



THE ILLEGAL TRADE IN LIVE ANIMALS is a booming business involving pet stores, collectors and individuals seeking exotic species from around the world. To get a handle on this trade, Defenders of Wildlife analyzed data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Law Enforcement Management Information System on wildlife shipments containing live animals that were denied entry to the United States from 2005 to 2014. During this decade, some 3,726 shipments containing more than 330,000 live animals—animals that died during transport included—were denied entry to the United States. Depending on the species, as many as three animals may die for every one that makes it to the buyer alive,¹ which means that based on this data, another 990,000 animals likely did not survive other legs of the journey to the United States.

Top 5 Ports of Entry

Live animal imports were denied at 53 (out of 64) U.S. ports of entry. Nogales, Arizona is the only port of entry in the top five that is not designated by FWS for the import and export of wildlife (Table 1).

Table 1. Top 5 Ports of Entry by Shipment

Rank	Port of Entry	Number of Shipments	Percentage of Shipments
1	Los Angeles, CA	1,737	46.6%
2	Miami, FL	423	11.3%
3	San Francisco, CA	259	6.9%
4	Nogales, AZ	212	5.6%
5	New York, NY	163	4.3%

Top 5 Countries of Export

Live animal imports denied entry to the United States were exported from 130 countries and territories. Indonesia stood out as the top country of export, mainly exporting coral. Together, the top five countries of export exported 63 percent of live animal shipments denied entry to the United States (Table 2).

Table 2. Top 5 Countries of Export

Rank	Country of Export	Number of Shipments	Percentage of Shipments
1	Indonesia	1,294	34.7%
2	Mexico	509	13.6%
3	Canada	192	5.1%
4	Australia	182	4.8%
5	Tonga	177	4.7%

Top 5 Trade Routes

Indonesia to Los Angeles emerged as the top trade route for more than a quarter of all shipments of live animals (Table 3). This trade route was particularly popular for coral shipments. California was the top destination for shipments containing live animals. A total of 2,091 shipments (56.1 percent) were denied entry at ports located in California (Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego).

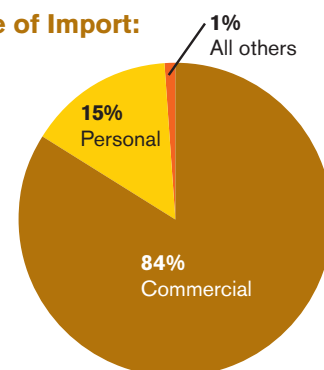
Table 3. Top 5 Trade Routes

Rank	Country of Export	Port of Entry	Number of Shipments	Percentage of Shipments
1	Indonesia	Los Angeles, CA	974	26.1%
2	Mexico	Nogales, AZ	212	5.6%
3	Tonga	Los Angeles, CA	158	4.2%
4	Australia	Los Angeles, CA	152	4.0%
5	Indonesia	San Francisco, CA	111	2.9%

Purpose of Import

While the vast majority of live animal imports denied entry to the United States were imported for commercial (84 percent) or personal (15 percent) purposes, these shipments also contained animals destined for biomedical research, circuses, science, zoos, breeding and education (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Purpose of Import: By Segment



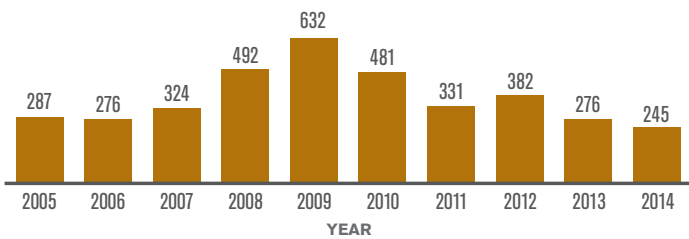
¹Based on analyses by Wildlife Conservation Society, Defenders of Wildlife, Born Free USA

TRENDS IN THE GLOBAL LIVE ANIMAL TRADE DENIED ENTRY TO THE UNITED STATES

Annual Trends

Live animal imports were denied entry every year from 2005 to 2014 (Figure 2). The number of denied imports peaked in 2009 (632 shipments) and was at its lowest in 2014 (245 shipments). The annual average was 372 shipments.

Figure 2. Number of Live Animal Shipments Denied Entry Annually 2005–2014



Top 5 Types of Animals Traded²

Seventy-four different generic name categories (categories describing common types of animals) were present in the data. Together, the top five generic name categories contained 175,986 individual animals, 52.9 percent of all individual animals shipped (Table 4).

Table 4. Top 5 Generic Name Categories by Volume

Rank	Generic Name	Number of Individuals	Percentage of Individuals
1	Tropical Fish	53,799	16.2%
2	Turtle	44,916	13.5%
3	Coral	33,505	10.1%
4	Slider	23,764	7.1%
5	Python	18,088	5.4%

Tropical Fish

Shipments containing tropical fish were frequently exported from Thailand, Indonesia, and Bermuda, and frequently denied at the ports of Atlanta, Miami, and New York. No one trade route was particularly common. Almost all of the fish were imported for commercial purposes (99.8 percent). Of the 53,799 tropical fish in the shipments, 2,427 died during transit (one in 22). More than one-fourth (27.1 percent) of the fish were sourced from the wild, while the majority (72.6 percent) were bred in captivity or farmed. The number of tropical fish denied import annually fluctuated from 95 individuals in 2008 to 22,584 in 2005.

²Top generic name categories excluding data outliers

Turtles

Shipments containing turtles were most commonly exported from Mexico and China and denied at the ports of El Paso and Miami. No one trade route was particularly common. Almost all of the turtles were imported for commercial purposes (99.5%). Of the 44,916 turtles in the shipments, 5,930 died during transit (one in seven). Only 17.4 percent of the turtles were sourced from captivity, while 82 percent were sourced from the wild. The number of turtles denied import annually varied greatly from as low as 14 individuals in 2006, to as many as 18,070 in 2011.

Corals

One main trade route emerged for shipments containing coral: Indonesia to Los Angeles. In fact, 42.4 percent of shipments containing coral traveled this route. Almost all of the coral was imported for commercial purposes (99.5 percent). The most common types of coral included large- and small-polyp stony coral and short-tentacle plate coral. Only one in every 523 corals died during transit. An incredible 91.7 percent of the coral was sourced from the wild—only 6.7 percent was sourced from captivity. The number of corals denied import annually fluctuated between 1,378 individuals in 2005 and 6,794 in 2009.

Sliders

The trade route from Mexico to Nogales was used by almost half (48.5 percent) of the shipments containing sliders. Almost all of the sliders (99.3 percent) were imported for commercial purposes. There were only two types of turtles in this category: Cuban sliders and common sliders, both from the genus *Trachemys*. No sliders died during transit. The sliders were more commonly sourced from captivity (74.1 percent) than from the wild (20.6 percent). The number of sliders denied import annually fluctuated greatly from as low as four individuals in 2007 to as many as 15,046 in 2005.

Pythons

Shipments containing pythons were most commonly exported from Benin, Great Britain and Indonesia and denied entry at the port of Miami. No one trade route was particularly common. Almost all of the pythons were imported for commercial purposes (99.8 percent). The most common type of python was the ball python. No pythons died during transit. The pythons were far more commonly sourced from captivity (82.4 percent) than from the wild (17.5 percent). The number of pythons denied import annually fluctuated greatly from as few as 165 individuals in 2006 to as many as 6,661 in 2013.

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For updates on the illegal wildlife trade, visit www.defenders.org/combating-wildlife-trafficking