

TOP TEN ANIMALS IN TROUBLE FROM THE WILDLIFE TRADE

African grey parrots, *Psittacus erithacus* are found in the rainforests of west and central Africa. They often forage on the ground for palm nuts, seeds, fruits, leaves, and sometimes snails. They are classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as vulnerable (VU) because of habitat degradation and the pet trade. Thousands are taken out of the wild each year for their feathers and, because of their intelligence and ability to mimic human speech, as pets. Though they may be sold as captive-born, most of the parent birds are wild-caught.

Chimpanzees, *Pan troglodytes* are found in the forests and woodlands of equatorial Africa. In addition to tool use, they are known to plan hunts and organize attacks against their rivals. Their populations are steadily declining, and the species is classified as endangered (EN). The causes are multifactorial and include habitat loss (deforestation as human populations rise) plus the pet trade and the bush meat (hunting of wildlife for food) trade, the latter of which have been known to introduce them (and us) to fatal infectious diseases.

Asian Elephants, *Elephas maximus*, are found in India and Southeast Asia, and African Elephants, *Loxodonta Africana* (savanna elephant) and *Loxodonta cyclotis* (forest elephant) in sub-Saharan Africa. The largest land mammal, they communicate by making sounds that range from low-frequency rumbles we are unable to hear, to high-pitched, high-volume trumpet calls. All three species are in trouble: Asian elephants are endangered (EN), the African forest elephant is critically endangered (EN-CR), and the savanna elephant endangered (EN). These declines are the result of conflict with humans, often over farmland and crop destruction, loss of habitat, and the wildlife trade. Dozens of elephants die each day in Africa for their ivory which is made of the same materials (enamel and dentin) as our teeth.

Hawksbill sea turtles, *Eretmochelys imbricata* are critically endangered (EN-CR) – as are all seven species of sea turtle. They are found in oceans worldwide where they spend most of their time before returning to the beaches where they were hatched to lay their own eggs. Like many egg-laying reptiles, warmer sand temperatures in the nest produce female hatchlings, cooler ones produce males. Climate change threatens this balance. The Hawksbill and other sea turtles are in trouble because of over-harvesting their eggs and meat for food and their shells for carvings and jewelry, and because of by-catch.

Lions, *Panthera leo* were once common in sub-Saharan Africa. Now they are considered vulnerable to extinction (VU) throughout their range and are no longer found in many areas. Unlike most cats which are solitary, lions are highly social. The move and hunt together. Related females in a pride will even nurse each other's cubs. Lions are in trouble because of trophy hunting for their pelts, claws, and teeth, the bush meat (hunting of wildlife for food) trade, the trade in lion bones for traditional Chinese medicine, habitat loss, and conflict with humans over livestock predation.

There are eight species of Pangolins, four in Asia (*Manis* species) which are critically endangered (EN-CR) and four in Africa (two *Phataginus* species and two *Smutsia* species) which are vulnerable to extinction (VU). Pangolins are like anteaters with very long tongues and no teeth; like birds, they have a thick stomach wall that helps to grind up their diet of ants and termites. They are the most trafficked mammal in the world, for their meat in ceremonial dishes and their scales in traditional medicine and for jewelry.

Red and green macaws, or green-winged macaws, *Ara chloropterus* are found in tropical forests and woodlands of southern Central America and northern to mid-South America. Their diet in the wild includes clay, which they eat to counteract the toxins found in many of their preferred foods, including cashews and palm fruit. Though their population numbers are high enough to keep them off the endangered species list (they are considered of least concern, LC) they are increasingly in trouble from the pet trade.

There are five species of rhinoceros. Each has distinctive features that reflect their habitat. In sub-Saharan Africa, the critically endangered (EN-CR) Black Rhino, *Diceros bicornis* has a prehensile upper lip for browsing leaves and branches. White Rhinos, *Ceratotherium simum* which are near threatened (NT), have wide, flat lips for grazing. Both species have hard footpads, like horse hooves, for running on hard ground. The rhinos of tropical Asia include the vulnerable (VU) greater one-horned or Asian Rhino, *Rhinoceros unicornis*, and the critically endangered (EN-CR) Javan Rhino, *Rhinoceros sondaicus* and Sumatran Rhino, *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*. Rhinos are killed for their horn, which is used in traditional Chinese medicine and for decorative carvings, even though it is made of the same material, keratin, as our nails and hair.

Sharks are found worldwide and include 536 species. Nearly 40% are threatened with extinction. All have an excellent sense of taste and can detect tiny amounts of chemicals in water– as little as one drop of blood; they can also pick up electrical signals as tiny as those created by the muscles of their prey. Dozens of species of shark are being driven to extinction because of “finning,” the harvesting of just their fins for soup, including Great Hammerhead Sharks, *Sphyrna mokarran*, Thresher Sharks, *Alopias species*, and Whale Sharks, *Rhincodon typus*.

There are six sub-species of Tiger, *Panthera tigris* throughout Asia. All are endangered (EN) for a variety of reasons. Habitat loss and conflict with humans over livestock is one reason, similar to other large predators. But in addition, tigers are in trouble because of a long tradition of trophy hunting for pelts, teeth, claws; for tiger parts including bones used to make ceremonial wind and traditional medicine, despite lack of evidence that they produce health benefits; and as pets for “tiger selfies.” Tigers socialize through scent-markings and scratch marks; one male’s territory may overlap that of many females.