TRENDS IN GLOBAL WILDLIFE IMPORTS DENIED ENTRY TO THE UNITED STATES

THE UNITED STATES is one of the largest consumer and transit countries for wildlife and wildlife products in the world. It also has one of the most comprehensive wildlife trade databases in the world, the Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS), which records imports and exports of wildlife. Defenders of Wildlife analyzed LEMIS data from 2005 to 2014, during which time some 49,334 imported shipments from around the world were denied entry into the United States by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Office of Law Enforcement. These seized, re-exported or abandoned shipments contained at least 5.5 million individual wildlife parts and products, over 660,000 individual animals and more than 4.8 million pounds of meat, fins and caviar.

STEVE HILLEBRAND/USFWS

Most Common U.S. Ports of Entry

Wildlife imports were denied entry at 64 U.S. ports of entry. The three most common ports of entry—San Francisco, California, Anchorage, Alaska, and El Paso, Texas—each denied just over 8 percent of the shipments for a combined total of 24.5 percent of all shipments (Table 1). Of the top five ports of entry, all are designated by FWS for the import and export of wildlife goods with the exception of El Paso.

Table 1. Top U.S. Ports of Entry by Shipment

Rank	U.S. Port of Entry	Number of Shipments	Percentage of Shipments
1	San Francisco	4,095	8.3%
2	Anchorage	4,042	8.1%
3	El Paso	4,021	8.1%
4	Los Angeles	3,729	7.5%
5	New York	3,254	6.6%

Most Common Countries of Export

The country of export is the country that exported the shipment directly to the United States, which is not necessarily the country where the shipment originated. Of the 214 countries and territories found in the data set analyzed, the top five countries of export accounted for 47 percent of all shipments. Mexico exported the most (19 percent); China and Canada were close behind (10.3 percent and 9.6 percent respectively) (Table 2).

Table 2. Top Countries of Export by Shipment

Rank	Country of Export	Number of Shipments	Percentage of Shipments
1	Mexico	9,386	19.0%
2	China	5,117	10.3%
3	Canada	4,763	9.6%
4	Indonesia	2,128	4.3%
5	Philippines	1,921	3.8%

Most Common Genera

Because 45.6 percent of the data did not include a species identification, the five most commonly identified genera are used to best represent the kinds of animals found in the shipments (Table 3). No one genus was particularly common, with the top five combined making up only 18.4 percent of the data.

Table 3. Top Genera

Rank	Genera	Number of Segments	Percentage of Segments
1	Unknown/Blank	3,172	4.3%
2	Python	2,989	4.0%
3	Crocodylus	2,956	4.0%
4	Odocoileus	2,330	3.1%
5	Alligator	2,232	3.0%

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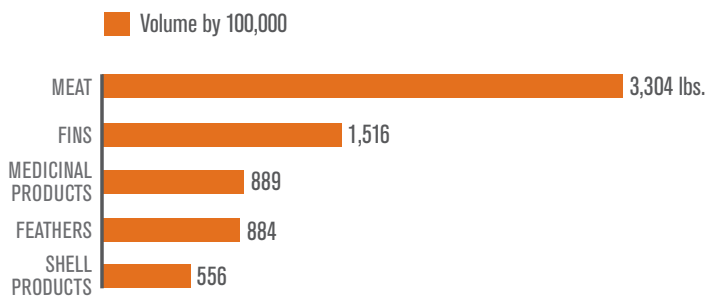
Most Common Purpose of Import

The data contained 11 different purposes of import. However, the vast majority of all shipments fell into one of two categories: personal (53.4 percent) or commercial (40 percent). The remaining nine categories amounted to only 6.6 percent combined.

Most Common Products by Volume

The data set contained records of 77 different types of wildlife parts and products, including live and dead animals, measured in 10 different units. When compared, meat and fins (measured in pounds) were present in the highest volumes (Figure 1). Medicinal products, feathers and shell products (measured in number of items) were the remaining top-five products.
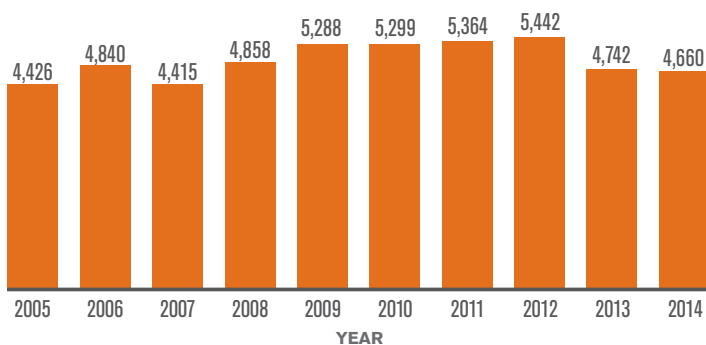
Figure 1. Top Products by Volume

Volume by 100,000

Product	Volume
MEAT	3,304 lbs.
FINS	1,516
MEDICINAL PRODUCTS	889
FEATHERS	884
SHELL PRODUCTS	556

Annual Trends

In the last decade, the number of imported wildlife shipments denied clearance each year ranged from 4,415 to 5,442, with an annual average of 4,933 shipments (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Number of Imported Wildlife Shipments Denied Clearance Annually 2005–2014

Year	Shipments
2005	4,426
2006	4,840
2007	4,415
2008	4,858
2009	5,288
2010	5,299
2011	5,364
2012	5,442
2013	4,742
2014	4,660

Most Common Taxonomic Classes

The data contained animals from 11 different taxonomic classes of animals. Alone, the top two classes made up over half the data, while the top five classes combined made up 88 percent of the data (Table 4).

Table 4. Top Taxonomic Classes

Rank	Class	Number of Segments	Percentage of Segments
1	Mammalia	20,813	28.3%
2	Reptilia	19,900	27.0%
3	Mollusks	8,945	12.1%
4	Cnidaria	7,933	10.7%
5	Aves	7,333	9.9%

Regional Breakdown

The data contained imports from every region of the world, including Antarctica and the High Seas. The top three regions—Asia, North America and Europe—exported 80.3 percent of all shipments denied clearance (Table 5).

Table 5. Exporting Regions by Shipment

Rank	Region	Number of Shipments	Percentage of Shipments
1	Asia	18,545	37.5%
2	North America	14,184	28.7%
3	Europe	6,980	14.1%
4	Latin America	3,939	7.9%
5	Africa	2,855	5.7%
6	Oceania	2,632	5.3%

Most Common Trade Routes

While the raw number of shipments exported from a particular country or imported to a particular port of entry is helpful, identifying the most common trade routes requires looking at both the country of export and the port of entry (Table 6).

Table 6. Most Common Trade Routes

Rank	Country of Export	Port of Entry	Number of Shipments	Percentage of Shipments
1	Mexico	El Paso, TX	3,614	7.3%
2	Mexico	Nogales, AZ	1,616	3.2%
3	China	San Francisco, CA	1,557	3.1%
4	China	Anchorage, AK	1,296	2.6%
5	Mexico	Laredo, TX	1,151	2.3%

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For updates, visit www.defenders.org/combating-wildlife-trafficking