



A Comprehensive Analysis on the Trade in African Primates

Saving our closest relatives in the animal kingdom benefits all beings on this planet, including us humans.

Foreword from Pan African Sanctuary Alliance

Africa hosts an extraordinary diversity of nonhuman primates on Earth, yet 53% of primate species on the African mainland are threatened with extinction. Habitat destruction, climate change, and both legal and illegal trade continue to drive the decline of these species.

Despite the significant threats faced by African primates, little global attention has been paid to the effects of the international trade in these species. The extent of trade exploitation impacting African monkeys and great apes is likely far greater than the numbers presented in this report. Research estimates that for every young chimpanzee rescued and brought to a sanctuary, as many as ten others or more are likely killed by poachers.

This report collates evidence from available literature and trade data, offering a window into the exploitation of African primates. It also presents recommendations on enforcement, awareness, and international collaboration aimed at reducing poaching and trafficking pressure on these species.

Primates are central to our understanding of human evolution, emerging diseases, and cognitive and behavior science. They are our closest relatives in the animal kingdom – sentient and intelligent beings with complex social bonds. As seed dispersers and pollinators, they are also essential to healthy ecosystems and play a key role in regenerating forests that help mitigate climate change and biodiversity loss – ultimately benefiting all beings on the planet, including us humans.

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Executive Summary

African primates — including chimpanzees, gorillas, and monkeys — are being traded across borders for profit. This report includes the analysis of over 200 individual cases and over 40 published academic or grey literature sources, in addition to global trade datasets like the CITES Trade Database and TRAFFIC seizure records, to reveal how the trade impacts African primate species.

Between 2000 and 2023, over 6,000 African primates were reported in legal international trade. Thousands more were trafficked illegally for use as exotic pets, wild meat, and traditional medicine. Many were infants, likely taken from the wild after their mothers were killed. The trade, both legal and illegal, spans over 50 countries. Weak enforcement, inconsistent monitoring, and global demand drive the crisis.

This report presents key data and real-world cases to inform policymakers and spark public awareness. Our recommendations call for improved enforcement, stronger legislation, and scaled-up, sustained support for accredited primate sanctuaries and conservation action.



A Call for Action

African primates play vital ecological, cultural, and economic roles. Yet trade — especially illegal trafficking — undermines:

- Conservation of threatened species
- Public health and zoonotic disease control
- Enforcement of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) and national wildlife laws
- Animal welfare and ethical standards

Despite international protections, enforcement gaps and demand for African primates — live, parts and products — are accelerating primate population decline. Action is urgently needed — not just at borders, but at source, transit, and demand points across the international trade chain.





Introduction

African primate trade research has focused on the pet trade and the wild meat trade along with conservation and human health impacts. To date, there have been almost no comprehensive studies on the international trade, legal and illegal, despite the alarming decrease in African primate populations. This is particularly concerning, as researchers have warned that worldwide 93% of primate populations are declining, and that trade plays a role in this drop (Estrada et al., 2022).

According to the IUCN/SSC Primate Specialist Group:

- **63% of all primates worldwide are threatened – the highest degree of threat for any of the larger groups of mammals**
- **In mainland Africa, an estimated 53% of primate species (54 out of 103) are threatened with extinction**

This project focuses on collecting and assessing the available data on African primates with the goal of establishing trends associated with the trade. This research corresponds with five objectives that aim at achieving a better understanding of the trade and assessing its impact on African primate conservation efforts.

Report Objectives

- 1 To establish the volume of international legal trade in African primate species and analyze the species traded, purposes of the trade, and country of exports, transit, and imports.
- 2 To establish the volume of international illegal trade in primate species as it pertains to the African continent and analyze the species traded, purposes of the trade, and country of exports, transit, and imports.
- 3 To gain insights into the patterns of regional trade in primates across Africa with several case studies.
- 4 To gain insights into the international trade in African great apes with case studies.
- 5 To identify demand factors associated with the most commonly traded species of African primates.





Legal Trade

To establish the volume of international legal trade in African primate species and analyze the species traded, purposes of the trade, and country of exports, transit, and imports.

The CITES trade database was accessed and all data on the primates of interest were exported and analyzed. From 2015-2023 (approximately 10 years), a total of 5,286 trade incidents were recorded in CITES. Due to the nature of each incident being recorded using various measures (for example, 6 bones or 15kg of meat), the first stage of this analysis will focus on the number of reported incidents. Each incident may account for different primate quantities or product types.

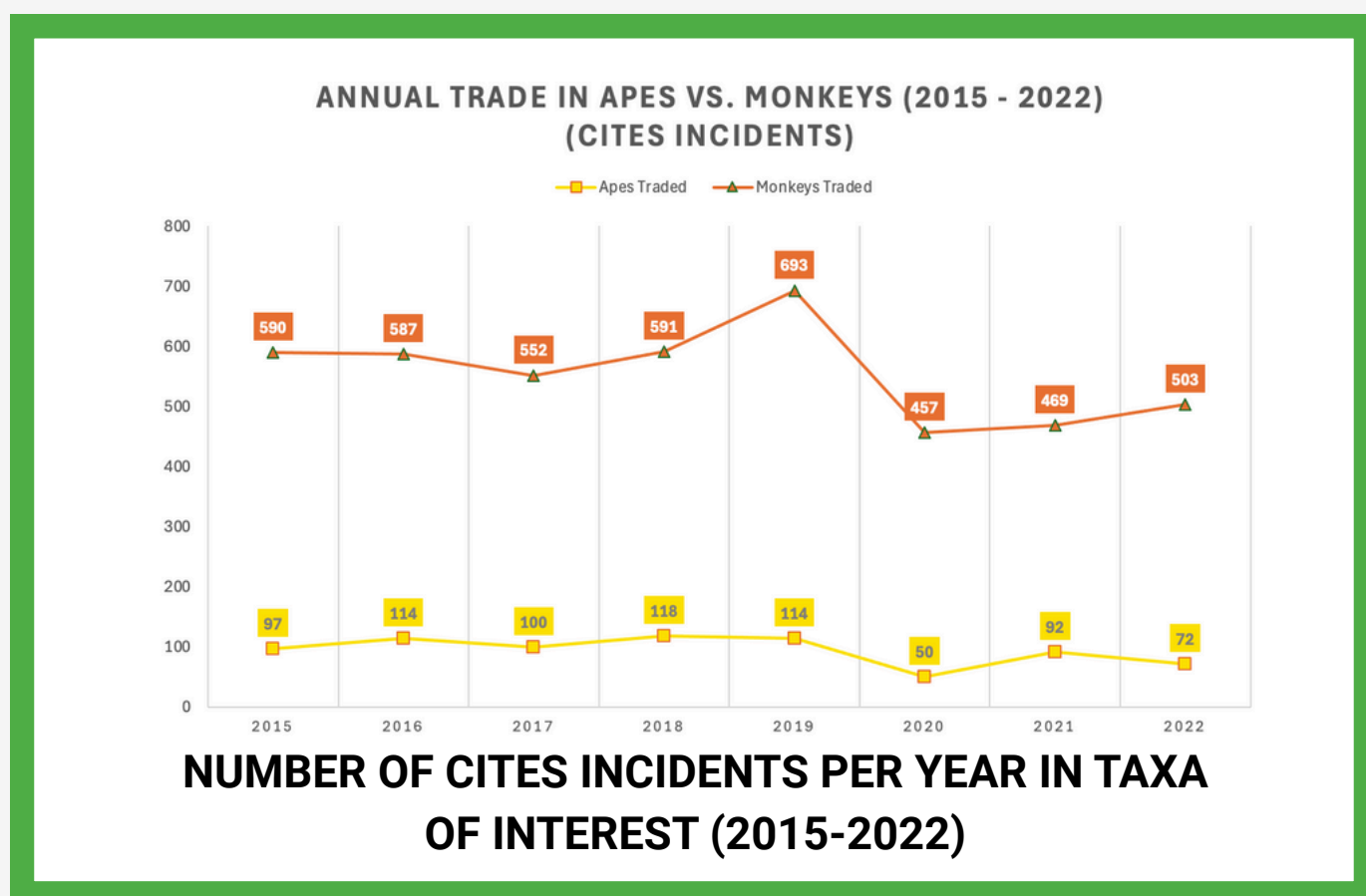
CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.

The dataset contains 78 primate taxa of interest, all of which had associated data in the CITES trade database. The breakdown of incident counts for each taxon over the recorded period is detailed in the dataset. Of these incidents, 702 were reported as legal Appendix I trades, while 4,603 were legal Appendix II. Appendix I species are generally considered those facing the highest risk of extinction and are restricted to non-commercial trade, while Appendix II species are those not immediately threatened with extinction but require trade regulation to avoid endangerment.



From 2015 to 2023, legal trade values remained relatively stable from year-to-year for apes, with a dip experienced in 2020, followed by a slight bounce back and further decline. Monkeys appeared to have a relatively increasing legal trade pattern until 2019, with a significant dip in 2020, showing a trend increase through 2022.

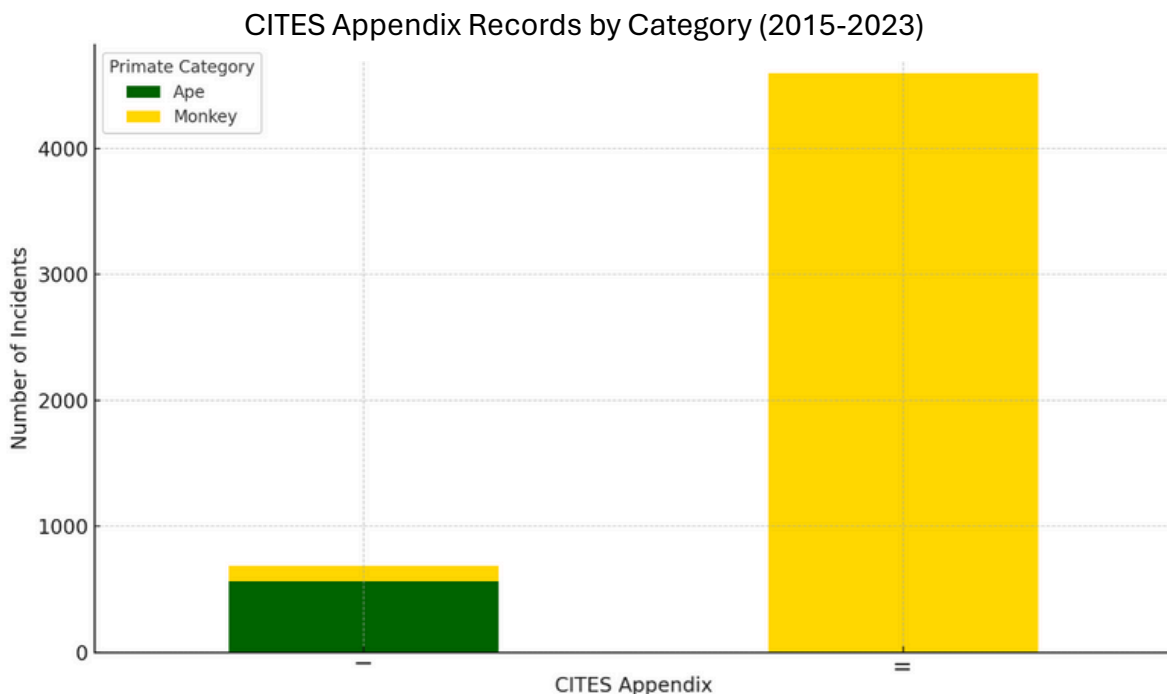
Within the examined time period, there were 564 Appendix I great ape incidents, and 125 legal Appendix I monkey trade incidents. Appendix II trades consisted almost entirely of monkey species, with 4,595 incidents recorded; 2 ape incidents were recorded under Appendix II despite the fact that great apes are listed in Appendix I. Overall, 13.8% of legal trade incidents therefore involved great apes, while 86.2% involved monkeys.



A CLOSER LOOK AT SPECIES

The bar chart below presents the top 10 most traded primate species between 2015 and 2023. The taxon with the highest number of recorded incidents is *Papio ursinus* (Chacma baboon), with 2,031 incidents – far surpassing other species. The Chacma baboon is followed by *Papio cynocephalus* (yellow baboon) with 511 incidents, *Pan troglodytes* (chimpanzee) with 418 incidents, and *Papio anubis* (olive baboon) with 393 incidents.

Several other monkey species also appeared within the top ten most commonly traded species, including the *Colobus guereza* (mantled guereza) with 186 incidents, *Papio hamadryas* (hamadryas baboon) with 180 incidents, *Erythrocebus patas* (patas monkey) with 156 incidents, and *Cercopithecus neglectus* (De Brazza's monkey) with 125 incidents. The presence of these species reflects the broad taxonomic reach of the legal African primate trade.



CITES APPENDIX BREAKDOWN FOR REPORTED INCIDENTS OF PRIMATE TRADE IN TAXA OF INTEREST

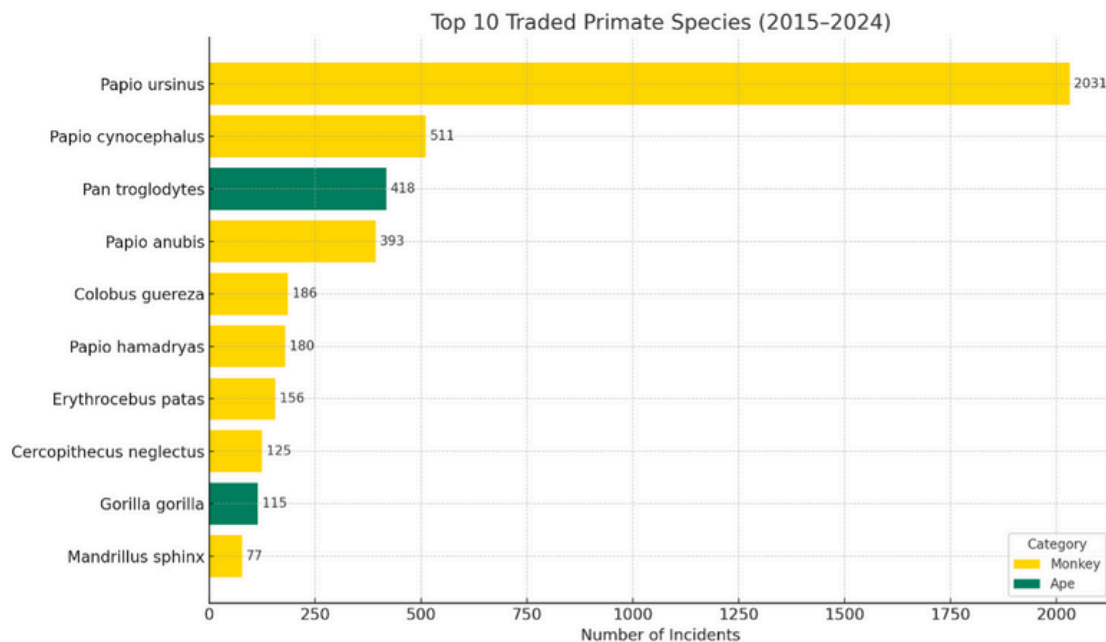


Among the great apes, *Pan troglodytes* (chimpanzee) led in volume, with 418 incidents, followed by *Gorilla gorilla* (western gorilla) with 115 incidents. While the trade volume of the great apes is fewer in species and lower in count than that of most monkey species, their inclusion is particularly concerning given their slow reproductive rates and higher conservation statuses.

The high number of records for *Papio* species underscores the genus' dominance in the international trade of primates, comprising three of the top five species. This widespread trade activity indicates that baboons remain a consistent focus of the trade.

Overall, the data highlights a continuing pattern of intense trade pressure on a select group of primates, with implications for species conservation, enforcement priorities, and the need for improved reporting and identification practices within the CITES framework.

TOP TEN SPECIES LEGALLY TRADED BASED ON CITES TRADE DATA FROM 2015-2023, BROKEN DOWN BY PRIMATE TYPE



Among the top ten most commonly traded African primate species, IUCN Red List conservation statuses range from Least Concern to Critically Endangered. Most baboon species (*Papio ursinus*, *P. cynocephalus*, *P. anubis*, and *P. hamadryas*) are currently listed as Least Concern, reflecting their broader geographic distribution and relatively stable population trends. Despite The Chacma baboon has a declining population trend according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in its 2018 assessment.

Several traded species are of significant conservation concern. The chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) is classified as Endangered, and the western gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*) is Critically Endangered, facing severe threats from habitat loss and poaching. The mandrill (*Mandrillus sphinx*) holds a Vulnerable status, highlighting its susceptibility to population decline. These statuses emphasize the importance of closely monitoring and regulating trade in certain primate species, particularly those already at risk of extinction, to ensure that legal trade mechanisms do not exacerbate existing conservation challenges.

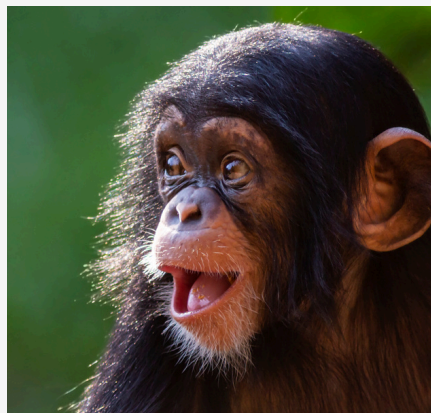
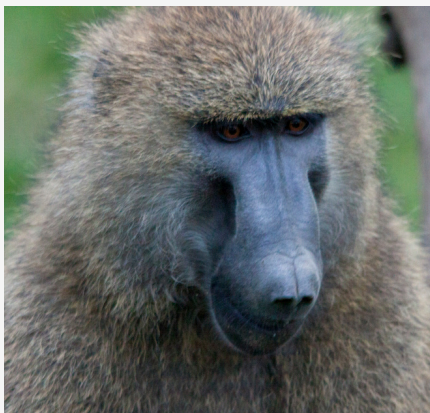
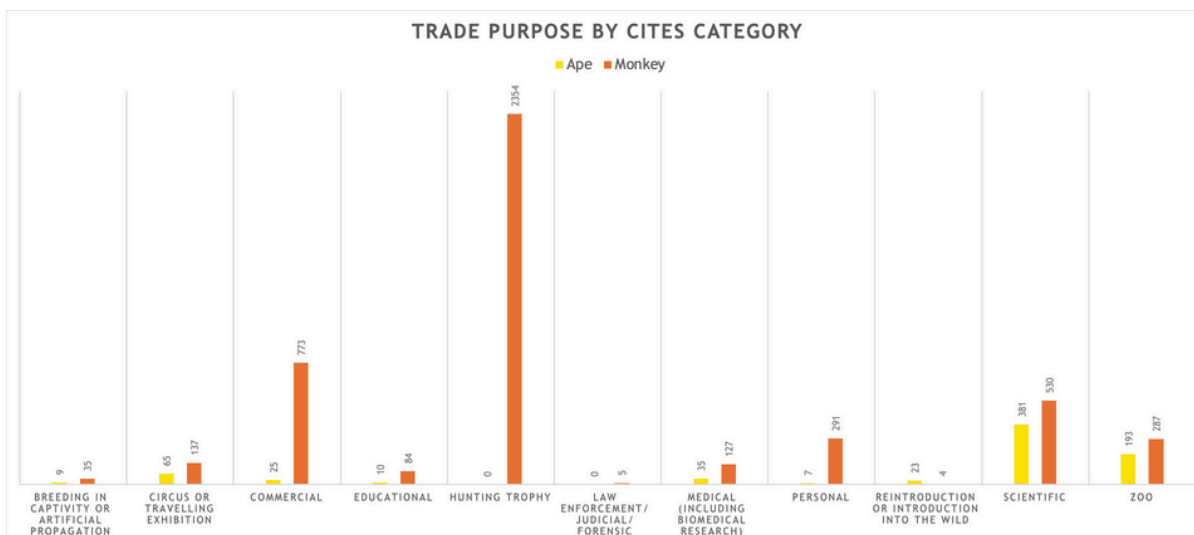
TOP TEN LEGALLY TRADED AFRICAN PRIMATES AND THEIR IUCN STATUS

Scientific Name	Common Name	IUCN Status	Last Assessed
<i>Papio ursinus</i>	Chacma Baboon	Least Concern	2016
<i>Papio cynocephalus</i>	Yellow Baboon	Least Concern	2016
<i>Pan troglodytes</i>	Chimpanzee	Endangered	2016
<i>Papio anubis</i>	Olive Baboon	Least Concern	2016
<i>Colobus guereza</i>	Mantled Guereza	Least Concern	2019 (subspecies-level updates)
<i>Papio hamadryas</i>	Hamadryas Baboon	Least Concern	2019
<i>Erythrocebus patas</i>	Patas Monkey	Least Concern	2022
<i>Cercopithecus neglectus</i>	De Brazza's Monkey	Least Concern	2019-2020 (various subspecies updates)
<i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	Western Gorilla	Critically Endangered	2018
<i>Mandrillus sphinx</i>	Mandrill	Vulnerable	2020

LEGAL TRADE PURPOSE

The bar chart below illustrates the stated purposes for the legal international trade in apes and monkeys between 2015 and 2023. The predominant trade purpose overall is “hunting trophy,” accounting almost entirely for monkey-related trade, with over 2,000 recorded incidents. This is followed by “commercial”, with primarily monkeys involved; and “scientific” use, where both monkeys and great apes are present in significant numbers, suggesting active involvement of primates in scientific research. Other common purposes include “zoo” and “personal” uses, further highlighting the diversity of reasons primates are traded. Notably, trade for medical and educational purposes appear less frequently. A small number of apes and monkeys are traded for breeding in captivity purpose.

LEGALLY DECLARED TRADE PURPOSES FOR MONKEYS AND APES (2015-2023)





LEGAL TRADE PRODUCT TYPES

There was a large variety of primate-derived products involved in trade incidents between 2015 and 2023, categorized by ape versus monkey species. Overall, monkey products dominate the dataset across nearly every category. The most frequently reported product types include hunting trophies, specimens, skulls, and live animals. Hunting trophies were the single most common product type, overwhelmingly sourced from monkeys. Specimens and skulls also appear in large numbers, reflecting the demand for both whole-body and anatomical parts.

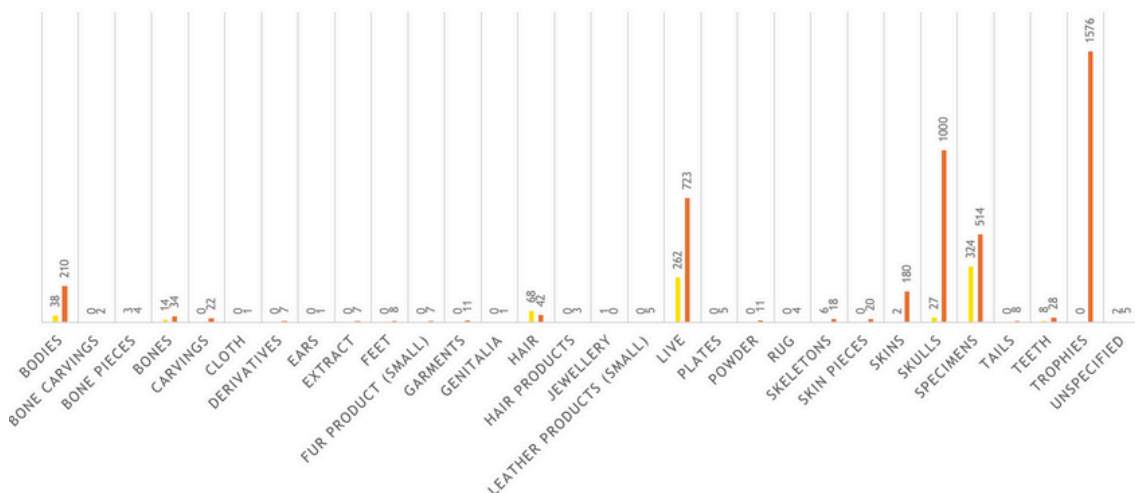
While great apes are less represented overall, they are disproportionately present in the live trade category, highlighting ongoing concerns around the illegal capture and trafficking of great apes for the exotic pet, entertainment and public display markets.

The wide array of product types, ranging from teeth and tails to derivatives and garments, underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of the primate trade.

LEGALLY DECLARED PRODUCT TYPES FOR APES AND MONKEYS TRADED (2015-2023)

PRODUCT TYPE/TERM BY CITES CATEGORY

■ Ape ■ Monkey

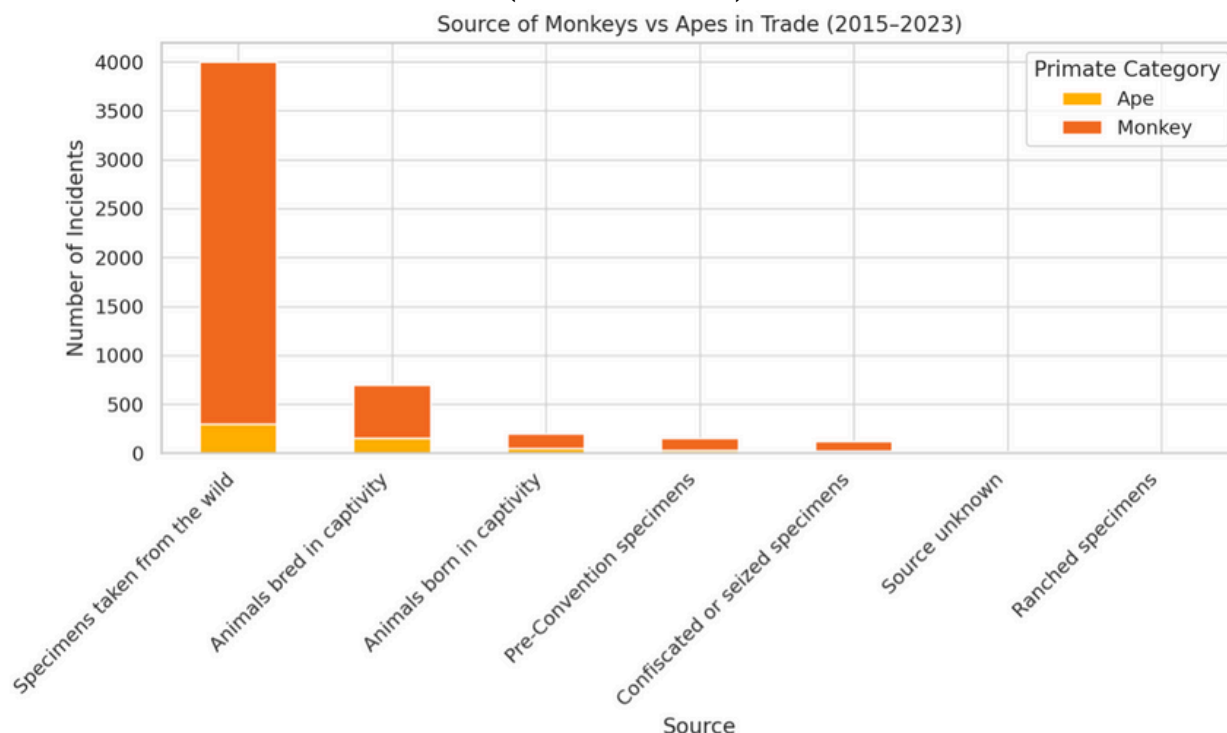


LEGAL TRADE SOURCES

Figure below illustrates the sources of monkeys and apes in international trade between 2015 and 2023. The majority of individuals – particularly monkeys – originate from the wild, with over 4,000 reported incidents involving specimens taken directly from natural habitats. This far exceeds other source categories, underscoring the persistent reliance on wild populations. Captive sources such as animals bred or born in captivity represent a smaller, but still notable portion of the trade, particularly for great apes. Minimal trade is reported from sources such as pre-Convention specimens, confiscated animals, or ranching operations. The data highlight ongoing conservation concerns, especially for wild populations, and point to the need for enhanced protections and enforcement efforts targeting captures from the wild. Scrutinizing the use of captive source code is a priority to ensure that wild primates, especially great apes, are not laundered as captive-bred.



LEGALLY DECLARED SOURCE OF APES AND MONKEYS (2015-2023)





Illegal Trade

To establish the volume of international illegal trade in primate species as it pertains to the African continent and analyze the species traded, purposes of the trade, and country of exports, transit, and imports.

In order to understand the nature, patterns, and the prevalence of the illegal trade in primates, this report extracted data from the TRAFFIC Wildlife Trade Tracker database.

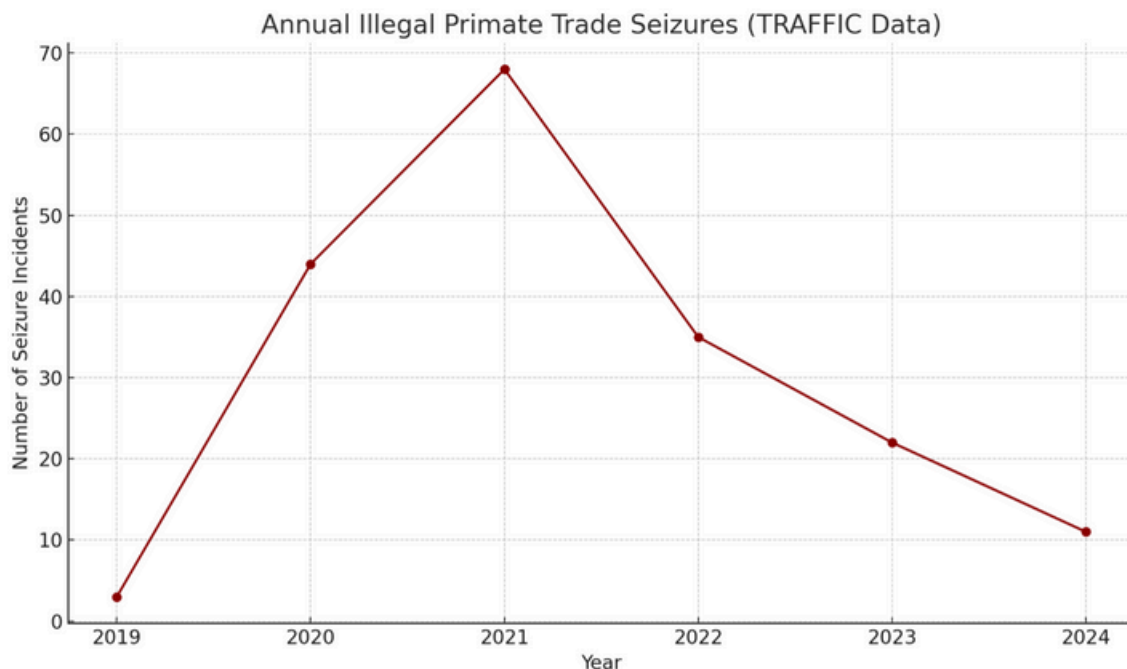
TRAFFIC Wildlife Trade Tracker database is one of the most comprehensive and publicly available databases that contain information on the global illegal wildlife trade and seizure patterns. The database contains data on various components, including species information where available (which include all species groups that have been found to be seized/traded illegally); trade data that details the origin, transit, and destination countries and locations whenever the data are available; summary description of the incident/seizure that may include a combination of species; and other miscellaneous enforcement information (e.g. seizure, prosecution, 'law enforcement activity', etc...).

TRAFFIC collects data by incorporating various qualitative and quantitative approaches, including: (a) monitoring and reporting data that may include government agency reports, market surveys, law enforcement reports, and other publicly available sources; (b) online platforms using advanced technologies, such as data mining and scraping; and (c) by collaborating with both governmental and other non-governmental organizations, international organizations (such as CITES).



The results reported herein include information extracted from a total of 183 incidents involving African primates and for dates spanning from January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2023, a span of a total of four (4) years. For the incidents involving multiple primate species (e.g. chimpanzee and a mustached guenon; vervet monkey and baboon) were disaggregated by species in order to be able to report the results by species. This may lead to an overcount of the incidents involving African primates, however, given the analyses are performed with species as the units of analysis, such overcount is not an issue. Unfortunately, in some cases, specific species information has not been provided, and, within the incident report, the species is reported as “monkey” or “primate”, therefore, data provided here should be interpreted with caution.

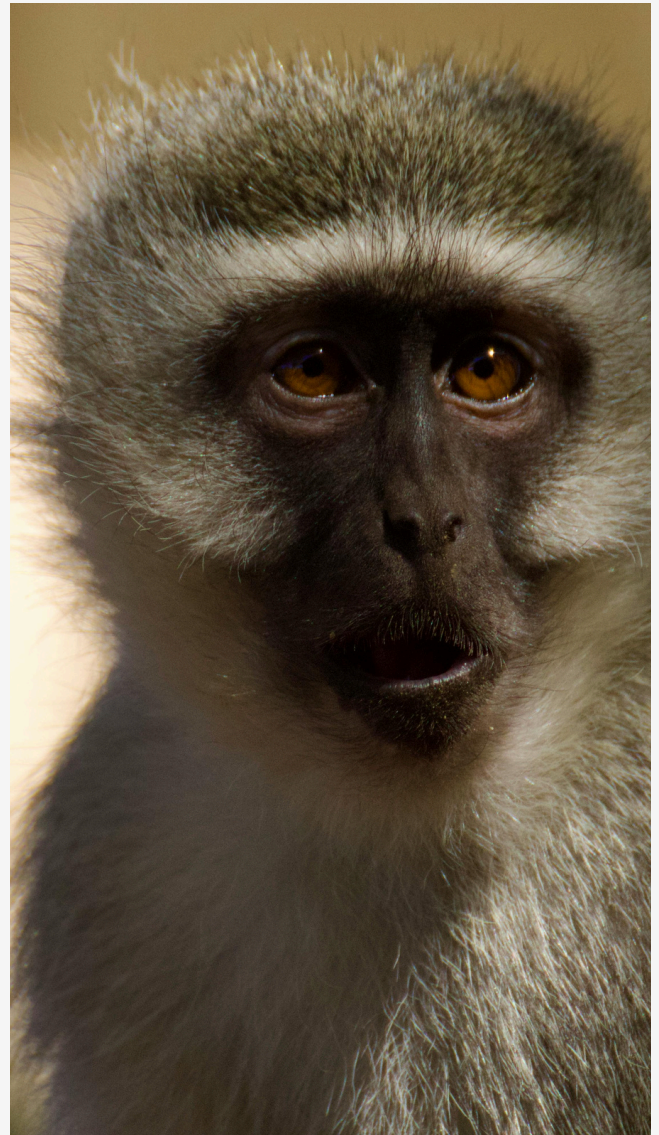
ANNUAL ILLEGAL PRIMATE TRADE SEIZURES AS REPORTED BY TRAFFIC, 2019-2024



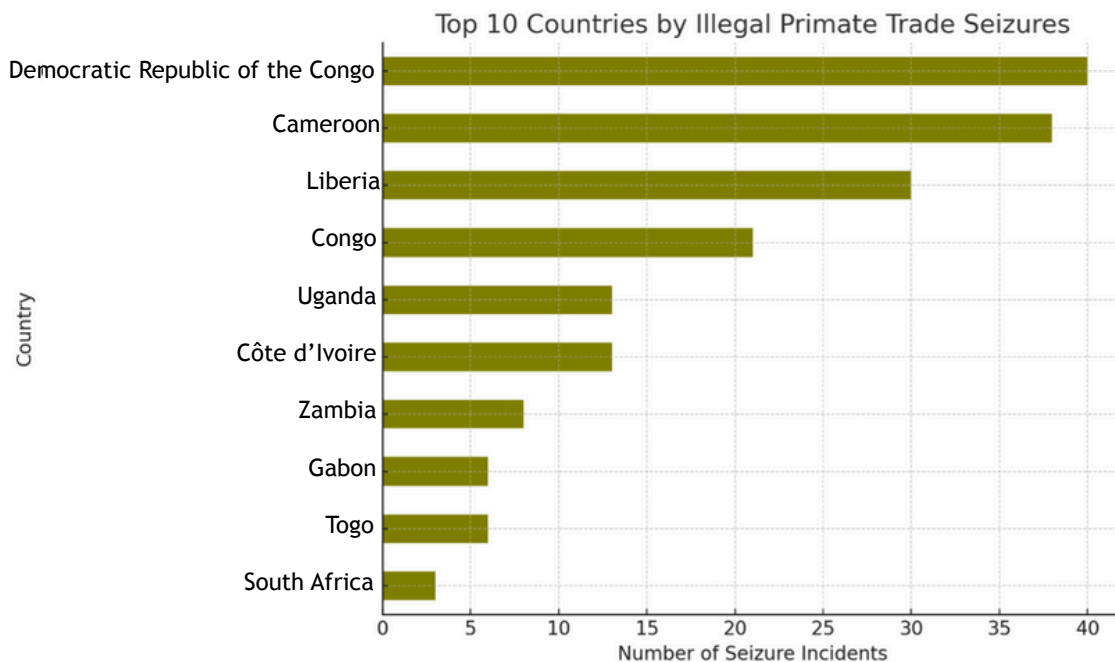


Examining the annual trends in primate seizures, there was a sharp rise from 2019 through 2021, peaking at 68 reported incidents in 2021. Seizures declined heavily in count from 2022 to 2024, which could be due to a variety of factors, from decreased enforcement reporting efforts, actual decreases in illegal activity, COVID-19 related impacts on primate trade, and more.

Despite its value as a source for illegal wildlife trends and patterns, there are many limitations associated with this database. Three of the main limitations include underreporting; data quality and consistency; and potential data bias. Data underreporting is a concern, as not all illegal trade is reported or not all wildlife crimes result in seizures, meaning that the database does not capture the full extent of the problem. The quality and consistency of the data captured in the database suffers from some drawbacks related to the reporting practices specifically related to the origin/transit/destination countries. Countries with weak reporting systems may not provide data that can be captured by TRAFFIC. Lastly, data bias can be due to the potentially more focus on large seizures or visible species, potentially biasing multi-species analyses. Despite these limitations, however, TRAFFIC Wildlife Trade Tracker database remains one of the more robust and comprehensive databases that is also publicly available.

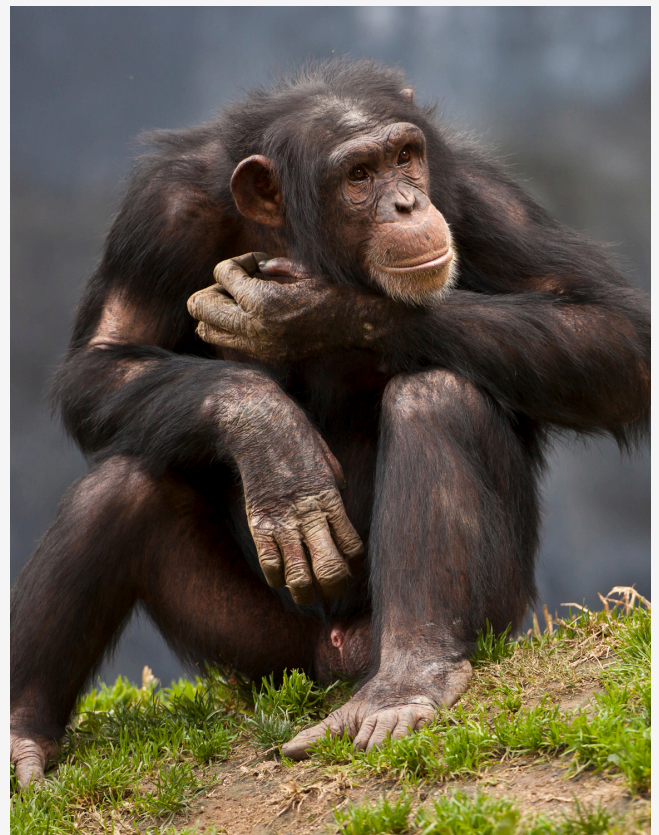


TOP TEN COUNTRIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ILLEGAL PRIMATE TRADE BY NUMBER OF SEIZURES



To understand the spatial distribution of the hotspots of African primate seizure incidents, associated countries were examined. The border areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, and Liberia emerged as the most prevalent areas where African primates have been seized. Less prevalent, but also important, were the border areas of Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda.

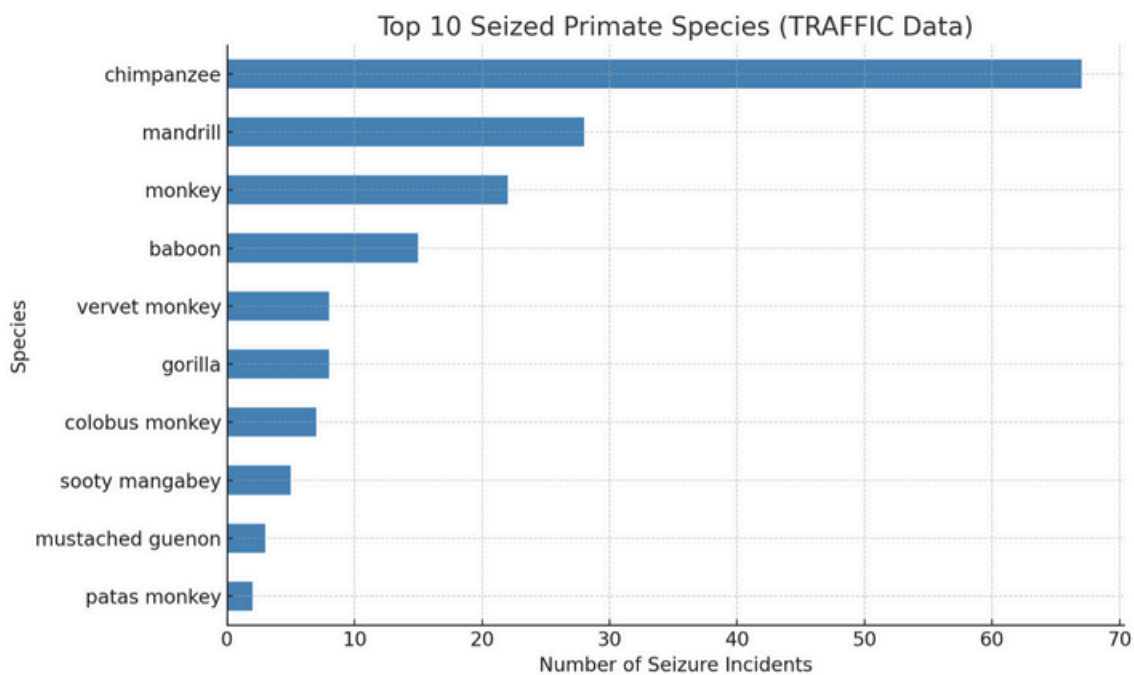
These countries are major source or transit zones in the primate cross-border trafficking supply chain. All are within or adjacent to key biodiversity regions in Central and West Africa, and several are known hotspots for trafficking of multiple taxa (primates, pangolins, parrots).





A total of 23 different species (or broader species groups) were identified as being involved in the illegal poaching/seizures/trade of African primates. Among the most prevalent of these include chimpanzees, which accounted for 37% of the incidents, followed by mandrills, which accounted for 15% of the incidents. Together, these species accounted for 52% of all the incidents for the years examined (2020-2023). Additional results are shown below.

TOP TEN SEIZED PRIMATE SPECIES (TRAFFIC)





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Factors and Trends

To identify demand factors associated with the most commonly traded species of African primates.

The literature was reviewed to identify factors empirically linked to the trade and trafficking in African primate species. Eight key factors were identified.

ECONOMIC INCENTIVES AND POVERTY

Local poverty and lack of economic opportunities drive communities to hunt and trade primates as a source of income, especially in rural African regions.

CULTURAL AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Primate parts are used in traditional medicine, rituals, and as wild meat, with cultural beliefs sustaining demand in African communities.

DEMAND IN CONSUMER COUNTRIES

High demand for live primates as pets, entertainment, and public display in countries like Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the U.S. fuels international trafficking.

WEAK LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRUPTION

Inadequate enforcement, bribery, and systemic corruption allow poachers and traffickers to operate with low risk of apprehension.



SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE MARKETPLACES

Social media and online platforms enable traffickers to market and sell live primates, especially great apes, to a global audience, normalizing exotic pet ownership and private zoo collections.

LOOPHOLES IN CAPTIVE BREEDING REGULATIONS

Loopholes in CITES regulations allow traffickers to label wild-caught primates as captive-bred, facilitating legal trade of illegally captured animals.

HIGH VALUE OF PRIMATES AS EXOTIC PETS AND STATUS SYMBOLS

Primates, especially great apes, are viewed as status symbols in certain cultures, with high values associated with exotic pets and private collections.

HABITAT LOSS AND ENCROACHMENT

Deforestation and land conversion increase access to primate habitats, making it easier for poachers to capture and trade primates.



Policy Implications

The articles reviewed for this report highlight a range of policy implications to address and prevent the trade in African primates, which span enforcement, legislative reforms, international cooperation, community engagement, and public awareness strategies.

STRENGTHENING LAW ENFORCEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Enhanced Enforcement Measures

Many articles stress the need for stronger enforcement of existing wildlife trade laws. For example, the Global Financial Integrity report (2018) calls for improved detection, prosecution, and punishment of illegal primate traders. This involves training law enforcement agencies, especially in source countries, to better monitor and intercept illegal activities along trafficking routes.

Cross-Border Cooperation

The State of the Apes report (2020) and Nijman & Shepherd (2023) emphasize that the transnational nature of the primate trade requires cross-border collaboration. Enhanced intelligence-sharing between nations, especially among source, transit, and consumer countries, is crucial to disrupt trafficking networks and prevent “laundering” of illegally captured primates through legal trade routes.

Standardized Monitoring Systems

Illicit Financial Flows and the Illegal Trade in Great Apes (2018) advocates for standardized tracking systems to monitor the movement of primates across borders. Such systems, integrated with financial oversight mechanisms, would help prevent criminal networks from exploiting gaps between national regulations and enable better enforcement of international standards like those set by CITES.



POLICY AND LEGAL REFORMS

Addressing Legal Loopholes

The EMS Foundation & Ban Animal Trading (2023) report highlights the need for legal reforms to close gaps in wildlife trade regulations, such as better defining “captive-bred” animals to prevent laundering of wild-caught individuals as captive stock. More scrutiny by the CITES authorities on the use of the C purpose code (animals bred in captivity) on CITES permits is needed. These reforms would tighten controls and reduce the ability of traffickers to exploit regulatory weaknesses.

Stronger Penalties and Criminalization

Several studies suggest that the penalties for illegal trade need to be more severe to act as effective deterrents. Strengthening criminal penalties would make wildlife trafficking riskier for organized crime syndicates. For instance, Nijman et al. (2023) argue for harsher penalties to reflect the serious ecological impacts of primate trafficking on species survival and ecosystem health.

COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION AND ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMS

Community Involvement in Conservation

Engaging local communities is a critical policy focus. Articles such as McNamara et al. (2016) highlight the importance of community-based conservation programs that offer economic incentives to reduce reliance on the illegal primate trade. Providing alternative livelihoods (e.g., ecotourism or sustainable agriculture) can reduce local incentives to engage in poaching and trafficking.

Education and Awareness

Raising awareness among local communities about the legal, health, and conservation risks associated with primate trade is also emphasized. Programs that educate communities about the ecological importance of primates and the potential long-term benefits of conservation can shift perceptions and practices, reducing the demand for wild meat and live trade locally.



At the Limbe Wildlife Centre, their innovative Green Project partners with local farmers and former hunters near Mt. Cameroon National Park to sustainably harvest wild-grown leaves and crop by-products like potato, papaya, and cassava leaves. This in turn provides the sanctuary's primates with a natural, healthy diet while supporting nearly 100 families in the surrounding community.



PUBLIC AWARENESS AND DEMAND REDUCTION IN CONSUMER COUNTRIES

Reducing Demand for Primate Pets and Products

Many articles advocate for public awareness campaigns aimed at decreasing the demand for primates as exotic pets, wild meat, or ingredients in traditional medicines. State of the Apes Volume IV (2020) stresses that consumer education in regions like Asia, the Middle East, the EU, and the U.S. is vital, as reducing demand in these markets can significantly impact the trade.

Corporate and Social Media Responsibility

Nijman et al. (2011) and the Global Financial Integrity report (2018) suggest that social media companies should take proactive steps to prevent the advertisement and sale of illegal wildlife, including primates, on their platforms. Policies that hold companies accountable for moderating content related to illegal wildlife trade can reduce exposure and accessibility to illegal primates.

INCORPORATING WILDLIFE PROTECTION INTO BROADER DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Integrated Conservation-Development Policies

Nijman et al. (2023) and Wright et al. (2015) argue for integrating primate conservation into broader socio-economic development strategies. For instance, policies could link conservation efforts to sustainable development goals, ensuring that conservation projects also contribute to local economic and social needs.

Funding Mechanisms for Conservation Initiatives

Adequate funding is a recurring recommendation across articles, emphasizing that resource constraints hinder effective policy enforcement and conservation activities. Funding mechanisms that support protected area management, Indigenous-led conservation efforts, and long-term community-based programs are essential for sustaining primate populations and preventing trade.





EXPANDING PROTECTED AREAS AND RECOGNIZING INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS

Protected Area Expansion

Establishing and enforcing protected areas can reduce access to primate populations targeted for illegal trade. Nijman et al. (2023) underscore the importance of protected areas in halting habitat loss and providing refuge for primate species.

Indigenous Land Rights

Recognizing Indigenous rights to manage their lands is a crucial policy implication for effective conservation, as Indigenous territories are often rich in biodiversity and have lower deforestation rates. State of the Apes (2020) and Nijman & Shepherd (2023) both advocate for policy frameworks that empower Indigenous communities to lead conservation efforts on their lands, promoting sustainable, culturally respectful practices that benefit both primates and local populations.

Conclusions

From the literature review and associated policy recommendations, several key conclusions emerge about the trade in African primates, its impacts, and effective strategies for prevention:

Multifaceted Nature of Primate Trade Requires Comprehensive Solutions

The trade in African primates is driven by a complex combination of economic, cultural, and international factors, spanning both legal and illegal markets. To address this, a comprehensive approach is essential. Policies must integrate conservation, socio-economic development, enforcement, and international cooperation. Targeting only one aspect of the trade is unlikely to yield substantial or sustainable results; instead, a coordinated, multi-level strategy is necessary to address the root causes, reduce demand, and curb illegal activities.

International Collaboration is Crucial for Controlling Transnational Wildlife Trade

The transnational nature of primate trafficking underscores the need for strong international cooperation across the entire trade chain. Many consumer countries, especially in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America, drive demand, while African countries bear the brunt of poaching and biodiversity and habitat loss. Effective solutions will require collaboration among source, transit, and destination countries to harmonize legal standards, reduce consumer demand, improve monitoring systems, strengthen coordinated enforcement controls in each trade point, and enable intelligence-sharing to dismantle trafficking networks.

Effective Law Enforcement and Policy Reform Can Deter Illegal Trade

Weak enforcement and legal loopholes allow traffickers to operate with relative impunity. Strengthening penalties, improving border controls, and standardizing regulations across countries can act as significant deterrents to wildlife crime. Legal reforms must also address issues such as "laundering" of wild-caught primates as captive-bred, which is a common loophole exploited by traffickers. Well-enforced, transparent regulations can reduce illegal trade by making it more difficult and costly for traffickers to circumvent laws.

Empowering Local Communities is Key to Sustainable Conservation

Primate conservation will be more effective when local communities are actively involved and benefit economically from conservation efforts. Conservation policies that provide sustainable livelihood options, like ecotourism, reforestation projects, and community-managed reserves, can reduce dependence on illegal hunting. Empowering communities and respecting Indigenous land rights is critical, as these groups are often well-positioned to monitor and protect biodiversity effectively. When local communities have a vested interest in protecting primates, it leads to a more inclusive, sustainable, grassroots approach to conservation.

Raising Public Awareness in Consumer Countries Can Significantly Reduce Demand

Public education campaigns in consumer countries about the environmental and ethical implications of the primate trade are essential. Reducing demand for primates as pets, traditional medicines, or entertainment can directly impact the scope of the trade. Additionally, social media platforms and online marketplaces play a role in perpetuating illegal trade, so policies holding these platforms accountable can further curb demand. Consumer awareness campaigns should address the risks of zoonotic disease transmission, animal cruelty, and the conservation importance of primates, encouraging more ethical consumption patterns.



Habitat Conservation and Expansion of Protected Areas are Critical

Habitat destruction is both a direct and indirect driver of primate trade, as it increases access to primate populations for poachers and fragments populations. Expanding and enforcing protected areas, especially in biodiversity-rich lands, is a key policy recommendation to mitigate habitat loss and provide safe havens for primates. Protecting these areas from logging, agriculture, and infrastructure projects is essential for long-term conservation effort and reduces hunting pressure not only on primates but other at-risk species as well.

Targeted Funding and Resources are Essential for Effective Implementation

Adequate funding and resources are necessary to support enforcement, community engagement, and conservation projects. International financial support, potentially through conservation grants, international development funds, and ecotourism investments, can ensure that policies are implemented effectively and sustainably. These resources can support sanctuary care of rescued live animals, enhance training for enforcement and judiciary agencies, and strengthen community-based conservation programs, and habitat preservation efforts.



Disclaimer

This report uses data from the CITES Trade Database (from 2015 to 2023), TRAFFIC, and EAGLE Network. While these sources provide valuable insights, they are not exhaustive:

- *CITES data captures only reported legal trade and may include inconsistencies or underreporting. It does not reflect unreported or illegal domestic trade.*
- *TRAFFIC seizures are drawn from media and public reports, which vary in coverage and reliability across regions.*
- *EAGLE data reflects strong enforcement in select countries, but findings may not apply to regions outside EAGLE's reach.*

These limitations, among others, mean the report likely underrepresents the full scale of African primate trade, particularly illicit activity.

PASA, the Pan African Sanctuary Alliance, is the only alliance of African primate sanctuaries, uniting over 20 accredited sanctuaries across 13 countries. We safeguard primates through conservation initiatives, sanctuary care, and by fostering human-wildlife coexistence.

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