

# **Reversing the Tide of Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking**

**- Mapping Trends -**

**- Analyzing and Preparing Countermeasures -**

A Report by Freeland  
(July 2014)



Freeland is a frontline counter-trafficking organization working for a world free of wildlife trafficking and human slavery. Our team of law enforcement, development and communications specialists work alongside partners in Asia, Africa and the Americas to build capacity, raise awareness, and promote good governance to protect critical ecosystems and vulnerable people.

This report is the result of lessons learned during activities carried out with a number of partners. Freeland takes sole responsibility for the views expressed in this report.

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## A. Executive Summary

*Chapter Summary:* Defining parameters of successful wildlife crime enforcement; and recommendations.

### Measuring Success through Results

One of the world's biggest wildlife enforcement successes was a May 2014 operation by Thailand's Anti Money Laundering Office (AMLO) which led to seizures of **over US\$ 36.5 million** in assets from a wildlife crime syndicate, which was trafficking tigers, pangolins and rosewood across Southeast Asia. The seizure resulted from information gathered by police and Freeland working together. The information had been passed securely to AMLO and an international group of investigators for action in Thailand and across borders.

*Operation Cobra I<sup>1</sup> and II<sup>2</sup>* ran for 30 days in early 2013 and 2014, respectively, driven by a team of wildlife enforcement, police, and Customs officers from Asia, Africa and the United States who jointly conducted multiple, parallel and real-time investigations against wildlife criminals across three continents. The operations were unprecedented in nature and achieved a result worthy of examination: **they disrupted and slowed illegal trade in endangered species for at least 90 days in the midst of a normally high season for wildlife trade.**

The International Coordination Team - representing ten countries and four regional wildlife enforcement networks - congregated in operations rooms set up in Bangkok and Nairobi. Both operations yielded hundreds of arrests in over a dozen countries, the seizure of over 10 metric tons of elephant ivory, as well seizures of rhino horn, pangolins, big cats, birds, protected timber species and much more.

Three major factors led to the Cobra operations' success:

- **Government-led:** the operations were initiated and led by government agencies from source, transit and consumer countries.
- **Demand-driven:** focal geographic areas, species, and goals were decided by participating governments.
- **Civil Society - supported:** Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) assistance was honed to the needs of the participants and used effectively by them.

A key result of the relationships built during the Cobra operations was the decision to **expose the Xaysavang syndicate**, headquartered in Lao PDR and operating a vast international wildlife crime network. Consequently, the US government declared an unprecedented **one million dollar reward**<sup>3</sup> on information which could lead to the dismantling of the syndicate.

Cobra – and several other promising law enforcement

initiatives – evolved from eight years of intensive interaction among government officials and a specialized counter wildlife trafficking program that is now called “ARREST” (Asia's Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking). Lessons learned and a trove of data are being tracked in this program to share with primary clients and partners, including ASEAN, China, the United States and a wide array of Civil Society Organizations (CSO's).

The conception and successful implementation of such programs is contingent on:

- Listening and responding sensitively to governments' needs.
- Building up a high level of trust with government investigators.

Both the above had been honed by years of experience in supporting government anti-trafficking efforts. The Cobra operations evolved from joint training exercises and meetings, utilizing specialized international platforms that combined governmental authority with civil society flexibility.

**This report is a distillation** of all the lessons learned prior to and during the implementation of the ARREST program. It discusses smuggling techniques, success indicators, seizure maps and best practices.

**The lessons can be applied** to dismantle the world's most powerful wildlife syndicates that are destroying earth's wildlife populations at an alarming rate.

**A mother-lode of information** exists in open sources, accessible to everyone. However, law enforcement agencies and policy makers who are not specifically collating wildlife crime information do not get to see all the data in one place, and hence may not recognize the enormity of the scope of wildlife crime.

**More information exists in closed sources** such as investigation files. While these are not available for sharing in a publication, ARREST's work on supporting, training and providing facilitation to these agencies provides an indication of its extent.

Important recommendations are summarized below. Their details follow in the *Recommendations* section.

<b>Summary Recommendations</b>	
<b>(Details for each follow in the <i>Recommendations</i> section)</b>	
<b>International Level Actions</b>	Completely ban international trade in endangered species for the next 15 years
<b>National Level Actions</b>	Increase government or community responsibility for wildlife habitats
	Increase participation of Customs and police agencies in wildlife enforcement
	Step up counter-corruption measures
	Tighten and standardize laws
	Develop and implement professional counter-poaching measures
	Develop and implement professional counter-trafficking measures
	Mainstream wildlife crime with other national priorities
<b>International Enforcement Cooperation</b>	Create, operationalize, and link WENs
	Provide an easy, direct and secure communications channel
	Set up tracking systems for CITES permits
	Provide analysis support to enforcement agencies
<b>Government-Civil Society Partnerships</b>	Scale a field-tested, globally adaptable WEN partnership support platform
	Implement sustained demand-reduction campaigns
	Prioritize gathering missing information

## B. Using this Report

*Chapter Summary:* Immediate answers.

The contents of this report may be read as standalone articles or as successive chapters building up a theme of successful wildlife crime enforcement.

Above all, the report is intended to be *usable*. Readers looking for quick answers may consider the following list of anticipated questions:

<b>Question</b>	<b>Chapter No.</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Crime</b>		
How do traffickers operate?	C.1.	Congruency with Other Organized Crimes
Where are animals sourced from / sent to?	C.2	Sources, Transit and Consumer Regions
Where do rhino horn seizures occur?	J	Country / Commodity Maps
Where do elephant ivory seizures occur?	J	Country / Commodity Maps
Where do pangolin seizures occur?	J	Country / Commodity Maps
Where do tiger / big cat seizures occur?	J	Country / Commodity Maps
<b>Investigation</b>		
Why are some buyers offering outrageous prices?	D.2	Swindles
What should alert suspicion?	D.2	Swindles
What is an early indicator of potentially serious expansion in wildlife trade?	D	Predicting Trade Expansion
How does one predict the next ‘big thing’?	D	Predicting Trade Expansion

<b>Enforcement</b>		
How do traffickers decide on smuggling techniques?	C.4	Smuggling Methods Flowchart
Which seized animals may be suitable for repatriation?	C.3	Processing Stages for High Value Species
Which vehicle type is used for reptiles / birds / mammals?	C.4	Smuggling Methods Flowchart
Why should transport of captive bred species be interdicted?	E.3	Inflated Breeding Claims
How can one share enforcement information?	F.2.c)	Information sharing for enforcement
<b>Evaluation</b>		
How can one measure the success of enforcement efforts?	F.1	Indicators for Successful Enforcement Practices
<b>Policy and Planning</b>		
Which global and or national systems have proven effective?	F.2	Comparing Similar Systems
What are the do's and don'ts for wildlife enforcement?	G.1	Do's and Don'ts
Which anti-corruption methods work?	G.1	Do's and Don'ts (Media Highlight)

## C. Trafficking Wildlife

*Chapter Summary:* Analyses, graphs and maps of the mechanics of current wildlife trafficking.

### 1. Congruency with Other Organized Crimes

#### a) *Wildlife trafficking profits similar to drug trade*

The real incentives for wildlife traffickers are very high profit margins and very low levels of penalties and law enforcement<sup>4</sup>.

A rhino horn can be purchased from poachers in Mozambique for several thousand dollars and sold onto a buyer in Hanoi for \$250,000. Vietnam has no clear law against possession of rhino horn.

**Example:** Rare Ploughshare tortoises (*Astrochelys yniphora*) from Madagascar can be sold to buyers in Southeast Asia for \$30,000 for a large adult specimen<sup>5</sup>.

A poacher in Africa may get paid as little as \$100<sup>6</sup> for a pair of elephant tusks that, once carved, can sell for up to \$90,000 in China or the USA. Tortoises with attractive shells, such as the Indian Star (*Geochelone elegans*) are shipped in consignments of hundreds and each individual may command starting prices of up to US\$ 300<sup>7</sup>. The list goes on.

#### b) *Traffickers generate and perpetuate demand*

Traffickers in consumer countries create and sustain demand by introducing and re-branding wildlife products. Rhino horn medicines are now sold as tonics (not just prescribed medicines). Lion bone is being marketed as an

effective alternative to (and sometimes sold as) tiger bone medicines. Tiger bone is being marketed by non-medicine experts as a panacea. Tokay geckos (*Gecko gecko*) had been re-branded as an AIDS medicine.

#### c) *Traffickers maximize resource extraction*

Commercial wildlife traffickers constantly evaluate future sites for exploitation. Pangolins (scaly anteaters) are currently the most highly traded mammal in Asia, with the highest demand for their flesh and scales emanating from China and Vietnam. In the 1990's populations of the Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) were severely depleted by local consumption. Traders then began sourcing Sunda pangolins (*M. javanica*) from Southeast Asia<sup>8</sup>. For several years (approximately 2005 – 2011), a typical pangolin seizure would be of over 100 animals, along the land or sea routes between Southeast Asia and Vietnam or China.

Once pangolin populations were depleted in certain Southeast Asian countries, traffickers began to source them from South Asia (*M. crassicaudata* and Indian populations of *M. pentadactyla*) with seizures increasing along the India-Myanmar and India-Nepal borders. Increasingly, enforcement officials in India and Nepal began seizing pangolin scales, a previously sporadic event. More recently, authorities increased interdictions of pangolins in trade to Asia to Africa<sup>9</sup>, sometimes via France<sup>10</sup>.

The westward trend in pangolin source countries echoes the trend in big cat skins and bones in the 1990s. Tiger populations were depleted in China, then Southeast Asia, prompting traders to source them from South Asia, wiping out tiger populations inside some protected areas in India.

d) ***Traffickers adapt to enforcement pressure***

Massive seizures of African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) ivory have been made by agencies in Asia, at seaports, airports, and attached facilities such as port warehouses. As enforcement increases in one country, traffickers move consignments to another country, another port in the same country, or another method of bulk transport such as sea to air freight.

e) ***Traffickers exploit loopholes, especially in CITES***

In 2011, Customs officials in Thailand stopped a consignment of six rhino horns from Africa because they were accompanied by a photocopied CITES permit. Ensuing investigations in Thailand and South Africa revealed an elaborate system of sourcing rhino horns from South Africa for ultimate sale in Vietnam and Lao PDR, controlled and financed by Lao PDR nationals, and facilitated by corrupt Thai law enforcers and South African businessmen. The syndicate used Thai prostitutes in South Africa to secure individual hunting permits for rhinos, which were actually shot by professional hunters; the horns were then transported with valid CITES documents to Thailand, before being smuggled to Lao PDR and Vietnam.

The traffickers exploited loopholes in the system, paying prostitutes to apply for legal hunting permits and using valid CITES certificates to move the horns from Africa to Asia<sup>11</sup>. The case was only detected when the traffickers' overconfidence led to carelessness<sup>12</sup>.

The case raises an important question: **are current international legal systems adequate for or even oriented towards species conservation?**

Elsewhere, traffickers rely on lack of knowledge or corruption among border enforcement officials to transport consignments.

**Example:** pangolins are classified CITES Appendix II, with zero quota (meaning, **no commercial trade permitted**), yet pangolin shipments still cross borders in some Southeast Asian countries with officially stamped CITES permits. National CITES Management Authorities issue these legally invalid permits, and traffickers rely on border guards not knowing CITES regulation details<sup>13</sup>.

f) ***Traffickers find product substitutes***

The demand for tiger (*Panthera tigris*) bone in traditional Asian medicine fuelled poaching of tigers and leopards (*Panthera pardus*) from South and Southeast Asia. With numbers declining, poachers also hunted lions (*Panthera leo*) in India<sup>14</sup>. Traffickers soon realized it was easy and legal to source lion bones from Africa. Vietnamese companies (including those involved in rhino horn trafficking) started obtaining lion bones from South Africa<sup>15</sup>.

2. **Source, Transit and Consumer Regions**

a) ***Source countries or regions***

These are usually biodiversity rich. The stringency of national wildlife laws vary; even in countries where laws are good, the quality of implementation and enforcement is inconsistent.

Source countries or regions have a desired species in **abundance**, or they have **rare and unique** species which fetch high values. The latter is particularly true for island ecosystems like Madagascar and Australia.

Prominent sources and 'commodities' supplied to the illegal trade include:

Country/Region	Commodity
Africa	Ivory, rhino horn, lion bone, big cat cubs, ungulates, live reptiles, pangolins, great ape infants
South Asia	Big cats (dead), ivory, musk deer pods, rhino horn, pangolins, rare insects, birds (songbirds and raptors), marine invertebrates, reptiles
Southeast Asia	Big cats (live and parts), pangolins, birds (songbirds and raptors), reptiles, primates
Australia	Endemic reptiles
South America	Primates, birds, reptiles

b) ***Transit countries***

These tend to have:

- Excellent infrastructure: roads, hub airports, seaports, telecommunications.
- Strategic geographic location, between a prominent source and consumer.
- Busy or established transit routes for legal trade.
- Special trade agreements with neighboring consumer or transit nations.
- Prevalence of corruption.

Transit countries are often sources and consumers as well. Traffickers may stop to **re-hydrate** live animals or **stockpile** before moving the consignment to the consumer, and use the waiting period to gather local animals.

**Example:** Pangolin traffickers moving from Indonesia to Vietnam rehydrate animals in Thailand and Lao PDR and collect more pangolins from local dealers.

**Example:** A Japanese trafficker was interdicted in Thailand while attempting to smuggle over 600 tortoises from Amman to Tokyo. During his stopover in Bangkok, he visited a wildlife market to buy pig-nosed turtles for sale in Japan<sup>16</sup>.

Prominent transit countries / territories:

Country/ Region	Commodity
Nepal	Transit between India and China
Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand	Connects trade from Africa and South Asia to Southeast and East Asia (particularly bulk air and sea cargo)
Lao PDR	Connects trade from Africa and Southeast and East Asia
UAE	Connects Africa to Asia (particularly air cargo)

c) **Consumer countries or regions**

These are where **buying power and demand** intersect. Consumption patterns are influenced by traditions, peer groups and societal trends.

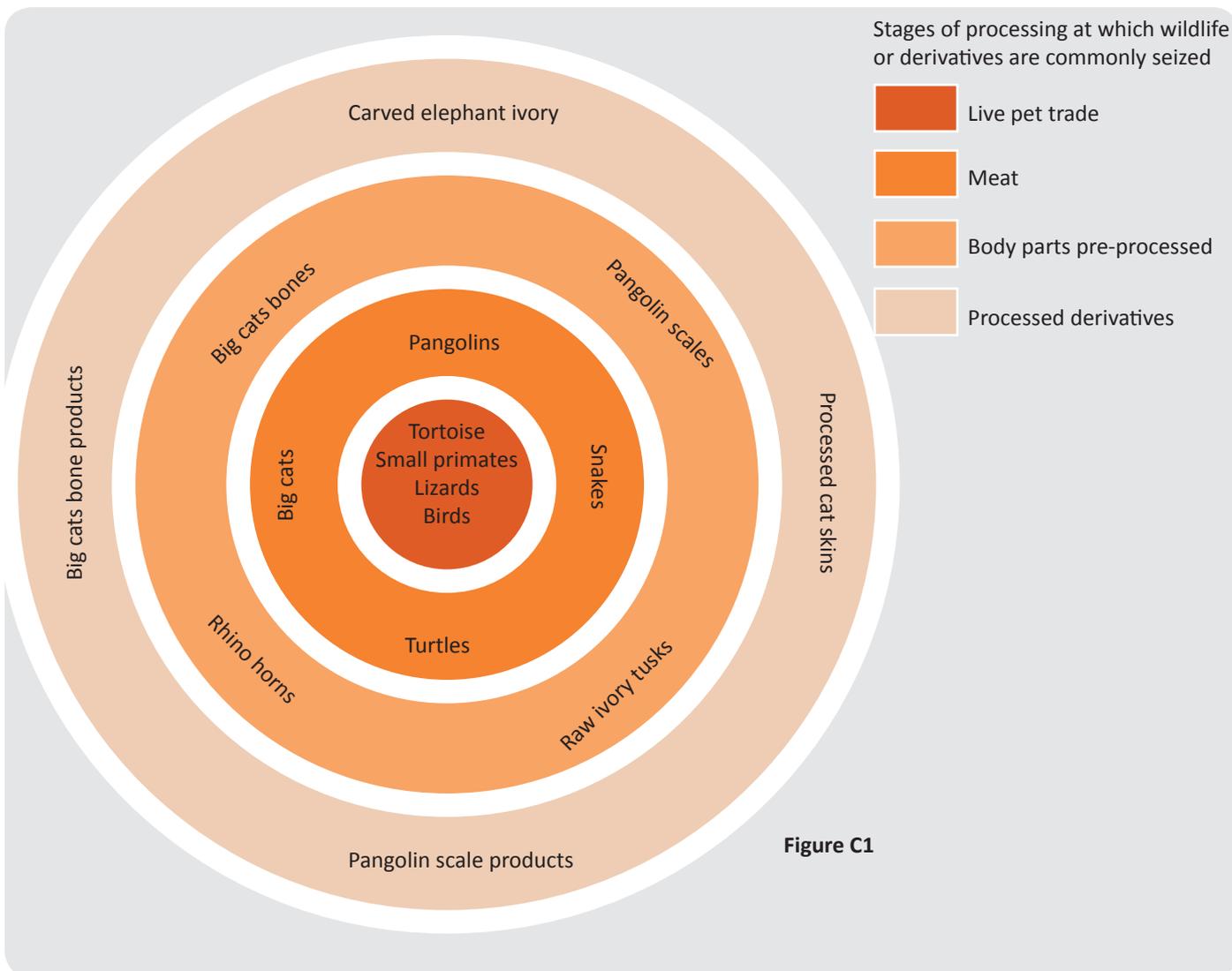
Prominent consumers:

- China
- USA
- Western Europe
- Japan
- Vietnam

3. **Processing Stages for High Value Species**

To plan interdictions and/or evaluate the possibilities for rehabilitation and repatriation of live wildlife, it is important to know the stages of processing at which high value species are typically seized.

Figure C1 shows, moving center outwards, increasing levels of processing of a species or derivative prior to transport.



#### 4. Smuggling Methods Flowchart

Figure C2 shows the decision process behind selecting a method of transport for live animals or derivatives.

It can be used to plan interdictions by understanding the transport requirements of a particular species or derivative.

**Example:** Live pangolins for consumption are transported rapidly by vehicle to keep them alive. Therefore, information about possible transport must be acted upon very quickly.

**Example:** Ivory is often left in containers in Customs bond areas for several weeks to throw off law enforcement. Therefore, unclaimed cargo must be investigated.

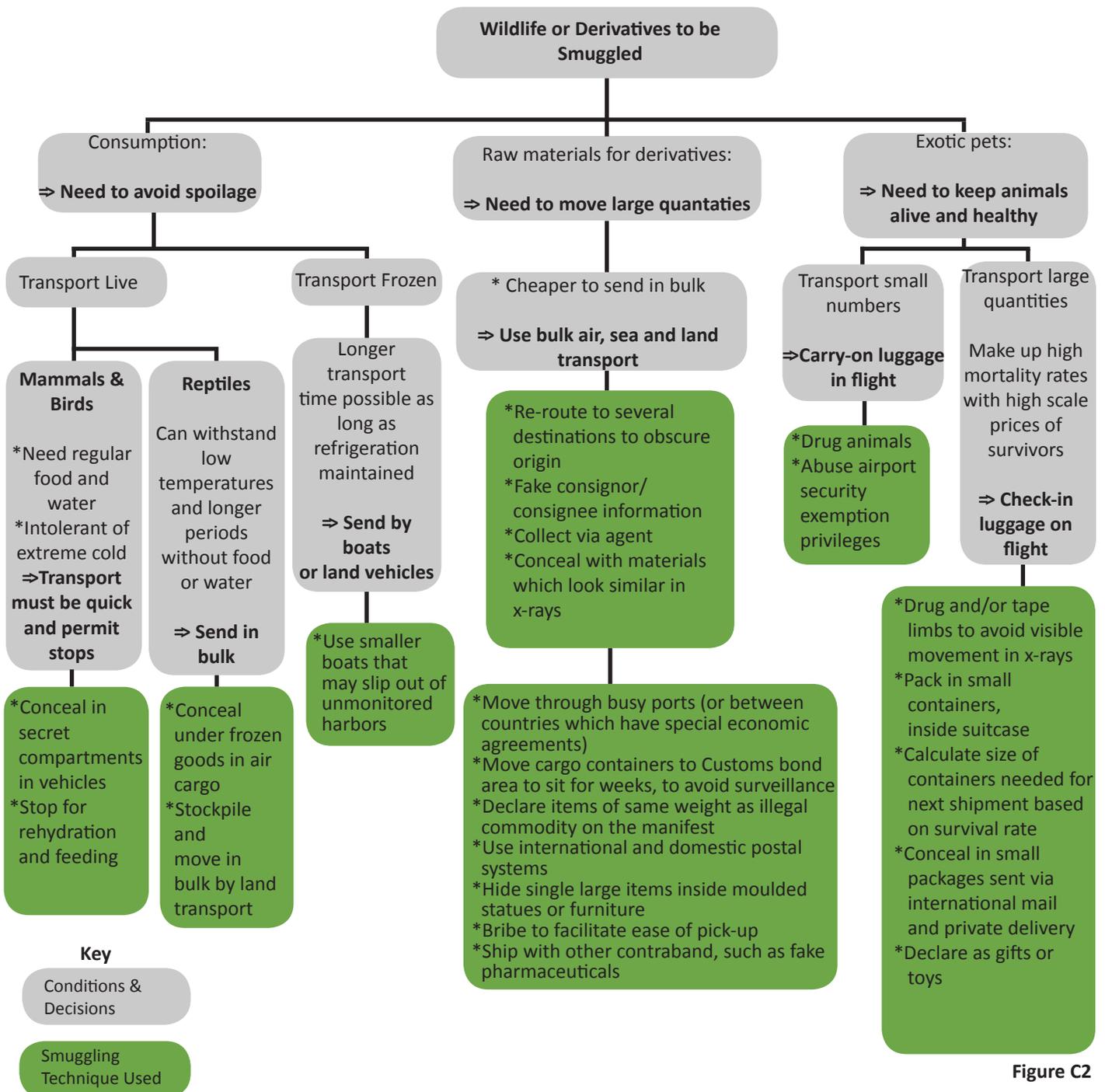


Figure C2

When trafficking is for:

- **Consumption:** The primary need is to avoid spoilage. This is accomplished by transporting animals live or as frozen meat.

For mammals and birds, which are intolerant of extreme cold, transport must be rapid. Reptiles may be concealed under other frozen meat.

- **Derivatives:** Raw materials are sent in bulk

by cargo transport. Since spoilage is not a drawback, consignments are rerouted or not claimed for long periods to obscure trails.

- **Live Pets:** Animals need to be kept alive and relatively healthy, indicating rapid transport, usually by air. Traffickers either transport small quantities in personal belongings or transport bulk quantities in checked in baggage, selling survivors at high prices to compensate for transport mortalities.

## D. Wildlife Crime Proxy Indicators

*Chapter Summary:* OECD Proxy Indicators for wildlife Crime

The Organization for Economic Development (OECD) is developing a set of proxy indicators to determine the existence of illicit wildlife trafficking. The abundance of crime statistics from an area is not necessarily indicative of the true extent of crime. Lack of enforcement, poor reporting or low prioritization of wildlife crime may lead to scarce data levels even from areas facing heavy levels of wildlife crime.

Proxy indicators examine other extant factors to determine areas with high possibility of wildlife crime.

These may include:

- Amount of licensed trade in export and import countries
- Presence of wild animal holding facilities in airport or sea port infrastructure
- Size of legal market in animals / derivatives
- Size of online black market
- Government policy on legalizing trade
- Presence of wild animals in holding facilities

## E. Predicting Trade Expansion

*Chapter Summary:* Overlooked indicators of existing or impending expansion in wildlife trafficking.

Traffickers exploit opportunities for new markets, anticipating consumer demand. The following indicators, often overlooked, may be used to predict market trends.

### 1. Celebrity Endorsement or Media Popularity

The popularization of a species via films, television shows or more recently, Youtube, may lead to a spike in demand. The film “*Finding Nemo*” led to burgeoning sales of clown fish; populations of the species in some reefs are believed to have dropped by 75% in the years following the film’s release<sup>17</sup>. An extremely popular video on Youtube, featuring a slow loris being tickled popularized the idea of keeping the species as pets.

### 2. Swindles

Fuelled by rumours of individual animals fetching prices of over US\$ 26,000, tokay geckos (*Gecko gecko*) are harvested at unsustainable rates from the wild in South and Southeast Asia.

The tokay industry has even spawned what appears to be a swindle: a website ([geckobuyer.blogspot.com](http://geckobuyer.blogspot.com)) offers starting prices of US\$ 2.5 million per animal to tokay

sellers.

There is a catch: sellers are expected to deposit a hefty amount at the office of the buyers, before the buyer will travel to inspect the specimen and agree to pay the remainder if a series of difficult conditions are met.

### 3. Inflated Breeding Claims

Sellers of Indian star tortoises often claim their products are captive bred<sup>18</sup>. However, the majority of illegal seizures originate from India, where there are no known breeding centers.

Pangolin traffickers claim that their specimens are captive bred. However, all pangolin species are notoriously difficult to breed in captivity. They require specialized ant-based diets and females generally produce a single young annually. These breeding rates are inadequate to supply the large numbers seized.

## F. Analyzing Success

*Chapter Summary:* Indicators that enforcement is successful; success stories.

### 1. Successful Enforcement Indicators

Seizures provide good ‘snapshots’ of the trade but cannot confirm whether law enforcement efforts have been successful. Increased seizures may point to an **increase in the trade, or better enforcement**; it is not always possible to separate the concurrent influences of both.

Complete eradication of wildlife crime may never be possible – witness the war on drugs which still continues despite billions spent on law enforcement. However, wildlife law enforcement holds promise if given a chance and coupled with effective, long-term demand reduction.

Drug traffickers can withstand a large percentage of their product being seized and still make large profits, largely due to highly favorable profit margins and the ability to replenish stocks quickly. Wildlife traffickers also enjoy favorable profit margins, but they cannot replenish stocks as quickly. A tiger cannot be manufactured overnight the way additional methamphetamine tablets may be produced. A seizure of dead tigers at the border or rhino horns at the airport hits wildlife traffickers harder in the pocket and represents a significant loss of time invested. If wildlife enforcement is aimed further up the chain from mule to trafficker, coupled with stronger penalties and steady enforcement, criminals will face quickly declining profit margins and increasing risks. The result will be less wildlife in trade, which means less poaching. The aim of wildlife law enforcement should be to **destabilize the trade and make it non-lucrative**, allowing for populations to recover, while good wildlife governance takes root.

Successful enforcement is indicated by the following:

#### a) *Open and ubiquitous wildlife trade ceases*

Up to 2008, certain notorious wildlife markets in Southeast Asia had a range of illegal species on open display. Traders knew the species were protected, but were confident of non-enforcement of laws. Raising awareness and capacity building among enforcement personnel, along with media attention and praise for raids, helped change the situation. While trade still continues at these markets, it is now only in the hands of a few big traders, who store their animals off-site<sup>19</sup>. **Smaller traders do not find it advantageous to stock illegal species.**

#### b) *Trade perception changes from ‘easy’ to ‘difficult’*

The strongest incentives to join the wildlife trade are high profit margins and low penalties. Bribes are lower than for many other illicit commodities. This situation changes with the creation of multi-agency task forces, where more than one agency keeps a lookout. It also becomes cost-prohibitive to bribe officials from several agencies. Since

national task forces were set up under the ASEAN-WEN, police informants have reported that **criminals can no longer guarantee safe passage of wildlife**<sup>20</sup>, even after corrupt officers have been paid.

#### c) *Law enforcement targets syndicates’ heads*

When senior officers allocate personnel and resources to bringing down heads of syndicates, it indicates that previous wildlife law enforcement actions have been successful enough for them to consider it worthwhile to invest in comprehensive, long-term investigations<sup>21</sup>. While many law enforcement agencies may still need civil society support to carry out long-term investigations, it is a huge step forward from the earlier prevalent attitude of ending a case with the arrest of transporters or seizures.

#### d) *Wildlife crime businesses destabilized*

This is an alternative to traditional law enforcement approaches.

In some countries, the heads of syndicates may be too closely connected with governments for there to be any action against them, despite overwhelming evidence of criminality. The government structure may even be subverted to facilitate their business, such as by issuing permits with biologically impossible breeding quotas (so that wild-caught animals may be passed off as captive-bred). In this case, repeated and widespread media exposure (after consultation with law enforcement agencies who are attempting interdiction) makes the syndicate head unsuitable as a business partner and their trafficking automatically declines.

**Example:** after prominent international media attention<sup>22</sup> was given to a trans-regional wildlife crime syndicate headquartered in Lao PDR, it became increasingly difficult for the syndicate head to find business partners<sup>23</sup>. With the declaration of a reward by the US government for information on the syndicate, his wildlife business is believed to have slowed down.

### 2. Comparing Similar Systems

#### a) *Wildlife Enforcement Networks*

The ASEAN-WEN was launched in 2005 and the SAWEN in 2011. The former has outperformed the latter (even after adjusting for the launch date difference) primarily due to the presence of a strong, pro-active civil society support program. The ASEAN-WEN has had the advantage of forging strong partnerships with civil society organizations which mentored and supported it during its nascent phase.

Civil society support is flexible and timely and should be an important component of all emerging Wildlife Enforcement Networks. The ASEAN-WEN also led with the idea of National Task Forces to optimize ownership by countries. Each country determined the structure and composition of its own National Task Force which was linked to the WEN structure.

#### b) *Domestic Ivory Trade Bans*

In some Southeast Asian countries, domestic trade of domestically obtained ivory is permitted. This practice facilitates the ‘laundering’ of smuggled African ivory in large quantities, since there is no immediate method of discerning the origin of an ivory sample. India banned all ivory trade (domestic and imported) in 1992 which has prevented ‘laundering’ of African ivory.

There is a strong need to ban domestic ivory sales (particularly in ivory consuming countries) to end the perpetuation of elephant killing in Africa.

#### c) *Information sharing for enforcement*

To use the Interpol information sharing system an officer

must obtain permission from their superior to send information to the country’s National Central Bureau (NCB), which may be staffed by unknown officers, and wait while information travels through the system, sometimes up to two months. This option is rarely used.

The United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime’s (UNODC) Border Liaison Office (BLO) mechanism developed by UNODC, where border officials can immediately share information with their counterparts a few meters away instead of waiting for permission from their respective Foreign Ministries, is used much more effectively. Simplifying the information exchange process has dramatically improved seizure rates.

Similarly, agencies have stated their preference<sup>24</sup> for the World Customs Organization’s Customs Enforcement Network Communication (CENComm) web-based secure platform for information exchange over Interpol since processes are quick and there is a high probability of getting useful information from the system.

## G. Sustaining Success

*Chapter Summary:* Practices to keep and/or overhaul.

### 1. **Do’s and Don’ts**

Tactics which work, and those that don’t are:

#### **Do’s:**

##### ✓ *Networking Opportunities for Investigators*

**The Operation Cobra series**, described in the Summary is an excellent example of a government-led successful operation. Officers worked and lived together for a month working on cases, developing long-lasting and positive relationships and producing results.

##### ✓ *On-the-Job Trainings (“OJTs”)*

Freeland pioneered wildlife enforcement OJTs during its support for ASEAN-WEN, sending experienced staff (former law enforcement officers) to **mentor law enforcement** teams through actual investigations. The mentors spent weeks with enforcement teams, providing real-time training during operations against wildlife criminals. These OJTs resulted in a significant rise in the quality of enforcement and the quantity of data collected during investigations.

##### ✓ *Civil Society Cooperation*

Wildlife enforcement agencies that utilize assistance offered by like-minded NGOs are out-performing agencies that exclude their involvement. Agencies tasked with fighting wildlife crime often have severely limited operations budgets and do not have reliable, real-time information. In these cases, a proactive civil society

partnership allows them access to funds, information and technical expertise that they may not have had the time to source. Civil society partners offer governments more flexibility, visibility and networking opportunities and boost enforcement efforts. Such support should be viewed as complementary to assistance provided by larger international organizations that may not be in a position to provide fast and comprehensive support to all countries in times of crisis.

##### ✓ *Intelligence Packages*

International Organization (IO), NGO and private sector groups are often fed important, real-time information on wildlife criminals through informal channels. They can effectively package the information into a format useful for enforcement action. Frontline officers have used ‘Intel Packs’ created by Freeland and other NGOs to convince senior officers of the extent of syndicates being investigated, thereby gaining permissions for further action.

##### ✓ *Media Attention*

Frontline officers often work without recognition. The opportunity to show their skills and results to an international audience is a huge motivator. Freeland recorded an increase of 300% in enforcement actions during the filming of a National Geographic TV series featuring anti-wildlife-trafficking officers.

Media attention is also a counter-corruption measure. Highlighting the work of good officers motivates them to publicly speak out against corruption in their own agencies.

Finally, media focus on wildlife crime also helps to build support for wildlife frontline officers from within their own agencies, including from their superiors. During the early phases of the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network, “WEN” teams would often request Freeland and other ARREST partners for funding for an operation since their own budgets were limited. After receiving consistent international media attention and praise, senior officers were much more likely to allot budgets to their frontline staff for operations.

Media attention must be balanced and timed appropriately with the need to follow investigations through to prosecutions. Journalists must be encouraged to demand a positive end to the seemingly never-ending story of endangered species trade.

#### ✓ *Constant Awareness Reminders*

These may be as simple as outreach posters at border crossings and airports. While their primary aim is to urge travelers to desist from wildlife crime, feedback from officials stationed at these posts indicates that the posters serve to remind them to look out for smuggled wildlife. This is significant considering the wide array of illicit commodities that officers are expected to seize.

#### ✓ *Building Local Relationships*

Enforcement support measures only work when **they engage intelligently and sensitively with local conditions.**

Conditions include agency politics, corruption, varying priorities, cultures and traditions. Success in such a scenario is possible, but only after devoting time to build relationships with authorities. Experience and personal relationships help develop tactics to avoid or negate the malevolent effects of corruption.

#### *Don'ts:*

##### ✗ *Imposing Alien Expectations*

Government agencies are likely to resent directives and guidelines issued from another part of the world, without recognition of local sensitivities. This is exacerbated when these directives emanate from an agency with greater resources or from a developed country which is perceived to not have the same challenges.

Target themes and priorities must be decided by participating governments. Pre-decided short-term investigation themes handed to governments have actually disrupted ongoing undercover investigations against syndicates.

**Example:** investigators in Southeast Asia, focusing on a comprehensive 2-year investigation into one of the region's largest syndicates were pulled away to participate in a world-wide operation which focused on maximum seizures during a short time period.

##### ✗ *Faceless Interaction*

Government investigators do not share information with people they have not met. This has been Freeland's universal experience with officers from all over the world.

Some reluctance is due to valid concerns about information security and corruption. Other reasons are cultural.

After investigators are brought together (as in Operation Cobra) they are more willing to communicate with each other, and levels of cooperation increase dramatically.

## 2. **Urgent Overhaul Needed**

While law enforcers improve their strategies, global actors and policy makers have work to do too:

### a) *CITES: Needs ethos update*

CITES was enacted 40 years ago with the belief that people will always exploit wildlife resources. Consequently, the only recourse was to let exploitation occur at a monitored and controlled rate.

Quotas for allowed levels of international trade in species are set by countries during the Conference of Parties (CoP). Every CoP is marked by pre-event lobbying battles among pro-conservation and pro-exploitation groups, agencies and businesses.

Pro-exploitation lobbies urge governments to allow legal trade in endangered species, lift restrictions on trade quotas and lower legal protections for species. Their argument is: by flooding the market with items from legally killed or ‘farmed’ animals, or allowing one-off sales of endangered species derivatives, poaching pressure on wild populations will decline. Simultaneously, endangered animals will be seen as income earners and preserved by communities.

In practice, however, the presence of legally farmed or hunted animals in trade, coupled with endemic corruption, allows the ‘laundering’ of wild animals through legal channels. Limited or controlled trade in rare and endangered species and their body parts has often served to fuel demand. Demand eventually outstrips supply from legal sources. Opportunists link cheaper, illegal sources with buyers, increasing profit margins for all, thereby encouraging increased poaching. As illustrated by the African ivory and rhino horn trades, legal trade and hunting quotas have not prevented large-scale poaching. They have increased it.

The ease with which legal mechanisms are subverted to facilitate overexploitation (e.g.: the rhino hunting syndicate described previously) demonstrates the need for an overhaul of CITES to a more pro-active conservation-oriented approach. The current trajectory of the CITES community compromising on trade in rare and endangered species will result in more global poaching outbreaks.

b) **Weak penalties**

Barring some countries, most national wildlife laws have very light penalties, often amounting to a small fine for traffickers. This leads to repeat offences carried out with confidence, strengthening syndicates.

c) **Unsuitable procedures**

Legal processes in certain countries serve to facilitate the trade. For example, where seized wildlife is auctioned<sup>25</sup> openly, traders have been known to pay couriers to

get deliberately arrested with goods which are then bought during government auctions, enabling syndicates to obtain contraband legally.

d) **Abuse of military privileges**

Soldiers stationed in biodiversity rich areas have been known to hunt or purchase wildlife. For example, foreign soldiers have been recorded buying snow leopard skins in Afghanistan<sup>26</sup>.

e) **Abuse of diplomatic privileges**

Diplomatic personnel have attempted to smuggle rhino horns from Africa to Vietnam<sup>27</sup>. Diplomatic exemption from security procedures was used to smuggle live, drugged animals (tiger and bear cubs, and primates) in cabin baggage onto an international flight in Thailand to West Asia.

## H. Mainstreaming Wildlife Protection

*Chapter Summary:* Aligning wildlife crime with other national priorities.

To ensure wildlife crime remains a priority, it is necessary to mainstream it with other important national agenda items. The most important sectors to be engaged are:

**1. National Security**

Wildlife crime fosters international syndicates and facilitates the movement of criminals across international borders. Trade routes, rest stops and transportation systems set up for wildlife crime are used concurrently for other crimes such as human trafficking and drug smuggling. Some armed insurgencies in Africa<sup>28</sup> and Asia are believed to be funding their ammunition purchases with the sale of high value poached wildlife.

**2. Health**

Wildlife crime often involves the transport of animals under extremely unhygienic and unhealthy conditions. The animals may be slaughtered and processed under low sanitary standards. This also creates a zoonotic disease transmission hazard.

**Example:** Pangolins are bundled up for transport and not allowed to move for several days. Prior to being sold into food markets they have days-old fecal deposits all over their bodies, parasites, and untreated wounds from capture and transport.

**3. Revenue Losses**

Wildlife crime (especially timber) involves smuggling, depriving governments of legitimate revenue.

**4. Livelihoods**

Traffickers degrade or destroy forests, depleting resources for vulnerable rural populations. Heavy demand also removes species from forests, depriving local communities who may have been using them sustainably. Financial incentives by traffickers also prompt local communities to destroy their natural resources for immediate gain.

**Example:** Fishermen used cyanide compounds to stun and capture reef fish for the aquarium trade; unwittingly they also killed coral reefs which harbored fish they were dependent on for their livelihoods.

**5. Food and Agricultural Security**

Deforestation affects watersheds, which in turn negatively impacts agricultural production. Other ecological services provided by natural flora and fauna: pollination, soil regeneration, seed dispersal are all affected when wildlife and habitats are destroyed.

## I. Recommendations

*Chapter Summary:* Immediate Priorities.

**1. International Level Actions**

a) **Ban endangered species trade for 15 years**

This will give hard-hit species a sufficient reprieve from poaching to initiate population recovery, and make law

enforcement straightforward, since there will be no valid trade quotas to confuse paperwork.

## 2. National Level Actions

### a) *Reduce commercial ownership of habitats*

Legal trade quotas for rare and endangered species exist largely because of the pressure by commercial interests, including private owners of critical wildlife habitats who wish to sell animals on their land. They claim that unless they are allowed to exploit the species commercially, they will need to sell the land to commercial developers. Profit margins for a few should not be allowed to dictate international conservation policy. In cases like this, it is advisable that the government or communities take management and/or financial responsibility over the land and the species.

### b) *Increase Customs and police roles in enforcement*

These agencies in many countries are better equipped and prepared than their CITES counterparts to combat organized crime. Too often, wildlife crime enforcement initiatives are led by or confined to understaffed and undertrained CITES departments.

### c) *Step up counter-corruption measures*

This can be done via: highlighting the good work of good officers; multi-agency approaches; and media exposure of criminals and their protectors.

### d) *Mainstream wildlife crime with other crimes*

Links must be made to national security, food security, health, livelihoods and revenue losses.

### e) *Tighten and standardize laws*

Laws on national and international species should be reviewed, since many non-native animals may pass through a transit country.

**Example:** Lao PDR did not interdict pangolin and reptile shipments crossing from Thailand to Vietnam since the animals were not native.

### f) *Implement professional anti-poaching measures*

Frontline staff take on vast, international, organized crime. Professional counter-poaching capacity development programs are available and should be institutionalized where necessary.

Capacity development must include creating localized Training Management Packages and increasing local capacity to implement trainings.

### g) *Implement professional anti-trafficking measures*

There must be special emphasis on training government investigators to work with counterparts across borders. Professional counter-trafficking capacity development programs are available and should be institutionalized where necessary. Joint counter-trafficking training courses

should continue to lead to action, as was done with the ASEAN-WEN Special Investigation Group “DETECT” training that led to Operation Cobra.

## 3. International Enforcement Cooperation

### a) *Create and operationalize WENs*

Wildlife Enforcement Networks have proven advantages: multi-disciplinary task forces; facilitating enforcement networking and cooperation; and instilling a sense of pride and ownership over counter-trafficking measures.

### b) *Easy, direct and secure communications channel*

The current Interpol NCB system is not preferred by enforcement agencies due to practical complications. The World Customs Organization’s CENcomm (which has recently been offered to future regional wildlife operations) is more convenient because each officer participating in an operation can tap in for a specified duration.

### c) *Set up a tracking system for CITES permits*

This could be similar to parcel shipping tracking systems such as DHL or FEDEX. This would enable wildlife enforcement, police and Customs officers to track the legitimacy of wildlife shipments.

### d) *Provide analysis support to enforcement agencies*

This is particularly important for the data they bring to operations. Interpol’s expertise in this field will be very useful.

## 4. Government – Civil Society Partnerships

### a) *Scale government-civil society efforts*

The ARREST/WEN civil society-government template that produced Operation Cobra is flexible and can be adapted for any region or country. It is flexible and allows incorporation of government and civil society partners upon demand, to fill geographic or thematic gaps in capacity development, public awareness, and sustainability of networks.

CSO’s also have flexibility and speed, as compared to most government agencies. They can play a critical role in assisting, facilitating, capacity building and networking to improve government enforcement efforts. However, CSO’s should stand back to let government agencies lead operations.

Successful government and civil society partnerships in enforcement – such as ARREST for wildlife, and the Interpol-Pharmaceutical Security Institute partnership on combating counterfeit pharmaceuticals trafficking – need to be quickly scaled internationally.

### b) *Sustained demand reduction campaigns*

This is particularly important for countries with very high demands for endangered species.

These include China, the United States and Vietnam. The Governments of China, Vietnam and Thailand are already partnering with CSO's to devise and launch demand reduction campaigns. These joint efforts should be supported as a matter of urgency.

Enforcement in source, transit and consumer countries

must be coupled with demand reduction and good governance (anti-corruption) campaigns.

c) **Prioritize gathering 'missing' information**

Such information includes: domestic wildlife trade statistics; comprehensive marine species trade statistics; quota mismatch statistics (i.e., outgoing quotas are higher than incoming quotas for a transit consignment, indicating

**J. Country/ Commodity Maps**

Chapter Summary: Seizure maps

The following maps are based on open source data of seizures of key endangered species.

The mapping system was developed to provide law enforcement agencies with an inexpensive method of tracking seizure locations and thereby determining personnel and resource allocations. The maps can be used to visualize the following:

- Map areas with large blank spaces, located between countries with lots of seizures indicate either low enforcement or low reporting rates in the blank spaces.
- The maps also show wildlife trafficking hotspots.

Freeland can provide the excel sheets the maps are based on, or more detailed maps upon request.

**Ivory Seizures**

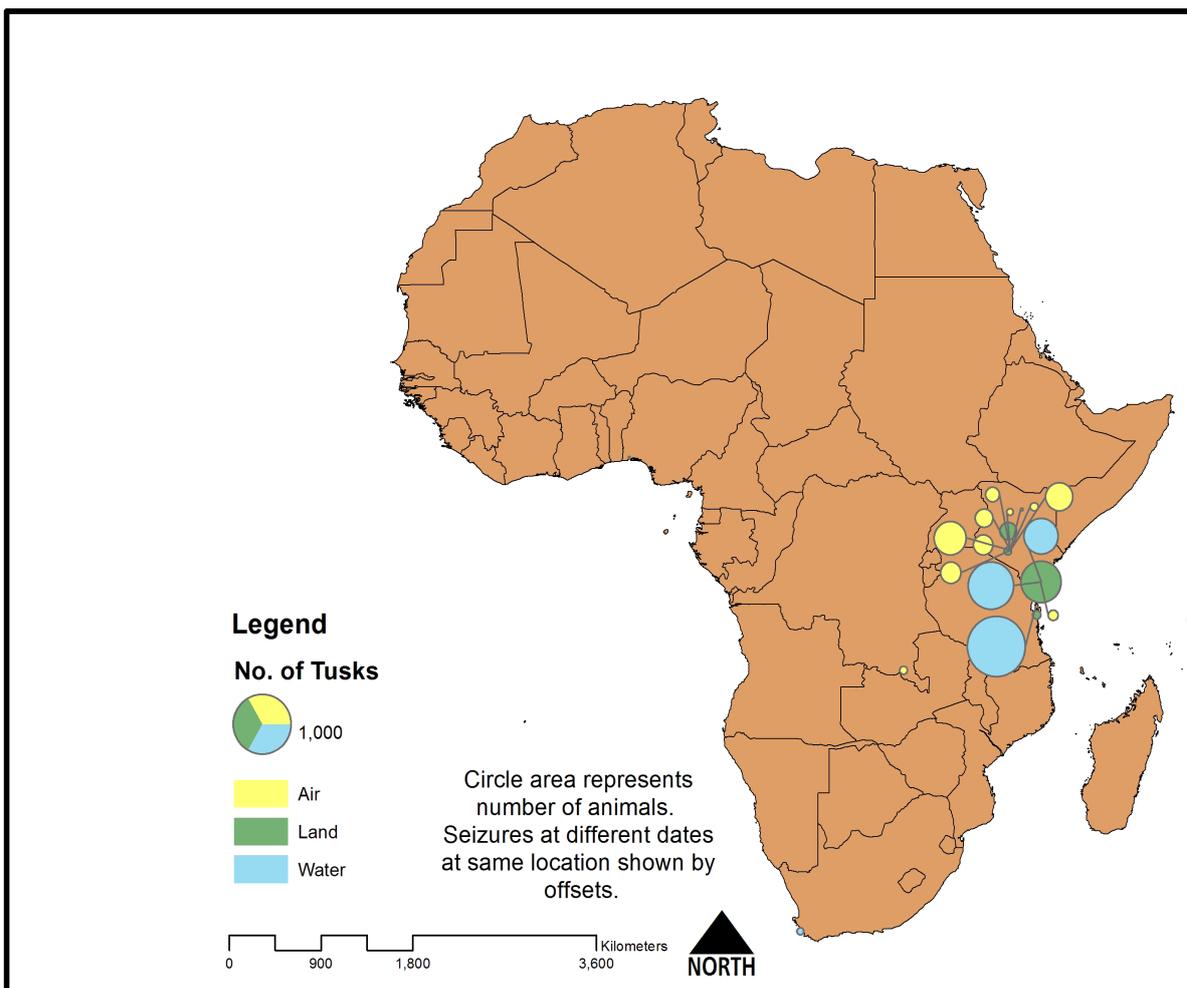


Fig i. Ivory seized in Africa, 2008-2013

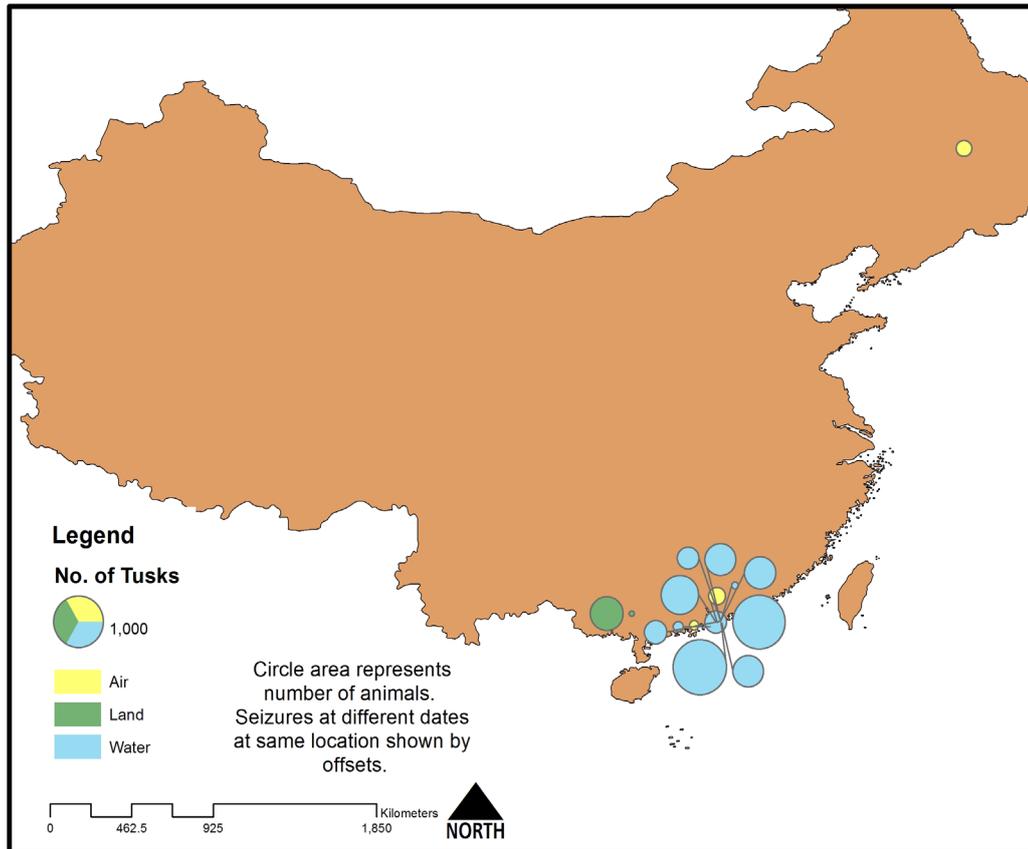


Fig ii. Ivory seized in China, Hong Kong, and Macau, 2008-2013

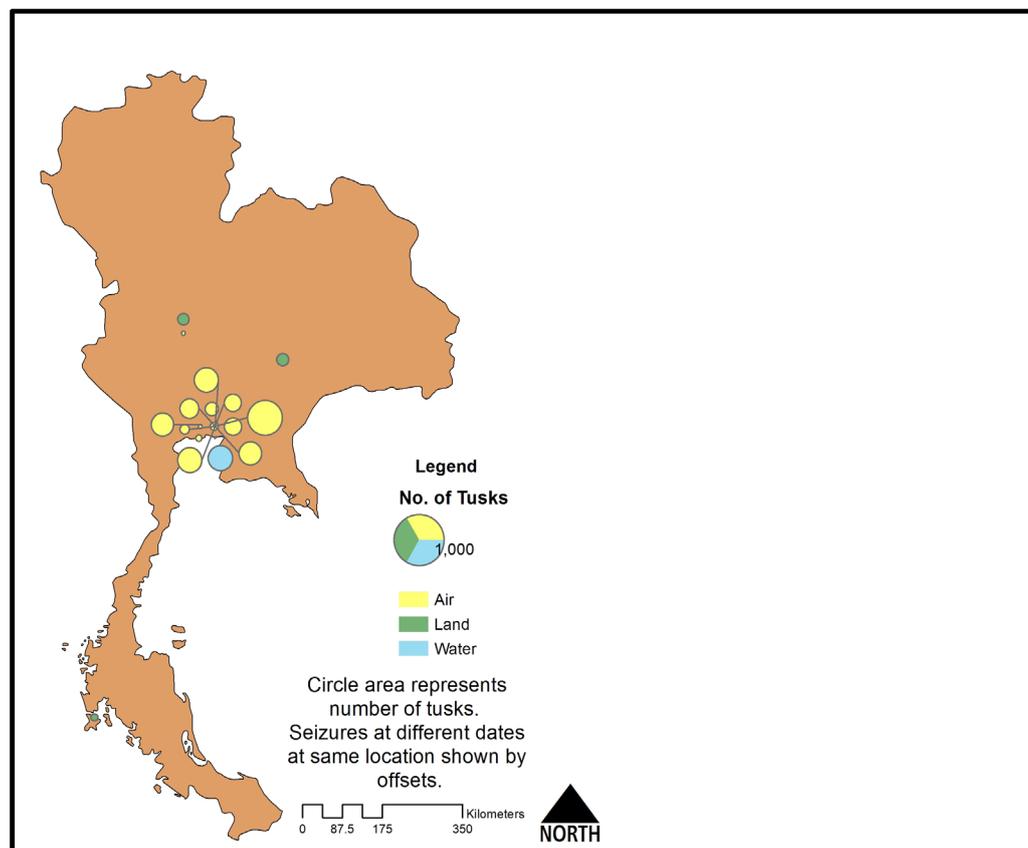


Fig iii. Ivory seized in Thailand, 2008-2013

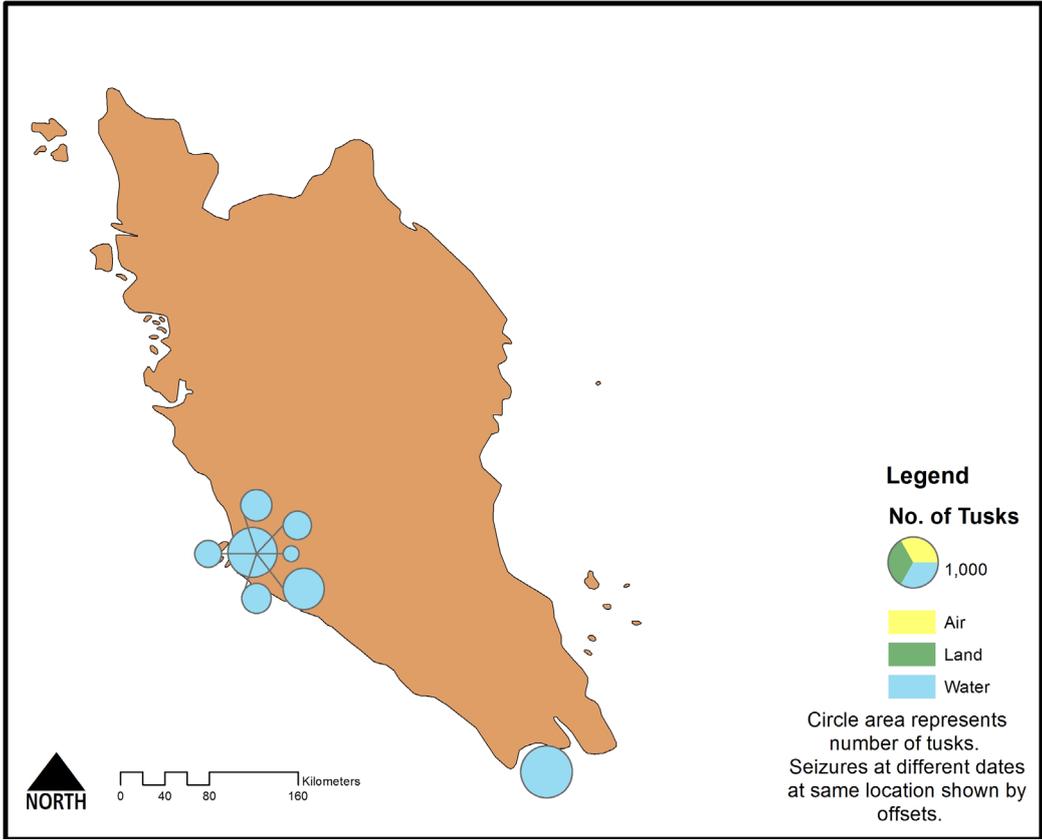


Fig iv. Ivory seized in Malaysia and Singapore, 2008-2013

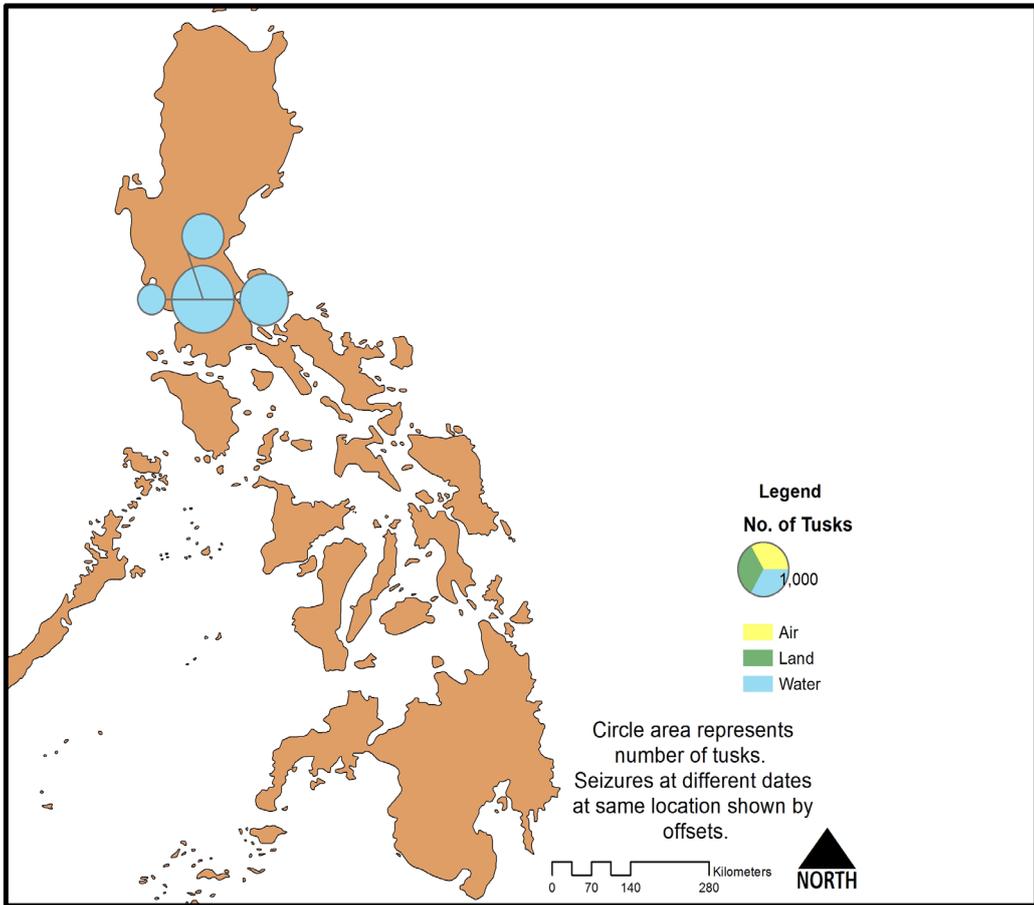


Fig v. Ivory seized in the Philippines, 2008-2013

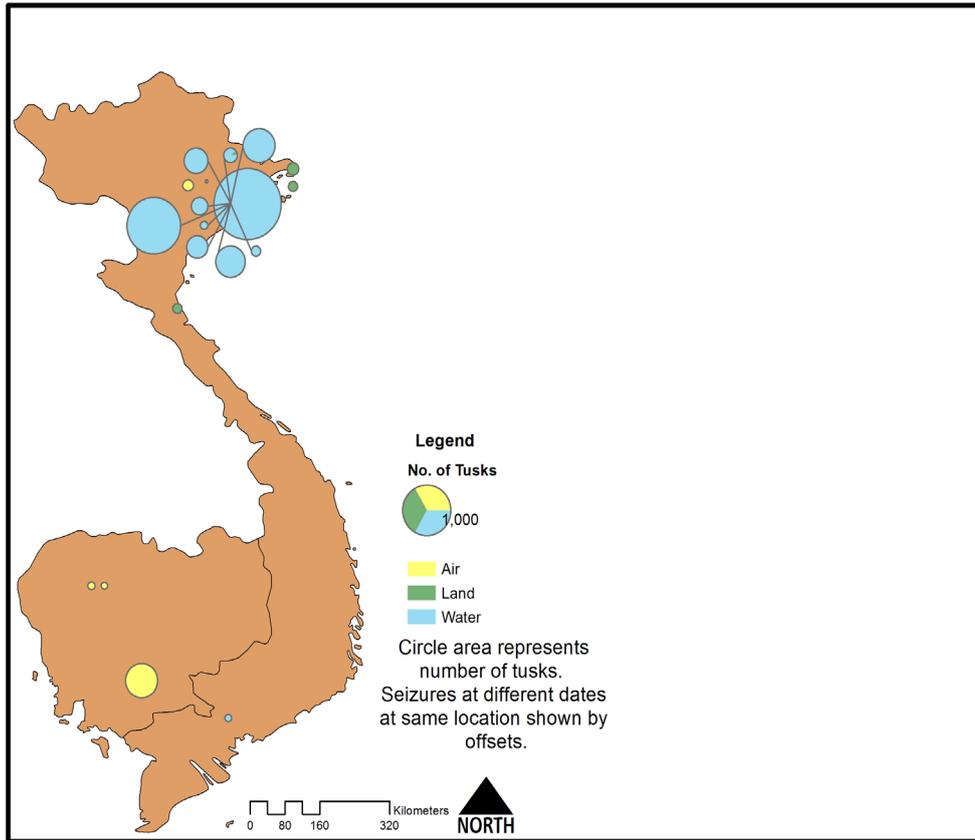


Fig vi. Ivory seized in Cambodia and Vietnam, 2008-2013

### Big Cats Seizures

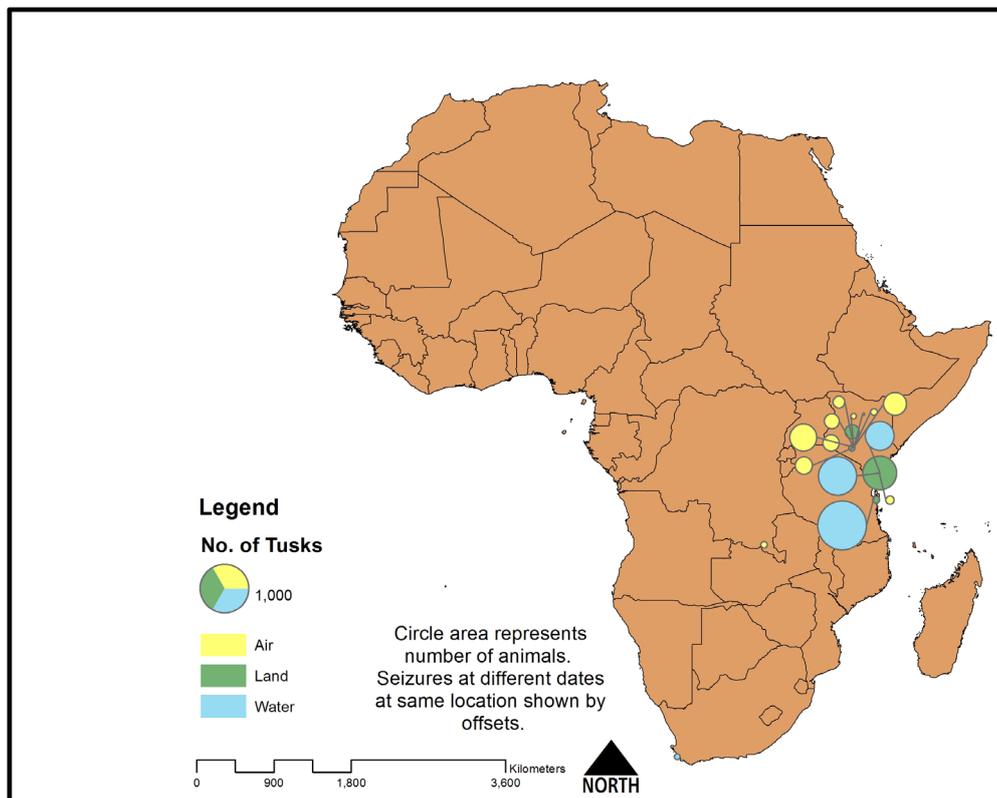


Fig i. Big cats seized in Africa, 2008-2013

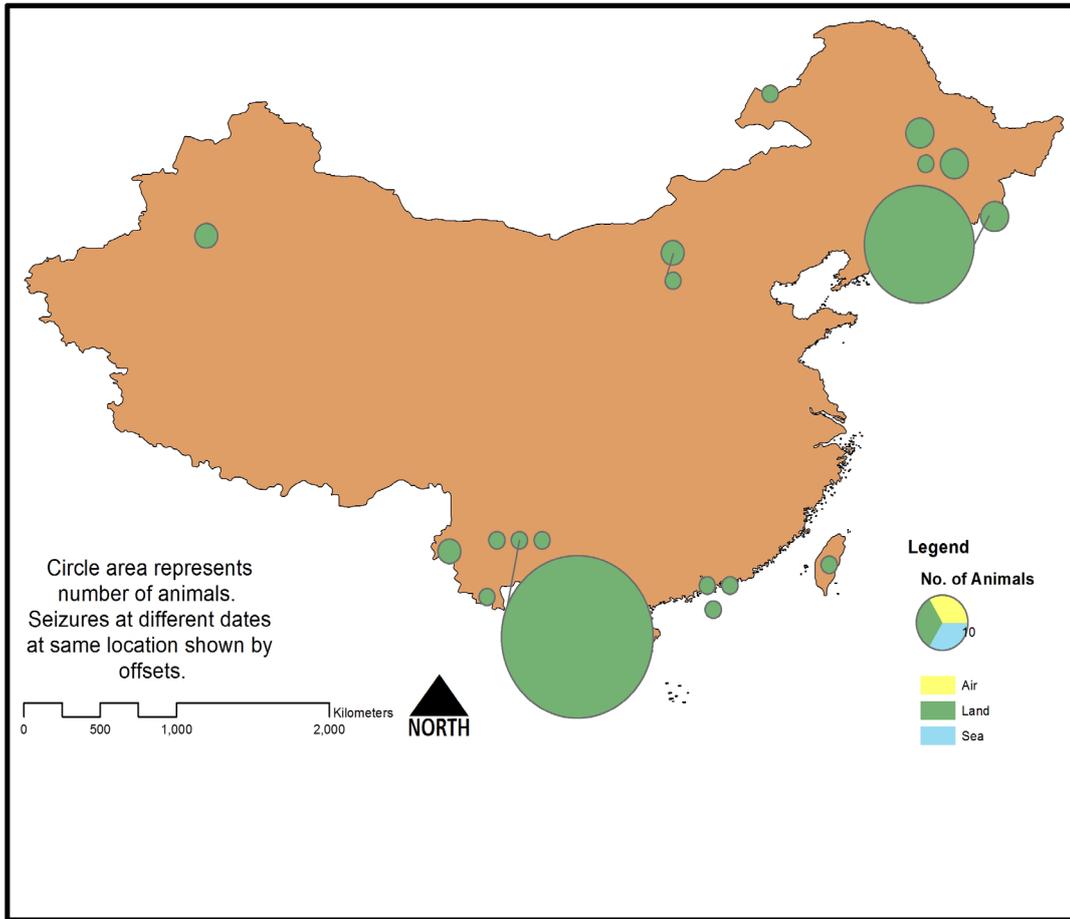


Fig ii. Big cats seized in China, 2008-2013

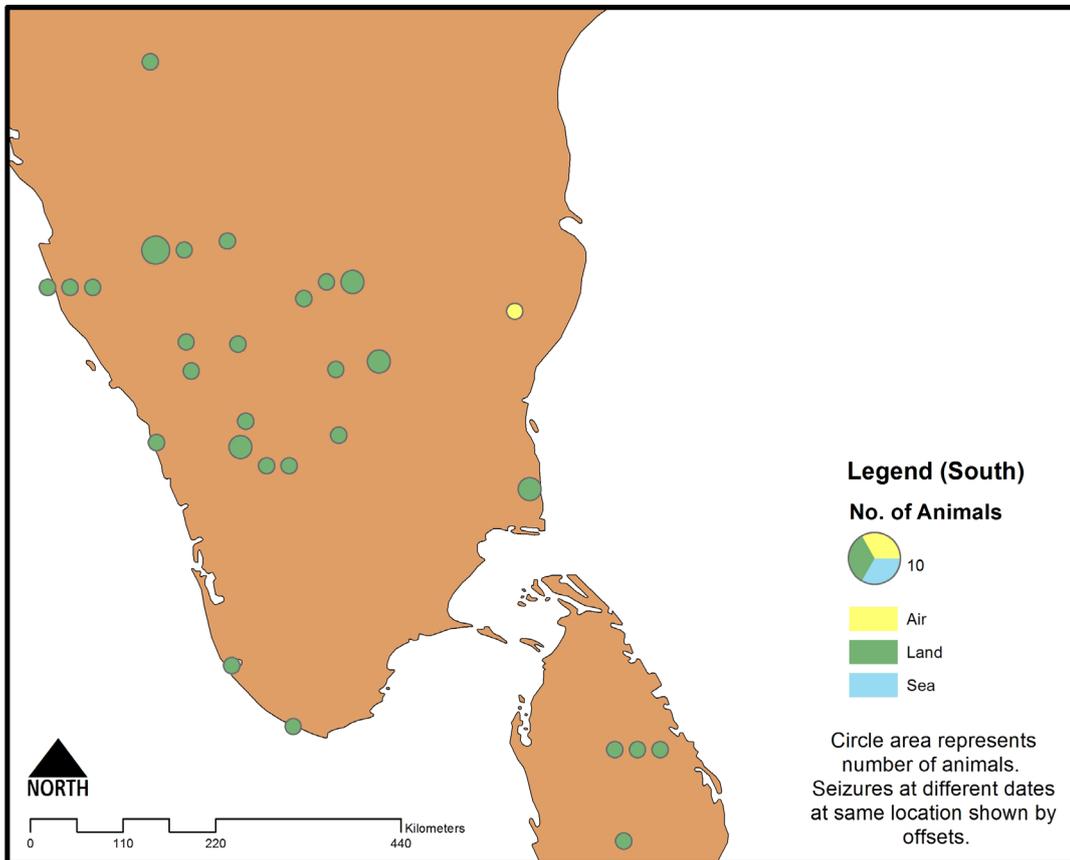


Fig iii. Big cats seized in southern India and Sri Lanka, 2008-2013

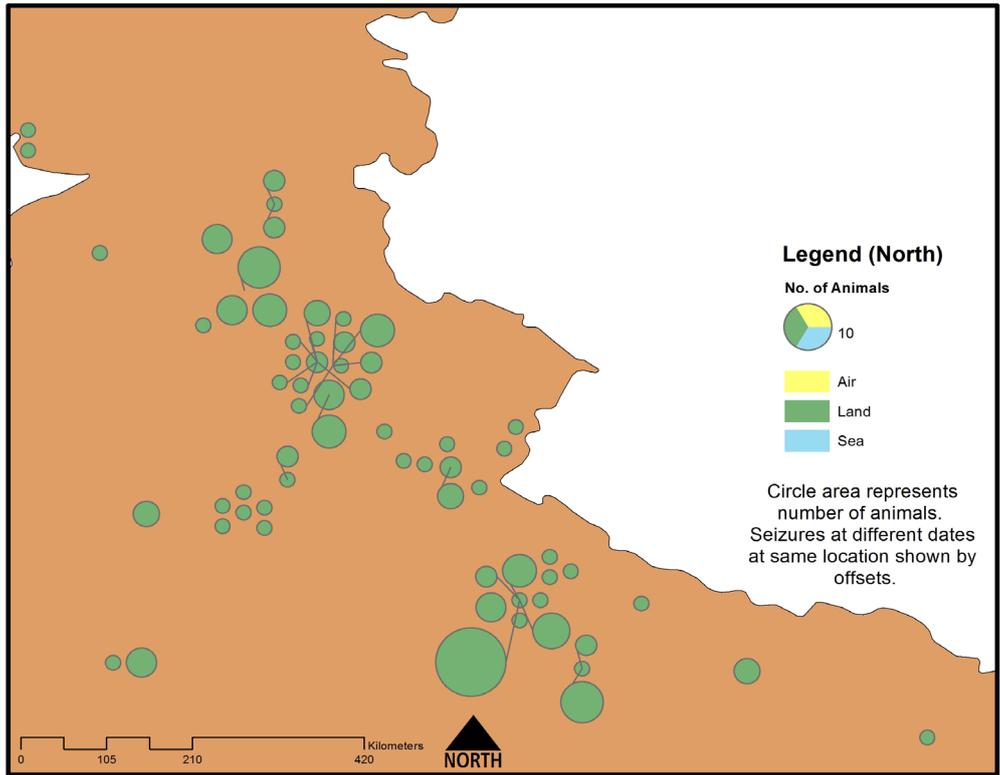


Fig iv. Big cats seized in northern India, 2008-2013

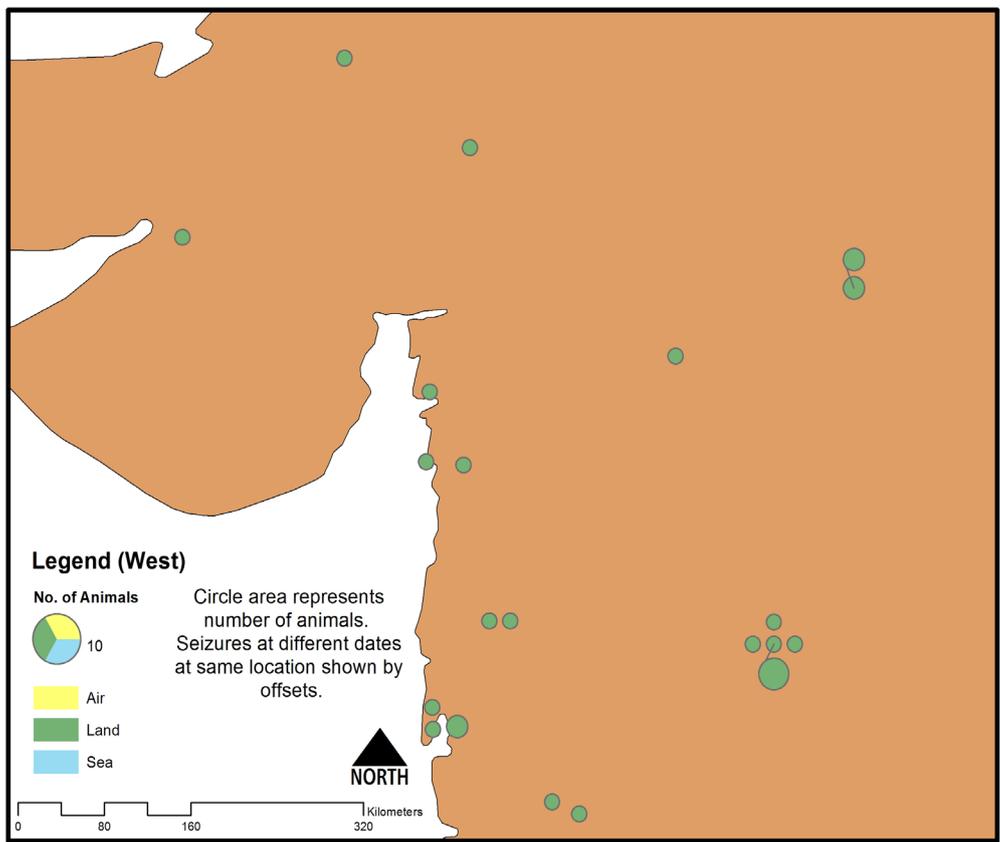


Fig v. Big cats seized in western India, 2008-2013

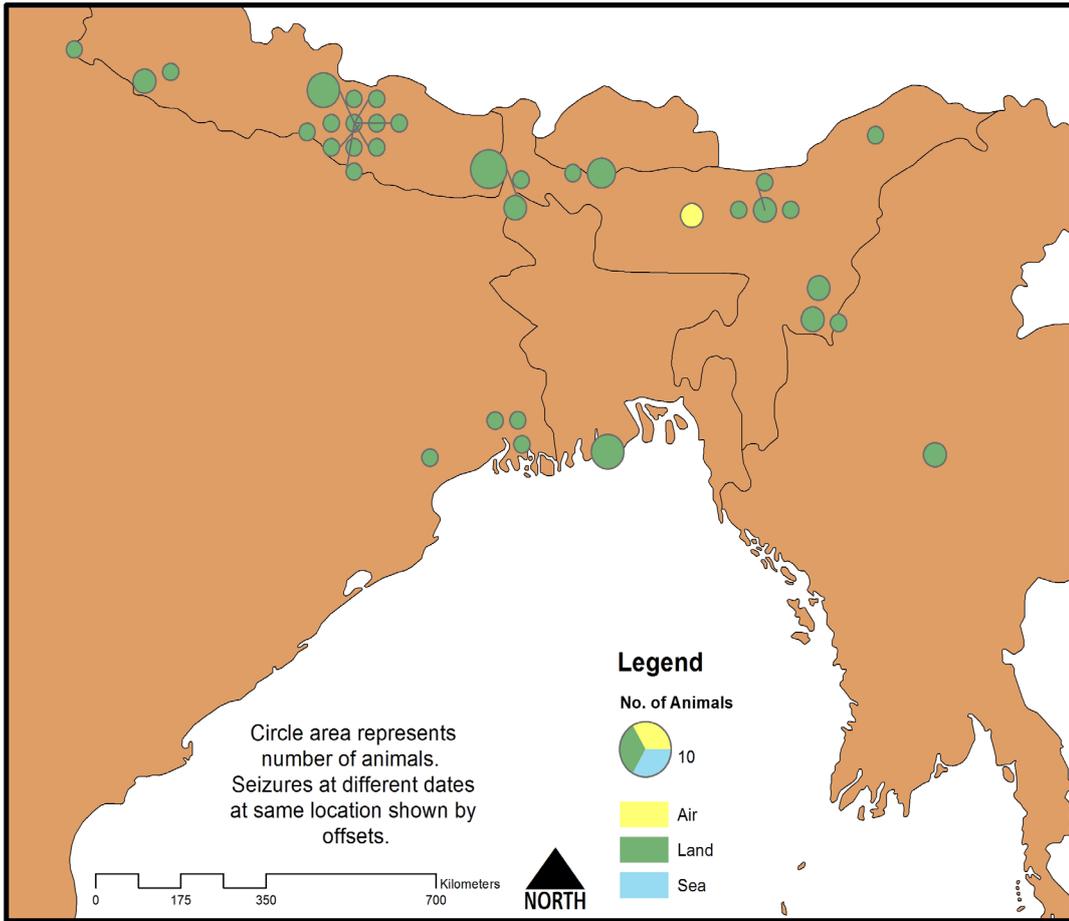


Fig vi. Big cats seized in Bangladesh, Bhutan, eastern India, Myanmar and Nepal, 2008-2013

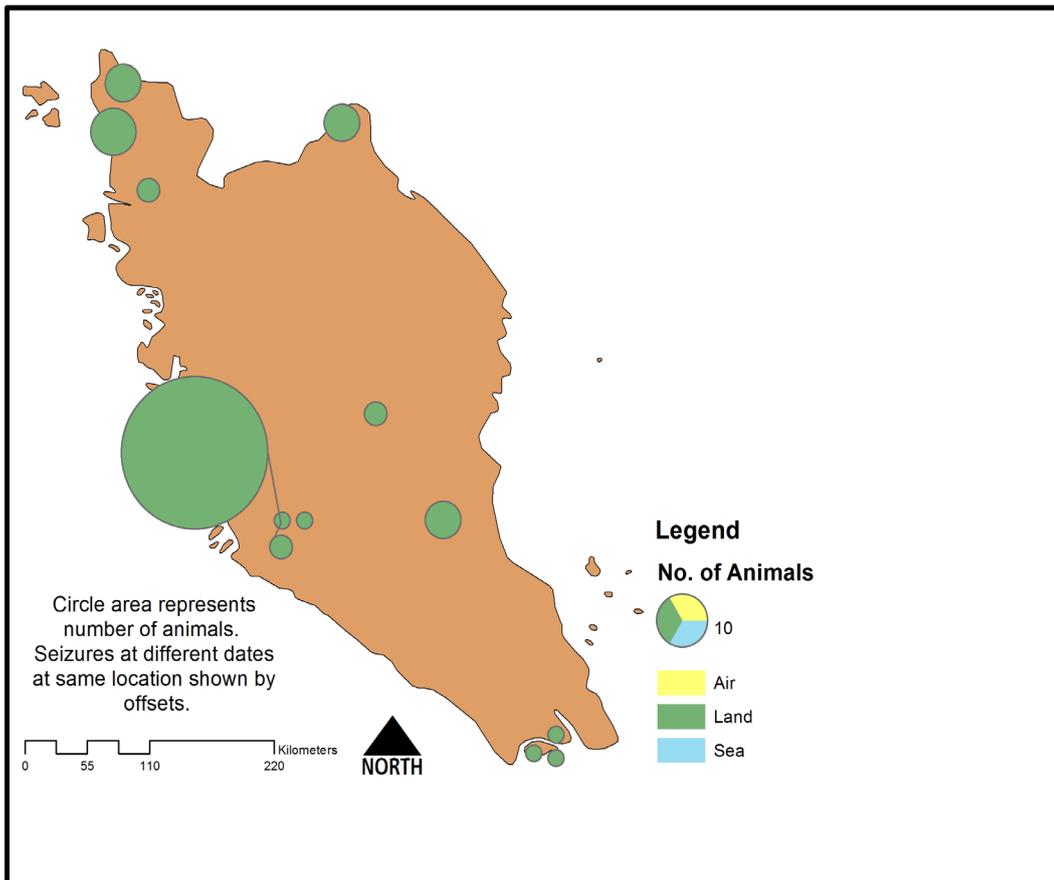


Fig vii. Big cats seized in Malaysia and Singapore, 2008-2013

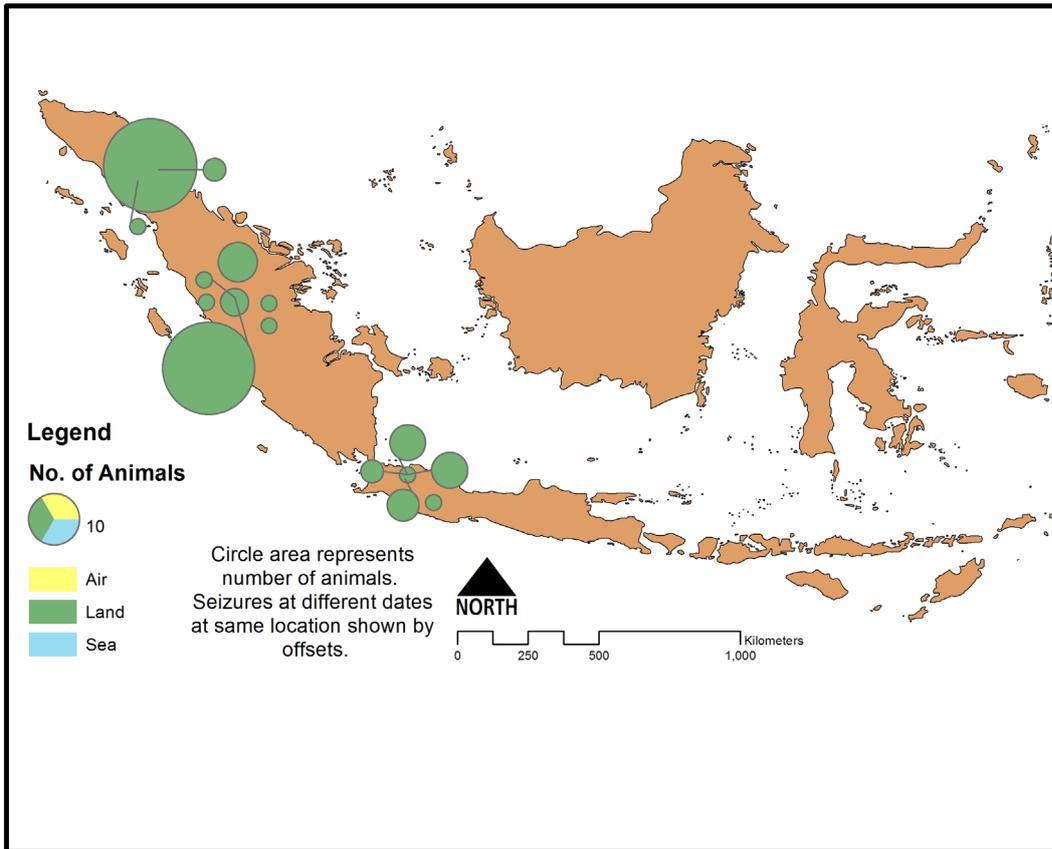


Fig viii. Big cats seized in Indonesia, 2008-2013

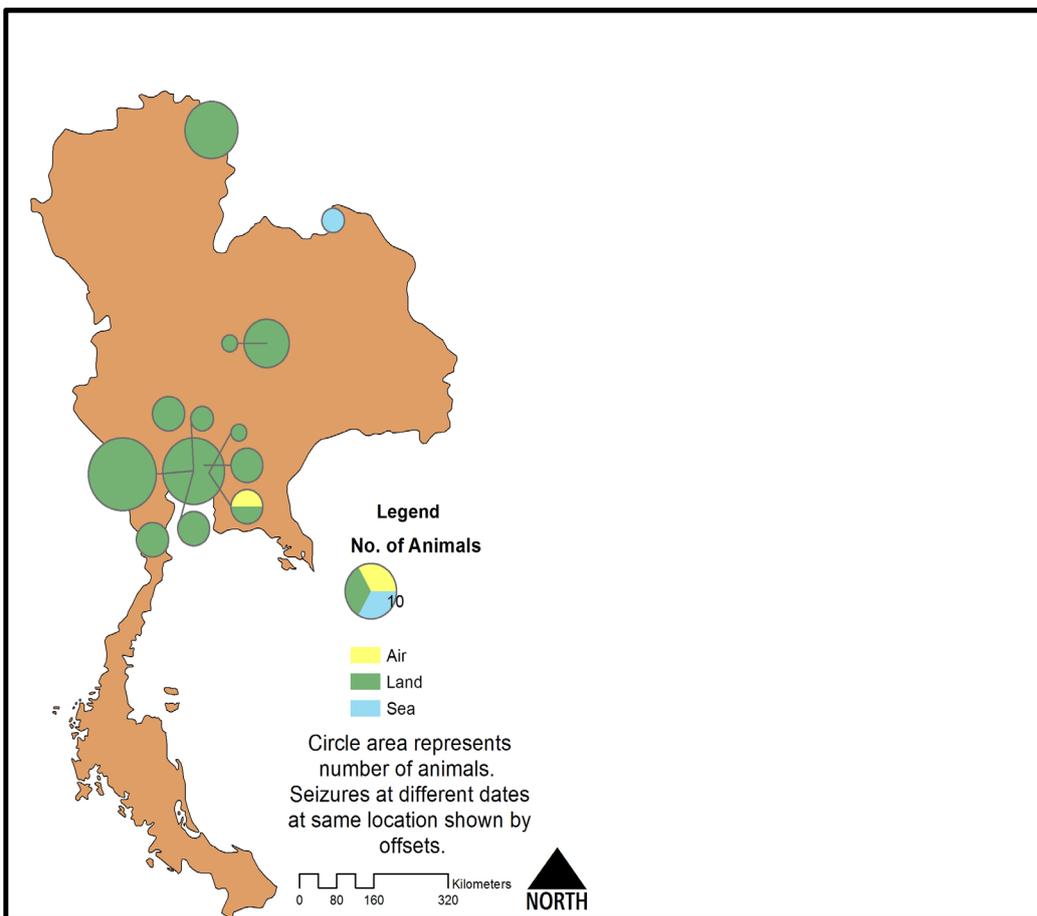


Fig xi. Big cats seized in Thailand, 2008-2013

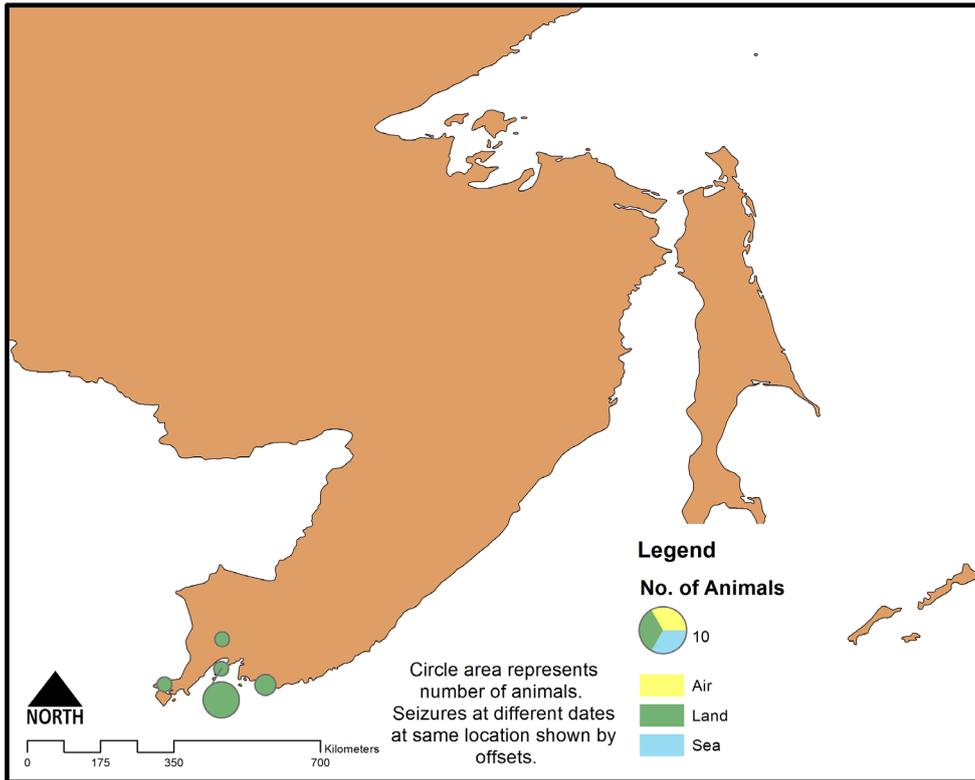


Fig x. Big cats seized in eastern Russia, 2008-2013

### Pangolin Seizures

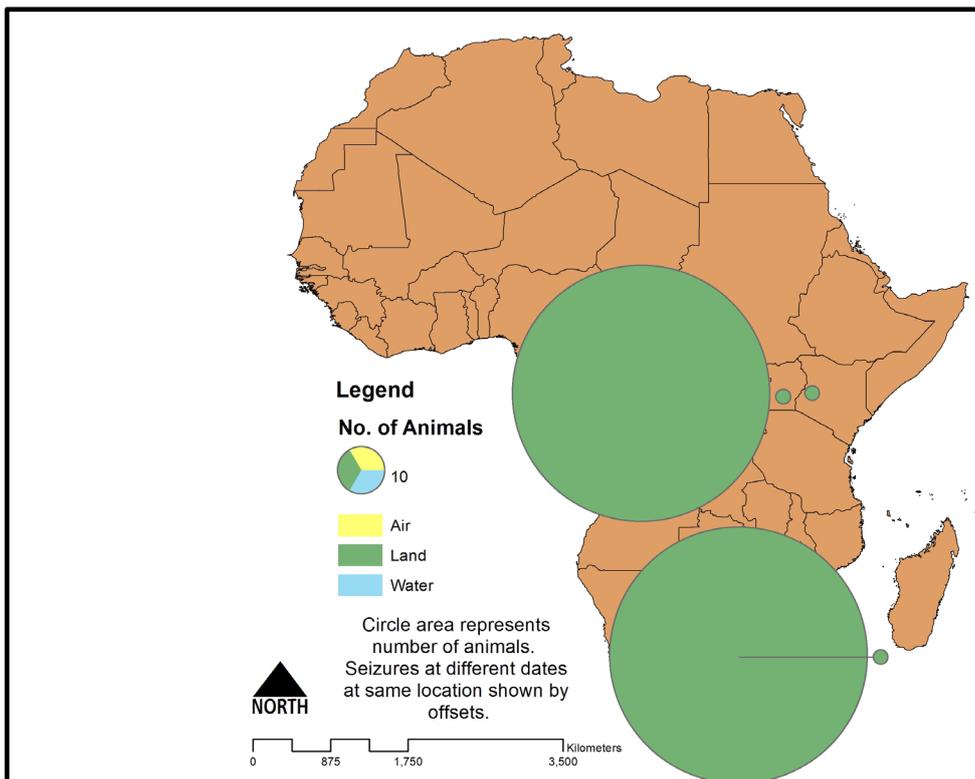


Fig i. Pangolins seized in India, Myanmar, and Nepal, 2008-2013

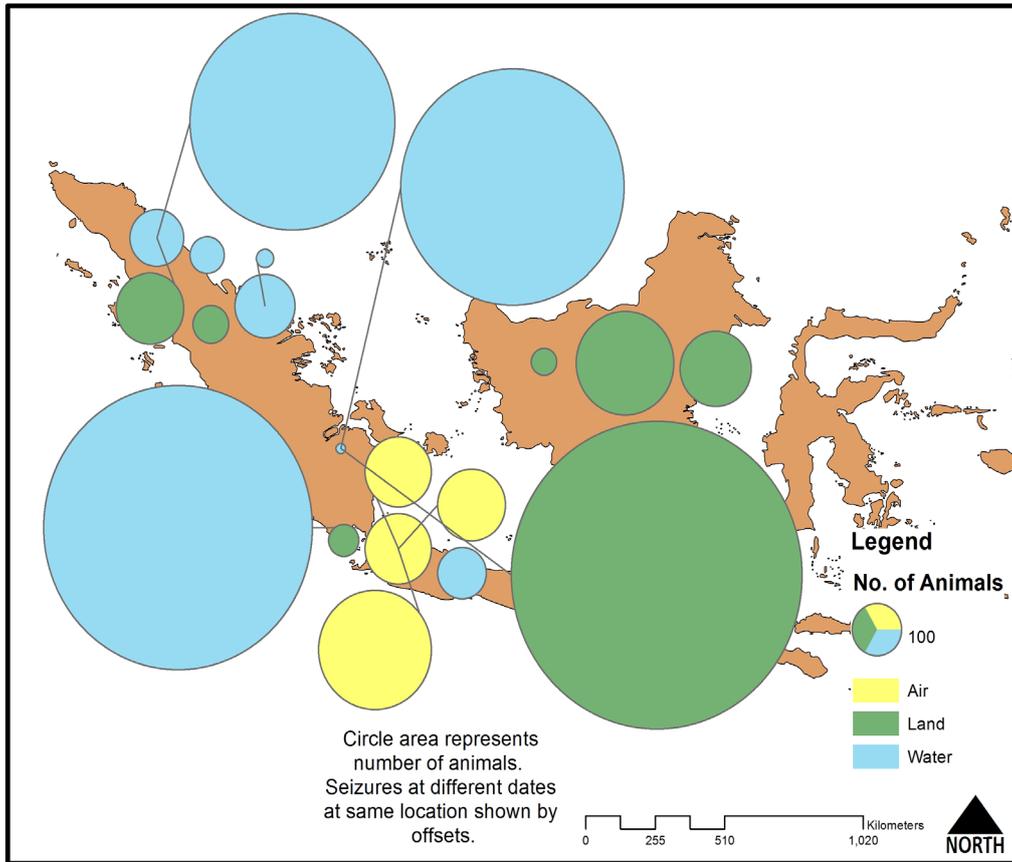


Fig ii. Pangolins seized in Indonesia, 2008-2013

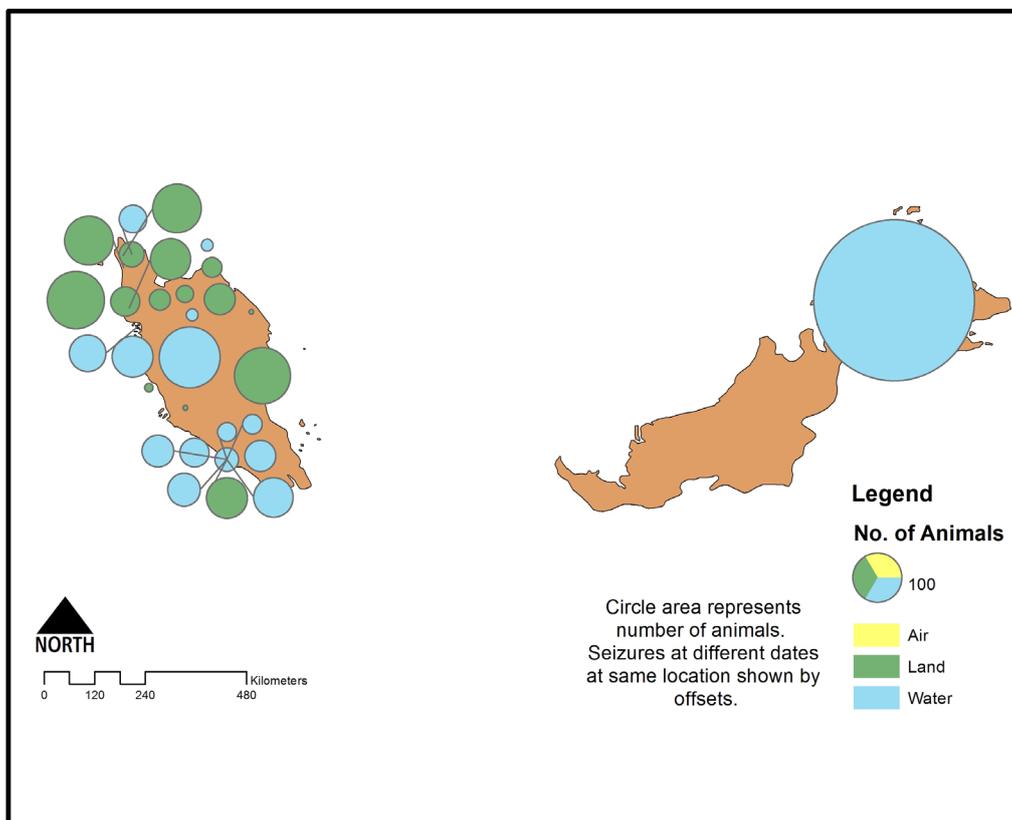


Fig iii. Pangolins seized in peninsular Malaysia and Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan, 2008-2013

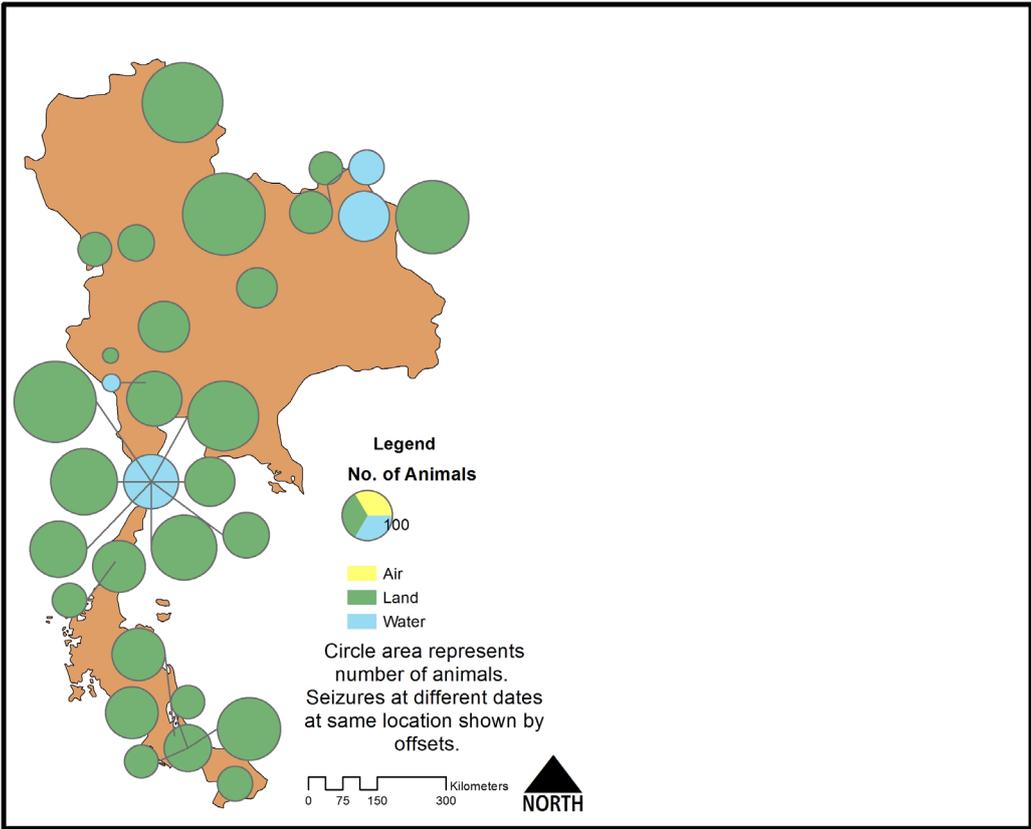


Fig iv. Pangolins seized in Thailand, 2008-2013

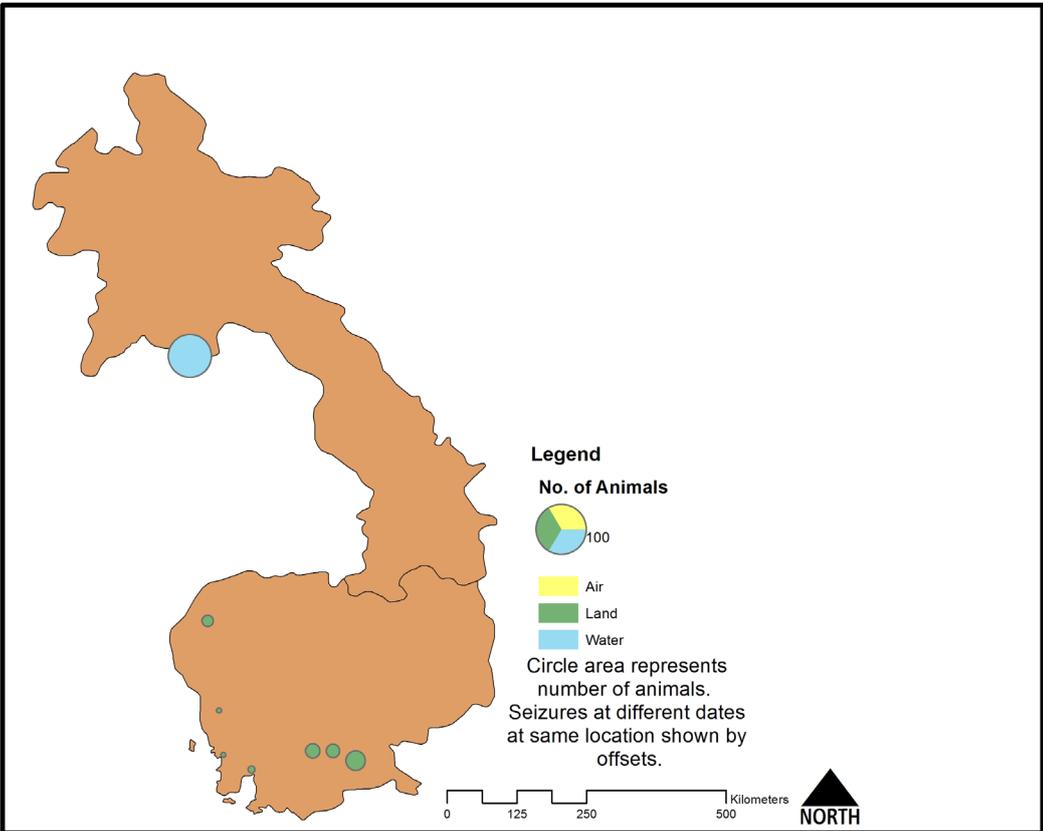


Fig v. Pangolins seized in Cambodia and Lao PDR, 2008-2013

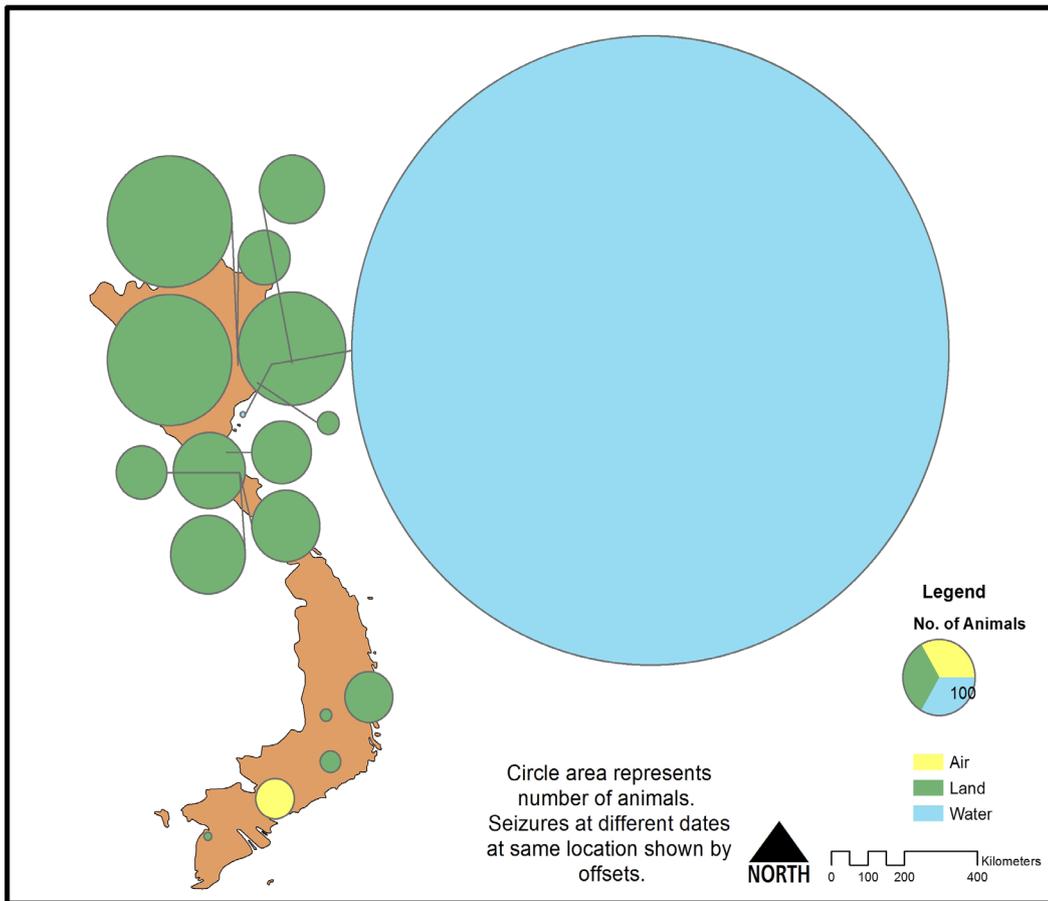


Fig vi. Pangolins seized in Vietnam, 2008-2013

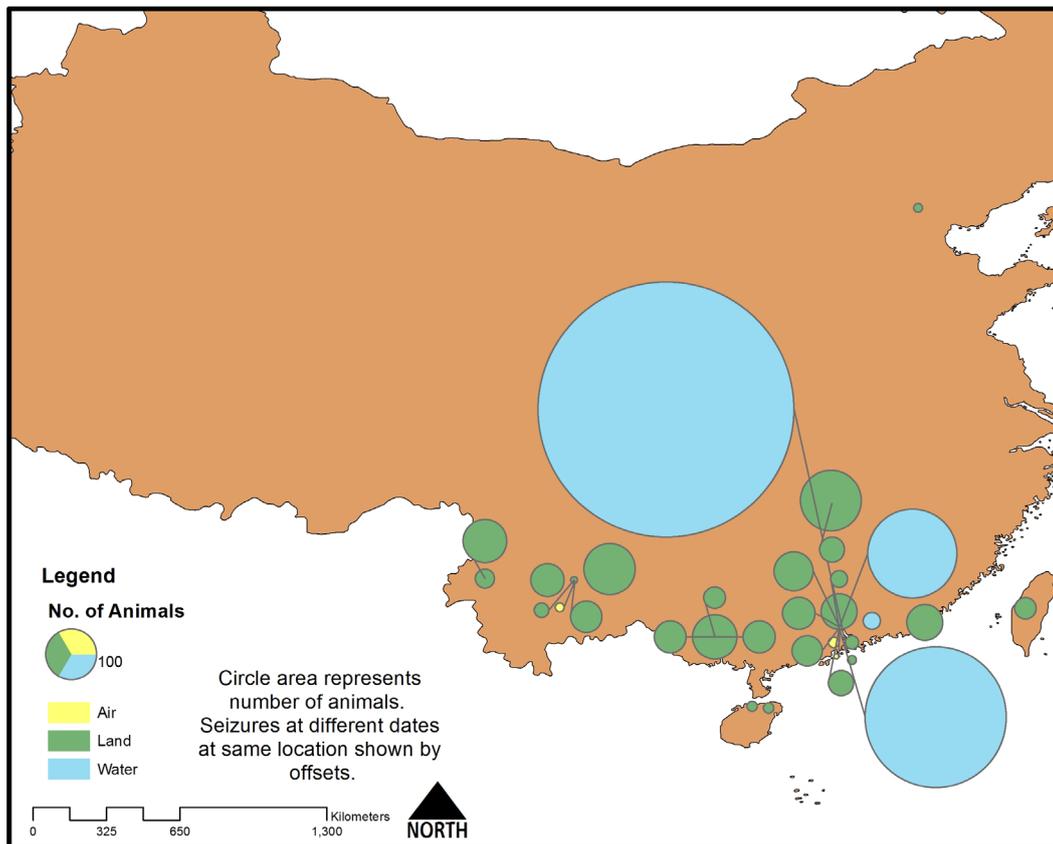


Fig vii. Pangolins seized in China, 2008-2013

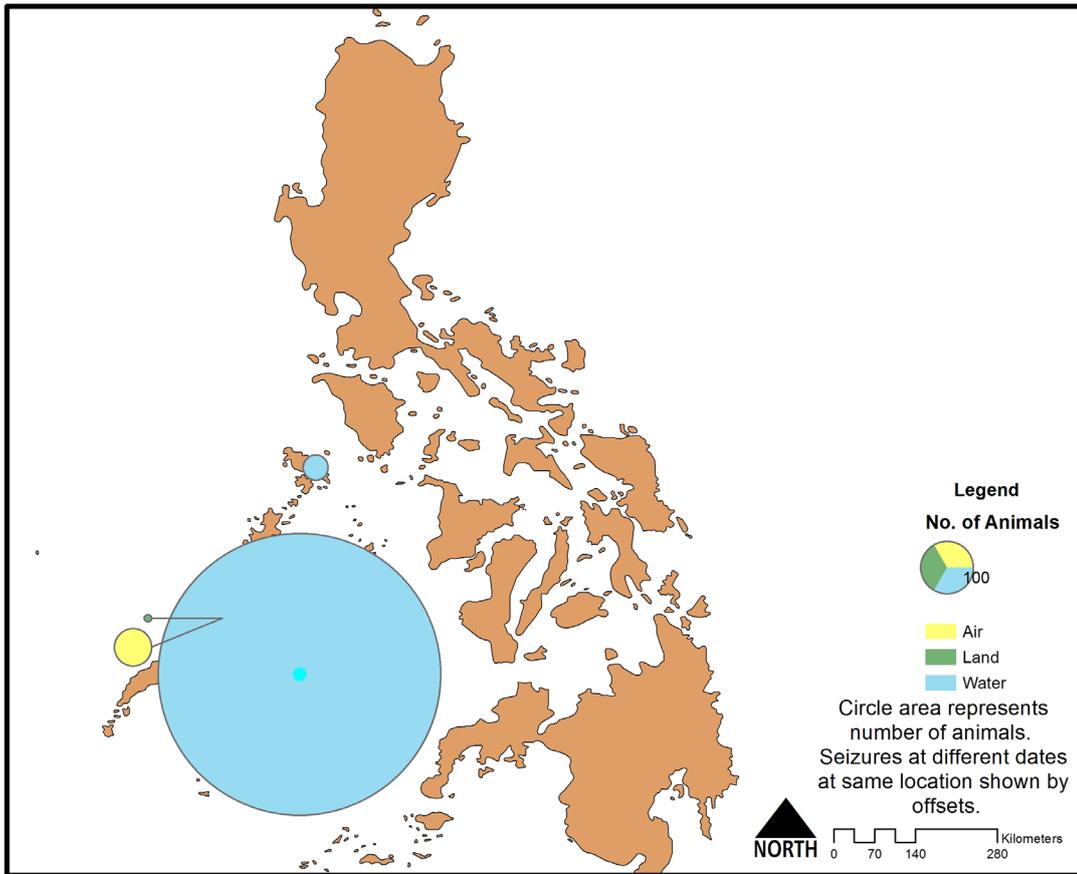


Fig viii. Pangolins seized in the Philippines, 2008-2013

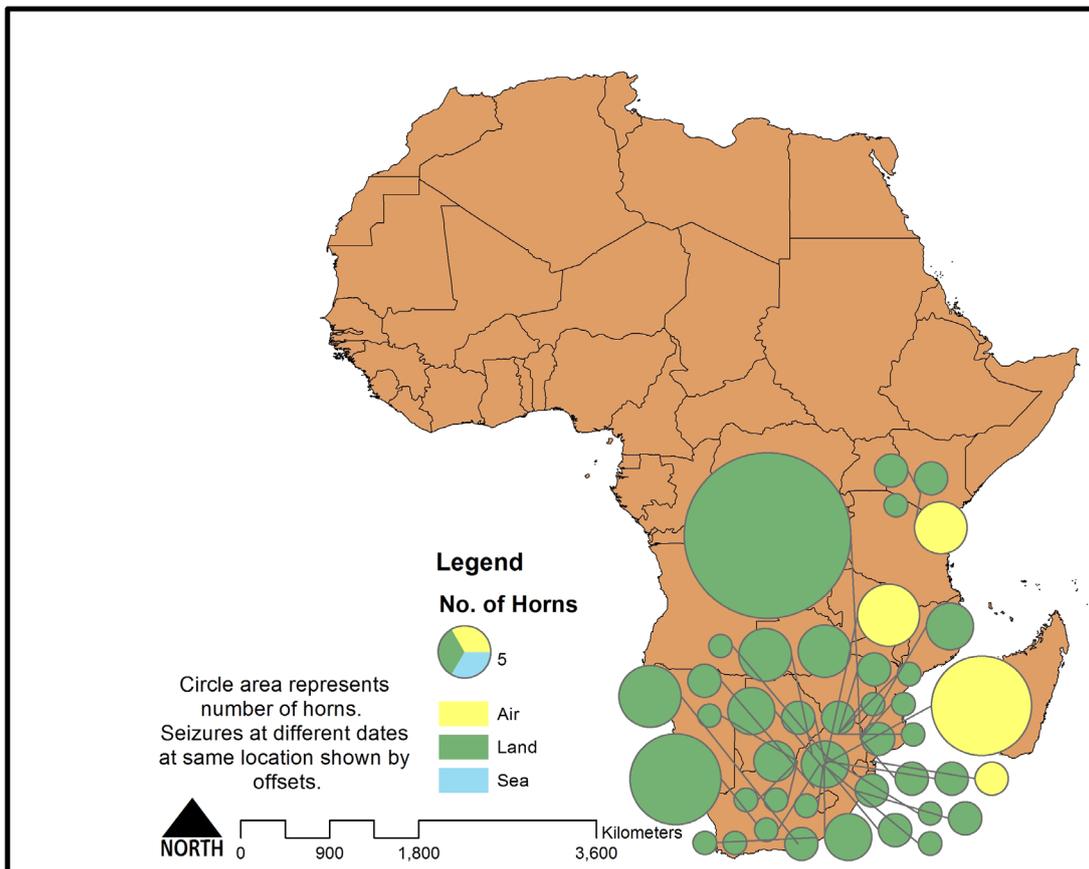


Fig ix. Pangolins seized in Africa, 2008-2013

### Rhino Horn Seizures

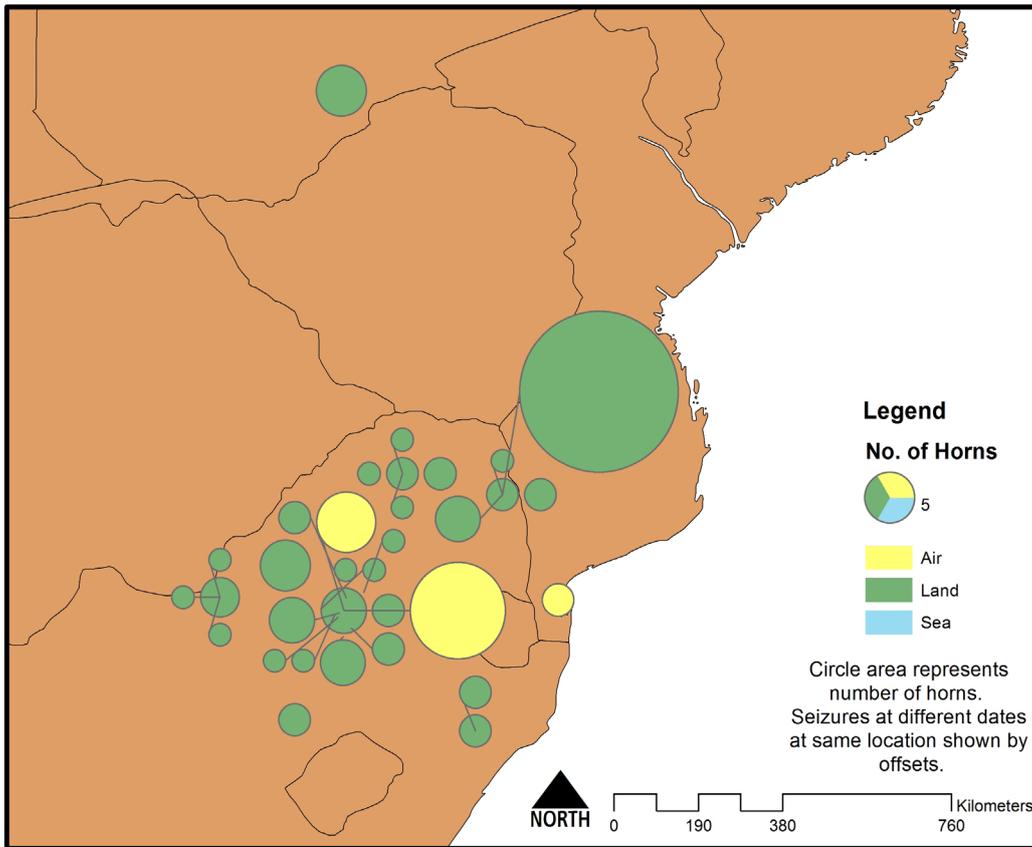


Fig i. Rhino horns seized in southern Africa, 2008-2013

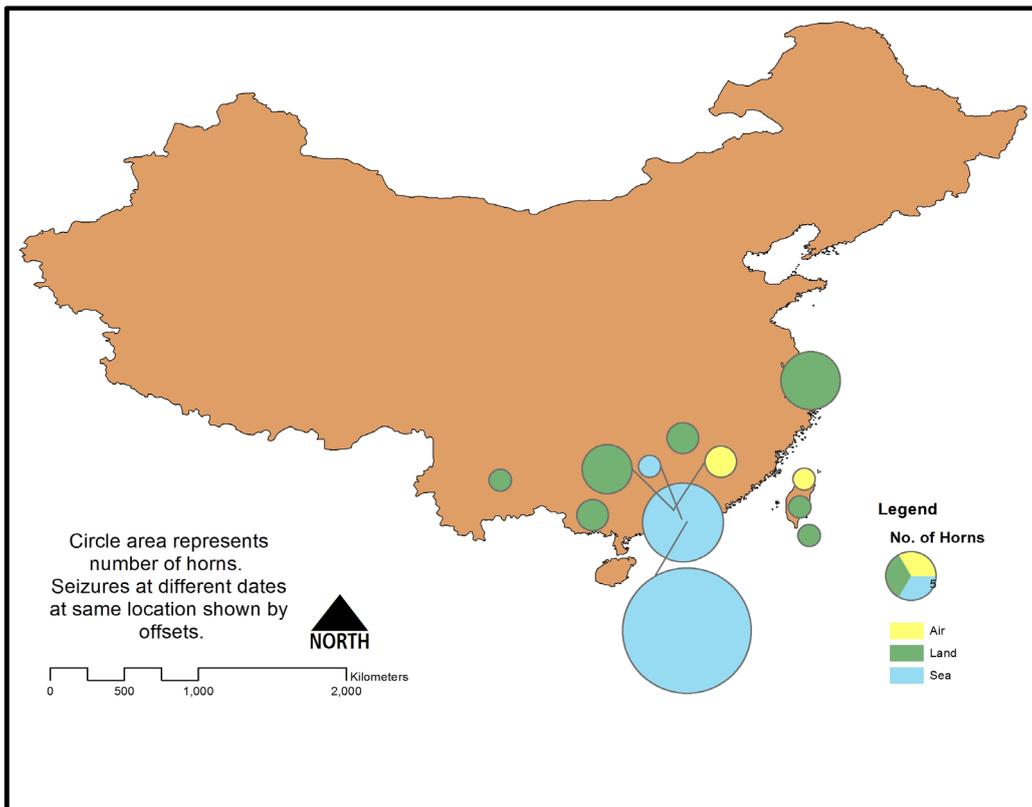


Fig ii. Rhino horns seized in China, 2008-2013

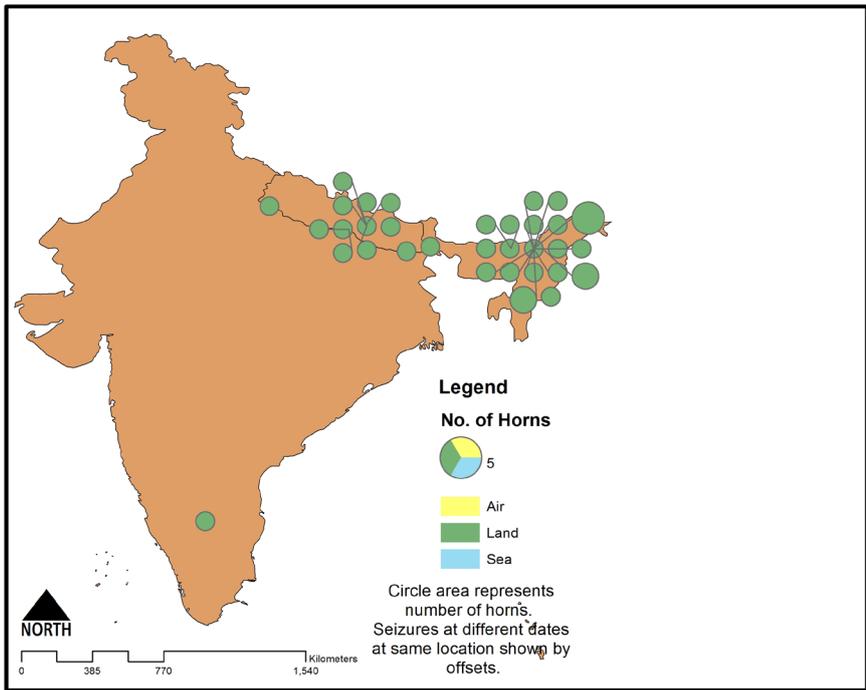


Fig iii. Rhino horns seized in India and Nepal, 2008-2013

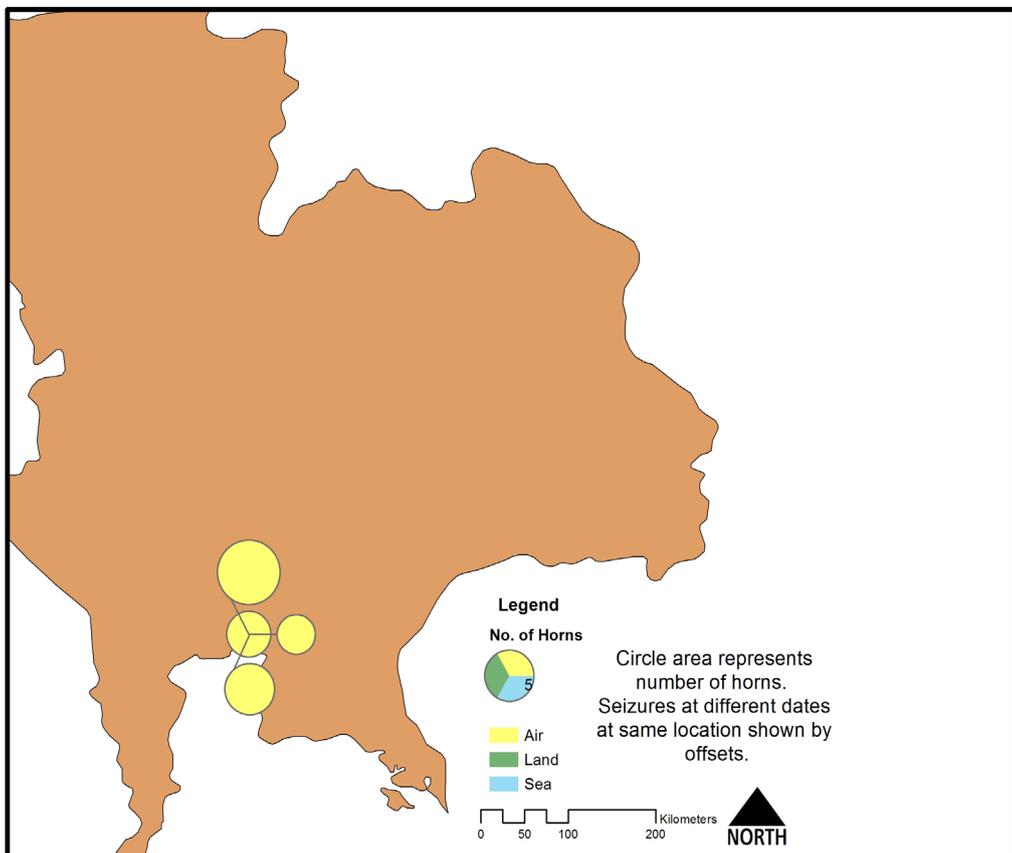


Fig iv. Rhino horns seized in Thailand, 2008-2013

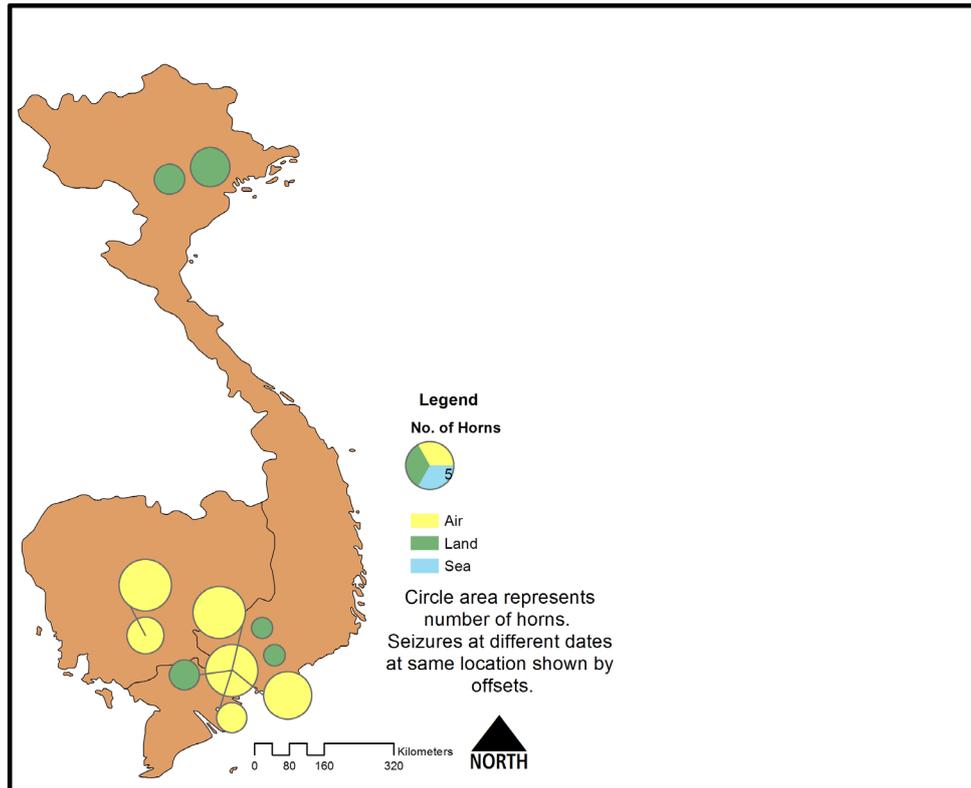


Fig v. Rhino horns seized in Cambodia and Vietnam, 2008-2013

## K. Methodology

*Chapter Summary:* Data selection, collection and analysis methods.

This ongoing study utilizes the following research and analytical methods:

### 1. Data Collection

All the information used in this report is open source.

### 2. Charting and Mapping

Maps were made using a specially developed system utilizing plotting of information from Excel sheets to Google Maps.

### 3. Sampling

Since this report is meant as a representative snapshot, all open source data available up to the cutoff dates has been plotted. Pros and cons of this approach:

- The geographical and quantitative scope of the trade is easily and visually understood.
- Trends in crime are visually understood.
- The magnitude of enforcement response required to reverse the tide is clear.

On the other hand, not all seizures and crimes are reported by the media, or are reported with inaccuracies. This may be due to low priority given to reportage of wildlife crime, or because information is deliberately not released to the press by investigating agencies while the case is open. This may have skewed data into showing lesser crime than actually exists.

The above factor becomes significant when only reported data is used to formulate new policies. For example, initial non-reporting of ivory seizures by Chinese agencies (due to their good confidentiality practices during an ongoing investigation) led to a belief that trafficked levels of ivory were significantly lower than actual levels.

## L. Conclusion

*Chapter Summary:* Closing message.

This report represents over 60 years of pooled experience of Freeland staff working to support government anti-trafficking efforts. The report aims to be a practical tool and an informative overview; it may be considered a ‘snapshot’ of wildlife crime and enforcement today, or as a guide to planning better enforcement activities.

Wildlife crime has grown to become one of the largest international organized crimes, largely because it has been previously ignored or downplayed. With emerging links to national and global security, the importance of ecological

security is now being increasingly recognized. Equally important are the intangible, but rising sentiments of national or regional pride in a shared wildlife heritage, and the determination to not let the greed of a few overshadow the needs of the many.

There is plenty of hope for the future: inclination, determination and perseverance are all that are needed. Serious though wildlife crime may be, it is not unstoppable – as the many examples in the report have shown.

End of Narrative Section

## M. Abbreviations

<b>ARREST</b>	Asia’s Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>ASEAN-WEN</b>	ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network
<b>ASEANAPOL</b>	ASEAN Association of Police Chiefs
<b>BLO</b>	Border Liaison Office
<b>CAWT</b>	Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking
<b>CENcomm</b>	Customs Enforcement Network Communications
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CITES</b>	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna & Flora
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information Systems
<b>HAWEN</b>	Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network
<b>ILEA</b>	International Law Enforcement Academy
<b>IO</b>	International Organization
<b>Lao PDR</b>	Lao People’s Democratic Republic
<b>LATF</b>	Lusaka Agreement Task Force
<b>NCB</b>	National Central Bureau
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Government Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Development
<b>OJT</b>	On the Job Training
<b>PSI</b>	Pharmaceutical Security Institute
<b>SAWEN</b>	South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network
<b>SIG</b>	Special Investigations Group
<b>SOMTC</b>	Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime
<b>TCCC</b>	Transnational Crime Coordination Center
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USFWS</b>	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
<b>USG</b>	United States Government
<b>WCO</b>	World Customs Organization

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## O. Credits and Acknowledgements

### Authors

Onkuri Majumdar

*with*

Steve Galster and Doug Goessman

### Maps

Eric Ash

Cael Anacker

### Data Collection

Bussara Tirakalyanapan

### Editing & Reviewing

Joy Asato Meglasson

Eric Ash

SulmaWarne

### Design

Matthew Pritchett

Shreyana Shrestha

Comments should be directed to: [Onkuri@freeland.org](mailto:Onkuri@freeland.org)

### We are grateful for support from:

ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network

Royal Thai Government

United States Agency for International Development

United States Department of State

United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Save the Tiger Fund

National Geographic Television





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**FREELAND FOUNDATION**  
518/5 Maneeya Center Building,  
8th Floor, Ploenchit Road, Lumpini,  
Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330, THAILAND  
Tel: +662 254 8321 to 3 Fax: +662 254 8324