

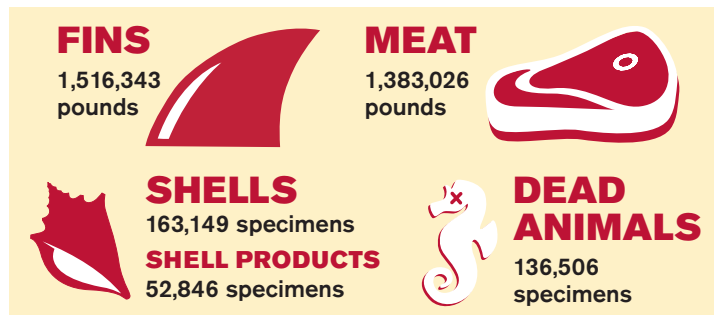


**ILLEGAL WILDLIFE PRODUCTS** come in all shapes and sizes. To better understand the illicit trade in these products and identify trafficking trends, Defenders of Wildlife analyzed data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement Management Information System on wildlife shipments exported from Latin America and denied entry to the United States from 2005 to 2014. The analysis showed that U.S. ports of entry turned away 64 different types of wildlife products, including live and dead animals, totaling 620,014 individual items, 54,886 live animals and 3 million pounds of wildlife and wildlife products.

### Top 5 Products by Volume

Sixty-four different types of wildlife and wildlife products were exported from Latin America. The most common exports were fins, meat, shells, dead animals and shell products (Figure 1). Two of the top five products, fins and meat, were measured by weight. The other three—shells, dead animals and shell products—were measured in number of items.

Figure 1. Top Products by Volume



### Fins

Fins were found in 16 shipments, made up of 26 individual segments and totaling 1,516,343 pounds. Shark fins (mostly blue and scalloped hammerhead) made up 1,476,603 pounds of the total (97.3 percent). Shark fins are commonly used in shark fin soup, but also in pills, powders, supplements and other derivative products.

In terms of the volume of fins shipped, Belize to Miami, Florida was the top trade route with 1,476,546 pounds (97.3 percent). Belize was also the top exporter by volume with 1,476,546 pounds in total (97.3 percent). Miami denied the highest volume of fins: 1,476,574 pounds (97.3 percent).

The highest volume of fins denied entry was 1,478,559 pounds (97.5 percent) in 2014. The most shipments denied entry in a year was three in both 2009 and 2015.

In 2005 and 2006, no shipments were denied entry thus the volume of fins was zero.

All but eight pounds of the fins were sourced from the wild (effectively 100 percent). All but eight pounds of the fins were imported for commercial purposes (effectively 100 percent). Of the eight pounds imported for personal purposes, all would truly be considered personal imports as opposed to imports declared as personal but falling under the commercial volume criteria.<sup>1</sup>

### Meat

Meat was found in 2,367 shipments, made up of 2,434 individual segments and totaling 1,383,026 pounds. Queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) meat made up 625,771 pounds of the total (45.2 percent). Queen conch meat is consumed in various forms, including raw and fried.

In terms of the volume of meat shipped, the trade route from Argentina to Seattle, Washington saw the highest volume of meat with 618,989 pounds (44.7 percent). Argentina was also the highest volume exporter overall with 618,990 pounds (44.7 percent). Seattle denied the highest volume of meat with 618,989 pounds (44.7 percent).

The highest annual volume of meat denied entry was 635,482 pounds (45.9 percent) in 2013, while the largest number of shipments containing meat was 609 in 2014. The lowest annual volume of meat denied entry was 2,299 pounds (0.1 percent) in 2005. The smallest number of shipments containing meat was 102 in 2005. Interestingly, the annual number of shipments containing meat denied entry increased steadily from 102 in 2005 to 609 in 2014.

<sup>1</sup>50 C.F.R. 14.4, Importation, Exportation, and Transportation of Wildlife ("There is a presumption that either or more similar unused items are for commercial use.").

## TRENDS IN THE TRADE OF WILDLIFE PRODUCTS FROM LATIN AMERICA TO THE UNITED STATES

Almost all of the meat, 1,349,109 pounds (97.5 percent), was sourced from the wild. Almost all of it, 1,371,959 pounds (99.2 percent), was imported for commercial purposes. Of the 11,014 pounds (0.8 percent) imported for personal purposes, 4,735 pounds (0.3 percent) would truly be considered personal.

### Shells

Shells were found in 894 shipments, made up of 1,024 individual segments and totaling 163,149 shells. Queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) shells made up 148,182 of the total number of shells (90.8 percent). Queen conch shells are used to make jewelry and decorative items.

In terms of the volume of shells shipped, the top trade route was from the Bahamas to Miami with 107,954 shells (66.1 percent). The Bahamas also exported the highest volume of shells in total with 108,124 (66.2 percent). Out of all the ports of entry, Miami denied entry to the highest volume of shells: 132,390 (81.1 percent).

The highest volume of shells denied entry in a year was 33,665 (20.6 percent) in 2012, while the largest number of shipments containing shells was 121 in 2005. The lowest annual volume of shells denied entry was 1,243 (0.7 percent) in 2007. The smallest number of shipments containing shells was 63 in 2008.

Almost all of the shells, 159,967, were sourced from the wild (98 percent). Similarly, 154,104 shells (94.4 percent) were imported for commercial purposes. Of the 9,308 shells (5.7 percent) imported for personal purposes only 1,213 (0.7 percent) would truly be considered personal.

### Dead Animals

Whole dead animals were found in 1,590 shipments, made up of 1,920 individual segments and totaling 136,506 animals. No particular kind of animal made up a majority, however frogs and butterflies were both common (27.2 percent and 15.5 percent respectively).

In terms of the volume of dead animals shipped, the trade route from Mexico to Nogales, Arizona was the most common with 38,497 animals (28.2 percent). Along the same lines, Mexico was the highest volume

exporter with 72,567 dead animals in total (53.1 percent). Meanwhile, Nogales denied entry to the highest volume of dead animals with 38,407 in total (28.1 percent).

The highest annual volume of dead animals denied entry was 58,042 (42.5 percent) in 2014, while the largest number of shipments containing dead animals was 270 in 2011. The lowest volume of dead animals denied entry annually was 2,010 (1.4 percent) in 2005. The smallest number of shipments containing shells was 114 in 2014.

The majority of the dead animals, 124,002, were sourced from the wild (90.8 percent), and a majority 107,336 (78.6 percent) were imported for commercial purposes. Of the 16,513 dead animals (12.1 percent) imported for personal purposes, only 1,895 (1.3 percent) would truly be considered personal.

### Shell Products

Shell products were found in 197 shipments, made up of 226 individual segments and totaling 52,846 shells products. Sea urchin shells made up 22,002 of these shell products (41.6 percent), almost all of which were derived from sea biscuit urchins (*Clypeaster* genus).

In terms of the volume of shell products shipped, the top trade route was from Brazil to Memphis, Tennessee with 10,661 shell products (20.1 percent). However, Haiti was the highest volume exporter with 29,913 shell products (56.6 percent), and Miami denied entry to the highest volume of shell products, 37,152 (70.3 percent).

The highest volume of shell products denied entry annually was 29,336 (55.5 percent) in 2012, while the largest number of shipments containing shell products was 29 in 2007. The lowest volume of shell products denied entry annually was 251 (0.4 percent) in 2011. The smallest number of shipments containing shells was nine in 2011.

Almost all of the shell products, 51,968, were sourced from the wild (98.3 percent), and almost all, 51,553 (97.5 percent), were imported for commercial purposes. Of the 1,094 shell products (2 percent) imported for personal purposes, some 916 of them (1.7 percent) would truly be considered personal.

---

For more information please contact: Alejandra Goyenechea, [agoyenechea@defenders.org](mailto:agoyenechea@defenders.org)

For a full report on combating wildlife trafficking from Latin America to the United States, more fact sheets and updates on the illegal wildlife trade, visit [www.defenders.org/combating-wildlife-trafficking](http://www.defenders.org/combating-wildlife-trafficking)