. An increase in the proportion of seizures involving cetaceans was observed between 2019 and 2020, particularly for sperm whales and narwhal, with cetaceans mainly exported from Greenland and the Faroe Islands and destined for Denmark and France. Most seizures were on import (35%) into the EU or internal (18%), while 37% of seizure records either reported the direction of trade as unknown, described it as other, or did not report the direction of trade. France and Belgium noted an increase in seizures of bushmeat on import and in transit at airports in 2020.

Seizures of **live and rock corals** (most of which were stony corals of the order Scleractinia (CITES App. II/Annex B)) significantly decreased

in 2020, from 922 seizures (14% of total 2019 seizures) involving 6852 specimens and an additional ca. 433 kg in 2019 to 286 seizures (7% of total 2020 seizures) involving 1965 specimens and ca. 109 kg. This decline is likely a consequence of COVID-19 related travel restrictions, resulting in a reduction in air passenger volume and limited tourist seizures on import at airports.

Timber also decreased in 2020 in terms of the number of reported seizure records and the number of specimens and weight reported, from 258 seizure records of timber making up 4% of total seizures in 2019 to 29 seizure records constituting < 1% in 2020. In January 2017, the CITES Appendix II listing for *Dalbergia* spp. came into force, however, following CoP18 (July-August 2019), an exemption (under Annotation #15) was entered in November 2019 whereby all finished products to a max. weight of wood of up to 10 kg per shipment involving *Dalbergia* spp. species listed in CITES Appendix II were exempt from requiring CITES documents. This annotation may be a reason for the decrease in timber seizures since 2019, together with improved compliance.

MAIN COUNTRIES OF EXPORT:

Thailand remained the **top exporter to the EU**, involved in 20% of total reported exports to the EU in 2020, compared to 15% in 2019. **The USA also increased** in prominence as an exporter, making up 15% of total reported exports in 2020, compared to 8% in 2019. An increasing proportion (69%) of USA exports of medicinals in 2020 were derived from plants (44% in 2019). **Switzerland increased** as one of the top non-EU countries of export, involved in 5% of total reported exports in 2020, compared to 2% in 2019. Exports from Switzerland to the EU may have been less disrupted by the pandemic than long-distance international trade, which may have resulted in the slight increase. In contrast, mainland **China significantly decreased** to 5% of total reported exports in 2020, compared to 12% in 2019. As the site of the first emergence of the virus, restrictions on trade routes involving mainland China (e.g., border closures with Viet Nam and decreases in air traffic) may have been more severe than other regions.



Live Birds

were seized in greater quantities in 2020, compared to 2019.

EMERGING AND CONTINUING TRENDS IN ILLEGAL TRADE IN 2020 INCLUDED:

CONTINUING TRENDS

- The continued increasing number of (mainly internal) seizures of **bird bodies, parts, and derivatives**, particularly bodies, feathers, skulls, and trophies.
- The increasing number of **reptile bodies, parts, and derivatives**, mainly in the form of large and small leather products and bodies.
- The continued seizures of **sturgeon caviar** *Acipenseriformes* spp. (App. I/II, Annex A/B) mainly intercepted on import.
- A **lack of adherence to CITES permitting continues** to be a significant cause of goods being seized, based on the reasons for seizures of both CITES Appendix I and Appendix II listed species, primarily being a CITES document-related offence.
- **Shipments involving CITES Appendix II/ EU Annex B listing species**, especially those declared as having no accompanying CITES documents, continued to be seized, raising the question of why they are non-compliant.

EMERGING TRENDS

- The increasing number of **fish bodies, parts, and derivatives**, mainly in the form of shark and sturgeon meat.
- The increasing shipment of specimens, derivatives, and products of illegal wildlife through the **postal system** (detected in mail centres). The main countries/territories of export reported for 2019 and 2020 (based on the number of seizure records) were broadly similar, with **Thailand, the USA, mainland China** (all be it to a lesser extent than 2019), and **Indonesia** in the top countries of export across both years, (these exports mainly involving medicinal products), with **Switzerland** increasing as a top exporter in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic likely caused a boom in e-commerce resulting in an increased volume of parcel deliveries representing a significant challenge for authorities in charge of controlling parcels and enforcing CITES and the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations.



European Eel

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The Member States of the EU in 2020: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. The UK withdrew from the EU on 31st January 2020. As a result, the UK was not included in this analysis, however UK information on prosecutions and EU-TWIX alert data was included.
- ² European – Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange—the system includes a database of CITES seizures in the EU (<https://eu-twix.org/>)
- ³ Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Romania reported no seizures for 2020
- ⁴ <https://unctad.org/webflyer/covid-19-and-maritime-transport-impact-and-responses>
- ⁵ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0969699721000454>
- ⁶ <https://www.iata.org/en/iata-pressroom/publications/economic-reports/air-passenger-monthly-analysis--apr-2020/>
- ⁷ <https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en-GB/Insights/2021/01/covid-19-impact-on-the-air-cargo-industry>
- ⁸ Figures based on UNCTAD calculations, derived from a combination of Automated identification System (AIS) data and port mapping intelligence provided by MarineTraffic.
- ⁹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2020/World_Wildlife_Report_2020_9July.pdf
- ¹⁰ The seizure data reported by Germany are related to seizures carried out at border posts only. Internal seizures carried out by the regional or local authorities inside the country are not available in a central database, therefore, such data could not be provided and included in the analysis.
- ¹¹ Units used to report medicinals are not consistent across EU Member States: some reported units as packs of tablets others as individual tablets; sometimes no unit was specified, or kg or l was used.
- ¹² Under EU law, products which are labelled as containing Annex listed species under the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations are taken as containing that particular species and may be seized without any verification of the species content in the project or DNA testing beforehand. This briefing can therefore not distinguish between those verified as containing Annex listed species from those simply claiming this on the packaging.
- ¹³ Including animal parts/derivatives, e.g. bear, seahorse, big cats, and crocodile.
- ¹⁴ This case study was selected as trade in medicinals was the top commodity in trade as reported by number of seizure records.
- ¹⁵ <https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/the-invisible-trade-wild-plants-and-you-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>
- ¹⁶ Qualitative information provided by an EU Member State to supplement the quantitative analysis.
- ¹⁷ <https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/the-invisible-trade-wild-plants-and-you-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>
- ¹⁸ Excluding their overseas territories.
- ¹⁹ Member States listed here in order of importance based on number of seizure records in 2020.
- ²⁰ Trade in CITES Appendix II/Annex B listed species may not be permitted for some species/countries with stricter domestic measures, such as the zero import/export policy set in the EU since December 2010 for European Eels *Anguilla anguilla*.
- ²¹ <https://undp-biodiversity.exposure.co/turning-the-tide> - <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/law-and-crime/article/3111775/covid-19-pandemic-forces-endangered-species-smugglers>
- ²² <https://www.traffic.org/what-we-do/projects-and-approaches/covid-19-resource-centre/>
- ²³ COVID-19 pandemic and air transportation: Successfully navigating the paper hurricane - ScienceDirect
- ²⁴ <https://data.icao.int/coVID-19/economic.htm>; https://www.icao.int/sustainability/Documents/COVID-19/ICAO_Coronavirus_Econ_Impact.pdf Note: Figure converted from USD to EUR.
- ²⁵ The UK's seizure data was included in the 2019 EU CITES seizure analysis but excluded from the 2020 analysis due to the UK's withdrawal from the EU on 31st January 2020.
- ²⁶ <https://wildlifejustice.org/new-analysis-measures-to-combat-covid-19-impact-wildlife-trafficking/>

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