

**TRAFFIC**



October 2024

**REPORT ON  
WILDLIFE  
TRAFFICKING  
IN COLOMBIA**

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*Cattleya Orchid*

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

## DEVELOP A NATIONAL SEIZURE DATABASE

The need to develop a single database of wildlife seizures that centralises information from both enforcement authorities (DICAR) and environmental authorities (CAR, National Park, Urban Environmental Authorities such as the SDA) to avoid duplication and dispersion of national data.

## SHARE INFORMATION ON ILLEGAL TRADE WITH BORDER COUNTRIES

Colombia's government, together with Brazil, Peru and Ecuador, should promote the exchange of information on illegal wildlife trade, using existing regional networks such as INTERPOL, the South American Wildlife Enforcement Network (SudWEN) and Red Jaguar. In addition, it is necessary to develop effective tools to facilitate communication between control and environmental agencies, as well as the creation of a regional platform that collects relevant information on wildlife crime investigations. This platform should include data on traffickers' profiles, routes, points of sale and participants involved in trafficking species in each country, and each nation should designate a focal point, such as the environmental police (Colombia's DICAR, Ecuador's Environmental Police, Peru's Directorate of the Environment, and Brazil's Environmental Military Police), with the capacity to analyse and maintain the confidentiality of the data. This regional platform should be linked to the implementation of the Agreement on Environmental Cooperation and have an action plan that establishes clear deadlines to ensure its effective operation.

## ENGAGE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The involvement of Colombia's indigenous and rural communities in the wildlife trafficking chain needs to be tackled from various angles, including both effective law enforcement and strengthening local livelihoods and economies. It is essential to involve these communities in the fight against species trafficking through a participatory approach that considers the specific cultural, socio-economic and environmental aspects of each of these groups. An example is the training of indigenous community-based monitors of the territory, which can generate a greater sense of ownership over wildlife and reduce the participation of these communities as suppliers within the chain of trafficking wild species.

## ALLOCATE RESOURCES AT WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING HOTSPOTS

The allocation of human (staffing and capacity building) and technological (uses of applications and a geographic information system) resources should focus on Colombia's Autonomous Regional Corporations of the departments of Amazonas, Antioquia, Cordoba, Bolivar, Magdalena, Cesar, Santander, Cundinamarca, Valle del Cauca and Sucre, which have been identified as the most vulnerable areas to wildlife trafficking in Colombia.

## TRACEABILITY SYSTEMS

To avoid the laundering of wild species, it is necessary to improve the traceability systems of the species that are legally marketed; for example, having marking according to international standards and the application of the traceability standards implemented by CITES. The strengthening of these traceability systems in Colombia requires adequate surveillance and permanent training of the actors involved in the commercial chain, such as customs personnel (DIAN), police and postal personnel.

## STRENGTHEN CONTROL AT EL DORADO AIRPORT (BOGOTA)

Reducing wildlife trafficking at El Dorado Airport is a high-priority task because it is considered the most important airport in the dynamics of national and international wildlife traffic in Colombia. Since there are several parties involved in monitoring passengers and luggage, it is essential to develop response protocols that include enforcement authorities, environmental authorities and private companies and that encourage cooperation according to their powers to detect and intercept wildlife trafficking events. On the other hand, the use of anonymous reporting tools of wildlife trafficking events by airport staff and citizens in general, can be a useful tool to strengthen controls in El Dorado because they provide information to identify patterns, trafficking routes and criminal networks that may be operating in this airport.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an analysis of the situation, trends, drivers and taxonomic groups that are part of wildlife trafficking in Colombia with a focus on the air sector, and an analysis of the legal trade of CITES species. In addition, a summary of the convergence with other crimes is provided.

Scarlet Macaw

This report is based on a literature review of internet sources, official statistics, the CITES database that contains information on legal trade, and the Wildlife Trade Information System (WiTIS) database that has information on seizures at Bogota's El Dorado Airport.

The main results of the report focus on data on trade in CITES species in order to understand the trends of the legal market in Colombia and match that with the wild species identified as part of the illegal trade. As well as historical data from the 16th century on unregulated trade in Colombia, trends in illegal trade including border areas, species, the key promoters and national and international routes. The report also documents the seizures made at the national level with an emphasis on the air sector, as well as the main taxa trafficked. In addition, there is a summary of the Colombian international and national legal framework on legal trade and wildlife trafficking, the competencies and actions of the different government agencies on this issue.

Among the main findings, it was identified that Colombia is one of the main exporters of wildlife in South America, both in terms of the number of specimens and the weight of specimens in the legal wildlife trade. Regarding illegal trade, national and international routes have been identified, in which Bogota plays an important role because it is a gateway, collection or destination city for illicit trade. Therefore, El Dorado airport is a strategic point for the entry and exit of wildlife, part of the traffic both nationally and internationally. Half of the seizures in air transport in Colombia have been reported at this airport, the most significant being those of the Amazon matamata *Chelus fimbriata* and poisonous frogs (genus *Oophaga*), which were mostly destined for the United States. Colombian enforcement authorities identified that the *modus operandi* of criminal organisations involved in wildlife trafficking is through the assignment of differentiated roles within the network: hunters, intermediaries, transporters, exporters, where indigenous communities play an important role as suppliers of wild specimens. It is also recognised that there is a convergence of crimes, including drug trafficking, forced

displacement, extortion, document forgery, money laundering, and other environmental crimes such as illegal logging and mining. In addition, the border areas between Ecuador-Colombia and Peru-Brazil-Colombia are recognised as hotspots for illegal trade in species due to the social and territorial dynamics in these geographical areas of the Amazon basin.

Regarding the main facilitators of wildlife trafficking in Colombia, corruption was identified at all levels of the trafficking chain, as well as the demand for wildlife specimens for the national and international market, with some Asian countries recognised as principal destinations for uses in their gastronomy and as ornaments. At the national level, this demand focuses on the consumption of bushmeat and the use of specimens of wild species as pets.

Illegal wildlife trade is facilitated by legal loopholes and regulatory gaps, the extension of sanctioning environmental processes, the lack of prioritisation of wildlife crimes, the methodology for imposing fines, and the inability for trafficked wildlife to be considered victims in criminal proceedings. With regard to subsistence hunting and fishing, the involvement of indigenous communities and the abuse of the legal prerogative that allows rural communities to take advantage of unlicensed wild species and sell surpluses has been identified.

In Colombia, another facilitator of this crime is the institutional weakness of the enforcement agencies, focusing on the deficiency of human and technological resources, the lack of procedures and protocols and the low number of judges and prosecutors with adequate knowledge of the environmental problems of wild species. Regarding wildlife fishing, it was identified that the fishing authority in Colombia does not have sufficient resources to control this activity in the Atlantic and Pacific, the Autonomous Regional Corporations with jurisdiction over fisheries do not work together, as well as the limited number of personnel that Colombia's National Natural Parks System (SPNN) has in the marine-coastal areas that are under its administration.



Poverty and the lack of sustainable economic alternatives of rural and indigenous communities in Colombia were identified as the main socio-economic factors that drive wildlife trafficking because this illicit activity contributes to the family economy of communities settled in rural and remote areas of Colombia. In addition, cultural perceptions and traditions also drive the perpetration of this environmental crime.

The main taxa involved in wildlife trafficking in Colombia are reptiles, followed by birds, where the most illegally traded species is the Amazon matamata *Chelus fimbriatus*. In terms of flora, the most trafficked taxonomic groups are guadua (*Guadua* sp.), palms (Arecaceae family) and wildcane (*Gynerium sagittatum*). In addition, orchids have been identified as a taxon illegally traded in Colombia, with the genus *Cattleya* being one of the groups with the highest number of seizures in Bogota.

Finally, the *red flag* that must be taken into account in the air and maritime sector to identify possible wildlife trafficking events, as well as in the issuance of CITES species permits, are summarised.

# ACRONYMS

<b>ANLA</b>	National Environmental Licensing Authority (ANLA)
<b>AUNAP</b>	National Aquaculture and Fisheries Authority
<b>CAR</b>	Regional Autonomous Corporations
<b>CAV</b>	Wildlife care and assessment centres
<b>CAV-R</b>	Wildlife assessment and rehabilitation centres
<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>CITES</b>	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
<b>CMS</b>	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
<b>CE</b>	Critically Endangered
<b>DIAN</b>	The National Directorate of Taxes and Customs
<b>DICI</b>	Directorate of Criminal Investigation and INTERPOL
<b>EN</b>	Endangered
<b>ICA</b>	Colombian Agricultural Institute
<b>IIAP</b>	Institute of Pacific Environmental Research
<b>INVEMAR</b>	Marine and Coastal Research Institute
<b>LC</b>	Least Concern
<b>MADS</b>	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
<b>NCP</b>	National Police of Colombia
<b>SDA</b>	Bogota District Department of the Environment
<b>SPNN</b>	National Natural Parks System
<b>ACT</b>	Amazon Cooperation Treaty
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>USAID</b>	U.S. Agency for International Development
<b>WCS</b>	Wildlife Conservation Society
<b>WITIS</b>	The Wildlife Trade Portal
<b>WWF</b>	World Wildlife Fund for Nature
<b>ZIF</b>	Border Integration Zones



# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**PREVENTIVE SEIZURE.** Measure imposed by the environmental authority by administrative act, which consists of the physical act of taking possession of a specimen of wild fauna or flora temporarily.

**CITES TRADE DATABASE.** A publicly accessible database managed by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) on behalf of the CITES Secretariat, which records the legal trade (imports, exports and re-exports) of CITES-listed species reported by signatory countries to the Convention.

**WILDLIFE LAUNDERING.** The practice used to include illegally harvested wildlife in a country's legal system.

**ENVIRONMENTAL BUBBLE.** Military term used by military intelligence to identify actors, crimes and threats that put national security at risk, applicable to crimes against the environment.

**SUBSISTENCE HUNTING.** Hunting that is carried out not for profit and exclusively for the purpose of providing food to the person who carries it out and for their family and which does not require a permit.

**BUSHMEAT.** The hunted meat of wildlife species and is the main protein source of indigenous and rural communities and people of African descent. It is fundamental for local livelihoods, for food security and sovereignty.

**CRIME CONVERGENCE.** The tendency of transnational crime networks to meet at common points or hubs; and it is through the interweaving of these hubs that their criminal action is facilitated, infiltrating all spheres, from the economic, social and political, in such a way that State intervention is enhanced and made even more complex.

**DEFINITIVE SEIZURE.** The administrative sanction imposed by the environmental authority through a motivated administrative act, which consists of the material and definitive seizure of those specimens of exotic wild species of terrestrial or aquatic fauna and flora, and of the products, elements, means and implements used to violate environmental standards, in the terms indicated in Law 1333 of 2009, paragraph of article 38, numeral 5 of article 40 and in article 47; and in Decree Law 2811 of 1974 and its regulatory decrees.

**SPECIMEN.** Sample, model, specimen, usually with detailed characteristics of its species of flora or fauna.

**CONSTITUENT PART.** Any constituent part of a wild animal such as horns, legs, claws, fins, bladders, skin, etc.

**HOLD LUGGAGE.** Luggage delivered to an airline for transport in the hold of an aircraft.

**AIR FREIGHT.** Goods that are transported through a commercial airline or charter.

**SEIZURE.** The temporary material apprehension of movable goods, livestock, flora and fauna carried out by uniformed personnel of the National Police, whose possession, sale, offer, supply, distribution, transport, storage, import, export, carrying, conservation, processing or use, constitutes behaviour contrary to coexistence and the law.

**HUNTING PERMIT.** This permit authorises the use of wildlife and its products. It is classified as: i. Commercial hunting permit, which is granted as long as there is no ban or prohibition on the species intended to be used; ii. Control hunting that is carried out with the purpose of regulating the population of a species when social, economic or ecological circumstances so require; and iii. Promotion hunting is carried out with the exclusive purpose of acquiring specimens for the establishment of breeding farms or hunting preserves.

**CITES PERMIT.** An official document issued by a Management Authority of a Party authorising the export of a specimen of a species included in Appendix I or II; the export of a specimen of a species included in Appendix III from a State that has included the species in question; or the import of a specimen of a species included in Appendix I. To be valid, a permit must comply with the requirements of the Convention and the Resolutions of the Conference of the Parties.

**STUDY PERMIT FOR THE PURPOSES OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY.** An authorisation that is part of a scientific research project in biological diversity for commercial, industrial or biological prospecting purposes that involves some or all of the activities of collection, gathering, capture, hunting, fishing, manipulation of the biological resource and its movement in the national territory.

**PERMIT TO COLLECT SPECIMENS OF WILD SPECIES FROM BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY FOR NON-COMMERCIAL SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PURPOSES.** An authorisation that allows the following activities of collection, gathering, capture, hunting, fishing and/or manipulation of biological resources within the framework of a research or a university teaching practice.

**PERMIT TO COLLECT SPECIMENS OF WILD SPECIES OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY FOR THE PURPOSE OF PREPARING ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES.** An authorisation that is part of the environmental licensing process and allows the collection of specimens in the framework of the preparation of one or more environmental studies, it does not imply the authorisation of access and use of genetic resources.

**SUBSISTENCE FISHING.** Fishing that is carried out not for profit and exclusively for the purpose of providing food to the person who carries it out and for their family and does not require a permit.

**RESTORATION OF SPECIMENS OF SPECIES OF WILD FLORA AND FAUNA.** The action of returning to the State, the specimens apprehended including the value of all costs incurred from the time of apprehension until their final disposal.

**INTERNATIONAL ROUTES.** These are the international routes identified for wildlife trafficking that have countries of passage and final destination.

**WILDLIFE TRADE INFORMATION SYSTEM (WITIS).** A database managed by TRAFFIC that contains information on cases of seizures, poaching and observation measures in relation to wild species.

**WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING** All illegal activities related to the illicit trade of wild flora and fauna and whose objective is to benefit individuals, groups or companies. It includes the obtaining, capture, poaching, smuggling, import, export, transformation, possession, collection and consumption of wild, aquatic or terrestrial flora and fauna, living or dead, including their derivatives, parts and products, that is regulated by national and/or international legislation. It represents so-called green or environmental crimes.





# INTRODUCTION

**The illegal wildlife trade is considered one of the fastest growing illegal markets in the world. Its clandestine nature and the weakness of controls and law enforcement make it difficult to measure its magnitude. Research suggests that this trafficking contributes to civil conflict, economic loss, poverty, and climate change, and negatively impacts national security and stability, state authority, biodiversity, and public health (Sollund and Maher, 2015).**

In this context, no country is exempt from this crime that negatively impacts biodiversity, human health, national security and socio-economic development (UNODC, 2020). Illegal wildlife trade is not limited to countries with high biodiversity. In fact, in most countries there is illegal export, transit and/or import of wild species. Some regions are hotspots for specific taxa. For example, Oceania for corals and South and Central America for birds. On the other hand, plants and fungi are often undervalued in wildlife trafficking reports, orchids (Orchidaceae), cacti (Cactaceae) and truffles have a significant illegal market globally (Mozer and Prost, 2023).

As far as Latin America is concerned, wildlife trafficking is important due to high levels of biodiversity and the variety of end markets for the region's wildlife products. As far as routes and methods of transport are concerned, these vary depending on the type of specimen or wildlife product traffickers smuggle. However,

some trends are observed with regard to trafficking by air transport: a) Live animals are sent in hold luggage or in the passenger's clothing or items; b) Wildlife products are trafficked in air cargo; c) The most trafficked species were finches, lizards, snakes and turtles; d) Traffickers use 84 airports in the region and the most common routes are through Mexico or Brazil; e) The largest number of seizures were made at the airports of Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Belem, Manaus and Tijuana, which together represent 37% of the seizures in the region between 2010 and 2020 (Conelly, 2021).

In relation to wildlife trafficking in Colombia, its species diversity has made it a significant area for wildlife trafficking, with reptiles, birds and mammals being the most threatened taxonomic groups (Bernal, 2021). With regard to wild flora, orchids with striking flowers or considered rare (due to their shape or scarcity) are part of the illegal trade (MADS and National University of Colombia, 2015). Colombia ranks second in the list of countries with the highest wildlife trafficking, where it is estimated that 58.3 specimens are seized every 24 hours (González, 2021). Regarding the number of seizures and seized specimens, there are information gaps because in general at the regional and local level, enforcement entities (environmental and police) do not carry systematic protocols or generate complete quantitative data on the problem, which causes an underestimation in the real volume

**Conflict, poverty and climate change** are consequences of the illegal trade in species.

of individuals extracted from ecosystems (Cáceres-Martínez *et al*, 2017).

In light of this, TRAFFIC works at a global, regional and local level to reduce illegal wildlife trade. Among its regional actions, it implements the project "Working to Reduce Illegal Wildlife Trafficking in the Main Airports of Latin America" which aims to strengthen the application of national and international law to combat wildlife trafficking in the air sector of countries such as Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico and Peru. It also seeks to support control agencies in the effective interception of illegally traded wildlife using technological solutions and improving national capacities and the establishment of adequate control processes.

Considering the above, this document was prepared to provide a broad perspective on wildlife trafficking in Colombia, in which both international and national environmental regulations were considered, the competencies of Colombian government organisations in their control, and the management of Environmental and Control Authorities to prevent, control and monitor this crime. It also recounts the history of the trade in Colombian wildlife species, trends, the main illegal national

and international routes identified, the main taxa trafficked, the main catalysts of this crime and the convergences with other crimes.

Information was also collected on wildlife seizures at Bogota's El Dorado airport as the focal airport of this project, and the trade of CITES species was analysed. This report provides a broad overview of the dynamics of the illegal wildlife trade in Colombia.

## Wildlife Trafficking

is linked to the biodiversity market in Latin America



Manatee



# ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

The Colombian legal system addresses wildlife trafficking from three angles:

1. On the one hand, it has been described as a matter of national importance because it affects the natural and cultural wealth of the nation and constitutes a threat to the environment.
2. On the other hand, in terms of administrative law, wildlife trafficking constitutes a violation of the obligations established in the country's environmental regulations, so it can trigger an

- environmental sanctioning process that leads to a possible declaration of responsibility and the imposition of fines.
3. Criminal law that pursues conduct harmful to the environment and natural resources (American Bar Association, 2020).

The following summarises the international and national environmental regulations related to wildlife trafficking in Colombia.

## INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS

This section summarises the international conventions and agreements to which Colombia is a party, considering that CITES is the most relevant international convention for wildlife trade issues.

### THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES)

CITES is an international agreement between governments that entered into force on 1 July 1975 and whose objective is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of species. Currently, the Convention has 184 Party countries and regulates international trade on 40,920<sup>1</sup> species including 6,610 animal species and 34,310 plant species (CITESa, 2024). Colombia has been a signatory to this convention since 31 August 1981, 1981. As for Colombia's legislative progress in implementing CITES, it is classified in Category 1 (out of 3), which means that its legislation meets the requirements to implement CITES. Colombia has adopted stricter measures in the country with respect to species of

sharks, marine rays and chimeras, namely the prohibition throughout its national territory of all trade in products and derivatives of sharks, rays and chimeras, including export, re-export and import (CITES, 2023; CITESb, 2024).

### CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)

The CBD is a legally binding international treaty with three objectives: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. Colombia has been a signatory to this agreement since 1992 and was ratified in 1994 (Rudas, 2003).

### UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION

This convention was signed in Palermo (Italy), and its scope of application is the prevention, investigation and prosecution of crimes involving participation in a group of organised crime, money laundering, corruption and obstruction of justice. This United Nations Convention was ratified by the Colombian State through Law 800 of 2003 and constitutes the

main international instrument to prevent and combat transnational crimes (Güiza-Suárez *et al*, 2022).

### UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANISED CRIME

This convention was approved by General Assembly Resolution 55/25 of 15 November 2000, which aims to promote cooperation to effectively prevent and combat transnational organised crime. In Colombia, this convention was approved by Law No. 800 of 2003 (United Nations, 2004).

### THE ANDEAN COMMUNITY (CAN) REGULATION ON ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

Decision 523 of 2002 by which the "Regional Biodiversity Strategy for the Tropical Andean Countries" was approved, has an impact on wildlife trafficking in the environmental area of the Andean Community. In this strategy, six objectives were established, the first being the most relevant, in which it was established to conserve and sustainably use ecosystems, species and genetic resources in situ, with complementary ex situ actions in order to ensure the long-term spread of endangered species (Güiza-Suárez *et al*, 2022).

### LIMA DECLARATION ON ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

The Lima Declaration is an international instrument adopted during the first High Level Conference of the Americas on Illegal Wildlife Trade in 2019. The States present at this conference committed to implement and promote 21 measures to combat trafficking species of wild flora and fauna. These include: recognising illegal trafficking as a serious crime; combating electronic commerce of species or products derived from them; studying the state of species and the effect that trafficking has generated on their population (Güiza-Suárez *et al*, 2022).

### LETICIA PACT

An international treaty signed in 2019 by the Amazonian countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Suriname) where 16 mandates were established to protect the Amazon. The subscribing countries committed

to cooperate on issues such as reforestation, conservation, sustainable use of forests and biodiversity; Amazonian security; information and knowledge management and reporting; the empowerment of women and indigenous peoples and financing for the execution of mandates (Güiza-Suárez *et al*, 2022).

### ACTION PLAN FOR BORDER SECURITY BETWEEN THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENCE OF COLOMBIA AND THE MINISTRIES OF DEFENCE AND INTERIOR OF PERU

The States of Colombia and Peru committed to cooperate against transnational organised crime. In this action plan, strengthening security in the Amazon was established as a line of work, for which they committed to coordinate between the Armed Forces and the National Police the adoption of measures against wildlife trafficking (Güiza-Suárez *et al*, 2022).

### AMAZON COOPERATION TREATY (ACT)

It is a legal document of a technical nature, signed in Brasilia on 3 July 1978 by the eight Amazonian countries (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela) that aims at the harmonious and integrated development of the basin (Pio, 2020). Article VII promotes scientific research and the exchange of information and technical personnel between the competent entities of the respective countries to expand knowledge about the flora and fauna resources of the Amazon territories and to establish a regular system for the exchange of information on the conservation measures of each State (Amazon Cooperation Treaty, 1992).

<sup>1</sup>This figure may refer to species, subspecies, or populations. They include some whole groups, such as primates, cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises), sea turtles, parrots, corals, cacti and orchids. However, in some cases only a subspecies or geographically separate population of a species (for example the population of just one country) is listed.



# NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Below is a summary of the main Colombian regulations that are associated with the protection of wildlife and those that determine the procedures for controlling and monitoring the illegal trade in species.

## COLOMBIAN CONSTITUTION OF 1991

It is the supreme rule to which all Colombian legislation is subject. It is considered an ecological constitution because a series of environmental rights and duties of constitutional rank were enshrined, as well as provisions related to the environment and natural resources, national heritage, in three modalities: a) Obligations (articles 8, 79, 30, 330 and 331); b) Components of the State's economic development model (National Development Plan and State intervention in the economy, articles 310, 333, 334, 339 and 340); and c) Limitations of some economic rights (property, company, articles 58 and 63) (García *et al*, 2010). Relevant articles related to wildlife trafficking are:

- **Article 8.** "It is the obligation of the State and individuals to protect the cultural and natural wealth of the nation".
- **Article 79.** "Every individual has the right to enjoy a healthy environment. An Act shall guarantee the community's participation in the decisions that may affect it. It is the duty of the State to protect the diversity and integrity of the environment, to conserve the areas of special ecological importance, and to foster education for the achievement of these ends."
- **Article 80.** "The state shall plan the handling and use of natural resources in order to guarantee their sustainable development, conservation, restoration, or replacement"

## NATIONAL CODE OF RENEWABLE NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT – LAW 2811 OF 1974

This legal instrument aims to achieve the conservation, improvement and rational use of renewable natural resources and regulate the conduct in relation to the environment and renewable natural resources and the relationships that arise from the use and conservation of these. This code establishes the rules of conservation, control and surveillance and prohibitions on wild flora and fauna including hydrobiological resources.

**Article 252** establishes the types of hunting: a) Subsistence; b) Commercial; c) Sports; d) Scientific; e) Control; and f) Promotion. **Article 273** classifies fishing into: a) Commercial (artisanal and industrial); b) Subsistence; c) Scientific; d) Sports; e) Control; f) Promotion.

## COLOMBIAN CRIMINAL CODE – LAW 599 OF 2000

This code sets out the penalties applicable to anyone who commits a crime. In the Single Chapter Crimes against Natural Resources and the Environment, in its **Article 328** on Illicit Use of Renewable Natural Resources, it establishes that whoever "appropriates, introduces, exploits, transports, maintains, traffics, trades, exploits, takes advantage of or benefits from specimens, products or parts of the fauna, forest, floristic, hydrobiological, biological or genetic resources of Colombian biodiversity, will incur a prison term of forty-eight (48) to one hundred and eight (108) months and a fine of up to thirty-five thousand (35,000) legal monthly minimum wages in force". The penalty will be increased from one third to half, when the species are categorised as threatened, at risk of extinction or migratory, rare or endemic to Colombian territory. The following articles were introduced in the Law 2111 of 2021:

- **Article 328a Wildlife Trafficking.** "Those who traffic, acquire, export or market specimens, products or parts of aquatic, wild or exotic wildlife without the authorisation of the competent authority or with non-compliance with existing regulations, will incur a prison term of sixty (60) to one hundred thirty-five (135) months and a fine of three hundred (300) to forty thousand (40,000) minimum legal monthly wages in force. "The penalty will be increased from one third to one half when the conduct is committed through the export or marketing of cartilaginous fish fins (sharks, rays or chimeras).
- **Article 328b Illegal Hunting.** "Those who, without permission from a competent authority or in breach of existing regulations, hunt, exceed the number of pieces allowed or hunt in times of closures, will incur a prison term of sixteen (16) to fifty-four (54) months and a fine of thirty-three (33) to nine hundred thirty-seven (937) minimum legal monthly wages in force, provided that the conduct does not constitute a crime punishable by a higher penalty."
- **Article 328C Illegal fishing.** "Those who, without permission from a competent authority or in breach of existing regulations, carry out fishing activities, market, transport, process or store specimens or products of prohibited, protected species, in any category of threat, or in reserve areas, or in prohibited periods, or in a prohibited area, will incur, without prejudice to the administrative sanctions that may arise, a prison term of forty-eight (48) to one hundred and eight (108) months and a fine of one hundred and thirty-four (134) to fifty thousand (50,000) minimum legal monthly wages in force." Subsistence fishing will not be considered a crime, when it conforms to the parameters established in the existing regulations.



Ara Macaw

# ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

The main laws of Colombia in relation to traffic and legal and sustainable trade in wild species are summarised below. Article 23 of Law 99 of 1993 establishes the adoption of the necessary measures to ensure the protection of species of wild flora and fauna and issue the certificates referred to by CITES. Law 356 of 1997 through the approval of the protocol relating to the areas of wild flora and fauna specially protected by the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region. Decree 1076 of 2015 that regulates hunting activities provided for in Decree 2811 of 1974.

In terms of regulatory regulations, they are divided into those of sustainable use and sanctions (García, 2010; Güiza-Suárez *et al*, 2022).

## SUSTAINABLE USE LAWS

- Law 017 of 1981 where CITES was approved
- Law 99 of 1993 in subsection 21 of article 5 regulates the obtaining, use, management, research, import, export, as well as the distribution and trade of genetic species and strains of wild fauna and flora; the import, export and trade of said genetic material. Within this same law, article 85 establishes the sanctions against infractions for the misuse or use of renewable resources.

- Law 611 of 2000 and Resolution 1772 of 2010 which regulates the activity of zookeepers that are classified as open cycle, closed cycle and mixed cycle.
- Law 2153 of August 25, 2021, which provides for the creation of an information, registration and monitoring system that allows the control, prevention and avoidance of illegal trafficking of wild fauna and flora in national roads, shopping centres, marketplaces, transport terminals, airports, sea and river ports, warehouses, post offices and public transport parcels, as well as in strategic spaces of towns, municipalities, departments and border regions in the national territory.

## SANCTIONING LAWS

- Law 599 of 2000 through which the penal code was issued.
- Law 2387 of 2024 amending the environmental sanctioning procedure of Law 1333 of 2009. This law establishes that preventive measures include the preventive confiscation of products, elements or implements used to commit the infringement and the preventive apprehension of specimens, products and by-products of wildlife. Likewise, among the sanctions applicable to the offender is the definitive seizure of specimens, products and by-products, elements, means or implements to commit the offence and the restitution of specimens of species of wild fauna and flora.

# RESPONSABILITIES OF GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

The National Environmental Authority of Colombia is the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS) in charge of defining the national policy on the environment and natural resources and responsible for maintaining statistics on the movement of wild species. In addition, it is the CITES Management Authority in charge of issuing licenses for the collection of wild specimens for commercial and scientific purposes of CITES species. In the case of non-CITES species, the National Environmental Licensing Authority (ANLA) has the power to authorise or deny export or import permits.

Likewise, the research institutes of Colombia (SINCHI, Humboldt, IIAP, INVEMAR) are the CITES Scientific Authorities that are responsible for formulating non-detrimental extraction opinions to establish the feasibility of exporting wild specimens through an evaluation of information on the current situation and management of species in the different territories of Colombia, as well as evaluating imports of CITES species. The National Natural Parks System (SPNN) of Colombia is responsible for granting permits, concessions and other environmental authorisations for the use and exploitation of renewable natural resources in the areas part of the SPNN. The Colombian Agricultural Institute is responsible for controlling imports and exports of flora and fauna and anticipating sanitary and phytosanitary risks.

Regarding fishing, the National Authority of Aquaculture and Fisheries (AUNAP) of the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for controlling and monitoring fishing, as well as monitoring compliance with the regulations that regulate fishing activities in the country.

In relation to Regional Autonomous Corporations (CAR), they have the competence to execute environmental policies, plans and programs in their jurisdictions, and also issue licenses for the collection of specimens for commercial export or non-commercial scientific purposes. At the decentralised level, the governments, municipalities, districts and indigenous territories are responsible for controlling and monitoring the mobilisation, processing, use, exploitation and commercialisation of renewable natural resources.

In relation to customs and transit areas, the National Directorate of Taxes and Customs of Colombia (DIAN) is responsible for controlling and monitoring acts of use, mobilisation, transformation and commercialisation of wild flora and fauna.

The entities of the public force: a) National Police of Colombia, through the DICAR, plans, directs, develops, supervises and evaluates the activities of prevention and control of crimes related to the environment and natural resources; and b) Military Forces, through the "Environmental Bubbles", carry out military operations that allow identifying and combating the illicit trade of wildlife, accompanying the environmental authorities, control bodies, governorships and mayors for the seizure and imposition of sanctions. The National Navy is responsible for protecting the resources of marine flora and fauna.

On the other hand, other agencies with competencies in issues related to wildlife trafficking are: a) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs that, together with MADS, coordinate international environmental policy with the aim of protecting border ecosystems; b) The Attorney General's Office through its





Magdalena Colombia

prosecutors is responsible for investigating and accusing conduct contrary to criminal law, including crimes against natural resources (wildlife trafficking); c) The Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic of Colombia is responsible for monitoring fiscal management, establishing environmental costs; and d) The Office of the Inspector General is the entity in charge of issuing disciplinary sanctions to public and private servants in environmental matters, and is responsible for advancing disciplinary processes for very serious offences when: 1) A state contract is approved, entered into or executed with a person who does not have an environmental license; 2) Acts are uttered with ignorance of environmental regulations; and 3)

Matters of the functions of the that causes a serious risk or deterioration to the environment or natural resources (Rodríguez-Ortiz, 2016; Güiza-Suárez et al, 2022).

Annexe 1 summarises the competencies of public institutions in Colombia regarding wildlife trafficking.

# MANAGEMENT OF WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING ISSUES

Environmental Authorities over the years have adopted specific commitments at the international level to strengthen cooperation with other nations for the conservation of biodiversity through conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the conservation and sustainable use of wild species with emphasis on those that are threatened and regulated by CITES.

At the national level, actions have been based on the development of environmental policies on the use and exploitation of biodiversity, action plans and technical bases have been developed where management lines aimed at controlling illegal wildlife trade are considered.

As for control entities such as the National Police, the National Navy and the Air Force, they have strengthened their environmental

units or offices, and have also implemented mechanisms within their institutions to control wildlife trafficking (MADS, 2002; MADS, 2012).

Table 1 lists the main progress and actions of the Environmental and Control Authorities against wildlife trafficking.

**TABLE 1.**  
Main progress and actions of the Environmental and Control Authorities of Colombia against the illegal wildlife trade. - Source: MADS, 2002; MADS 2012

PROGRESS AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTIONS
Preventive and traffic control operations in some air, sea and land terminals, roads, shopping centres and market places	National Police, DIAN, ICA and the Colombian State Prosecution Office.
Formation of Inter-institutional Committees led by regional environmental authorities	CAR
Regulatory development to optimise the application of CITES in Colombia.	MADS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Design of a control and monitoring system for the use and movement of forest products.	MADS
Annual production of basic statistics on illicit use of wildlife.	MADS and CAR
Agreement and adoption of the single safe-conduct for the movement of wild species in the national territory.	MADS
Definition of a system for marking wildlife individuals under ex situ conditions	MADS
Formulation of the National Strategy for the Management of Confiscated Fauna	CAR
Formulation, coordination and adoption of national protocols for the management and disposal of confiscated specimens.	MADS
Identification and implementation of pilot production projects based on the substitution of illicit activities based on economic, biological and social feasibility studies.	MADS
Development of training events aimed at the entities involved in control and monitoring.	MADS
Campaigns to raise society's awareness of the problem, especially during the Easter and Christmas seasons, when the consumption of some species increases.	MADS, CAR
Categorisation and development of technical data sheets of threatened species	Humboldt Institute
Preparation of the National Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Wildlife Traffic 2025 – 2035 (in the process of being updated)	MADS

Likewise, public awareness campaigns have been carried out using the following strategies:

- Awareness-raising through the dissemination of messages on conservation.
- Disseminating information to avoid zoonotic diseases.
- Learning strategies and methodologies in academic spaces.
- Raising awareness about the illegal wildlife market.
- Creating awareness of this type of illicit trade.
- Recognition and use of species subject to illegal trade (Delgado et al, 2023).





Nine banded armadillo

# METHODOLOGY

This report was prepared through a documentary investigation that was divided into the following phases: a) Collecting information b) Processing information, c)

Information Analysis and d) Information Synthesis. The phases used are detailed below.

## DATA COLLECTION

Secondary bibliographic sources were used for data collection. Information from academic publications, reports from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), government statistics, and media reports that are freely accessible on the internet were reviewed. Information on Latin America related to wildlife trafficking was sought to contextualise the problem in the region and, finally, an exhaustive search was carried out for information related to Colombia and wildlife seizures at El Dorado Airport (Bogota).

Relying on data on the legal trade of wild species in Colombia, information from the CITES Trade Database for the period between 2018 and 2022 was analysed. The parameters analysed were:

- **Time period:** 2018 to 2022, taking into account the information reported by Colombia to CITES.
- **Country of export:** Colombia
- **Country of import:** The countries with

the highest number of imports of wildlife specimens from Colombia were analysed.

- **Origin:** All
- **Objective:** All
- **Terms of Trade:** All
- **Search by taxon:** The species/taxa that have the highest number of commercialised specimens were analysed.

For wildlife trafficking data related to seizures, the TRAFFIC Wildlife Trade Information System (WiTIS) database was used and the following parameters were taken into account:

- **Species:** All
- **Country:** Colombia
- **Time period:** 1923 to 2024
- **Incidents by type of transport:** Emphasis was placed on the means of air transport in order to have data for the case study of El Dorado Airport.

To reinforce the information from the WiTIS database, a search was carried out in online newspapers and in the Robin des Bois online

bulletin titled "On the Trail" (2013 to 2024). The official data of the seizures made at El Dorado Airport were provided by the District Secretariat of the Environment of Bogota (SDA) from 2016 to 2024.

## PROCESSING INFORMATION

After collecting the secondary information, the sources that contained relevant data such as routes, *modus operandi*, trafficked species, statistics on seizures, driving factors of illegal trade and convergences with other crimes were prioritised and categorised according to the subject matter to which they corresponded. In the case of the CITES database, the most relevant information focused on the species with the highest number of records of exported specimens from breeding farms, the species with the highest number of records of exported specimens collected from the wild and the main wildlife importing countries from Colombia were extracted. For the WiTIS database, wildlife seizures from Bogota's El

Dorado Airport and that had Colombia as their country of origin were analysed.

The information requested from the District Secretariat of the Environment of Bogota on the seizures of wildlife at El Dorado Airport was divided into two groups: 1) Seizures that had Colombia as their country of origin, and 2) Seizures that did not have Colombia as their country of origin. For this report, the seizures of wildlife that have Colombia as their country of origin were analysed in detail.



Amazon matamata



# INFORMATION ANALYSIS

Qualitative and quantitative prioritised and categorised information was examined and interpreted. Information on legal trade from the CITES database was transformed into graphs and information on seizures into tables of contents.

Once the information on wildlife seizures was organised, at El Dorado Airport from secondary sources and from the SDA that had Colombia as their country of origin, the information taken for the analysis was as follows:

YEAR	SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	NUMBER OF SPECIMENS / WEIGHT (KG)	CONCEALMENT METHOD	TRAFFIC METHOD	DESTINATION
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Based on this data, the representativeness of each taxonomic group was assessed, and the total number of specimens seized for each taxon was calculated. Some records such as shark swim bladders and sea cucumbers were represented in weight (kilograms) and not in number of specimens. This information was

organised and presented in a table format. In addition, information on the method of concealment (boxes, photographic film, among others), the method of traffic (parcel, air cargo, luggage), and the country or countries of destination were represented in percentages.

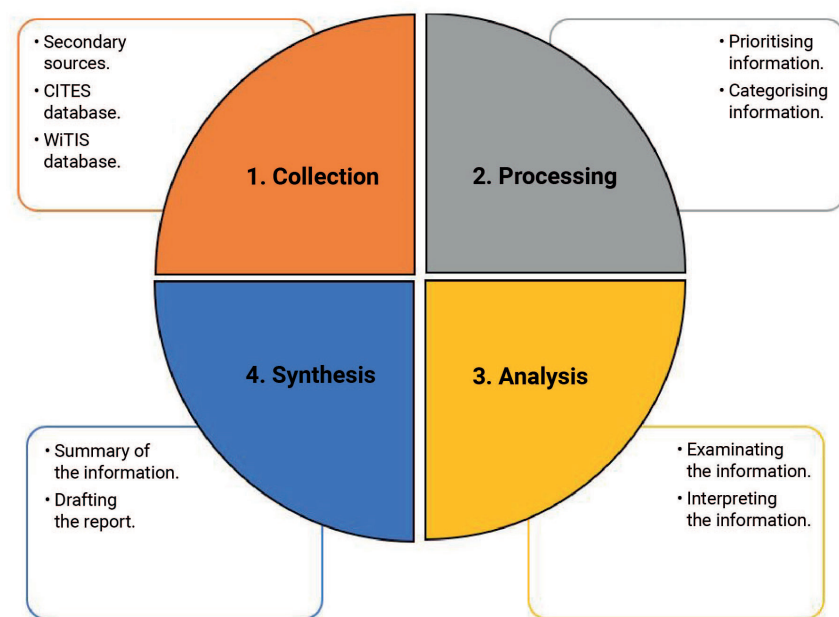
# INFORMATION SYNTHESIS

The information examined and interpreted was organised into a report, which included the most relevant quantitative and qualitative data on the dynamics

of wildlife trafficking in Colombia with an emphasis on the air sector.

Figure 1 summarises the main phases for the preparation of this report.

FIGURE 1. Methodology used for the development of the report



# RESULTS

This section examines the results of documentary research on the legal and illegal wildlife trade in Colombia, starting with a historical summary of the trade in Colombia, and an analysis of the legal wildlife trade using the CITES database as a reference. Next, traffic trends are examined including the identification of major national and international routes and dynamics in border areas. It also presents the *modus operandi* of criminal wildlife

trafficking organisations, the main illegally traded taxonomic groups, the main drivers, the convergence with other types of crimes and finally summarises important warning signs in the activities and actions within the wildlife trafficking chain.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF WILDLIFE TRADE IN COLOMBIA

In Colombia, the extraction of specimens directly from the natural environment represents the most used system for obtaining goods derived from wildlife. However, the country does not have adequate data on the exploitation of natural wildlife in the past or in the present. This is largely due to the fact that their exploitation and trade are illegal, and that a large volume is used for subsistence purposes (Mancera and Reyes, 2008).

by taxonomic group, where birds led exports followed by mammals. For example, between 1987 and 1988 the volume of alligator skins exported was between 7,800 and 14,000 (Mancera and Reyes, 2008; Rojas, 2011).

Since the mid 19th and during all the peak moments of international bird trade, Colombia was one of the main suppliers of: heron feathers, hummingbird skins, and cage birds, and these products were massively exported around the world until changes in fashion saw demand plummet or commercial bird exports were prohibited (Ortiz-Von Halle, 2018). Finally, this unsustainable trade led many species to the brink of extinction and the Colombian authorities to take restrictive control measures on the use and exploitation of wildlife.

There are records of wildlife trade in Colombia – with an emphasis on wildlife – since the 16th century where Europe was very relevant due to private collections of birds and their exotic cuisine, as well as the use of the *Trichechus inunguis* Amazonian Manatee as a source of protein for slaves, where its overexploitation almost led to extinction. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the oil and eggs of the South American River Turtle (*Podocnemis* spp.) and the Manatee were part of the trade to meet the demand for food. Between 1835 and 1890, birds, mammals, invertebrates, reptiles and pearls were traded to form part of private collections of naturalists. Between 1890 and 1914, the commercialisation of heron feathers was relevant due to fashion trends for the making of hats for women. Since 1915, Colombia has had reports of exports

Regarding flora, it is known that the search for orchids in Colombia began in the 19th century, where Victorian elites sent their servants in search of exotic and rare flora to expand their botanical collections. At that time they were considered symbols of social status. The boom in the collection of orchids for commercial purposes began in the second half of the 19th century, when large English nurseries and trading houses sent expeditions to obtain the largest number of specimens for auction.



### Lack of appropriate data

prevents quantifying exploitation and trade.

Colombian orchids were part of important collections in major European cities (Anderson, 2018; Uribe, 2020). Annexe 2 summarises the main wildlife trade activities and their uses over time in Colombia.

## LEGAL TRADE OF WILDLIFE SPECIES IN COLOMBIA

According to Sinovas and collaborators, by 2017, Colombia was the leading exporter of wild species in South America, both in term of the numbers of specimens—primarily the skins of *Caiman crocodilus fuscus* (Brown Caiman) and in weight, including *Strombus gigas* (Queen Conch) and Brown Caiman meat. The estimated average annual value of CITES exports between 2005 and 2014 was \$50.2 million. Most of this estimated value corresponds to alligator skins (USD 44.1 million

per year), while alligator leather products were the product with the second highest estimated value (USD 2.1 million per year).

Below is an updated overview of the legal trade in CITES species with emphasis on the most representative by number of specimens exported and the main importing countries from 2018 to 2022.

**Colombia is** South America's leading exporter of wildlife species.



Brown Caiman

In the specific case of the trade in *C. crocodilus fuscus* (Brown Caiman), over time it was demonstrated that the existence of the market for its skins and processed products was high due to its demand at the international level, so

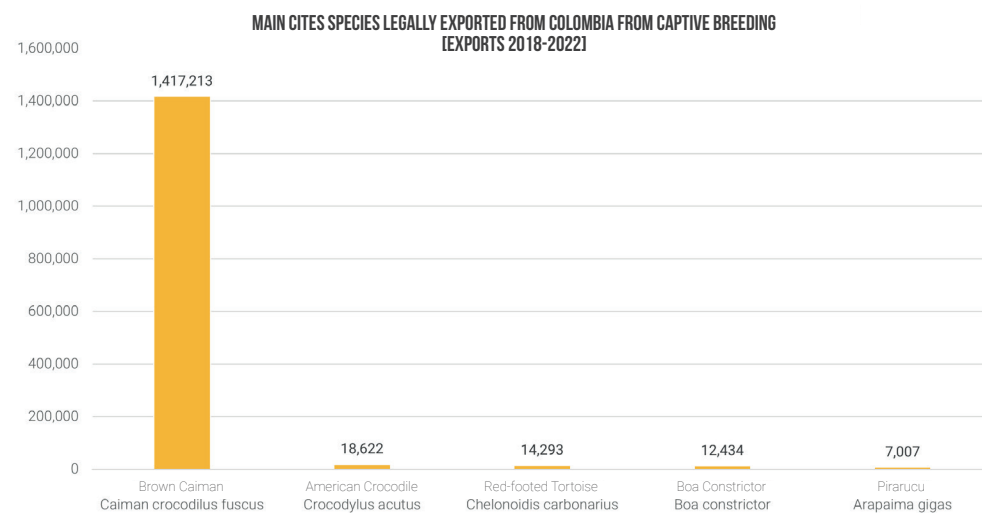
it was necessary to generate a reliable market that contributed to the conservation of the species hand in hand with captive breeding, avoiding the illegal commercialisation of the species (Cante *et al*, 2018).

### MAIN CITES SPECIES LEGALLY EXPORTED FROM COLOMBIA FROM CAPTIVE BREEDING

According to Colombia's reports to CITES, from 2018 to 2022, the species with the highest number of specimens exported from captive breeding by volume were: *Caiman crocodilus fuscus* (Brown Caiman), *Crocodylus acutus*

(American Crocodile), *Chelonoidis carbonarius* (Red-footed Tortoise), *Boa constrictor* (Boa Constrictor) and *Arapaima gigas* (Pirarucu), as indicated in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2.** Main CITES species legally exported from Colombia from captive breeding (according to Colombia's trade reports to CITES)

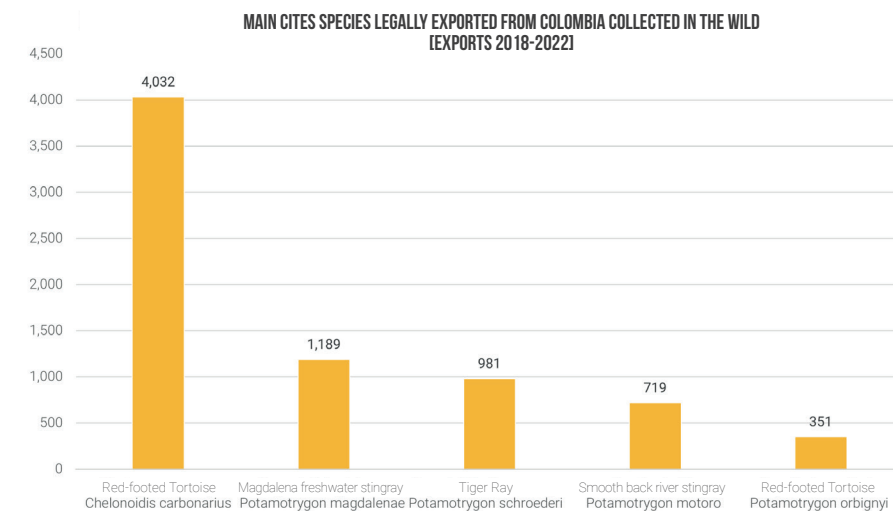


### MAIN CITES SPECIES LEGALLY EXPORTED FROM COLOMBIA COLLECTED IN THE WILD

According to trade reports from Colombia to CITES, from 2018 to 2022, the CITES species collected in the wild with the highest volume of exports are: *Chelonoidis carbonarius* (Red-footed Tortoise), *Potamotrygon magdalenae* (Magdalena freshwater stingray), *P. schroederi* (Tiger Ray), *P. motoro* (Black River Stingray) and *P. orbignyi* (Smooth back river stingray). From the Potamotrygonidae family, eight of

the freshwater rays in Colombia have been included since 2016 in Appendix III of CITES, which is less restrictive. Freshwater rays are sold for ornamental purposes. In Figure 3, the species with the highest number of exported specimens of wild origin are included.

**FIGURE 3.** Main CITES species exported from Colombia collected in the wild (according to Colombia's trade reports to CITES) - Source: CITES database, 2024





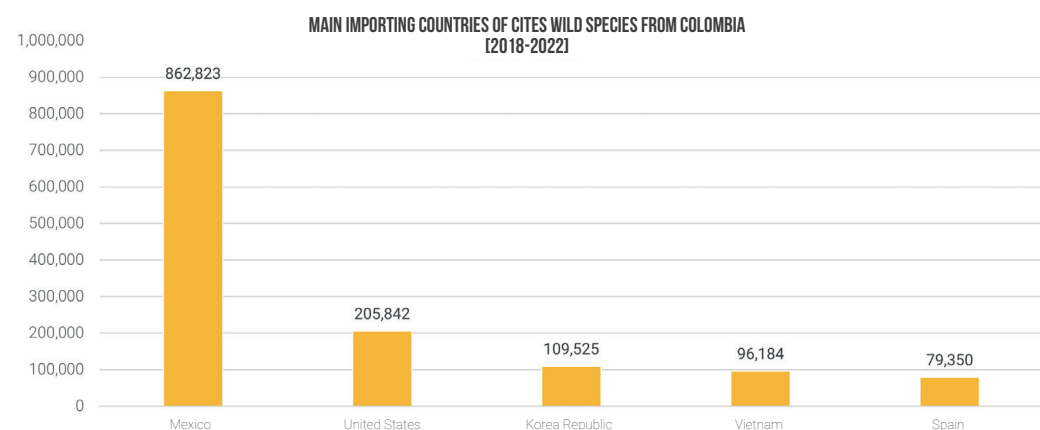
## MAIN IMPORTING COUNTRIES OF CITES WILD SPECIES FROM COLOMBIA.

According to trade reports from Colombia, between 2018 and 2022 the countries with the highest number of imports of wildlife specimens for commercial purposes from

Colombia were: Mexico, the United States of America, the Republic of Korea, Vietnam and Spain, as shown in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4.

Main importing countries of CITES wildlife for commercial purposes from Colombia (according to Colombia's trade reports to CITES) - Source: CITES Database, 2024



## WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING TRENDS IN COLOMBIA

The Regional Autonomous Corporations (CAR) of Colombia recognise that the total amount of seizures corresponds to only 1-10% of what is actually trafficked (Güiza-Suárez and Jiménez, 2022). The Reception and Rehabilitation of Wildlife Centre of Bogota receives approximately 4,000 animals per year. Most of these animals are trafficked within the country. From the seizure data provided by the National Police of Colombia (PNC), between 2019 and 2021, the vast majority of the wildlife trafficked came from the departments of Amazonas and Cordoba. In addition, the city of Bogota is considered a centre of national collection and international air traffic (Rojas, 2021).

The Comptroller General of Colombia prepared a map of vulnerable areas for wildlife trafficking in Colombia in the period from 2008 to 2013 and established that those departments that have between 10,000 to 50,000 individuals seized represent a critical value, between 1,000 to 10,000 at a high value, and those that do not exceed 1,000 individuals seized, a low value. From this analysis the following departments are within:

- CRITICAL VALUE.** Antioquia, Cordoba, Bolivar, Magdalena, Cesar, Santander, Cundinamarca, Valle del Cauca, Sucre.

**Amazonas and Cordoba** are the main wildlife trafficking hotspots.

- HIGH VALUE.** Atlantico, La Guajira, Choco, Caldas, Risaralda, Quindio, Bogota, Cauca, Tolima, Narino, Putumayo, Huila, Norte de Santander, Arauca, Casanare, Meta, Guaviare, Caqueta, Boyaca, Amazonas.
- LOW VALUE** are found in Vichada, Guainia and Vaupes (Patiño, 2020).

Regarding seizures of wild flora in the period between 2005 and 2010, the departments with the highest number of seizures recorded were: Valle del Cauca, Cordoba, Antioquia, Cundinamarca and Sucre (MADS, 2012).

## NATIONAL ROUTES USED FOR WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN COLOMBIA

The national routes that have been identified for the trafficking of different taxonomic groups of wildlife are:

- Route 1. Mammals, birds and reptiles.** Six routes have been identified: i. Amazonas-Meta- Bogota; ii. Casanare - Bogota; iii. Caquets-Huila-Tolima; iv. Girardot-Bogota; v. Choco-Antioquia-Barranquilla; and vi. Putumayo- Narino- Valle.
- Route 2. Amphibians, Coleoptera and Arachnids.** Three routes have been identified: i. Choco-Valle-Bogota; ii. Boyaca-Bogota-Bajo; and iii. Medio Magdalena-Cundinamarca.

- Route 3. Fish and ornamental fish.** Five routes were identified: i. Amazonas-Bogota; ii. Magdalena Medio-Bogota; iii. Choco-Antioquia-Bogota; iv. Llanos Orientales-Bogota; and v. Caqueta-Putumayo-Bogota (Valencia, 2018).

Most of the national wildlife trafficking routes identified in Colombia have the city of Bogota as a transit city or final destination. In the five routes identified for the traffic of ornamental fish, Bogota is the final destination city.



Red-footed Tortoise



## INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING ROUTES IN COLOMBIA

The PNC recognised wildlife trafficking as a growing problem. In 2020, 2,350 Amazon matamatas were seized, making it one of the largest seizures of reptiles in Latin America. It is known that the route of this shipment went from Bogota to Leticia, from Leticia to Peru, and from there, to the United States and Japan.

The PNC has identified three mainland wildlife routes:

- a. **Route 1. Latin America.** The countries that are part of this route are: Mexico, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and the United States (mainly the states of New York, California, Florida and Texas),

where birds, reptile skins, mammals and amphibians are traded.

- b. **Route 2. Europe.** Italy, Germany, Belgium, Czechia, Sweden, Croatia and Turkey are destination countries for wildlife specimens such as reptile and mammal skins.
- c. **Route 3. Asia.** Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea and Thailand are involved as destination countries, where reptiles, amphibians, insects and wild flora species are sold (Valencia, 2018; Connelly, 2021; Güiza-Suárez and Jiménez, 2022).

## WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN BORDER AREAS

Border areas present major challenges when it comes to the convergence of crimes and actors, in addition to the challenges in terms of institutional management and control capacity in border areas that are difficult to access (Molano-Rojas, 2016). Thus, the border areas of Colombia are considered hotspots for illegal wildlife trafficking. The situation of illegal wildlife trafficking in the binational border area between Colombia and Ecuador and the trinational border between Colombia, Peru and Brazil is summarised below.

### Binational border area between Colombia and Ecuador

The Colombia–Ecuador border integration zone (ZIF) has an area of 100,005 km<sup>2</sup>. In Colombia it is represented by the departments of Narino and Putumayo, and in Ecuador by the provinces of Esmeraldas, Carchi and Sucumbios. With regard to illegal wildlife trafficking, several taxa, including birds, mammals, and reptiles, are used for the consumption of meat, eggs, and fat. Hunting species such as *Cuniculus paca* (Lowland paca) and *Dasybus novemcinctus* (Nine-banded Armadillo), are used as a source of protein, and their consumption and sale is recorded for both indigenous and rural

communities in both countries. In Colombia, the meat is displayed in shop windows along with other meats, and is transported in portable polystyrene cool-boxes, and moved to the interior of the country in public transport buses and river transport by boats to be sold in the region. In the case of poisonous frogs, various reports indicate that they are extracted from the forests of the Pacific Narinense and Cauca to be sold in markets and pet fairs in Europe, Asia, and North America. It has been evidenced that foreign citizens pay peasants to extract them from the wild, and buyers transport them to the interior of the country by air or possibly to Ecuador by different means (WCS, 2023).

### Colombia-Peru-Brazil trinational border area

The trinational border area is made up of the departments of Putumayo and Amazonas of Colombia, the department of Loreto of Peru and the state of Amazonas of Brazil. According to a WCS study, 2023 in Colombia, in the trinational border area wildlife seizures were concentrated in 10 species: seven reptiles, two mammals and one bird. 93% of confiscated wildlife individuals are distributed in five reptile species: *Podocnemis unifilis* (Yellow-spotted River Turtle), *Chelus* sp. (mata-mata), *P. expansa* (South American River Turtle), *Boa*



Amazon river dolphin

*constrictor* (Boa Constrictor) and *Chelonoidis denticulata* (Yellow-footed Tortoise). Regarding the modes of transport of live monkeys, sloths, turtles and snakes, they are placed in sacks, backpacks, boxes and tows, and parcels are used to transport bushmeat and live individuals. In the specific case of the Giant leaf frog (*Phyllomedusa bicolor*), the poison is transported in tablets with resin attached under the parcel delivery mode.

Among the routes identified is the Amazon as a point of origin and movement for the illegal trade of mammals, birds and reptiles to Meta and the capital Bogota. The PNC identified that the illegal trade route that has its origin in the south of the country in the departments of Amazonas, Vaupes, Guaviare, Putumayo and Meta, species whose main destination is Bogota

and the borders are trafficked (WCS, 2023).

A specific case of illegal trafficking from Brazil to Colombia is that of the Piracatinga or Vulture catfish (*Calophysus macropterus*) and involves the smuggling of large volumes of this species across the border. In addition, this type of fishing leads to a conservation problem for the Amazon River Dolphins (*Inia* spp. and *Sotalia* spp.) and *Caiman crocodilus*, which are slaughtered in large quantities and used as bait in this lucrative fishing (Charity and Ferreira, 2020).

## WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN THE AVIATION SECTOR

The airline industry is considered an effective option for traffickers looking for a way to quickly move specimens of wildlife and their products or derivatives. The odds of traffic events being identified are low; even in the United States, a program to discreetly check law enforcement success rates at airports found that inspectors did not identify prohibited material 95% of the time. Wildlife traffickers exploit the weaknesses of airports, including: technological delays, latent corruption, and lack of capacity. Traffickers focus on specific airports or flight routes by choosing airports for their location, size, connections, customs control procedures, and the ability of control agencies to identify smuggling, among others (Utermohlen and Baine, 2018).

Of the information available on wildlife traffic seizures at Colombia's airports, half were at El Dorado International Airport (Bogota), followed by Alfredo Vasquez Cobo International Airport located in Leticia, a city on the Amazon River that borders Brazil and Peru, with 31% of the seizures made. At this airport, most of the seizures were of freshwater species such as *Arapaima gigas* (Pirarucú) or siluriformes (Connelly, 2021).

## CASE STUDY: EL DORADO AIRPORT

El Dorado Airport, located in the city of Bogota (Colombia), is the second airport with the highest volume of passengers in South America, which is why it plays a central role in Colombia's wildlife trade (Connelly, 2021). This airport is used for both domestic and international illegal wildlife trade. Regarding the security and control of baggage at El Dorado Airport, several parties are involved, including: the Civil Aviation Authority (Aerocivil), the Colombian National Police, the airlines, and Operadora Aeroportuaria Internacional (OPAIN), which is in charge of the administration and maintenance of the airport.

Among the efforts being made to prevent, decrease and control wildlife traffic at El Dorado Airport are:

- The signing of a memorandum of understanding between OPAIN and the District Secretariat for the Environment (SDA), which aims to strengthen inter-institutional coordination to contribute to the fight against wildlife trafficking, which is framed in the "Protocol to Control Airport Wildlife Trafficking";
- The signing of the Buckingham Palace Declaration which aims to implement practical measures to stop the illegal transport of wildlife; and
- Ongoing training of personnel; in partnership between ROUTES and OPAIN, 105 people were trained in order to raise awareness of the importance of reporting and denouncing evidence of actions regarding the illegal transport of wild species and the risks associated with these illegal practices, as well as on the relevance of the role of each person to contribute to the seizure and limitation of illegal exploitation of wild species.

From the information on wildlife seizures from the SDA and the Police at El Dorado airport, it is known that poisonous frogs, mainly of the genus *Oophaga*, are trafficked to Switzerland and Spain, and the Amazon matamata and macaws to the United States and Europe (Sollund and Maher, 2015). The collection of secondary information reported 44 seizures of wildlife species from 1993 to 2024 at El Dorado Airport. In this time period, seizures were reported in the years: 1993, 2000, 2011,

2013, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. In these 13 years, a total of 9,150 specimens, 3,493 constituent parts and 131 kilograms (including sea cucumbers and swim bladders) were seized. In 2021, the highest incidence of seizures occurred totalling nine, followed by 2018 with eight seizures. In 2020, the largest volume of specimens was seized with 2,722 and in 2021 the largest number of constituent parts (fins and swim bladders).

The taxonomic group with the highest number of records of specimens seized during the period from 1993 to 2024 is that of reptiles, followed by amphibians and thirdly, marine species. On the other hand, the taxonomic groups with the least recorded incidences have been mammals, molluscs and birds. In the case of wild flora, there were no seizures reported. The species with the highest number of seized specimens is *Chelus fimbriata* (Amazon matamata) with a total of 4,231 specimens, followed by venomous frog species (*Oophaga histrionica*, *O. lehmanni*, *O. sylvatica* and *Dendrobates* sp.) with a total of 1,021 specimens, between 1993 and 2024. In the case of marine species, fins and swim bladders of *Alopias pelagicus* (Smalltooth thresher shark), and sea cucumbers have been seized.

Amazon matamata, the *Oophaga* and *Dendrobates* frog genera and sharks of the genus *Alopias* are included in CITES Appendix II. As far as the IUCN conservation category is concerned, the Amazon matamata has not been assessed on the IUCN Red List. However, the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Terrestrial and Galapagos Turtle Specialist Group (TFTSG) assessed their global conservation status as Least Concern (LC) in 2011. Regarding the two species of venomous frogs of the genus *Oophaga* (*O. histrionica*, *O. lehmanni*), both are Critically Endangered (CR) and the shark species *A. pelagicus* Endangered (EN).

Among the main modes of concealment used by traffickers, bags, photographic films, containers and packages can be identified. As for the method of trafficking, wildlife was found in parcels in 57% of the cases of seizures, followed by 32% by luggage<sup>2</sup>, 7% by air cargo, and 4% unknown. It can be identified that

large volumes of specimens are transported by parcels or air cargo. The international destination of the specimens seized for the most part was the United States of America, followed by Germany, and China. In terms of domestic destinations, the most common were Bogota and Leticia.

It is important to mention that the results obtained and the analysis carried out on wildlife trafficking at El Dorado Airport represent only part of what is actually trafficked through this airport. This is because wildlife traffickers have found methods of concealment that cannot be easily detected in scanners or by control agencies.

Table 2 details the seizures of wildlife recorded

by year and by taxonomic group.

Also, there has been an illegal trade in pieces of coral and (dried) seahorses from El Dorado Airport that have European countries such as Germany, Poland and Spain as their final destination.

In the case of the seizures made at the "El Dorado" Airport that do not have Colombia as their country of origin, the database obtained from the SDA indicates an illegal trade, especially from the United States, of trophy hunting of the species *Odocoileus virginianus* (White-tailed Deer). Likewise, the number of seizures of *Tragelaphus* sp. (Kudu) from Israel are mainly from shofars (wind instruments made from animal horns). Seizures by continent are summarised below:



**Bags, photographic films, containers and packages** are the methods of wildlife concealment.

TABLE 2.

Wildlife seizures recorded at El Dorado Airport by taxonomic group

Source: Robin des Bois "On the Trail"; 2021; BOGOTA, 2021; INFOBAE, 2022; WITIS, 2024 ; SDA, 2024

YEAR	SPECIMENS SEIZED BY TAXONOMIC GROUP AT EL DORADO AIRPORT													TOTAL			Number of seizures
	Reptiles	Birds	Mammals	Amphibians	Insects	Arachnids	Molluscs	Crustaceans	Freshwater fish	MARINE SPECIES				Total number of specimens	Total number of constituent elements/parts <sup>4</sup>	Total number of Kilograms	
										Specimens <sup>3</sup>	Fins	Specimens (Kg)	Swim bladders (Kg)				
1993	312													312			1
2000	344			195										539			1
2011		1		50										51			2
2013							8							8			1
2016					1									1			1
2017										105	14			105	14		2
2018	7	1		216	13	23	3			540				803			8
2019	1387	15		424				12						1838			5
2020	2500			6	216									2722			3
2021	1937	1	1		67	241			26		3493	117		2273	3493	117	9
2022					93	145			30					268			5
2023					2									2			2
2024				130	71			20	7					228			4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6487</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1021</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>3493</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>9150</b>	<b>3493</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>44</b>

<sup>2</sup>Due to the lack of information, it is not possible to classify types of luggage such as hand luggage (carried in the upper compartments of the aircraft) or hold luggage (carried in the cargo area of the aircraft).

<sup>3</sup>The term specimens refers to living or dead individuals or whole organisms.

<sup>4</sup>The term constituent elements/parts encompasses the parts of an individual such as swim bladders and shark fins.





El Dorado Airport, Bogotá

- a. *South America*. Catfish (*Hypoclinemus zebra*, *Scobinancistrus* sp.) were seized from Brazil, Red mangrove Crabs (*Ucides occidentalis*) from Ecuador, Praying Mantises (*Acanthops erosula*), and Giant leaf frogs (*Phyllomedusa bicolor*) from Peru.
- b. *Asia*. Seahorses (*Hippocampus* spp) and Atlantic yellow cowry (*Naria acicularis*) were seized from China and Asian Water Monitor (*Varanus salvator*) from Indonesia.
- c. *Europe*. Mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*) were seized from England, Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*) from Germany,
- d. *Caribbean*. Fish from the Pomacentridae family were seized from Puerto Rico.

European fallow Deer (*Dama dama*) from the Netherlands, Kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) from Belgium, and butterflies of the Papilio krishna species from Italy.

Annexe 3 details the seizures of wildlife that Colombia has as a country of origin, by year, species, number, method of concealment, method of trafficking and destination.

## WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING NETWORKS MODUS OPERANDI

Regarding criminal organisations associated with illegal wildlife trafficking, the Directorate of Criminal Investigation and INTERPOL (DIJIN) of Colombia identified a modus operandi that is based on the distribution of roles such as:

1. **Hunters, fishermen, gatherers**, usually made up of inhabitants of a particular region who tend to be unaware that the activity is criminal and who are very knowledgeable about the local area;
2. **Transporters**, are those who are responsible for moving illegally collected wildlife from one place to another;
3. **Intermediaries**, who are responsible for contacting criminal networks with the communities from which wildlife is illegally extracted, this way of operating has been detected in the Colombian Amazon;
4. **Exporters** are traders who, through a legal veneer, are responsible for marketing illegally collected wildlife;
5. **Facilitators (legal actors)**, are often public officials who use corruption to ensure the proper functioning of environmental crimes (American Bar Association, 2020; InSight Crime, 2021);
6. **Consumers** are people who seek to meet their medicinal, ornamental, recreational, food, fuel, investment and cultural needs (Phelps et al, 2016).

The illegal wildlife trade in Colombia is part of organised crime because it works through cartels made up of family groups that have infrastructure and equipment, including farms, warehouses and vehicles for the operation. For the capture of living specimens from the wild, they employ indigenous people and peasants who know the topography, the reproductive cycles of the species and their habitats. Likewise, for the movement of wild specimens, they hire groups of transporters who, through boats, campers, trucks and cargo flights, move them to nearby urban centres, where another group is in charge of expanding the market niches both nationally and internationally (Valencia, 2018).

Annexe 4 summarises the typology of the main functions of the actors (gatherers/hunters, intermediaries, and consumers) of illegal wildlife trade chains.

The control authorities of Colombia, from the criminal and administrative field, take as an indication of organised criminal activity the number of seized specimens, since it is thought that, if the number is high, it is very likely that they are used for commercial purposes. In this context, bus and airport seizures tend to be more effective because it is easier to demonstrate intent to transport wildlife out of the country to international destinations (American Bar Association, 2020).

At the national level, wildlife specimens part of the traffic are marketed through social networks to evade controls. In an analysis of online wildlife trade in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, it was found that the largest number of publications from 2010 to 2020 were from Colombia with 33.64%. Reptiles were identified as the main target group of illegal online trade with 53% of publications, among the main species/taxa traded are: *Podocnemis unifilis*, *Chelus fimbriata*, *Boa constrictor*, *Caiman* sp. and *Chelonoidis* sp. Regarding birds, they were the second most targeted group with 27% of online publications, with the main species/taxa traded being: *Ara ararauna*, *Amazona* sp., *Ara* sp., *A. macao* y, *Forpus* sp.; from amphibians: *Dendrobates auratus*, *D. leucomelas*, *Phyllomedusa bicolor*, *Phyllobates terribilis*, and *Oophaga histrionica*; and mammals: *Cebuella pygmaea*, *Saimiri sciureus*, *Cebus* sp., *Sapajus apella*, *Ateles* sp. These species are mostly commercialised

through social networks such as Facebook and Instagram (WCS, 2021).

Wildlife specimens are internationally smuggled in deplorable forms, without oxygen, and in crowded spaces with low temperatures. For example, entrepreneurs who are part of the illegal wildlife trade known as “exporters” use legal fronts to disguise the unlawfulness of illegally caught wildlife. On the other hand, criminal networks that cannot use legal exits, transport wild specimens using rudimentary means. These networks transport live parrots to Brazil, the United States, and Spain between luggage or hidden in passenger clothing, reptiles are transported inside plastic bags and bottles, and marine species are transported dead inside packages (InSight Crime, 2021).

## Legal fronts

are used by entrepreneurs to conceal illegal wildlife trafficking.



## MAIN TAXA TRAFFICKED

The main taxonomic groups trafficked in Colombia and their species of both fauna and wild flora are summarised below.

### Wildlife

In the "National Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Illegal Wildlife Trafficking 2012 – 2020", it was identified that the illegal wildlife trade has a minimum of 569 target species (Ramírez-Zamudio, 2022). The most trafficked species are: *Brotogeris jugularis* (Orange-chinned Parakeet), *Trachemys callirostris* (Hycotea Turtle), and *Sciurus granatensis* (Red-tailed Squirrel) (MADS, 2012). Marine fish, freshwater fish, marine species and amphibians are not included in the summary of the main species of wildlife trafficked.

Reptilian species are the taxonomic group most affected by the illegal trade in fauna, used for food and for the use of their skins: iguanas, tortoises, freshwater turtles, boas and caimans. Reptiles are a taxon of great importance due to their high volumes of extraction and their economic and cultural connotation. In total number of seizures, birds occupy a distant second place (Arroyave, 2015; Ortiz-Von Halle, 2018).

From an analysis of seizures in Colombia by control agencies, with regard to reptiles, the most threatened by illegal trafficking are: four alligators, two crocodiles, ten lizards, 61 snakes and 21 turtles. The order with the highest number of specimens reported in wildlife trafficking was that of the Testudines (turtles) of species belonging to the families Cheloniidae, Emydidae and Podocnemididae. The genus *Trachemys* had the highest number of records, followed by *Chelonia*, *Podocnemis*, *Eretmochelys* and *Lepidochelys* (Bernal, 2021). An analysis of Amazon matamata seizures from 2010 to 2021 determined that 7,559 specimens were seized mainly in the department of Amazonas, specifically in the municipality of Leticia, followed by the department of Bogota (WCSa, 2022).

It is known that birds represent one of the taxa that are most seized worldwide because they are a demanded group and offered in the

international market for their attractive colours, their singing, and their rarity. The Psittaciformes order is one of the most trafficked for their illegal possession as pets. The following bird species are the most trafficked in Colombia: *Brotogeris jugularis* (Orange-chinned Parakeet), *Amazona ochrocephala* (Yellow-crowned Parrot), and *Pionus menstruus* (Blue-headed Parrot) (Baptiste *et al*, 2014; Lozano-Suárez *et al*, 2024).

*Didelphis marsupialis* (Common opossum), *Pecari tajacu* (Collared Peccary), *Cuniculus paca* (Lowland paca), *Dasypus novemcinctus* (Nine-banded Armadillo), *Cebus albifrons* (Brown Pale-fronted Capuchin), *Hydrochoeris hydrochaeris* (Capybara), *Alouatta seniculus* (Red Howling Monkey), *Saguinus oedipus* (Cotton-headed Tamarin), *Atelerix albiventris* (Four-toed Hedgehog) and *Sciurus granatensis* (Red-tailed Squirrel) were the most trafficked mammals in Colombia between 2018 and 2022 (Bonilla-Liberato *et al*, 2024).

With regard to invertebrates, spiders of the Theraphosidae family have been identified, and Hercules Beetles (*Dynastes hercules*) as the most trafficked species in Colombia (Baptiste *et al*, 2014).

### Flora

Between 2002 and 2010, the Colombian environmental authorities determined that the species or groups of species of flora most trafficked were: guadua (*Guadua* sp), palms (family Arecaceae) and wildcane (*Gynerium sagittatum*) (MADS, 2012).

Orchids are a globally threatened group and have been identified as part of the illegal trade in Colombia. In the period from 2006 to 2009, the most trafficked orchid species nationwide were: *Ada* sp., *Cattleya* sp., *Cattleya trianae*, *Dendrobium* sp., *Masdevallia rosea*, *Maxillaria* sp., *Miltonia* sp., *Phalaenopsis* sp., *Odontoglossum* sp., *Oncidium* sp., *Paphiopedilum* sp., *Pescatoria lawrenceana*, *Phaius* sp., and *Platystele* sp. In a study carried out in the main land terminals of Bogota (Terminal Salitre and Terminal del Sur), it was identified that the main illegally traded genera

## Iguanas, turtles, boas and alligators

are the reptile species most affected by the illegal trade.

are: *Cattleya*, *Phalaenopsis* (genus exotic to Colombia), and *Oncidium*. Among the species endemic to Colombia with greater movement and illegal trafficking, *Cattleya trianae*, *C. warscewiczii* and *C. mendelii* were identified. (MADS, 2012; Ordóñez-Blanco *et al*, 2019).

## MAIN FACILITATORS AND DRIVERS OF WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IN COLOMBIA

Below are the main factors of illegal trafficking of wildlife identified in Colombia and which are common with other countries in the region. Among them, we have identified facilitators of corruption, legal gaps and obstacles, and

institutional weaknesses, and as drivers, price in international markets, and cultural and socio-economic factors.



### CORRUPTION

Corruption is one of the main facilitators of illegal wildlife trade. Corrupt activities can take place at all stages of the wildlife trafficking chain, from poaching, illegal fishing and gathering, through the transport of illegally hunted or harvested products, processing and export, to the sale of illegal wildlife products and the laundering of profits and species. Corruption also undermines attempts to arrest

and prosecute those implicated in wildlife crime, for example, by bribing or coercing law enforcement officers, prosecutors, or judges to avoid investigation or influence judicial decisions (WWF and Traffic, 2015; USAID and WWF, 2021). According to Transparency International, Colombia is ranked 87 out of 180 countries evaluated (with 1 being the country that



is perceived to have the lowest levels of corruption in the public sector and 180 the country with the highest levels of corruption) with a score of 40 out of 100 (higher score for countries that are perceived to be less corrupt and vice versa), where the global average is 43.

Next, taken from the document "Strategies For Fighting Corruption in Wildlife Conservation", prepared by WWF and TRAFFIC in 2015, the phases of trafficking, related individuals and forms of corruption that could be part of the dynamics of wildlife trafficking in Colombia are contextualised. Corruption within wildlife trafficking can range from:

- a. The establishment of policies and legislation by government authorities. These may favour certain illegal activities and acts of corruption such as nepotism, influence peddling, conflict of interest and bribery.
- b. Issuing permits. For example, in Colombia the following permits can be obtained for the use and management of terrestrial wildlife: i. Hunting permits (subsistence hunting is exempt); ii. Permit to collect specimens of wild species of biological diversity for the purpose of preparing environmental studies; iii. Study permits for the purposes of scientific research in biological diversity; iv. Permits for the collection of specimens of wild species from biological diversity for non-commercial scientific research purposes; and v. CITES permits. Regarding the use and management of hydrobiological resources, the following permits are required depending on the purpose of the fishery: i. Artisanal Fishing Permit; ii. Industrial Fishing Permit; iii. Exploratory Fishing Permit; iv. Ornamental Fishing Permit; v. Research Fishing Permit; vi. Sport Fishing Permit; vii. Processing Permit Marketing Permit; viii. Integrated Fishing Permit; and ix. Cultivation Permit. In the issuance of these permits, acts of corruption such as forgery, false statements and bribery may occur.
- c. Illegal collection, hunting or fishing of wildlife specimens. These activities may involve control officers, and acts of corruption may include non-observance

of crimes and administrative infractions, participation in illegal harvesting or fishing, falsification of documents, and bribery. On the other hand, there are also legal actors looking for specimens that can be "laundered" (for example, in breeding farms). These "entrepreneurs" may violate the provisions of hunting permits granted by the competent authorities. This transgression may consist of obtaining: i. A greater number of copies than authorised; ii. sexes other than those authorised. These entrepreneurs sometimes resort to the use of corruption mechanisms such as promoting the omission of monitoring and control actions by the competent authorities, and delaying similar requests for use required by other legal actors.

- d. Transportation and export of illegal wildlife. In this phase of traffic, inspectors at checkpoints at airports, land terminals and ports may fail to observe crimes, be bribed or falsify documents.
- e. Sale of illegal wildlife products. At this stage, the police and inspectors can be part of the corruption network through acts of corruption such as document fraud, non-observance of the crime, bribery and collusion.
- f. Investigation and prosecution of wildlife offenders. Police, prosecutors, judges and public servants can be part of the corruption, and this can be presented in failures in the altered investigations, delivery of confidential information, loss of evidence, delay of cases, release of suspects, imposition of low or non-existent sanctions and bribes.

Table 3 summarises the phases of wildlife trafficking, related individuals, and forms of corruption.

**TABLE 3.**  
Phases of wildlife trafficking, related individuals and forms of corruption - Source: Adapted from WWF and Traffic, 2015

STAGES OF ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING	INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED	FORMS OF CORRUPTION
Establishment of policies and legislation	Government authorities	1. Nepotism
		2. Influence peddling
		3. Conflict of interest
		4. Bribes
Issuance of fishing, hunting, and export permits	Government officials responsible for issuing permits	1. Document forgery
		2. False statements
		3. Bribery
Illegal gathering, hunting or fishing	Control Officers Employers	1. Turning a blind eye
		2. Participating in illegal poaching or fishing.
		3. Bribery
		4. Document fraud
Transportation and export/import of illegal wildlife	Inspectors at checkpoints at airports, land terminals and ports	1. Turning a blind eye.
		2. Bribery.
		3. Document forgery.
Sale of illegal wildlife products	Enforcement officers, inspectors	1. Document fraud
		2. Turning a blind eye
		3. Bribery
		4. Collusion

## DEMAND

In the international context, the demand for wildlife products from Latin America, marketed both legally and illegally, has increased mainly from Asian countries such as China, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian countries. Numerous species from Latin America are used in traditional Chinese medicine such as the swim bladders of totoaba's, seahorses, sea cucumbers, the gallbladder of spectacled bears, and constituent parts of jaguars such as teeth, claws and bones. In the case of turtles, both their meat and their eggs are used for diet purposes and their shells to make earrings, combs and other decorative elements. There is also a demand for pets in China such as songbirds, parrots, and macaws, and private collectors also buy poisonous frogs, ornamental fish, reptiles, and other animals (Guynup, 2022).

In Colombia, at the national level, the demand for bushmeat is related to cultural behaviours. Excluding the Andean region, there are

bushmeat trade chains in other regions. These are short and respond to local trade dynamics (Quiceno *et al*, 2015; Gómez *et al*, 2016). Likewise, in Colombia there has been a demand for wild animals to be kept as pets. This behaviour has cultural roots. For example, in Pereira (Risaralda) the species with the highest demand are: *Amazona ochrocephala* (Yellow-crowned Parrot), *Pionus menstruus* (Blue-headed Parrot), *Chelonoidis carbonaria* (Red-footed Tortoise), *Cebus albifrons* (Brown Pale-fronted Capuchin), and *Boa constrictor* (Boa Constrictor) (Delgado, 2018; Vásquez-Restrepo and Rubio-Rocha, 2020). In another study carried out in Santa Martha in the village of Minca (Department of Magdalena), it was found that the main species kept as pets are: *Chelonoidis denticulatus* (Yellow-footed Tortoise), *Sicalis flaveola* (Saffron Finch) and *Ara militaris* (Military Macaw) (Quiñones, 2023).

## LEGAL GAPS AND OBSTACLES

From a study carried out by Güiza-Suárez *et al*, 2022, it was determined that the main legal gaps and obstacles in relation to illegal wildlife trafficking are:

*Extension of the environmental sanctioning procedure.* In Colombia, the environmental sanctioning procedure extended almost indefinitely, which affected the principle of immediacy of the evidence and even the process of those who are investigated. In Law 1333 of 2009, a special term of expiration of the sanctioning action of 20 years was added. However, in 2024 Law 2387 of 2024 entered where the expiration term is modified, which may not be extended beyond five years. In addition, it obliges the environmental authorities to formulate a plan to decongest the sanctioning procedures that have been held up for more than 15 years and are close to reaching 20 years.

### *Failure to prioritise wildlife crime*

Wildlife crime should be prioritised in investigations as wildlife trafficking undermines the collective right to a healthy environment. These crimes have a high frequency and involve a trafficking network in which a criminal organisation participates. However, these crimes are not among the most investigated.

*Methodology for imposing fines for species trafficking in the environmental administrative sector.* The implementation of the appraisal methodology by the different public institutions that exercise as environmental authority is not expeditious because some important sections of this methodology are not written in a clear way and this leads to the systematic non-use of this form of appraisal. (Redondo and Ibarra-Vega, 2019). In addition, it is known that CAR have difficulties in dosing the fine in cases of damage to wild species, so its application depends on the interpretation of each authority.

*The legal limitation regarding who can be considered "victims" in a criminal proceeding so that the damages caused by illegal trafficking of species are repaired.*

According to Colombian regulations, victims

can only be natural or legal persons who have suffered unlawful damage as a result of the commission of a crime, so wildlife cannot be considered a victim in criminal proceedings.

Regarding subsistence hunting and fishing, it has been identified that both criminal actors and legal actors involved in illegal wildlife trafficking take advantage of a specific situation, which is based on the exploitation of local communities to abuse the legal prerogative of subsistence hunting or fishing. Although these wildlife subsistence activities are carried out by local communities, the lack of permits and controls to exercise them and the legal power that allows them to sell the surpluses can cause this legal figure to be used to illegally obtain wild specimens and facilitate their laundering (García, 2022).

In a study carried out by Pino-Varón and Piedrahita-Hincapie (2023), it was determined that criminal law in Colombia is not very applicable in cases of illicit trafficking of wildlife and its other governing provisions, such as acquiring, marketing, or exporting parts or products, and the cause lies in the breadth of the rules, which leads to a complex, vague and ambiguous interpretation, amplified by the following factors: i. That the conduct must be malicious; ii. Causing serious damage or deterioration to the environment; iii. That the active subject is identified; iv. Let there be no error of type, and v. That administrative or police sanctions can be imposed without resorting to the criminal system. This leads to a fine line between the application of administrative, police and criminal sanctions.

## INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESSES

The institutional weaknesses that have been identified in the control of wildlife trafficking in Colombia according to a study carried out in 2021 by USAID and WWF, are:

### *Deficiency in allocated resources*

It was determined that there is a deficiency of human resources, technological means and technical capabilities. Among the main findings are: i. Lack of systematic training of law enforcement organisations, prosecutors and environmental authorities to identify threatened species listed in the 'red books' and contained in the CITES appendices, or to identify species whose commercialisation is not permitted; ii. Lack of prioritisation of wildlife trafficking in the Operational Plans of the environmental authorities; iii. Imbalance in the attention paid to the crime of wildlife trafficking compared to other crimes such as drug trafficking or other environmental crimes, or the use of resources (hydrocarbons, minerals); and iv. Lack of communication between government environmental and agricultural entities to exercise control over ornamental fish trafficking.

When it comes to wildlife identification and wildlife traceability, there is a lack of knowledge, skills and resources to do so.

In the specific case of the control of illegal trafficking of ornamental fish, there is a duality and overlap of competences, procedures and responsibilities, which leads to the duplication of actions. On the other hand, once the control entities sign institutional cooperation agreements, the technical, operational and financial capacity of each one is not sized, resulting in failed management attempts (Zúñiga, 2021).

Regarding wildlife care and valuation centres (CAV), wildlife care, valuation and rehabilitation centres (CAV-R) and transit homes, which are primary care centres for wild specimens resulting from illegal trafficking, in Colombia not all Regional Autonomous Corporations (CAR) have this type of infrastructure (USAID and WWF, 2021).

*Failures in the application of procedures, protocols and the appropriate treatment of species resulting from illegal wildlife trafficking.* Among the main findings have been found: i.

Lack of adequate communication channels between public entities in charge of controlling wildlife trafficking; ii. Poor information systems (information on incomplete seizures), seizure figures are not consistent between law enforcement and environmental authorities; iii. Lack of monitoring and control of wildlife marking systems; iv. Lack of CAV and CAV-R control; and v. Lack of follow-up and technical support in the process of reintroducing the seized specimens to the natural environment.

*Shortage of guarantee control judges and little presence of Prosecutorial Units at the local and regional level that address environmental issues.* It has been identified that there is a lack of guarantee control judges, as well as prosecutors and experts who accompany the investigative work of prosecutors in the critical areas of wildlife trafficking.

## ILLEGAL FISHING

On the issue of illegal fishing, the following institutional weaknesses have been detected:

- AUNAP, which due to its administrative deficiencies in both human and economic resources, does not have a presence in the important traditional fishing areas of the Colombian Atlantic and Pacific.
- The institutional fishing structure in Colombia is fragmented by the low incidence that the authorities have in terms of fishing. Of the 15 CARs that have competence in this area, none showed that they act in an articulated manner on issues related to the problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated marine fishing.
- As for marine-coastal protected areas, they do not have sufficient personnel to comprehensively manage the extension of the area (Rodríguez-Ortiz *et al*, 2016).



## SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS

The main socio-economic factor driving illegal wildlife trafficking in Colombia is poverty. The vulnerability of indigenous and rural communities to involuntary participation in harmful activities is well documented. INTERPOL highlights that the structural cause for the participation of these communities is the lack of resources. Many studies suggest that if indigenous and rural communities are provided with alternative livelihoods, trafficking networks would lose an important source of wildlife for international trade (Hagen, 2019). Some poverty-stricken people in Colombia rely on illegal hunting, fishing, or gathering of wild specimens as their only income; however, these illegal activities are in most cases considered a part-time occupation (Mozer and Prost, 2023).

Another important driver within the illegal wildlife trade in Colombia are the cultural perceptions and traditions that influence the use of wildlife by rural communities (Casas, 2007). The ownership of wild animals has been increasing over the years, the most common causes being their aesthetic appeal and the pleasure caused by their ownership. In Colombia there is a long tradition of using parrots, turtles and monkeys as pets. These practices are widespread among the poorest strata of the population who have moved to cities in recent decades. This migration has allowed these practices to be part of

the dynamics of large cities, facilitating the opening of illegal wildlife markets. For example, during Easter, marine mammals and turtles are marketed in large quantities because they are considered a protein source of "white meat" (Sollund and Maher, 2015; Delgado, 2018). This is because, during Lent and Holy Week, many people, especially in Catholic communities, avoid consuming "red meat" as part of the religious tradition.

Traditional medicine derived from wild products has its roots in rural and indigenous communities in Colombia that collect these species. In addition, wild animals are used in religious festivals (Osbaahr and Morales, 2012). However, not only the cultural perceptions of Colombians influence the illicit wildlife trade, but also those of other regions such as Asia, where there are traditional medicine practices that attribute certain healing properties to parts of the body of wild animals, and this influences the demand for certain specimens, parts and derivatives of Colombian species (Lee *et al*, 2020).



**Parrots, turtles and monkeys** are traditionally used as pets in Colombia.



Macaco Caiarara

## CONVERGENCE OF WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING WITH OTHER CRIMES IN COLOMBIA

The convergence between wildlife trafficking and other illicit activities is not a new phenomenon. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) concluded that wildlife trafficking takes advantage of legal supply chain vulnerabilities and often converges with other forms of serious crime. Traffickers rely on legal communication, finance, and transportation systems to coordinate and process payments for illicit shipments regardless of product. These illicit networks are dynamic and opportunistic because they change their structure and operations to maximise profits and minimise risks. For example, a study on arms trafficking along air routes concluded that criminals resorted to "lax oversight" and free trade zones for transit, product storage, and profit laundering, and thus infrastructures that support the transport and storage of weapons could also facilitate drug or wildlife trafficking (Spevack, 2021).

In different countries of Latin America, wildlife crimes are associated with other types of organised crime such as trafficking in arms, drugs, and human beings, as well as document forgery crimes. The last category includes, for example, forgery of CITES documents, export or import permits, and fictitious reproduction documents of specimens in registered breeding centres (WCSb, 2022). Geopolitical borders are considered hot spots for wildlife crime and trafficking in South America. There is evidence that in some parts of the tripartite

border between Brazil, Colombia and Peru the illegal smuggling of animals, wild plants and wood goes hand in hand with drug smuggling and other types of illicit trafficking (Charity and Ferreira, 2020). There is increasing evidence, for example, that drug traffickers finance and provide logistical support to illegal gold mining operations across the region, including in protected territories, and extend to the illegal logging and trafficking of wildlife including plants, insects and animals (UNODC, 2023).

In Colombia, illegal wildlife trafficking networks are not only dedicated to this illicit activity, some are involved in other crimes such as drug trafficking, extortion, threats, forced displacement and murders, and those related to other environmental crimes such as illegal logging and mining. This is how organised crime and corruption feed on each other and these joint actions ensure that institutional and social weaknesses are taken advantage of, and allow both corrupt and criminal acts to have a high capacity for adaptation to the control measures taken by the Colombian State (USAID and WWF, 2021; Wilson, 2023).

### CONVERGENCE OF CRIMES IN THE AVIATION SECTOR

In the case of the aviation sector, an opportunistic exploitation of aviation infrastructures has been identified resulting in an illicit convergence that is defined as the coincidence of multiple types of illegal traffic activities. These convergences can occur at

different levels and are described below:

- a. **Convergence during boarding.** It occurs when two or more types of illicit goods are transported together (i.e., by the same passenger or in the same cargo, parcel, or



piece of luggage). A specific case of this type of convergence occurred in 1993, when a shipment of boa constrictors carrying drugs (cocaine) inside was seized at the Miami airport. This cargo came from El Dorado Airport, Bogota.

- b. **Convergence within the organisation.** It occurs when the same illicit network moves multiple types of illicit products.
- c. **Convergence on the route.** It occurs when illicit actors exploit legal infrastructure along the same route between two points.
- d. **Convergence at a given site.** This type of convergence occurs when illicit actors use infrastructure at a fixed point, for example a city or an airport. An example of this is the El Dorado airport in Bogota, which is a strategic airport used for illicit trafficking of both drugs and wildlife. For example, the highest number of cases of interception of international mail and

cargo contaminated with drugs has been recorded at this airport, as well as 50% of national seizures of wildlife trafficking.

- e. **Convergence in jurisdiction.** At the broadest level of convergence, illicit actors exploit autonomous or semi-autonomous governance spaces. Convergence at the jurisdictional level may be driven by the presence of raw materials or end markets for multiple illicit products (Spevack, 2021)

## RED FLAGS IN WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

In an analysis conducted by Zavagli, 2021, it was identified that many of the indicators of suspicious cargoes are common to all forms of smuggling, including wildlife trafficking. A high level of corruption in countries and in both air and sea ports should be considered an important general warning sign because traffickers take advantage of these weaknesses in international trade chains. Below are some examples of red flags:

### Air or sea transport

- Shipment of goods incompatible with the origin and/or country of destination. For example, the shipment of wild species to a country that is a major producer and exporter of this species.
- The products or goods to be exported are divided into several shipments – a technique used to minimise risk.
- Abnormal shipping routes for the product and destination or unusual change of shipping routes.
- The use of free zones and ports and

their simplified import, export and transit procedures, which can be exploited for the diversion of illicit cargoes.

- Airline passengers who frequently travel on routes at high risk of illegal wildlife trade for a short period of time with tickets paid for by third parties or in cash.
- Shipments whose total weight is not consistent with the product being commercialised.

### CITES Permits

The permit must be original and written in one of the three languages of the CITES Convention: English, French or Spanish. Permit information should preferably be typed. The following should be taken into account:

**Invalid permits** For example, an expired permit; descriptions of specimens that do not match what is in the shipment.

**False or altered permits.** The permit has not been issued by a CITES Management Authority

or a legitimate permit has been altered after its issuance. The paper or print has an abnormal appearance (e.g., thickness, texture, and/or colour; permission or permission provided is a photocopy and not an original; presence of ink stains, often indicating that a solvent has been used); stamp or security stamp shows signs of having been copied; and/or the permit or certificate number has been altered.

**Permits with discrepancies.** The final destination listed on the permit and boarding documents must be the same.

## CONCLUSIONS

The illegal trafficking of species of wild flora and fauna in Colombia has dynamics similar to those of other megadiverse countries, where there is an increasing international and national demand for live specimens, parts (constituent elements), products and by-products of certain taxonomic groups that cause the detriment of wild populations. From information gathered from secondary sources, more information is available for wildlife, especially with regard to terrestrial species, while information for flora is scarce. This same pattern is presented in the seizure statistics of the control agencies. That is, the wild flora in the documentary and statistical analyses of illegal trade in Colombia is undervalued.

Colombia's seizure figures do not reflect reality, since according to the control authorities only up to 10% of what is illegally traded is confiscated. This gap may be due to several factors, among them, the institutional weaknesses demonstrated in the lack of resources, including humans, to control the extensive Colombian territory and, even more so, the border points, which are considered a peak area of illegal species trafficking, specifically in the Amazon biome where Colombia shares a border with Ecuador, Peru and Brazil. Likewise, the laundering of wild species through the use of legal documents hinders the actions of control bodies, which is aggravated by the corruption that exists throughout the chain of illegal trafficking of species.

Regarding the illegal trafficking of species

through air transport, Bogota's El Dorado airport is recognised as the most important point of entry and exit of wild specimens in Colombia on a national and regional scale. Wildlife seizures at this airport have only been of wildlife; however, it is not ruled out that there are species of flora that may be being trafficked illegally and that have successfully evaded controls. This airport, having the largest number of international connections in South America, is surely considered a strategic point for wildlife traffickers

The convergence of crimes associated with illegal wildlife trafficking is recognised in Colombia as a phenomenon that occurs alongside other crimes such as drug trafficking, extortion, document forgery, as well as environmental crimes such as logging and illegal mining. This confluence of crimes of all kinds, many of them transnational, weakens the actions of Colombian control organisations.

The use of rural and indigenous communities in Colombia within the illegal wildlife trafficking chain by traffickers is a phenomenon that not only occurs in Colombia, but also occurs in the other Amazonian countries (Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela). Traffickers identify rural communities as the primary source of wildlife species due to the accessibility and knowledge of their territory and the need of these inhabitants to have sources of income to strengthen their family economy. These factors, combined with the lack of controls in extensive territories and often inaccessible by

control bodies, allow for a continuous supply to illegal national and international markets.

Wildlife trade, when conducted sustainably and legally, contributes significantly to the Colombian economy. However, when this trade is illegal and is related to illegal hunting or gathering, the use of rural communities to participate in the illegal chain of trafficking, and even in possible species laundering, undermines Colombian and international laws that protect biodiversity. Organized crime operating against wildlife in Colombia is complex and takes advantage of institutional weaknesses, detection, investigation, detention and prosecution gaps, causing a total weakening in law enforcement.



*Boa Constrictor*

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# ANNEXE 1

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT ENTITIES AGAINST WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING.

**Table 4.** Responsibilities of Colombian government entities against wildlife trafficking.

GOVERNMENT ENTITY	RESPONSIBILITIES
Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development	<p>a) Define national policy in relation to the management and conservation of the environment and renewable natural resources.</p> <p>b) Grant, deny, suspend or revoke by administrative act the permits and certificates referred to in the CITES Convention.</p> <p>c) Maintain statistics related to the international movement of native species of Colombia, as well as establish mechanisms for the circulation of information and coordination with the other government entities involved in the control of exports and imports in the country.</p> <p>d) Inspect and monitor the management of Colombia's Autonomous Corporations.</p> <p>e) Issue licenses for the collection of specimens for commercial export or non-commercial scientific purposes of CITES species.</p>
Environmental research institutes (SINCHI, Humboldt, IIAP, INVEMAR)	<p>a) Establish the feasibility of exporting wild specimens and evaluate the possibility of allowing the import of species included in the CITES appendices (CITES Scientific Authorities).</p> <p>b) Consider the situation of species in the territory, their demographics and factors that affect them, to recommend measures to improve the state of resources in wildlife.</p>
National Authority of Aquaculture and Fisheries (AUNAP)	<p>a) Monitor the use of allocated fishing quotas.</p> <p>b) Control the departures and arrivals of fishing vessels linked to each permit.</p> <p>c) Verify the documents at boardings and arrivals in relation to permits, fishing patents, fishing gear, and authorised fishing zones.</p> <p>d) Control and inspect the unloading in ports, docks, processing or marketing plants, of the catches obtained by fishing operations or by a permit holder.</p>
Regional Autonomous Corporations (CAR)	<p>a) Execute the environmental policies, plans and programs in their respective jurisdictions.</p> <p>b) Control and monitor the movement, commercialisation and processing of natural resources in coordination with the other Regional Autonomous Corporations.</p> <p>c) Sanction offenders for violating environmental protection regulations.</p> <p>d) Issue licenses for the collection of specimens for commercial export or non-commercial scientific purposes.</p>
Special Administrative Unit of the Network of National Natural Parks of Colombia	<p>a) To manage, protect, conserve, preserve, control and monitor the areas that make up the National Natural Parks System of Colombia.</p> <p>b) Issue licenses for the collection of specimens of wild species of biological diversity for non-commercial scientific research purposes in the National Natural Parks System.</p>

GOVERNMENT ENTITY	RESPONSIBILITIES
Government, municipalities, indigenous territories and districts	a) Coordinate and direct environmental control and monitoring activities in relation to the movement, processing, use, exploitation and commercialisation of renewable natural resources
Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA)	<p>a) Protect the national flora and fauna through strict import and export controls.</p> <p>b) Determine the places allowed for the import or export of animals, plants or products derived from them.</p> <p>c) Anticipate sanitary and phytosanitary risks of the fauna and flora resources that are imported into Colombia.</p>
National Directorate of Taxes and Customs (DIAN)	a) Control and monitor acts of exploitation, movement, transformation and commercialisation of wild flora and fauna in customs and transit areas.
National Police of Colombia	<p>a) Ensure compliance with environmental standards, and impose corrective measures established in the National Citizen Security and Coexistence Policy.</p> <p>b) Collaborate with other environmental, administrative and judicial authorities to counteract practices that threaten the environment.</p> <p>c) Plan, manage, develop, supervise and evaluate the activities of prevention and control of crimes related to the environment and natural resources; as well as deploying the necessary capacities in the territory to contribute to public security, in compliance with the constitutional mission (Directorate of Carabineros and Rural Security - DICAR).</p>
Military Forces	<p>a) Contribute to the conservation of natural resources through collaboration with environmental, administrative and judicial authorities.</p> <p>b) Through the "Environmental Bubbles", carry out military operations that enable identifying and combating the illicit wildlife trade, and the accompaniment of environmental authorities, judicial authorities, control bodies, governments and the Mayor's Office for the seizure and imposition of sanctions; and the establishment of checkpoints against the trafficking of flora and fauna, in coordination with the environmental authorities.</p>
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	a) Coordinate international environmental policy in order to protect border ecosystems, in conjunction with the Ministry of the Environment.
Office of the State Attorney General	a) Fulfil the investigative and accusatory function of conduct contrary to criminal law, including crimes against natural resources (wildlife trafficking).
Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic	a) Monitor fiscal management and establish environmental costs.
Office of the Inspector General of Colombia	a) Disciplinary powers against public servants and individuals exercising public functions; in this way, in environmental matters, disciplinary processes will be carried out for very serious offences when: i) a state contract is approved, entered into or executed with a person who does not hold an environmental license; ii) acts are carried out with ignorance of environmental standards; and iii) matters of the server's own functions that cause a serious risk or deterioration to the environment or natural resources are omitted or delayed.

Source: Güiza-Suarez et al, 2022



# ANNEXE 2

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF WILDLIFE TRADE IN COLOMBIA.

**Table 5.** Historical overview of wildlife trade in Colombia

TIME/YEARS	SPECIES INVOLVED	PURPOSE
16th century	Family Psittacidae (parrots and parakeets)	Imperial European courts used birds in aviaries and parrot tongues and heads were menu art.
16th & 17th centuries	Manatees ( <i>Trichechus inunguis</i> )	Feeding slaves in the mines of the Choco and the transport canoes of Magdalena.
18th & 19th century	South American River Turtle ( <i>Podocnemis</i> spp)	To meet the demand for oil. Eggs were also used as food in the Colombian-Brazilian Amazon.
	Manatees ( <i>Trichechus inunguis</i> )	Meat and oil sold nationally and internationally.
Between 1835 and 1890	Eagle	Used in naturalists' collections
	White-tailed Deer antlers ( <i>Odocoileus virginianus</i> )	
	Hawksbill Turtle ( <i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i> )	
	Live and stuffed birds	
	Prawns	
	Snails	
	Conches and Mother of pearl	
	Skin (leathers) of caiman, puma, jaguar	
	Insects	
	Oysters	
	Ducks	
	Pearls	
Between 1890 and 1914	Turtles and their shells	
Between 1890 and 1914	Heron feathers	Decorating women's hats
Between 1915 and 1919	Poultry (79.83% exports)	Various uses
	Mammals (18.48% exports)	
	Reptiles (1.69 exports)	
	Alligator skins	
	Heron feathers	
	Venison horns and hides	
Between 1922 and 1924	Poultry (32.5% exports)	Various uses
	Reptiles (23.16% exports)	
	Mammals (7.85% exports)	
	Highly valuable pearls (36.49% exports)	
Between 1929 and 1969	Mammals (63.29% exports)	Various uses
	Reptiles (36.73% exports)	
	Poultry (0.73% exports)	

TIME/YEARS	SPECIES INVOLVED	PURPOSE
Between 1940 and 1970	Jaguar ( <i>Panthera onca</i> )	The skins of these species were sold in North American and European markets
	Puma ( <i>Puma concolor</i> )	
	Ocelot ( <i>Leopardus pardalis</i> )	
	Neotropical Otter ( <i>Lontra longicaudis</i> )	
	Giant Otter ( <i>Pteronura brasiliensis</i> )	
Mid-1960s	American Crocodile ( <i>Crocodylus acutus</i> )	Marketing of their skins
	Orinoco Crocodile ( <i>Crocodylus intermedius</i> )	
1987 and 1988	Caiman spp	7,800 and 14,000 hides were exported

Source: Adapted from Rojas, 2011

# ANNEXE 3

## SUMMARY OF WILDLIFE SEIZURES AT EL DORADO AIRPORT (BOGOTA-COLOMBIA)

**Table 6.** Wildlife seizures at El Dorado Airport from 1993 to 2024

YEAR	SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	NUMBER OF SPECIMENS / WEIGHT (KG)	SMUGGLING TECHNIQUES	TRAFFICKING METHOD	DESTINATION
1993 <sup>1</sup>	<i>Boa constrictor</i>	Boa constrictor	312	Fabric bags and inside flex foam boxes	Air freight	United States
2000	<i>Chelus fimbriata</i>	Amazon matamata	344	Hidden in personal luggage	Luggage	Unknown
	<i>Dendrobates</i> sp.	Poison dart frog	195			
2011 <sup>2</sup>	<i>Amazona amazonica</i>	Orange-winged Amazon	1	Unknown	Luggage	Bogota (Colombia)
2011 <sup>3</sup>	<i>Oophaga histrionica</i>	Harlequin Poison Frog	50	Boxes	Parcel	United States
2013 <sup>4</sup>	<i>Strombus gigas</i>	Queen Conch	8	Boxes	Parcel	Bogota (Colombia)
2016	<i>Morpho</i> sp.	Morpho butterfly	1	Box	Luggage	Unknown
2017	Unknown	Sea cucumber	105	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
2017	Unknown	Sea cucumber	15 (kg)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
2018	<i>Caiman crocodilus</i>	Brown Caiman	1	Duffle bag	Parcel	Unknown
2018	<i>Amazona amazonica</i>	Orange-winged Amazon	1	Unknown	Luggage	La Dorada (Colombia)
2018	<i>Megalobulimus oblongus</i>	Giant South American Snail	3	Plastic container	Luggage	Unknown
2018	<i>Trachemys scripta</i>	Pond slider	6	Plastic container	Luggage	Unknown
2018	<i>Oophaga histrionica</i>	Harlequin Poison Frog	153	Photographic films	Luggage	Germany
	<i>Oophaga lehmanni</i>	Lehmann's Poison Frog	50			
	<i>Oophaga sylvatica</i>	Diablito poison frog	13			
2018	<i>Siproeta epaphus</i>	Brown siproeta	9	Box	Parcel	Unknown
	<i>Heliconius doris</i>	Doris longwing	4			
2018	<i>Xenesthis pamphobeteus</i>	Tarantulas	23	Cereal boxes	Parcel	Republic of Korea
2018 <sup>5</sup>	<i>Isostichopus</i> sp.	Sea cucumber	540 (dry)	Parcel trade	Parcel	China
2019	<i>Chelus fimbriata</i>	Amazon matamata	28	Plastic bag	Parcel	Leticia (Colombia)
2019	<i>Chelus fimbriata</i>	Amazon matamata	1359	Plastic bags	Parcel	Leticia (Colombia)
2019	<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>	Saffron Finch	9	Parcel trade	Parcel	Bogota (Colombia)
	<i>Arremonops tocuyensis</i>	Tocuyo sparrow	3			
	Unknown	Saffron Finch	3			

1 The seizure occurred at Miami airport and the flight came from El Dorado Airport, Bogota.  
 2 Source: Department of Environment and OPAIN  
 3 Source: Department of Environment and OPAIN  
 4 Source: District Secretary of Environment and OPAIN  
 5 Source: Robin des Bois "On the Trail" No 21 pg. 7

2019	<i>Oophaga</i> sp.	Poison frogs	424 (4 dead)	Photographic films	Luggage	Germany via Brazil
2019	Unknown	Christmas Island red crabs	12	Polystyrene box	Parcel	United States
2020	<i>Lepidoptera</i>	Butterfly	216	Box	Parcel	Unknown
	<i>Oophaga histrionica</i>	Harlequin poison frog	3	Plastic container	Parcel	United States
2020	<i>Oophaga lehmanni</i>	Lehmann's Poison Frog	3			
2020 <sup>6</sup>	<i>Chelus fimbriata</i>	Amazon matamata	2500	Plastic bags	Air freight	United States Japan
2021 <sup>7</sup>	<i>Harpia harpyja</i>	Harpy eagle	93 feathers 2 claws (1 specimen)	Boxes	Parcel	United States
	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>	Greater kudu	1 horn (1 specimen)			
2021	<i>Panaque cochliodon</i>	Blue-eyed Plec	1	Plastic bag	Parcel	Unknown
2021	<i>Caiman crocodilus</i>	Brown Caiman	1 (skin)	Box	Parcel	Unknown
2021	<i>Pamphobeteus fortis</i>	Colombian Giant Copperhead	1	Plastic container	Luggage	Unknown
2021	<i>Alopias pelagicus</i>	Smalltooth thresher shark	3493 (fins)	Cardboard boxes	Air freight	China
			117 kg (swim bladders)			
2021 <sup>8</sup>	<i>Nasua narica</i>	White-nosed Coati	Strips of skins and tails	Parcel trade	Parcel	United States
	<i>Potos flavus</i>	Kinkajou				
2021	<i>Theraphosidae Barychelidae</i> (family)	Tarantulas	232	Inside Containers	Luggage	Germany
	<i>Buthidae</i> (family)	Scorpions	8			
	Unknown	Spider eggs	9			
	<i>Blaberidae</i> (family)	Giant cockroaches	67			
2021	<i>Panaque cochliodon</i>	Blue-eyed Plec	25	Cardboard boxes	Parcel	China
2021 <sup>9</sup>	<i>Chelus orinocensis</i>	Amazon matamata	1936	Double bottom boxes, covered with bags	Parcel	Unknown
2022	<i>Graphium</i> sp.	Butterfly	1	Box	Parcel	United States
	<i>Phyllium siccofolium</i>	Leaf insect	1			
	<i>Dynastes lichi</i>	Hercules rhino beetle	1			
	<i>Sipyloidea</i> sp.	Stick insects	1			
	<i>Papilio blumei</i>	Green swallowtail	1			
	<i>Acrocinus longimanus</i>	Harlequin beetle	1			
	<i>Haplopelma</i> sp.	Tarantula	1			
	<i>Idea blanchardii</i>	Blanchard's ghost	1			
	<i>Heteropteryx grayii</i>	Cricket	1			
<i>Heterometrus</i> sp.	Malaysian forest scorpion	1				
2022	<i>Blaptica dubia</i>	Dubia roach	25	Plastic container	Parcel	Germany
	<i>Acheta</i> sp.	Cricket	60			

6 Source: Robin des Bois "On the Trail" No. 28 pg. 27  
 7 Source: Robin des Bois "On the Trail" No. 32 pg. 160  
 8 Source: Robin des Bois "On the Trail" No. 33 pg. 146.  
 9 Source: Bogota, 2021.



2022	<i>Mygalomorphae</i> (subclass)	Tarantulas	143	Chess board	Parcel	Mexico
2022	<i>Panaque cochliodon</i>	Blue-eyed Plec	4	Box	Parcel	Unknown
2022	<i>Panaque cochliodon</i>	Blue-eyed Plec	26	Boxes inside plastic bags	Parcel	Vietnam
2023	<i>Siproeta stelenes</i>	Butterfly	1	Box	Luggage	Cali (Colombia)
2023	<i>Tenebrio</i> sp.	Mealworm	1	Plastic container	Luggage	Puerto Inirida (Colombia)
2024	<i>Cardisoma crassum</i>	Mouthless crab	20	Duffle bag	Luggage	Bogota (Colombia)
2024	<i>Brachyplatystoma tigrinum</i>	Tiger-striped Catfish	7	Box	Parcel	Japan
2024	<i>Oophaga histrionica</i>	Harlequin Poison Frog	130	Sample containers	Luggage	Brazil (Stopped in Panama)
2024	Family <i>Formicidae</i>	Ants	71	Hidden in pieces of ceramics	Parcel	Spain

Source: Robin des Bois "On the Trail", 2021; BOGOTA, 2021; INFOBAE, 2022; WITIS, 2024, District Secretary of the Environment, 2024 (All seizures that are highlighted are part of the information provided through an SDA database).

## ANNEXE 4

### SUMMARY OF WILDLIFE SEIZURES AT EL DORADO AIRPORT (BOGOTA-COLOMBIA)

**Table 7.** Wildlife seizures at El Dorado Airport from 1993 to 2024

Key participant	Types
Hunter-gatherers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Subsistence.</b> Harvesting or hunting is done for domestic use (food, cultural purposes) and is done on a small scale.</li> <li><b>Commercial specialist.</b> Harvesting and/or hunting with an explicit business orientation that often involves specialised knowledge or technologies. It includes different collection intensities and levels of technological investment, and is run by both self-employed and contracted collectors, as well as locals and non-residents.</li> <li><b>Opportunists.</b> Harvesting and/or hunting based on chance and circumstantial encounters, but not as a main objective or subsistence strategy.</li> <li><b>Local guide.</b> Local residents hired to guide non-resident hunters or gatherers.</li> <li><b>Rule abuser.</b> Violate catch rules, such as quotas (misstatement), limits (protected area), or technological restrictions (use of traps or prohibited nets).</li> <li><b>Accidental capture.</b> Unintended gathering or hunting of non-target species.</li> <li><b>Reactionary.</b> Harvesting or hunting associated with discontent or protest (e.g. in reaction to conservation policies or in conflict with wildlife).</li> </ul>
Intermediaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Logistics.</b> They are involved in ordering, aggregation, and transportation, as well as trade financing and planning. They can participate directly in the management of the trade or remotely.</li> <li><b>Specialised smuggler.</b> Transportation that requires specialised actions to evade detection or negotiate access, typically across borders (e.g., cross-border smuggling, specialised networks).</li> <li><b>Government accomplice.</b> Involved in using an official public position (e.g. forest ranger, police officer, judge, prosecutor) to facilitate trade, whether for economic (corruption), social or personal gain.</li> <li><b>Third parties.</b> External services contracted to support trade, but potentially unknowingly (e.g. bus or air transport).</li> <li><b>Processor.</b> Participates in the processing of products (e.g. skinning, preparation of medicines).</li> <li><b>Launderer.</b> Involved in laundering illegal wildlife in legal market chains (e.g. through captive breeding or processing operations).</li> <li><b>Seller.</b> Engage in direct selling to consumers or other intermediaries (e.g., marketplace, online platform)</li> </ul>
Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Medicinal.</b> Use associated with medicinal practices, usually traditional but some novel.</li> <li><b>Ornamental.</b> Use associated with ornaments and pets.</li> <li><b>Cultural.</b> Use associated with deep-rooted traditional practices (feathers, skins, rituals, etc.).</li> <li><b>Gifts.</b> Used as a gift, often to gain or demonstrate social prestige or respect.</li> <li><b>Investment.</b> Use as an investment, usually of taxa of great value.</li> <li><b>Recreational.</b> Use associated with the act of recreational gathering (e.g. hunting, sport fishing).</li> <li><b>Animal feed.</b> Use as feed for other animals (e.g. forage, bait).</li> <li><b>Construction material.</b> Use for construction materials.</li> <li><b>Fuel.</b> Use for fire or cooking.</li> <li><b>Food.</b> Use for direct consumption, from luxury consumption to basic nutritional needs.</li> </ul>

Source: Phelps et al, 2016.

OCTOBER 2024

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