



ILLEGAL WILDLIFE PRODUCTS come in all shapes and sizes and enter the United States from all over the world. To better understand this illicit trade 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 denied entry to the United States from 2005 to 2014. The analysis showed that U.S. ports of entry turned away 77 different types of wildlife products, including live and dead animals, and yielded useful information about these products and their trade.

Top 5 Products by Volume

The data on wildlife shipments denied entry to the United States revealed the top five products by volume (Figure 1). Two of the top products, meat and fins, were measured by weight, while the remaining three, medicinal products, feathers and shellfish were measured in the number of items.



Meat

Meat was found in 4,701 shipments, made up of 5,077 individual segments and totaling 3,304,743 pounds.

Mollusk meat (mostly queen conch and giant clam) made up 2,938,927 pounds of the total (88.9 percent). Both queen conch and giant clam meat are eaten in various forms, including raw and fried.

Mexico was the most common country of export for meat products with 1,233 exported shipments (26.2 percent). Meanwhile, Miami, Florida, was the most common port of entry with 782 shipments of meat denied entry (16.6 percent). However, the most common trade route—country of export to port of entry—was Haiti to Miami with 523 shipments (11.1 percent). The number of shipments containing meat

denied entry was lowest in 2005 (318 shipments) and highest in 2014 (849 shipments).

The majority of the meat, 2,935,230 pounds (88.8 percent), was sourced from the wild. Almost all of the meat, 3,281,855 pounds (99.3 percent), was imported for commercial purposes. Of the 17,387 pounds (5.2 percent) imported for personal purposes, only 5,874 pounds (0.1 percent) would truly be considered personal while the others would actually be considered commercial.¹



Fins

Fins were found in 59 shipments, made up of 68 individual segments and totaling 1,516,837 pounds. With such a high volume of fins uncovered in so few shipments, the data indicates that the average volume of fins per shipment was 25,709 pounds. Shark fins (mostly from sharks of the *Carcharhinidae* family) made up 1,476,777 pounds of the total (97.3 percent). Shark fins are commonly used for shark fin soup, but also used in pills, powders, supplements and other derivative products.

China was the most common country of export for fins with 15 exported shipments (25.4 percent). Meanwhile, San

Figure 1. Top Five Products by Volume



¹50 C.F.R. 14.4, Importation, Exportation, and Transportation of Wildlife (“There is a presumption that eight or more similar unused items are for commercial use.”).

TRENDS IN THE TRADE OF WILDLIFE PRODUCTS DENIED ENTRY TO THE UNITED STATES

San Francisco, California, was the most common port of entry with 25 shipments of fins denied entry (42.3 percent). Two common trade routes emerged: China to San Francisco and Belize to Miami. Three years, 2007, 2008 and 2011, each saw only one shipment containing fins denied entry. The number of shipments denied entry was the highest in 2014 (15 shipments).

Almost all of the fins, 1,516,824 pounds (effectively 100 percent), were sourced from the wild. The remaining 13 pounds were from unknown sources, although likely also taken from the wild as no legal captive sources for fins exist. Almost all of the fins, 1,516,530 pounds (99.9 percent), were imported for commercial purposes. A very limited volume of fins, 303 pounds (0.02 percent) were imported for personal purposes, although only 19 pounds (effectively 0 percent) of those would truly be considered personal.

Medicinal Products

Medicinal products were found in 3,983 shipments, made up of 4,960 individual segments and totaling 889,127 items.

Medicinal products from seals made up 532,347 of the products (59.8 percent). Seal fat is used topically and orally in traditional medicine to treat a variety of ailments, while seal oil is used as a health supplement.

China was the most common country of export for medicinal products with 2,285 exported shipments (57.3 percent). San Francisco was the most common port of entry with 1,572 shipments denied entry there (39.4 percent). In this case, the most common country of export and port of entry also made up the most common trade route with 1,235 shipments (31 percent) traveling from China to San Francisco. The number of shipments containing medicinal products that were denied entry was lowest in 2005 (254 shipments) and highest in 2009 (596 shipments).

A majority of the medicinal products, 739,309 (83.1 percent), were sourced from the wild. Most of the medicinal products, 550,662 (61.9 percent), were imported for commercial purposes. However, of the 337,727 (37.9 percent) products declared as personal, only 5,225 (0.5 percent) would truly be considered personal.

Feathers

Feathers were found in 1,229 shipments, made up of 2,238 individual segments and totaling 884,504

feathers. Feathers from fowl (mostly peacocks) made up 705,174 of the total feathers (79.7 percent). Peacock feathers are commonly used as for fly-fishing lures, decorative items and jewelry.

Canada was the most common country of export for feathers with 423 exported shipments (34.4 percent). Chicago, Illinois, was the most common port of entry with 98 shipments denied entry there (7.9 percent). The most common trade route was from Canada to Anchorage, Alaska, with 55 shipments (4.4 percent). The low number of shipments in the top trade routes indicates that the trade in feathers is widespread across many different routes, rather than one dominant route. The number of shipments containing feathers that were denied entry was lowest in 2006 and 2007 (90 shipments in each year). The number of shipments denied entry was highest in 2014 (179 shipments).

Less than half of the feathers, 331,734 (37.5 percent), were sourced from the wild. The vast majority of the feathers, 868,465 (98.1 percent), were imported for commercial purposes. Of the 11,587 feathers (1.3 percent) declared for personal purposes, only 1,992 feathers (0.2 percent) would truly be considered personal imports.

Shell Products

Shell products were found in 2,022 shipments, made up of 2,395 individual segments and totaling 556,949 shell products. Shell products made from mollusks (commonly known as seashells) made up 231,892 of the products (41.6 percent). Shell products made from mollusks are often used to make jewelry and decorative items such as lamps and picture frames.

The Philippines was the most common country of export for shell products with 273 exported shipments (13.5 percent). Anchorage was the most common port of entry with 426 shipments denied entry there (21 percent). The most common trade route was from China to Anchorage with 127 shipments (6.2 percent). The number of shipments containing shell products was lowest in 2013 (202 shipments) and highest in 2005 (314 shipments).

The majority of the shell products, 512,702 (92 percent), were sourced from the wild. Almost all of the shell products, 551,328 (98.9 percent), were imported for commercial purposes. Of the 5,592 (1 percent) products declared as personal, only 974 (0.17 percent) would truly be considered personal.

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