

THE SMUGGLING OF ANIMALS AND ANIMAL-DERIVED PRODUCTS IN POLAND.

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Introduction

Economic development and technological progress have disturbed the natural balance of our planet. Human have had the greatest impact on the devastation of fauna and flora. The living conditions of many plant and animal species depend on the entire human population. The role of people in using nature for their own purposes keeps increasing from year to year.

The problem of plant and animal smuggling is a global threat. Organized groups of smugglers keep expanding their illegal practices. Tourists have grown indifferent to the disappearance of many biological specimens. Illegal trade in exotic animals in Poland is very widespread. Between 2001 and 2003, 326 exotic animal species were bought. Nearly half of them were protected under the Washington Convention. Species imported to our country most frequently include reptiles, mainly lizards, turtles and crocodiles. Endangered species are brought to Poland mostly from behind the eastern and southern borders.

The increasingly real threat of the extinction of many exotic animal species has driven a number of countries to sign the Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES agencies control international trade in exotic species, specifying the conditions that must be met to ensure that it does not endanger the fauna and flora.

For years illegal trade of exotic species of plants and animals is the great danger for animal and plant population. The main problem with distribution of animals is not the black market but tourists who buy and smuggle endanger animals to their home country. Tourists all around the world want to bring home some souvenirs from vacation. Sometimes this is shell, but sometimes this is snake or parrot. Unfortunately the beautiful shells or carapaces etc. are reason of dead for plenty of species and is the move against the law. in many exotic countries we can found plenty of small shops offering live animals or some products made of it. In '70 it was confirmed that his kind of trade is the straight way to disappear of rare species of animals and plants. Every year we lost more than one thousand species.

To stop that process we should control all animal and plant trade even if they are not endanger but can be dangerous for native species.

Characteristic of polish market

Exotic animals market characterized a huge increase last years. In years 2001/2003 there were 326 legal transactions of buying exotic animals. More than half of it was the animals from the list of Washington Convention. Most of this animals were reptiles, about 155 species:

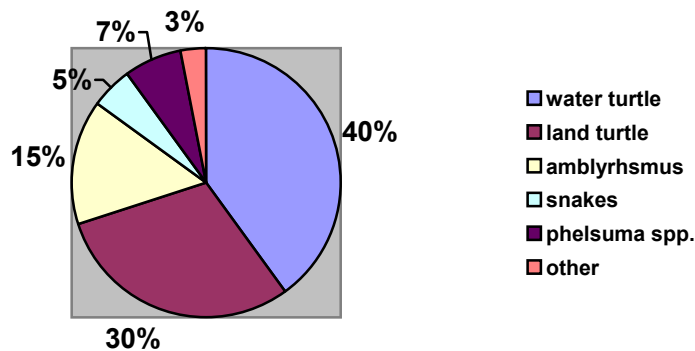
- lizards 83 species (23 from CITES list),
- snakes 47 species (18 from CITES list),
- turtles 22 species (14 from CITES list),
- crocodiles 3 species (all from CITES list)

The second group of animals that are present on market are birds. In Poland we have about 110 species of exotic birds on trade (82 from CITES list). In the smuggled birds the group are parrots at least 65 species.

The third group smuggled animals are arachnoids. We note 43 species on the market with 11 from CITES list, mainly scorpions and tarantulas..

The last group on our market are amphibians, we note 19 species (2 from CITES list). In last “fashion” are small colored frogs origins from South America which are very venomous.

Fig 1. The most common animal breed sales in Poland(5).



Sale of turtles in 2002 year in Poland:

- 84,33% species from CITES list,
- 15,77% others.

Tab. 1. Snake and turtles sale from CITES list in Poland 2002-2003 (5).

Species	2002 year	2003 year
Dark python	26,95%	8,8%
Boa	22,54%	35,1%
Royal python	21,5%	52,6%
Greece turtle	10,13%	22,2%
Steppe turtle	5,64%	74,1%

We can observe a huge increase of illegal import of land turtles especially from the east countries. Thousands of turtles are smuggled to Poland from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine. The rest of smuggled animals origin from Czech republic Hundreds of it dye during transport in small hiding-places out of water, feed or oxygen. After one day of trade we can find hundreds of un sale turtles around in Warsaw spatially in parks The increase on our market in only one year was about 68,46%.

We estimate that 50% of species trade in Poland from the CITES list offered in shops are illegally imported to our country.



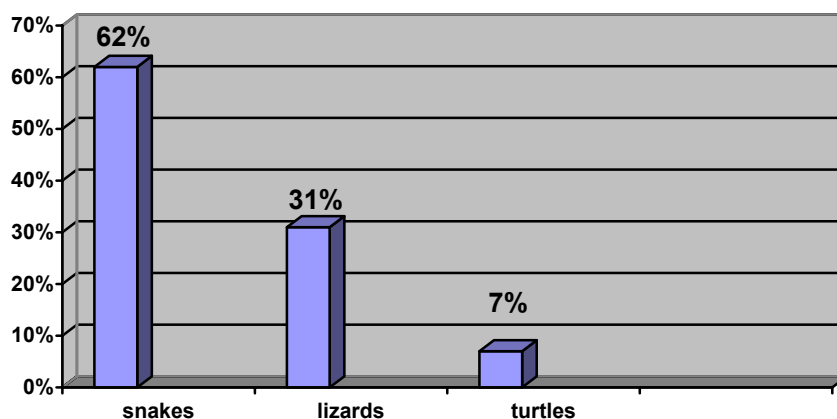
Source: www.wwf.pl/kampanie.

Monitoring of exotic animals sale in 2003 year show that:

- 88,5% of animals had full import and veterinary origin documents, but 11,5% had no documents or import papers due to CITES form
- Snakes come from Africa and mostly have full documentation. Main problem are snakes from illegal import to Poland which have no veterinary or origin CITES documentation. Also sale of skin of crocodile are forbidden on territory of Poland, but only in first six mouths of 2005 year our Custom Office on Okecie Airport have found four skins and two heads and three skulls of it. Those goods were smuggled from USA and Republic of South Africa.
- Arachnoids imported to Poland mostly have no origin CITES documents. The only exception are scorpions from Ghana.

- Better situation we can found in birds. But about 80% of popular species on our market Orion from illegal import from Czech Republic.
 - Sale of monkeys out of ZOO's are always illegal without CITES documents. We note sometimes try of sale on official market, but they are confiscated to ZOO's. Huge group of animals what do not have documents of CITES origin and veterinary treatment are reptiles.

Fig 2. Illegal trade of exotic animals.(5)



Conclusion

In 2004, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Euro RSCG Warsaw agency launched a campaign entitled “Do not buy smuggled animals”. Its aim was to curb trade in endangered animal species. The campaign resulted in amendments to the law which will help fight smuggling more effectively in the future. Nearly half of the Polish society learned about the scale of the problem. Controls on the internal market have been reinforced. The main intention of the World Wildlife Fund was to show people the consequences of ill-considered purchases and to demonstrate the huge impact of the society on the extinction of plants and animals. We must teach all tourists about endanger species before they buy or bring an animals home from their vacation.

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