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Key Facts

- Globally, the illegal trade in wildlife is worth £5 billion annually.
- Wildlife crime is a problem in London; the capital is a major hub for Europe's illegal trade in endangered species. The Metropolitan Police have seized over 30,000 endangered species items under Operation Charm. The majority were traditional Chinese medicines, including products made from **tigers, rhinos and bears**.
- The world's largest seizure of Shahtoosh shawls took place in 1998, in London's Mayfair. It is estimated that 1,000 critically endangered Tibetan antelope were killed to supply these shawls. There are only 50,000 **Tibetan antelope** in the world.
- The world's largest seizure of **rhino horn**, valued at several million pounds, occurred in 1996 in Kensington, London.
- The international traditional Chinese medicine market is expanding by 18 per cent per year. Although the vast majority of traditional medicines are legal, those which contain certain protected species are not. This rapid growth threatens the survival of a number of endangered species, both animals and plants, and has been cited as the biggest single threat to the continued existence of the **tiger**.
- Despite a global ivory trade ban, **elephants** continue to be poached in Africa and Asia for their tusks. The Metropolitan Police Wildlife Crime Unit has seized thousands of pounds worth of new ivory and ivory products, some of them manufactured in the UK.



Examples of traditional medicine products using bear bile.



Example of a rhino horn and traditional medicine containing rhino horn.



Black rhino in South Africa.

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- **Bear bile** is crudely and painfully extracted from caged bears in farms across China and Vietnam. Attitude surveys showed 70 per cent of the Chinese public would not use products containing bear bile if they understood the level of cruelty involved in bear farming. There are at least 54 traditional herbal alternatives to bear bile.



A caged Asiatic moon bear, used for bear bile farming, at the Nan Ping Bear Farm, Zhuhai, China.

- Approximately 40 adult male **musk deer** must be killed to produce one kilogram of musk.
- Despite the highest protection under international and domestic wildlife laws, India is losing its battle to save the **tiger**. Last year it was discovered that every single one of the tigers in the Sariska National Park in Rajasthan - where there was thought to be up to 24 of these big cats - had been poached.



Siberian musk deer
Moscow region, Russia

- Ounce for ounce, many endangered species products, including **musk, bear bile and rhino horn**, cost more than gold.

- Wildlife crime is serious. In 2000, a North London man was sentenced to six months imprisonment for selling taxidermy specimens of endangered species. A police search of his Islington shop led to the seizure of over 80 specimens, including **tigers, gorillas, chimpanzees, leopards, sea turtles** and many **endangered birds**. All of these were new items.

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- **Illegal wildlife trade kills animals – and people.**

Tragically, rangers employed to protect wildlife often end up paying with their lives. For example, in the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 209 rangers have been killed on duty in the past ten years. In India, 37 forest staff have been killed on duty in the last seven years.



Example of a traditional medicine product using tiger bone.

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