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ONLINE MARKET MONITORING REPORT

From July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2023

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCPE	Viet Nam's Central Committee for Propaganda and Education
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
TFWT	Tortoises and fresh-water turtles
IWT	Illegal Wildlife Trade
LEA	Law Enforcement Authorities
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MOH	Ministry of Health
WWF	World Wildlife Fund



**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

■ The trafficking and unsustainable trade in wildlife commodities such as elephant ivory, rhino horn, pangolin scales, and tiger bone are causing unprecedented declines in some of the world's most charismatic, as well as some lesser-known, wildlife species. A major contributor to this trade is the demand for wildlife products in Asia, notably in countries like Viet Nam and China. Despite concerted efforts to counter wildlife trafficking over the last decade, Viet Nam remains a hub for the illegal wildlife trade (IWT), growing from a transit point on the way to China to a final destination for high-value illegal products such as elephant ivory, rhino horn, pangolin scales, and big cat products. The threats driving the IWT derive from Viet Nam's history and its economic resurgence. According to TRAFFIC's Wildlife Trade Information System (WITISⁱ) database, 2,179 seizures were recorded from 2020 to the end of 2023. Over the last three years, ivory and its derived products have been seized significantly through marine

ports, with volumes ranging from hundreds to thousands of kilograms (kg). These seizures captured global media interest and drew a lot of public attention. Since COVID-19, IWT has also been growing in e-commerce and social media. Sellers started using these platforms to trade wildlife illegally and continued to do so following the lifting of global travel restrictions.

■ Monitoring Viet Nam's online market for illegal wildlife products is essential to identify and monitor online trade trends and dynamics between online and physical markets. This report summarizes the availability of illegal wildlife products for sale online in Viet Nam between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2023. Surveys were carried out among Viet Nam's dominant e-commerce and social media platforms, focusing on these target species: elephants, rhinos, pangolins, tigersⁱⁱ, and tortoise and fresh-water turtles.

Over **22,497** advertisements for all five target species were recorded, with **8,232** advertisements for ivory products and **8,327** advertisements for tiger products, confirming the continued alarming popularity of these illegal wildlife products. Target species products are used for various purposes, from ornamental to ceremonial (religious) and medicinal.

The emergence of glues from ivory, tiger bone, and rhino horn sold as mixtures (sometimes combining multiple endangered species) poses a challenge for law enforcement authorities (LEAs). While confiscation can be done, prosecuting these cases requires sample testing to identify the species origins of the mixed and processed substances, which is time-consuming and challenging. The distribution of wildlife sellers among several online platforms, notably on **Facebook (51.3%)** and **Zalo (35%)**, indicates where enforcement efforts should be placed. The consistent prevalence of wildlife trade online could suggest a persistent demand, requiring considerable effort to alter social values and discourage illegal wildlife-based purchases.





INTRODUCTION



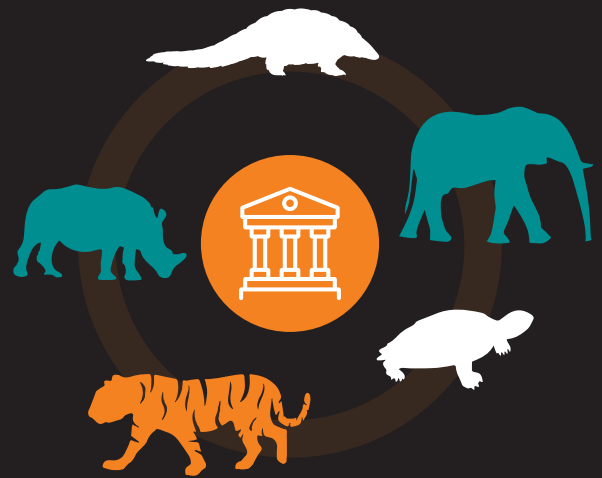
INTRODUCTION

- Viet Nam has long been recognized as a major end-market for wildlife consumption and a key transit point for illegal wildlife products to other Asian countriesⁱⁱⁱ. The demand in Viet Nam is fuelled by cultural beliefs and values that include disease treatment, health enhancement, and social status elevation.
- Rapid internet adoption and the prevalence of e-commerce and social networking sites have facilitated vectors for online trade in wild animals, plants, and their products. Since 2016, TRAFFIC has been monitoring Viet Nam's online markets, especially targeting illegal or unregulated offerings of wildlife products^v. Understanding the wildlife product market helps gauge the trade's scale and required response to address illegality, identify market trends and demand factors, and uncover emerging products driving new demand and potentially countering existing mitigation efforts.
- This report provides details of the online market for wildlife products from elephants, rhinos, pangolins, tigers, tortoises and fresh-water turtles in Viet Nam (including prices, volumes, and locations) assessed between 2021 and 2023. The species and products monitored for this report are listed in Appendix I and II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).



The trade of elephants, rhinos, pangolins and tigers and their products is also prohibited or restricted under Vietnamese law (Decree 84/2021/ND-CP dated September 22, 2021, on amendments to the Government's Decree No. 06/2019/ND-CP), while trade in captive-bred specimens of some tortoises and fresh-water turtles is still legal according to the same Decree. Wildlife trade online is further regulated by Electronic Transaction Law No. 51/2005/QH11 and Decree 52/2013/ND-CP for e-commerce, making it illegal to advertise and trade wildlife products such as ivory and rhino horn online. There is strong legislative backing to tackle wildlife crime, with Viet Nam revised Penal Code (No. 100/2015/QH13) that came into force in 2018 raising the penalties for illegal trade of CITES-listed species to up to

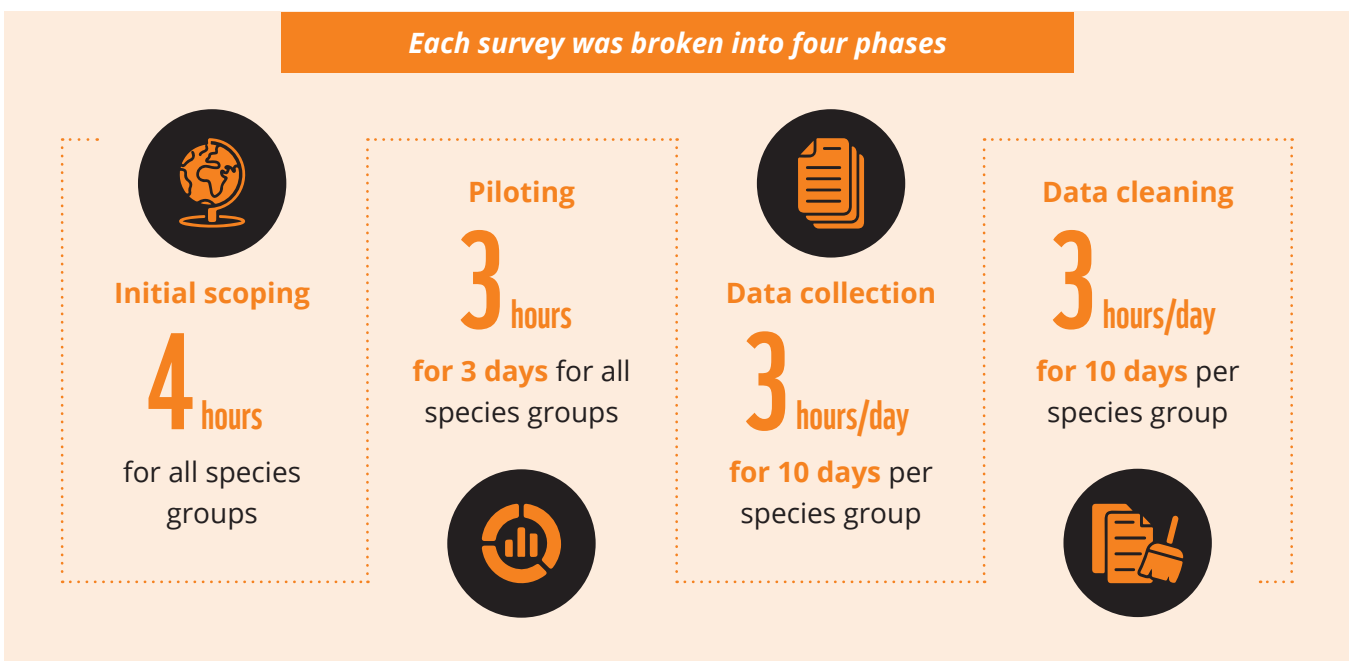
15 years imprisonment.



METHODOLOGY

- Online monitoring was conducted over four survey periods, capturing online advertisements and selling posts published between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2023.
- A total of 1,106 hours were spent on online monitoring, including initial scoping, piloting, collecting, and cleaning the data across the four

surveys. Survey efforts for each species group remained constant to enable comparisons on the magnitude and volume of advertisements and posts uncovered. Initial scoping and piloting were required before the first round of surveys to identify and test various platforms for the target species.




The survey periods were conducted over two months, gathering data on posts from the preceding six months. For example, the November - December 2021 survey period captured advertisements from July - December 2021. Data were collated and cleaned for four species groups during the first survey (November - December 2021).

The second (May - June 2022), third (November - December 2022) and fourth (May - June 2023) surveys collated and cleaned data for five species groups (with the addition of tiger products). During data collection, several rounds of searching were conducted using different “search terms” known to yield ad/post results from past TRAFFIC monitoring efforts. The search terms were used in the following order:




Advertisements/posts were found by entering search terms into the platform's search function. During data cleaning, care was taken to remove duplicate advertisements/posts and remove where the same image and text are used but posted on different dates.

Platforms surveyed



Social media platforms
Facebook, Zalo, TikTok,
YouTube



E-commerce platforms
Tiki, Shopee, Sendo, Lazada, and other
websites of independent sellers found via
Google search engine

The data collection also focused on various data points from advertisements/posts offering products of the target species, where available, including species taxa and items for sale, quantity, size, weight, price, seller profile, communication, payment, shipping methods, comments, advertisement text, posting date (time tag). Only data included in the ad/post were noted, and there was no communication

with sellers to avoid contributing to the perception of demand for the target species.

Wildlife product prices were recorded in VND currency and converted into US dollars for this report. The USD prices are based on the exchange rate of 24,2642 on January 2, 2024, as provided by <https://www.oanda.com/>.





KEY FINDINGS



KEY FINDINGS

IN THIS REPORT, “POSTS” ARE ADVERTISEMENTS THAT INDIVIDUALS POST TO SELL ILLEGAL WILDLIFE PRODUCTS ONLINE. FOR EXAMPLE, ‘ELEPHANT POSTS’ MEANS THAT THE POST CONTAINED ADVERTISEMENTS SELLING PRODUCTS MADE FROM ELEPHANTS OR THEIR PARTS. THE SAME TERMINOLOGY APPLIES TO POSTS INVOLVING OTHER ANIMAL SPECIES.



ONLINE PLATFORMS

Number of advertisements and sellers per group species

The number of advertisements for tiger and ivory products were the two most prevalent among the internet platforms surveyed (Figure 1; see species-specific section below for details).

While quantities of products were not explicitly collected in the survey as availability is not often made apparent by sellers, advertisements that specified quantities showed variance in the number of products offered for sale. Tortoises and fresh-water turtles had the highest number of individuals (live and carcasses) advertised due to the popularity of soft-shelled turtles bred and traded in Viet Nam, while advertisements for other target species mainly sold body parts. Overall, all five species experienced a peak from January to June 2022. Subsequently, pangolin numbers returned to previous levels, and tigers remained stable, while elephants, rhinos, tortoises, and freshwater turtles fell below their earlier records. Pangolins exhibited the lowest variance, followed by rhinos, tigers, tortoises, freshwater turtles, and elephants, as shown in Table 1.

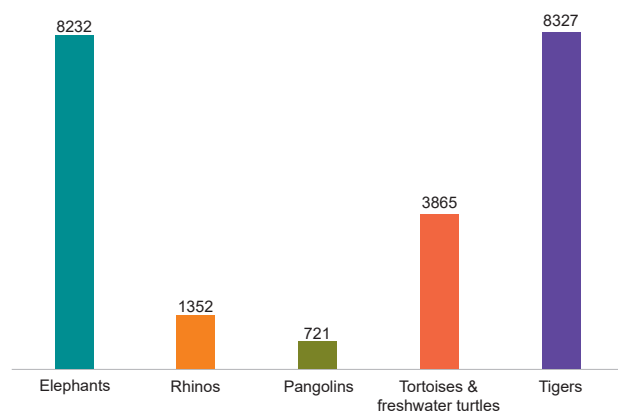
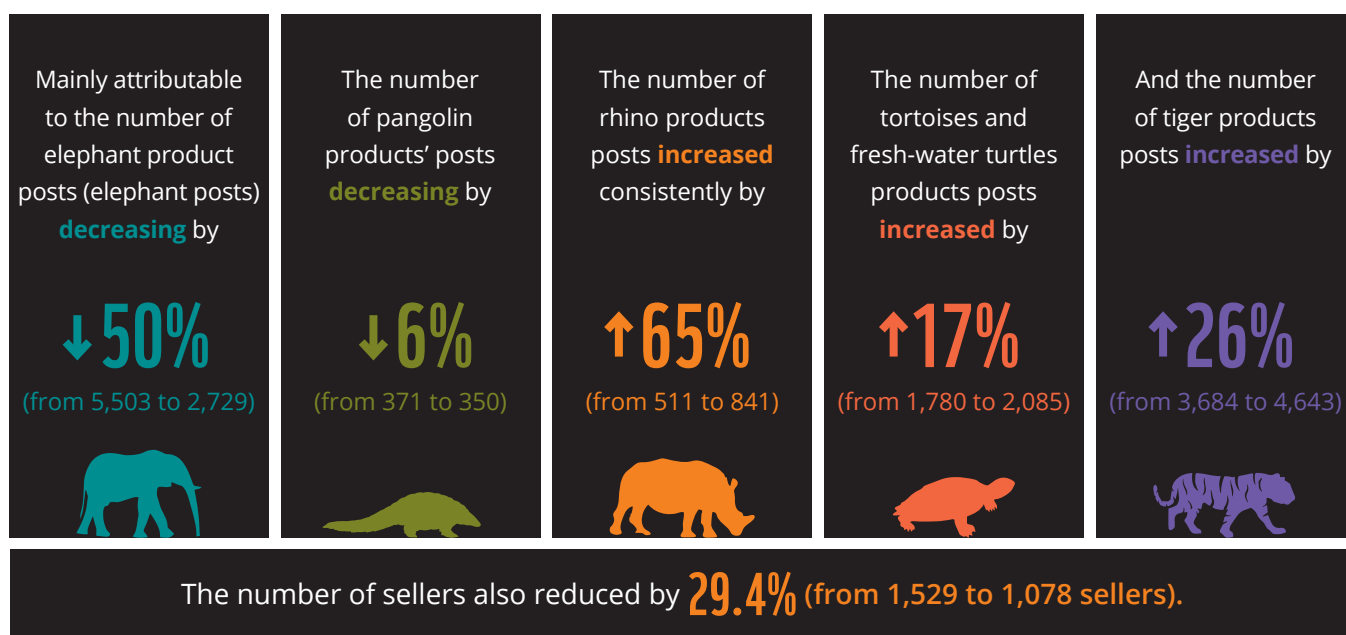


Figure 1: Number of advertisements per species groups from July 2021 - June 2023.

Species	The total of advertisements on all platforms surveyed				The total of sellers on all platforms surveyed			
	Jul - Dec 2021	Jan - Jun 2022	Jul - Dec 2022	Jan - Jun 2023	Jul - Dec 2021	Jan - Jun 2022	Jul - Dec 2022	Jan - Jun 2023
Elephants	2,458	3,045	1,424	1,305	449	183	107	127
Rhinos	118	393	406	435	55	38	40	18
Pangolins	111	260	178	172	55	101	55	59
Tortoises and fresh-water turtles	853	927	1,089	996	153	146	148	239
Tigers	1,106	2,578	2,500	2,143	258	91	123	162
TOTAL	4,646	7,203	5,597	5,051	970	559	473	605
TOTAL (12 months)	11,849		10,648		1,529		1,078	

Table 1: Number of advertisements and number of sellers, per species groups for each survey period.

A comparison between the surveys conducted over the two periods (July 2021 - June 2022) and (July 2022 - June 2023), as shown in Table 1, reveals that the overall number of advertisements reduced slightly by **10%** (from 11,849 to 10,648).



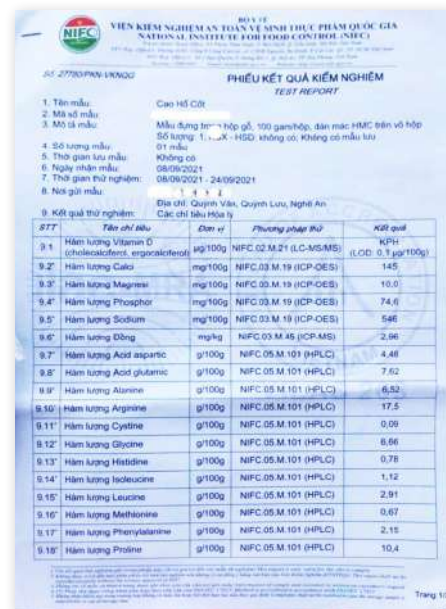
During the July 2022 - June 2023 period, the reduction in the number of posts (a decrease of 9.8%) and seller (a reduction of 28%) profiles may be connected, as several big seller accounts on Zalo were found to be temporarily locked for violating the platform's Community Standard, which does not allow users to post, store, or transmit information of animals are in danger of extinction.

In addition, the number of advertisements for elephants decreased significantly between January 2022 and June 2023, from 5,503 to 2,729. Observation suggests the reduced number of advertisements might be a response to several significant seizures of ivory in the second half of 2022 and early 2023.

During the surveys, new products were advertised, i.e., products that had not previously been advertised online, including elephant skin bags and wallets, rhino horn glue, and ivory glue.

Sellers used "Certifications" to prove products' authenticity & advertisements. These certifications were issued with unverified signatures and seals from the Vietnamese quality verification centers for jewelry and from the Vietnamese food quality certification company under the Ministry of Health (MOH).

From November to December 2021, leading up to the 2022 Lunar New Year, there was a peak in illegal wildlife product advertisements. This period, which encompassed advertisements from July to December 2021, saw tiger product gift sets as the most frequently traded items among all surveyed species. In comparison, before the 2023 Lunar New Year holiday, the number of advertisements remained relatively stable compared to the previous six months. However, the number of advertisements was significantly higher than before the 2022 Lunar New Year, and only a small reduction was seen following the Lunar New Year holiday (i.e., January - February 2023).



Picture 1: Use of unverified certifications to advertise authenticity and quality of products.

Number of adverts by platform for each species group

Facebook and Zalo were the dominant platforms on which products of the target species were found, with 51.3% and 35.5% of all advertisements identified (Figure 2). However, this may also reflect the dominance of Facebook and Zalo as social media platforms in Viet Nam with 91.6% and 90.1% of internet users aged 16 - 64 using the platforms

each month, respectively⁶. Social media's closed ecosystem and prevalence of private chat groups limit public view and access to wildlife products for sale, limiting the potential to monitor all adverts and transactions. Therefore, the number of wildlife items advertised may be much higher than recorded.

Percentage of advertisements across social media and e-commerce platforms (July 2021 - June 2023)

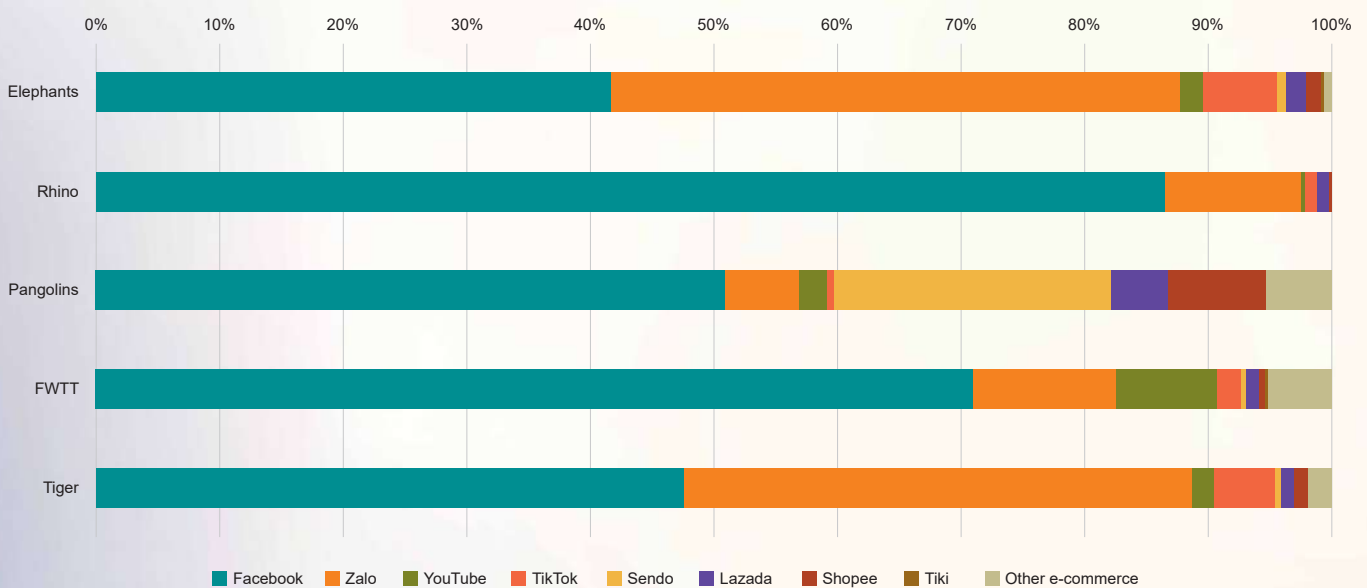


Figure 2: Percentage of advertisements on social media platforms and e-commerce sites (July 2021 - June 2023).



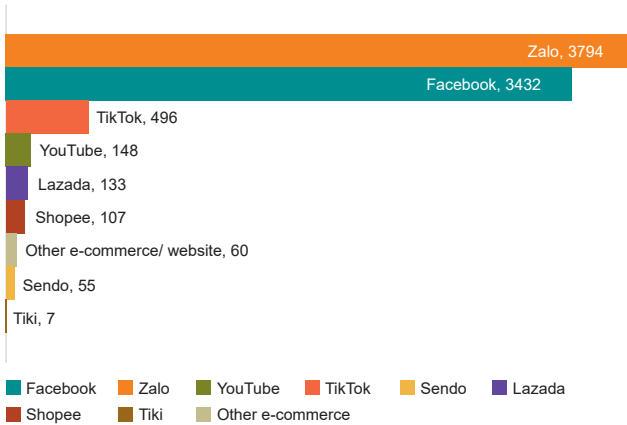


Figure 3: Number of adverts for elephant products by platform (N = 8,232).

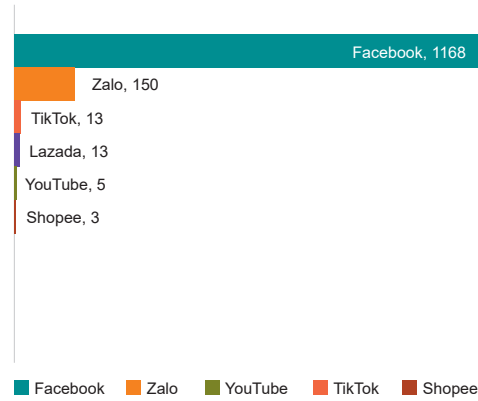


Figure 4: Number of adverts for rhino products by platform (N = 1,352).

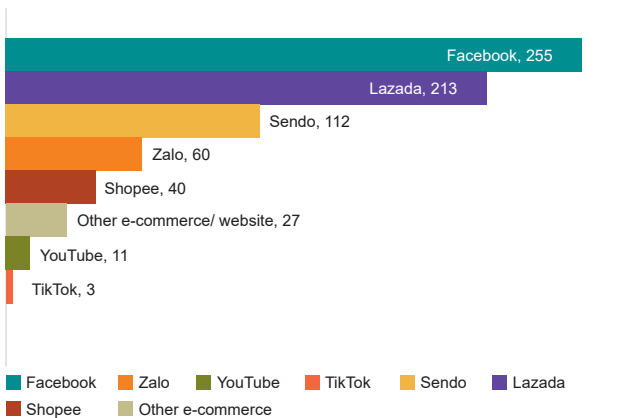


Figure 5: Number of adverts for pangolin products by platform (N = 721).

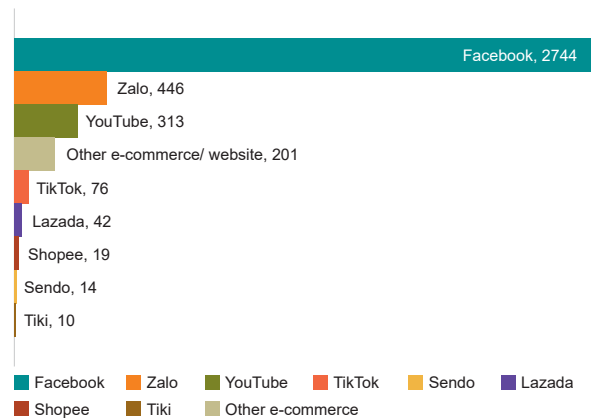


Figure 6: Number of adverts for tortoises and fresh water turtles products by platform (N = 3,865).

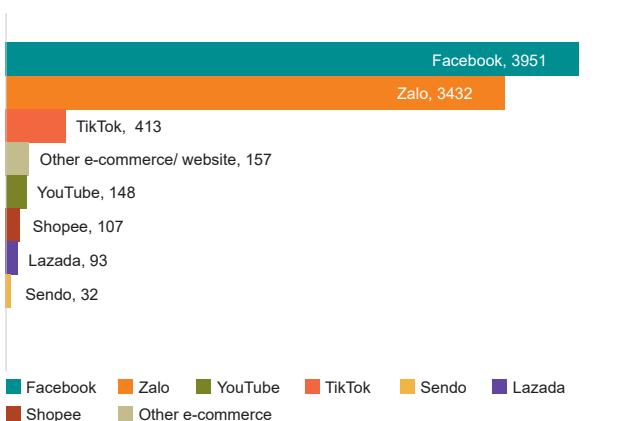


Figure 7: Number of adverts for tiger products by platform (N = 8,327).

As shown in Figures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, Facebook and Zalo remained the most traded channels among all platforms.

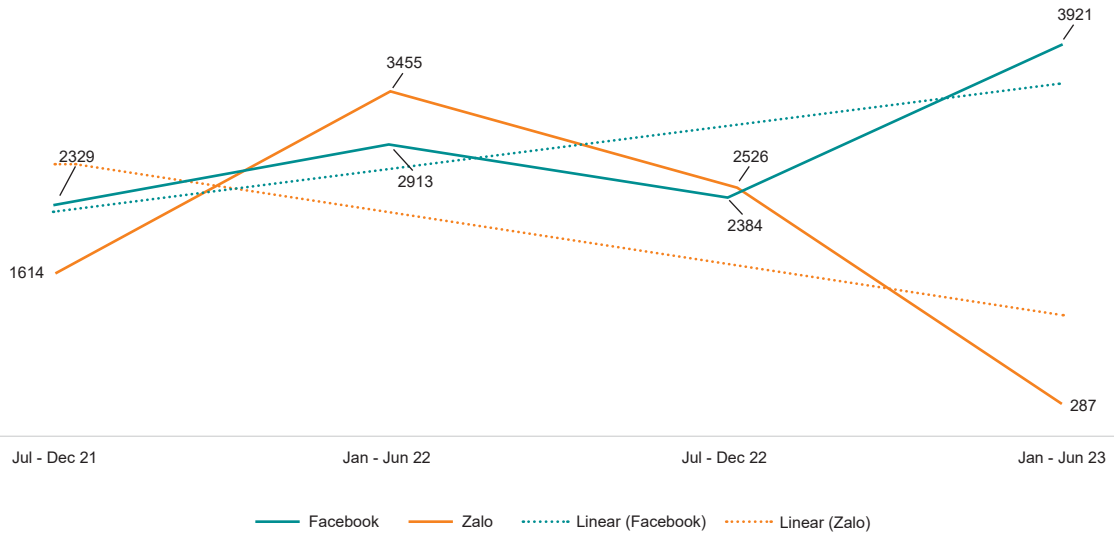


Figure 8: Number of advertisements on Facebook and Zalo by survey period.

The number of advertisements on Zalo significantly **decreased** from

3,455 > **287**
 in January - June 2022 in January - June 2023

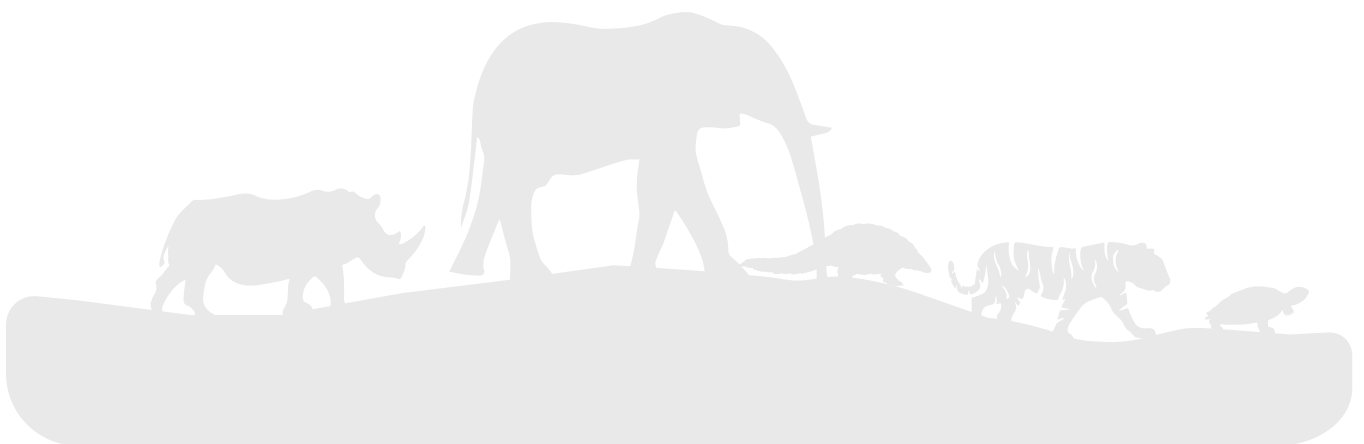


While there was a sharp **increase** from

2,526 > **3,921**
 in July - December 2022 in January - June 2023
 on Facebook (Figure 8)



This may have been because after Zalo had enforced its Community Policy, the sellers switched to other platforms, especially Facebook, to post their advertisements.





ELEPHANTS

Product Composition

- Jewellery and spiritual/religious items such as bangles, pendants, amulets, and rings were the most common items for sale, with 88% of advertisements (a total of 8,232 advertisements) containing items in this category between July 2021 and June 2023. This is consistent with previous monitoring, as, in 2017^{vii}, online advertisements for elephant products were dominated by jewellery items (97%) (total of 184 advertisements).
- Items made with elephant ivory were the most frequently advertised, representing 94% of all advertisements for elephant products, similar to the 2017 survey for which all elephant products identified were made of ivory. However, in the 2021 - 2023, there is a diversified range of elephant products, including those made with elephant tail hair, bone, teeth, and skin. The availability of elephant bone and teeth (6%) is a relatively new phenomenon, and items are carved in a style similar to that of traditionally carved ivory products. During the monitoring period, ivory jewellery was also advertised with a certification document to prove its authenticity.
- From January to June 2022, the first adverts for ivory glue, which derives from the use of ivory scraps (a byproduct of the ivory carving

process) mixed with other ingredients, were recorded. The purported benefits, as advertised, include preventing and treating bone and joint disease, providing calcium for bone and teeth, detoxifying, enhancing vision or cooling^{vi} the liver. This functional use of elephant products is new, promoting health purposes, just as elephant skin is used in traditional medicine, and is distinct from other uses of elephant products (such as ivory) as ornaments.





Elephant tail hair advertisement

Elephant teeth advertisement

Ivory product advertisement with certification

Elephant ivory glue advertisement

Picture 2: Products from ivory advertised on online platforms.

Ivory Prices

- Elephant ivory products had a diverse price range (Table 2). Previous online monitoring in 2017^{vii} also found a wide breadth of prices in the same product category, corresponding to an item’s size and weight. The upper range of prices appears to have increased in 2021 - 2023 compared to 2017.
- The prices of elephant products saw significant increases in 2017 and 2023, driven by a complex

interplay of factors. Firstly, the demand for elephant products can significantly influence their prices. In 2017, efforts to reduce demand in China, reportedly increased the demand for ivory in Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar^{viii}, thus exerting upward pressure on prices due to limited availability and high demand. Secondly, exchange rate fluctuations can certainly impact the prices of items sold.

PRICE RANGE (per item)	2017	2021 - 2023
Bangles	USD 22 - 242/each	USD 4 - 1,278/each
Rings	USD 9 - 176/each	USD 1 - 341/each
Amulets and Charms	USD 12 - 285/each	USD 4 - 1,662/each
Tusk	NA	USD 250/each
Tail hair ring	NA	USD 2 - 5/each
Skin bag/wallet	NA	USD 13 - 27/each
Statue	NA	USD 73 for a small one
Earring	NA	USD 10/each
Pipe	NA	USD 35/each
Comb	NA	USD 37/each

Table 2: Price range for ivory products from online monitoring for 2017 and between July 2021 and June 2023. Prices for items in advertisements were given in Vietnamese Dong and converted to US dollars for this report.



RHINOS

Product Composition

■ The analysis identified several types of rhino products being offered for sale online. Raw rhino horn was the most prevalent (65%), whether whole or cut into pieces. In its raw form, rhino horn can be further processed by carving it as ornaments or shaving it into powder for consumption in social/recreational settings or as medicine. Carved rhino horn products such as bracelets, amulets, and cups were the second most recorded form in which rhino horns were advertised (30.3%). A much smaller proportion

of rhino skin products (0.6%) were found for sale, as well as rhino horn glue (6.4%), a new product category not previously seen in market monitoring, and sold in a mixture with rhino skin, pangolin scales, seahorse, and gecko. This mixed glue was advertised to provide the following benefits: male enhancement, kidney, liver, and eye health, improved appetite, strengthened joints, detoxification, cancer prevention and reduced insomnia.



Rhino horn advertisement



Carved rhino horn advertisement



Rhino product advertisement with "HVC" branding



Rhino horn glue advertisement

Picture 3: Products from rhino horn advertised on online platforms.

Rhino product prices

Prices for rhino horn products were rarely explicitly stated in the advertisements. Two price points were recorded:

62g rhino horn product advertised for **VND 53 million**

100g rhino horn product for **VND 29 million**

equivalent to **USD 11,191 - 35,212/ kg.**



Between 2016 and 2023, average prices for rhino horn ranged from

USD 10,694/ kg to **USD 22,257/ kg**

The lowest average prices were recorded in 2019 and 2020, with an increase to

USD 13,445/ kg recorded in 2021^{ix}.

The two range points advertised online are consistent with the rise in prices in Viet Nam and other countries in the illicit rhino horn supply chain.



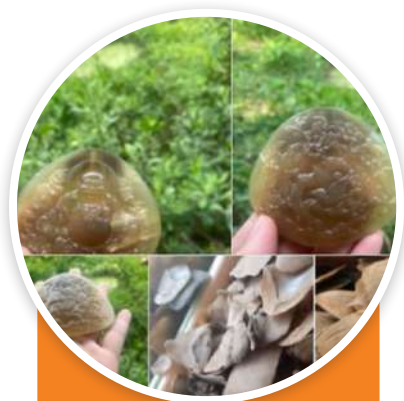


PANGOLINS

Product Composition

- Pangolin scales and medicinal products containing pangolin scale make up most of the pangolin products for sale online (96%), while whole pangolins, whether live or dead, were found in much smaller quantities (3%). Pangolin scales are primarily used in traditional medicine for the treatment of a variety of skin-related and other ailments, including scabies, boils, urticaria, urticaria strabismus, acne, as well as alopecia in women who have just given birth. Whole pangolins are likely used in the exotic meat trade.
- The sale of pangolin scales differs slightly among e-commerce and social platforms. Traditional medicine shops tend to openly offer medicinal

products with pangolin scales for sale on e-commerce platforms if the pangolin scales are one portion of the ingredients. They are often sold in processed form as a medicinal product, are advertised as “registered”, and may be accompanied by a certificate. Sales agents ply the pangolin trade on these platforms with multiple online shops, seemingly selling the same items. Meanwhile, individual sellers are more discrete on social media platforms, providing few generic images or information, and often include a phone contact for further details. These sellers tend to be offering pangolin scales in their raw form for sale and would be under greater exposure for legal action if they advertised more openly.



Carved pangolin scales advertisement



Pangolin claws advertisement



Pangolin carcass advertisement

Picture 4: Products from pangolins advertised on online platforms.

- Novel products were also found, including carved scales (0.22%) and claws (0.86%), which are typically used as ornaments and adornments.

Pangolin product prices

Advertised prices of pangolin scales ranged from USD 130 - 680/kg at wholesale (advertisements are aimed at businesses, offering bulk quantities at discounted prices with terms tailored for reselling) and USD 190 - 1,020/kg at retail (advertisements target individual consumers) (Table 3). This is consistent with previous findings of pangolin scales in Viet Nam valued at around USD 250/kg^x. The January - June 2023 survey reveals retail prices for pangolin scales to be around USD 400/kg, an increase of 114% compared to prices in the July 2021 - June 2022 monitoring period.






PANGOLIN SCALES	
 Pangolin scales (wholesale)	USD 130 - 680/kg
 Pangolin scales (retail)	USD 190 - 1,020/kg
 Pangolin scale medicine (5% scale)	USD 79 - 340/kg

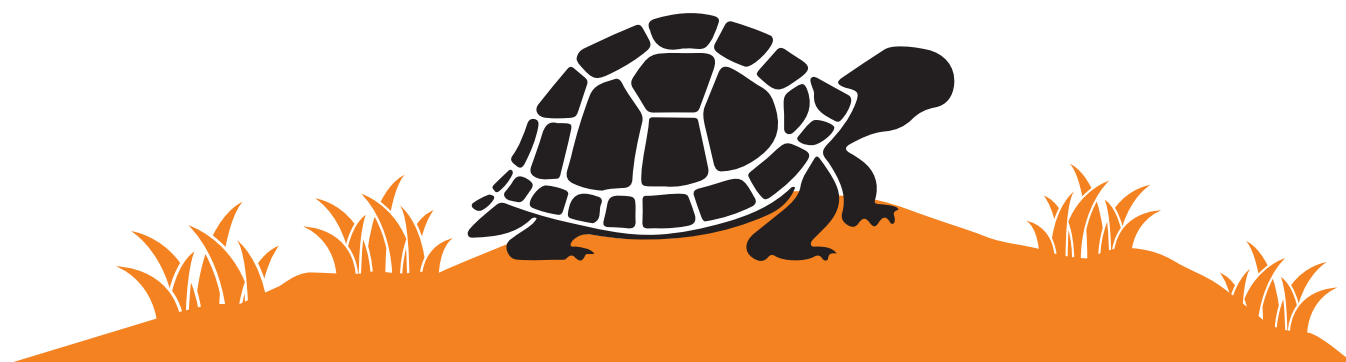
Table 3: Price range for pangolin scale products from online monitoring between July 2021 and June 2023. Prices for items in advertisements were given in Vietnamese Dong and converted to US dollars for this report.



TORTOISES AND FRESH-WATER TURTLES

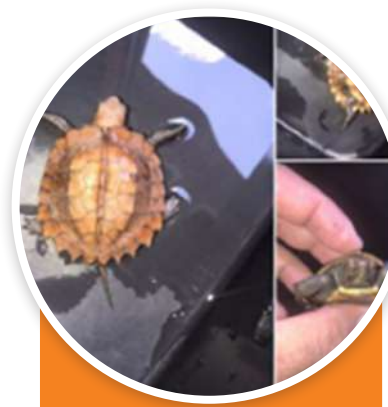
Product Composition

- Advertisements for tortoises and fresh-water turtles were primarily for live specimens (92.8%), advertised for the pet and meat trade, while dead specimens (3%) were likely exclusively for the meat trade. Turtle shells, shell powder, and shell glue were the third most frequent product category (2%), used for medicinal, food, and spiritual/religious usage (I Ching Divination shell—a traditional Chinese form of cleromancy).
- Despite the varieties of native species offered, imported species (e.g., Common Snapping turtles *Chelydra serpentina*, and Spotted Pond Turtle *Geoclemys hamiltonii*) were the most commonly advertised for the pet trade.
- A diverse range of tortoise and fresh-water turtle species were found in advertisements, including 23 native species (out of 26 in Viet Nam).
- The Elongated Tortoise *Indotestudo elongata* was the most frequently advertised species despite being protected under Viet Nam law^{xi} and regulated by CITES, where it is listed in Appendix II. Similarly protected is the Indochinese Box Turtle *Cuora galbinifrons*, listed in Group IB of Decree 06/2019/ND-CP (amended and supplemented by Decree 84/2021/ND-CP), where it is strictly prohibited from exploitation and use for commercial purposes, and in CITES Appendix I, which prohibits all trade in wild-sourced specimens for commercial purposes, and the Yellow-headed Temple Turtle *Heosemys annandalii*, listed in Group IIB of Decree 06/2019/ND-CP (amended and supplemented by Decree 84/2021/ND-CP), where it is restricted from exploitation and use for commercial purposes, and included in CITES Appendix II with a zero quota for wild specimens for commercial purposes as established by the Conference of the Parties. Specimens of 11 species were also advertised as farmed^{xii}, although the sale of adults and sub-adults in small numbers are unlikely to be farm bred, but suggest they are being sold illegally^{xiii}. Meanwhile, at least three species supplied the meat trade, especially soft-shell turtles^{xiv}.





Advertisement of Elongated Tortoises (*Indotestudo elongata*) for the pet trade



Advertisement of Keeled Box Turtle (*Cuora mouhotii*) for the pet trade



Advertisement of Asiatic Soft-shell Turtle (*Amyda cartilaginea*) for the meat trade

Picture 5: Products from tortoises and fresh-water turtles advertised on online platforms.

Tortoise and fresh-water turtle prices

- Prices for pet trade specimens varied considerably due to differences in size, age and appearance. The lowest average price was for the Chinese Stripe-necked Turtle *Mauremys sinensis* at USD 7.54/individual, while the highest average price was for the Vietnamese Box Turtle *Cuora galbinifrons* at USD 75/individual.
- Shells from soft-shell turtles are also used in traditional medicine and were priced at an average of USD 2.75 - 5.63/100g, while four other species were used to produce and sell turtle shell glue (at an average of USD 20.19/100g)^{xv}.

Meanwhile, shells of four species were mentioned in advertisements for I Ching Divination use and had the highest value of all tortoises and fresh-water turtle products (average of USD 28.55)^{xvi}. While the average prices for tortoises and fresh-water turtles were within the range of prices found in a previous 2017-2018 study on Facebook in Viet Nam^{xii}, only one, the Asiatic Soft-shell Turtle *Amyda cartilaginea* advertised for the meat trade, had an increase in average USD 22.73 in 2017 - 2018 to USD 64.60 in 2022. In 2023, soft-shell turtle eggs were also advertised at the average price of USD 10.24/kg as food.

Soft shell turtle shells (for TCM use)	USD 2.75 - 5.63/100g
Turtle shells (to produce shell glue)	USD 20.19/100g
Turtle shells (for I Ching Divination)	USD 28.55/shell
Asiatic soft-shell turtle	USD 64.60/kg (2022) <small>For reference, prices were USD 22.73/ kg in 2017 and 2018</small>
Soft-shell turtle egg	USD 9 - 12.3/kg (2023)

Table 4: Price range in advertisements for tortoise and fresh-water turtle products from online monitoring between July 2021 and June 2023. Prices for items in advertisements were given in Vietnamese Dong and converted to US dollars for this report.



TIGERS

Product Composition

- A diverse array of body parts from big cats can be sold online. However, in this monitoring period, the seller identified all advertised products as tiger products. Claws and teeth (especially fangs) were the most common products advertised (81%), mostly sold as pendants or rings. The availability of teeth (molars) other than fangs is a relatively new phenomenon.
- Tiger skin was the next most common item (7.8%), used in rugs or stuffed for use as home décor. Bone products were also available for sale (4.5%), but less than claws, teeth, and skin. Bone glue, used in traditional medicine, and bone glue wine were the most common bone products advertised for medicinal use. Other product types with fewer advertisements were whiskers, heads, penis, feet, mouth, genital and meat (1.3%). Whole tigers were also offered (0.6%).
- An emerging practice among sellers is to offer items for sale in their raw form, with products sold attached to the body part in which it came in as proof of provenance and as a sign of quality. Teeth would be sold with the skull attached, claws from the de-fleshed foot, or claws with flesh and fur remaining.



Tiger bone advertisement



Tiger skin/fur product advertisement



Tiger fangs advertisement

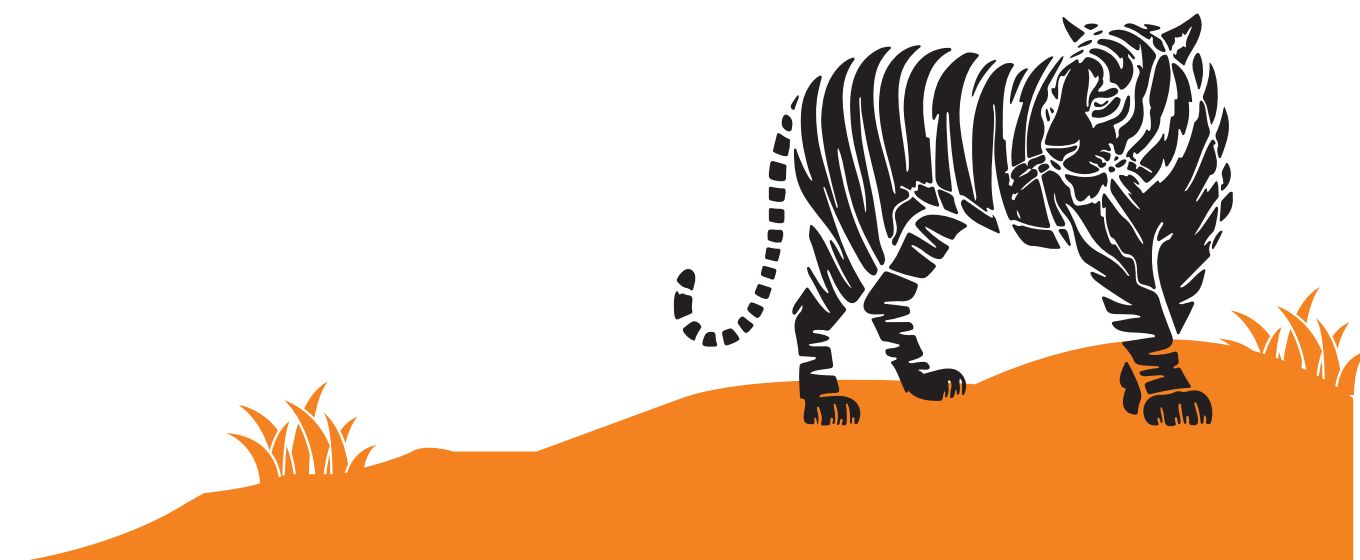
Picture 7: Products from tigers advertised on online platforms.

Tiger product prices

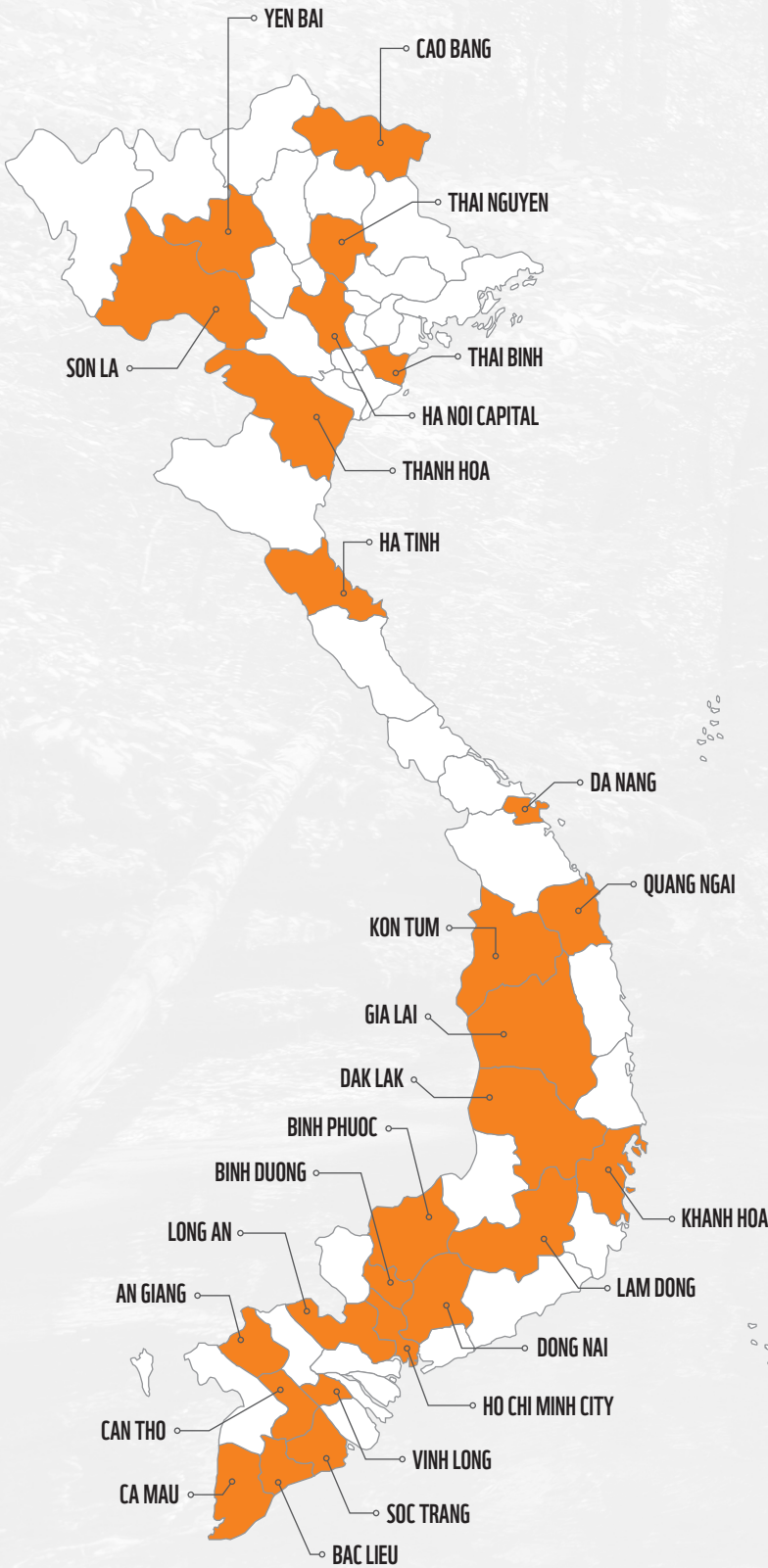
Raw claws	USD 8.52 - 1,831/claw
Claw covered by gold/silver	USD 41 - 410/item
Fangs	USD 25.55 - 4,259/item
Bone glue	USD 362 - 511/100g
Skin wallet	USD 24.65 - 65.72/item
Whiskers	USD 14.38 for five whiskers
Tiger cub	USD 1,009 - 1,513/individual

Table 5: Price range in advertisements for tiger products from online monitoring between July 2021 and June 2023. Prices for items in advertisements were given in Vietnamese Dong and converted to US dollars for this report.

Fangs have the most comprehensive range of prices and the greatest median price (USD 2,142.28) compared to other popular tiger products (Table 5). This price is also higher than that of another study in 2022^{xvii}, which recorded an average price of USD 1,450 for a canine. Similarly, the median price for bone glue found for this report (USD 436.5/100g) is also higher than in the 2022 study (USD 800/100g).



LOCATION OF WILDLIFE SELLERS



HA NOI, HO CHI MINH CITY



YEN BAI



DAK LAK



HA TINH, KON TUM



GIA LAI



KHANH HOA



BAC LIEU



CA MAU, BINH DUONG, BINH PHUOC, DA NANG, LAM DONG, QUANG NGAI, THANH HOA, VINH LONG



AN GIANG, LONG AN, SOC TRANG, THAI BINH, CAN THO



CAO BANG, SON LA, THAI NGUYEN



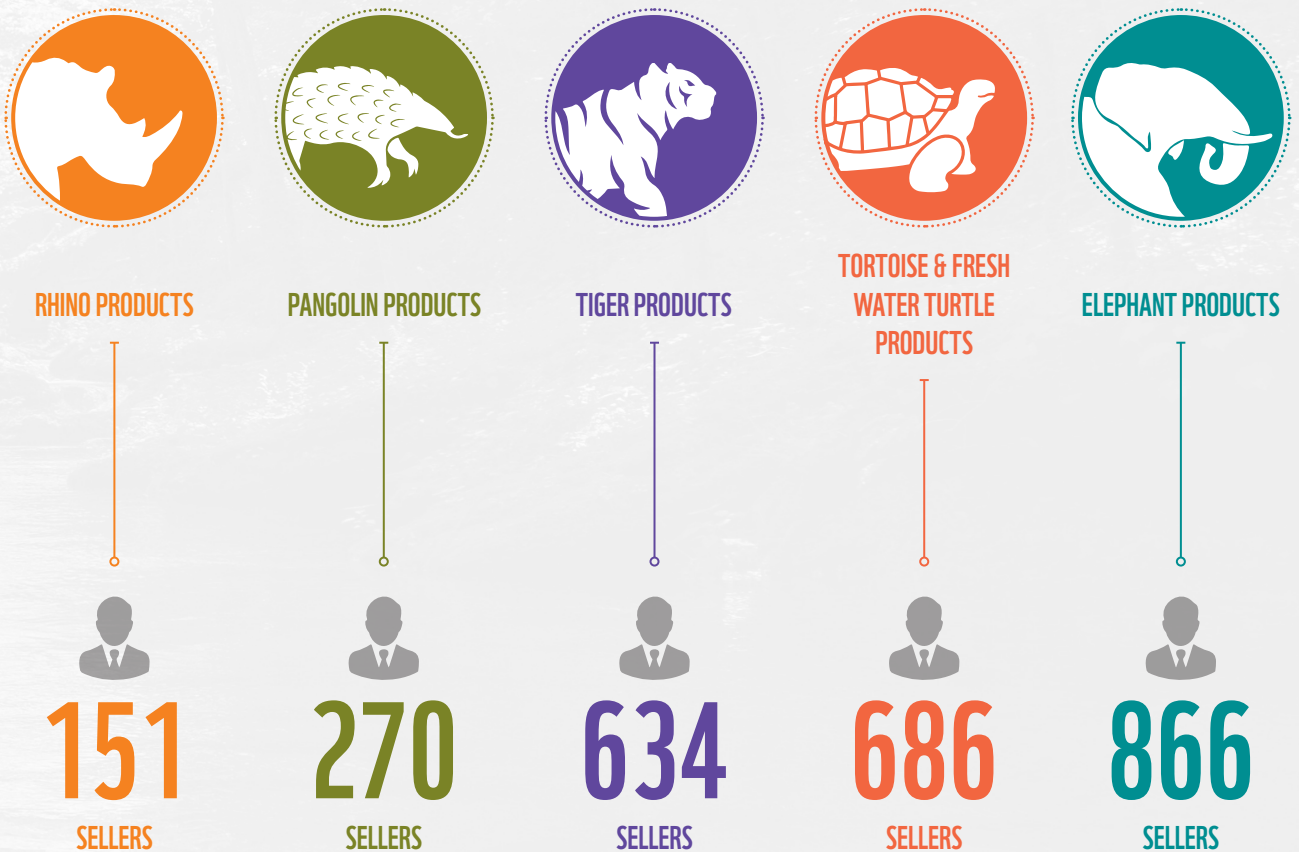
DONG NAI



SELLERS AND ADVERTISEMENTS

The infographic illustrates the geographic distribution of wildlife sellers across the country, with certain regions highlighted to indicate higher concentrations of seller locations, i.e., 26 provinces and cities. Notably, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City emerge as major hubs, offering products from all five surveyed species.

The survey, from July 2021 to June 2023, identified 2,607 wildlife sellers based on publicly available profile information. The data reveals a concerning trend in the illegal wildlife trade, with elephant products being the most prevalent (866 sellers), followed by tortoise and freshwater turtle products (686 sellers) and tiger products (634 sellers). Pangolin and rhino products, while less common, still show significant numbers, with 270 and 151 sellers, respectively.



The results only include locations from sellers' public profiles where location information is available within the surveyed period.



THE USE OF SLANG AND IMAGES/ICONS



THE USE OF SLANG AND IMAGES/ICONS

Using slang and images/icons to promote wildlife commodities online is an increasingly prevalent trend, with over 5% of all advertisements employing such tactics. For instance, euphemistic codes such as "Mr. 30" are employed to implicitly refer to tigers, while "Chocolate" is substituted for "Tiger bone glue," and "Rice" is used in place of "Is before." This approach appeals to contemporary

audiences, particularly younger demographics, by leveraging familiar communication styles and visually engaging content that resonates within digital realms. This trend reflects a strategic adaptation in marketing wildlife products, aiming to enhance engagement and broaden outreach by deploying relatable and visually captivating content formats.



CHALLENGES

Platform limitations

Researchers encountered considerable challenges in this assessment partly due to platform idiosyncrasies and obfuscated information on advertisements and posts.

- The disappearance of posts/groups/pages/profiles (due to reporting efforts or self-removal) halts the tracking of specific profiles and groups.
- Duplicate images from different advertisements/posts, which are not filtered out by the platform, make identifying the items for sale challenging.
- Some advertisements/posts with no searchable keywords (non-caption or caption written inside the photos/videos) make it challenging to apply the search methodology.
- The researchers observed some advertisements/posts as potential scams and fake accounts, but they do not appear to be actively filtered out by the platform.
- Zalo and TikTok are challenging to monitor. Researchers cannot use a keyword search to assess posts in Zalo, and both platforms also have copying restrictions, which adds substantially to data research effort.



Challenges in enforcing platform policy and law enforcement

- Fake accounts, scammers, duplicate accounts, and the disappearance of posts/groups/pages/profiles resulting in data loss may cause difficulty for LEAs in tracking the seller and investigating further.
- Gaining access to closed/private groups is an issue that LEAs confront as private groups reinforce user privacy. LEAs and online platforms might have to collaborate to enable LEAs to investigate through proper access.
- Limited findings on seller's profile and operations (price, location, etc.) – is an issue for LEAs that may have to adopt other means of building evidence for prosecutions, such as controlled deliveries.
- Advertisements with only images (no text) do not provide enough information for LEAs who need to conduct further investigations.... etc, including covert interactions with the seller, may be necessary, especially for large sellers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policymakers

Members of Viet Nam's National Assembly should consider increasing penalties for illegal wildlife consumption, thereby ensuring that there is sufficient deterrence along the entire supply chain, in line with raised penalties for traders of illegal wildlife, as the enactment of the revised Penal Code (No. 100/2015/QH13) had achieved.

Social media and e-commerce companies

E-commerce and social media companies should proactively enforce online activities on their platform where IWT is found as part of their obligations under the Electronic Transaction Law 51/2005/QH11 and Decree 52/2013/ND-CP. The companies are encouraged to:

- A** Strengthen their monitoring & IWT identification capabilities by:
 - Building awareness of staff.
 - Ensuring security staff complete training on identification of wildlife trafficking online.
 - Integrating keywords or images into screening mechanisms to identify illegal posts.
 - Seeking lessons learned from Business-2-Business cooperation and networks such as the Global Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online to adopt best-practice approaches in tackling wildlife trade online and localize resources for effective monitoring and deterrence.
 - Incorporating an explicit prohibition of illegal wildlife products within company policy on illegal goods.
- B** Develop and share the ever-evolving nomenclature of keywords, emojis, and coded images traders use in IWT between internet companies and market monitoring NGOs/academia.
- C** Encourage the development of internal screening capabilities (human or machine-based) to effectively identify new and emerging coded text and imagery in the sale of illegal wildlife.

Law enforcement agencies

LEAs should apply Viet Nam's revised Penal Code to target wildlife criminals and organized syndicates. They are encouraged to

- A** Increase the use of controlled deliveries and other investigative efforts to build evidence for prosecuting large wildlife traders online;
- B** Establish a working relationship and reporting mechanism between internet companies and law enforcement agencies, potentially formalized through Memorandum of Understanding or stakeholder working groups, and improve the moderation of IWT online;
- C** Collaborate with other government authorities, including the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development and CITES Management Authority, to counter wildlife trafficking.

Traditional medicine associations and practitioners are encouraged to

- A** Partner with academic institutions and relevant government agencies to identify, develop, and evaluate ethical, sustainable, and evidence-based treatments that can effectively address health concerns without using illegal wildlife ingredients.
- B** Collaborate with the MOH to audit all product offerings (investigating attached authentication certificates) to ensure ingredients from illegal wildlife are removed from medicine practice and that all wildlife-based traditional medicines are from legal sources.
- C** Collaborate with relevant departments within the MOH (such as the Traditional Medicine Administration) to review and remove illegal wildlife products from Vietnam Pharmacopoeia.

NGOs are encouraged to

- A** Maintain regular and consistent surveillance of online platforms to identify new trends, products, and concealed trading methods involving illegal and endangered wildlife and develop and refine best practice tools and approaches for detecting cryptic and evolving online trading tactics.
- B** Analyze and synthesize data from multiple sources to gain a holistic understanding of wildlife trade dynamics; for example, triangulate information on new and emerging products by cross-referencing online observations with consumer surveys and seizure reports.
- C** Engage Viet Nam's Ministry of Information and Communication, Central Committee for Propaganda and Education (CCPE), and mainstream media to deliver messaging and communications warning consumers about the illegality, fakes, and scams of selling wildlife products online.





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REFERENCES AND NOTES

- ⁱ *Welcome to the WiTISphere (campaign-archive.com)*. WiTIS data is predominantly sourced from open source data including media reports, which may be skewed towards particular species that generate public interest and locations over time and which should be noted when interpreting findings from this database.
- ⁱⁱ Tiger data for July - December 2021 was utilized from the CITES Big cats project (Jul - Oct) and TRAFFIC's backdate collection (Nov - Dec).
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- ^x Bui, T. (2019). The Pangolin Trade Explained: Situation in Vietnam. The Pangolin Report. 2 May. Retrieved from: <https://www.pangolinreports.com/vietnam/>
- ^{xi} Other species (>1% of total) include: Keeled Box Turtle (*Cuora mouhotii*), Heosemys spp., Yellow Pond Turtle (*Mauremys mutica*), Cyclernys spp., Amboina Box Turtle (*Cuora amboinensis*), Vietnamese Box Turtle (*Cuora galbinifrons*), Chinese Stripe-necked Turtle (*Mauremys sinensis*).
- ^{xii} Farming was mentioned in advertisements for the following species: Elongated Tortoise (*Indotestudo elongata*), Keeled Box Turtle (*Cuora mouhotii*), Mekong Snail-eating Turtle (*Malayemys subtrijuga*) Giant Asian Pond Turtle (*Heosemys grandis*), Yellow-headed Temple Turtle (*Heosemys annandalii*), Yellow Pond Turtle (*Mauremys mutica*), Chinese Stripe-necked Turtle (*Mauremys sinensis*), Golden Coin Turtle (*Cuora trifasciata*), Asiatic Softshell Turtle (*Amyda cartilaginea*), Wattle-necked Softshell Turtle (*Palea steindachneri*), Chinese Softshell Turtle (*Pelodiscus sinensis*).

^{xiii} Van, T. P., Luu, V. Q., Tien, T. V., Leprince, B., Khanh, L. T. T., & Luiselli, L. (2019). Longitudinal monitoring of turtle trade through Facebook in Vietnam. *Herpetological Journal*, 29(1).

^{xiv} Turtles intended for the meat trade include: Asiatic Softshell Turtle (*Amyda cartilaginea/Amyda ornata*), Wattle-necked Softshell Turtle (*Palea steindachneri*), Chinese Softshell Turtle (*Pelodiscus sinensis*), and possibly the Mekong Snail-eating Turtle (*Malayemys subtrijuga*) and *Heosemys* spp., although neither can be confirmed from the advertisements.

^{xv} The following species and genera have been advertised as species used in turtle shell glue: *Cuora galbinifrons*, *Heosemys* sp., *Mauremys* sp., *Palea steindachneri*, *Cuora mouhotii*.

^{xvi} I Ching Divination shells derive from: *Malayemys subtrijuga*, *Indotestudo elongata*, *Cuora mouhotii*, *Mauremys* spp.

^{xvii} <https://wildlifejustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/To-Skin-A-Cat-Report-SPREADS-V06.pdf>

^{xviii} *Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online*

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