

# EXOTIC EXPLOITATION

HOW THE U.S. PET TRADE THREATENS GLOBAL WILDLIFE



A Center for Biological Diversity Report  
**DECEMBER 2025**

# **EXOTIC EXPLOITATION:**

## **How the U.S. Pet Trade Threatens Global Wildlife**

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Cover photo: Blue tree monitor lizard from Adobe Stock





*Emerald tree boa by  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The exotic pet trend is growing globally and setting off alarm bells among wildlife conservation experts. An exotic pet's journey often starts with being captured in a remote jungle and ends in a U.S. household. The United States is one of the world's biggest players in the exotic pet trade, and more than **30%** of the animals it imports for the trade are sourced straight from wild populations.

Wildlife exploitation, including for the pet trade, is a major driver of the global extinction crisis. One million species are on track to face extinction in coming decades unless action is taken to address species loss. Addressing the United States' role in the exotic pet trade must be a top priority to stem this crisis and protect biodiversity for future generations.

This report analyzes U.S. import and export data collected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from 2016 to 2024 and provides a summary of the concerning threats that the pet trade poses to wildlife globally.

### THE CENTER'S ANALYSIS FOUND THAT:

- The United States imports on average more than **90 million** live amphibians, arachnids, birds, aquarium fish, mammals, and reptiles each year for the pet trade.
- More than **248 million** animals were captured from the wild and imported into the United States to be kept as pets from 2016 to 2024. Many of these animals were sourced from the world's biodiversity hotspots in Southeast Asia and South America.
- The United States is also a major exporter in the pet trade, sending more than **17 million** live amphibians, arachnids, birds, aquarium fish, mammals, and reptiles out of the country each year on average. Many of those animals are imperiled U.S. species.
- **Seven of the top 10** pet export species are turtles, among the most threatened groups of vertebrates and increasingly threatened by overexploitation and habitat loss.

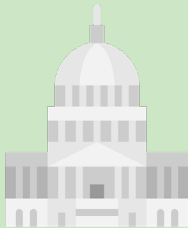
The pet trade contributes to the extinction crisis in several ways beyond simply taking animals out of the wild. As described in this report, the market has led to the introduction of invasive species and the spread of diseases in many parts of the world.

The use of misleading labels in shipping documentation and advertisements can lead well-intentioned consumers to accidentally purchase animals that were taken out of the wild illegally. The best way to protect wildlife from the pet trade is to simply avoid buying exotic pets altogether.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSUMERS



*Don't buy exotic pets.* Wild animals should stay in the wild. As a consumer, it's difficult to ensure that your purchase isn't contributing to species' decline in the wild.



Ask your representatives to introduce and promote policies that protect wildlife from overexploitation for the pet trade.



Don't watch or promote videos of exotic pets on social media. Viral videos help increase demand for species that are already threatened.



If you still want an exotic pet, ensure the animal is sourced from a legal, reputable, captive-breeding facility and isn't declining in the wild. Do your research by asking questions and checking the species' status at [iucnredlist.org](https://www.iucnredlist.org). If the species has been identified as at risk of extinction, don't buy it.

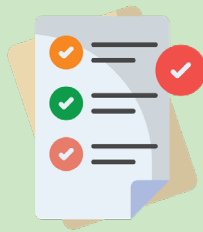


Consider whether the pet you want is the right fit for you. Many exotic animals require specific and potentially challenging care, and some can be dangerous to humans and other pets in the household. Resist the urge to buy a pet because it's trendy on social media or has been featured in a movie or TV show.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. POLICYMAKERS



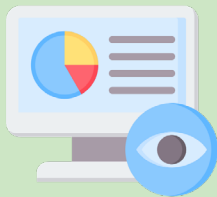
Ban the import and export of wild-caught animals for the pet trade to reduce pressure on vulnerable species and their habitats.



Implement a “positive list” for pet ownership. Only allow species to be kept as pets if scientific analyses show that trading them poses no risk to biodiversity, public health, or animal welfare.



Provide adequate funding and training for effective enforcement of existing wildlife protections from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the Endangered Species Act, and the Lacey Act.



Improve tracking and transparency of wildlife trade. Ensure that all species in trade are identified to the species-level in the Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS) database to enable accurate assessments of risks to wild populations.

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# INTRODUCTION

Around the world more and more people own exotic pets<sup>1</sup> like lizards, parrots, turtles, spiders, fish, and other animals that are generally considered “wild” as opposed to “domesticated.”<sup>2</sup> These animals are widely available for purchase — both legally and illegally — online and are often sourced directly from their wild habitats.

Social media has boosted the industry in recent years with TikTok and Instagram feeds featuring giant lizards basking in a basement and kinkajous licking lollipops in someone’s lap. This occurs both directly, in the case of social media sites that facilitate sales, and indirectly, when widely shared photos and videos normalize and promote owning and interacting with wild animals.<sup>3</sup>

But bringing these creatures into our homes comes at a huge cost to the animals, their counterparts still in the wild, their ecosystems, and the humans who depend on those ecosystems for their well-being.

The United States is a major player in the global pet market, both as one of the world’s largest importers of many pet species and as a major exporter of its own wildlife. Estimates vary, but there are likely at least 17.6 million exotic birds, reptiles, and small mammals living in 9 million U.S. households.<sup>4</sup> One source estimates that about half of household pets in the United States are exotic animals.<sup>5</sup> Exotic pets range from more familiar animals like chinchillas, bearded dragons, and aquarium fish to lesser-known jumping spiders, tiny frogs, and endangered reptiles.

The pet trade contributes to the growing global extinction crisis. One million species are on track to become extinct in the coming decades.<sup>6</sup> Wildlife exploitation, including taking animals out of the wild to become pets, is the leading driver of marine species loss and the secondary driver of terrestrial species loss.<sup>7</sup>

Whether a species filters our air or water, pollinates plants, or provides a food source for other animals, every species plays an important role in its native environment. When a species vanishes, whether due to climate change or pet industry demand, the effects of that loss ripple from the smallest organisms up to human communities.

Exotic pet collectors often seek the rarest species, making the pet trade inherently unsustainable. Threatened species are highly desired and attract high prices, incentivizing the collection of more wild animals from already-beleaguered populations.<sup>8</sup> Newly identified species and even species with pending legal protections can also experience spikes in demand.<sup>9</sup> When populations are depleted by overcollection for trade, demand may shift to similar species until those populations also suffer depletion.<sup>10</sup> Even as a species teeters on the brink of extinction, demand doesn’t diminish; it often intensifies.

The pet trade can also be deadly for animals, before they even reach a consumer. Mortality rates of traded animals along the potentially lengthy chain of capture, transport and sale can be high but are rarely documented by traders, further obscuring the true cost of the wildlife trade.<sup>11</sup> One study notes that only 35% of reptiles collected from the wild are actually traded, indicating that most animals died soon after being removed from their natural habitat.<sup>12</sup> Each pet that is ultimately sold to a consumer represents a number of “ghost” animals that did not survive long enough to make it there.

To protect wildlife and our planet, we must prevent human-caused declines in wild animals captured for use as pets. First we need to understand the scale of trade and identify which species are most at risk. This report analyzes exotic pet import and export data recorded in the U.S. Law Enforcement Management Information System, or “LEMIS,” from the most recent available period (2016-2024) to quantify the U.S. pet trade and identify trends that are important for species’ conservation.

We encourage consumers and policymakers to use this report to explore and understand the impact that the pet trade can have on animals, ecosystems and communities around the world, and to take action to address the negative impacts of the pet trade.



Australian green tree frog by  
Bidgee/Wikimedia



## RESULTS

Based on our analysis:

- On average the United States imports more than **90 million** live amphibians, arachnids, birds, aquarium fish, mammals, and reptiles each year for the pet trade and exports about **17 million**.
- While some of these pets are bred or born in captivity, more than 30% of pets imported to the United States between 2016 and 2024 were taken out of their wild homes for the trade. This means more than **248 million** wild animals were imported for the U.S. pet trade over the nine-year period.
- The United States exported a staggering number of wild-caught animals during this time, too. More than **24 million** animals sourced from their wild habitats were exported from the United States for the pet trade from 2016 to 2024.
- The United States regularly imports and exports species that are threatened with extinction to be used as pets. Between 2016 and 2024, the United States imported more than **12.5 million** animals considered to be threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, a renowned, international scientific body, including 87,000 “critically endangered” and 707,000 “endangered” animals. This trade commodifies and further endangers these threatened wild animal species.
- Of the top 10 native U.S. species exported abroad for pets, **seven** are turtles, including snapping turtles, red-eared sliders, and musk turtles. The United States has some of the world’s greatest diversity of turtles, increasingly threatened by trade and habitat modification.<sup>13</sup>
- Most of the pets imported to the United States that were captured from the wild are sourced from Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam) and South America (Colombia, Peru, Mexico, and Brazil), well-known biodiversity hotspots.

# 24 HOURS IN THE PET TRADE

CLOSE TO **300,000 ANIMALS** MOVE ACROSS U.S. BORDERS  
ON AN **AVERAGE DAY** FOR THE PET TRADE

## IMPORTS



Fish:  
194,972



Arachnids:  
46,175



Amphibians:  
4,037



Reptiles:  
1,625



Mammals:  
1,328



Birds:  
102



## EXPORTS



Fish:  
44,256



Reptiles:  
2,645



Birds:  
1,403



Amphibians:  
69



Arachnids:  
38



Mammals:  
16














# SELLING ENDANGERED SPECIES

Number of animals imported and exported as pets from 2016 to 2024  
by IUCN Red List status

IUCN Status	Quantity of Imports and Exports
Critically Endangered	91,173
Endangered	1,029,387
Vulnerable	11,890,899
Data Deficient	171,338

## Examples of species:

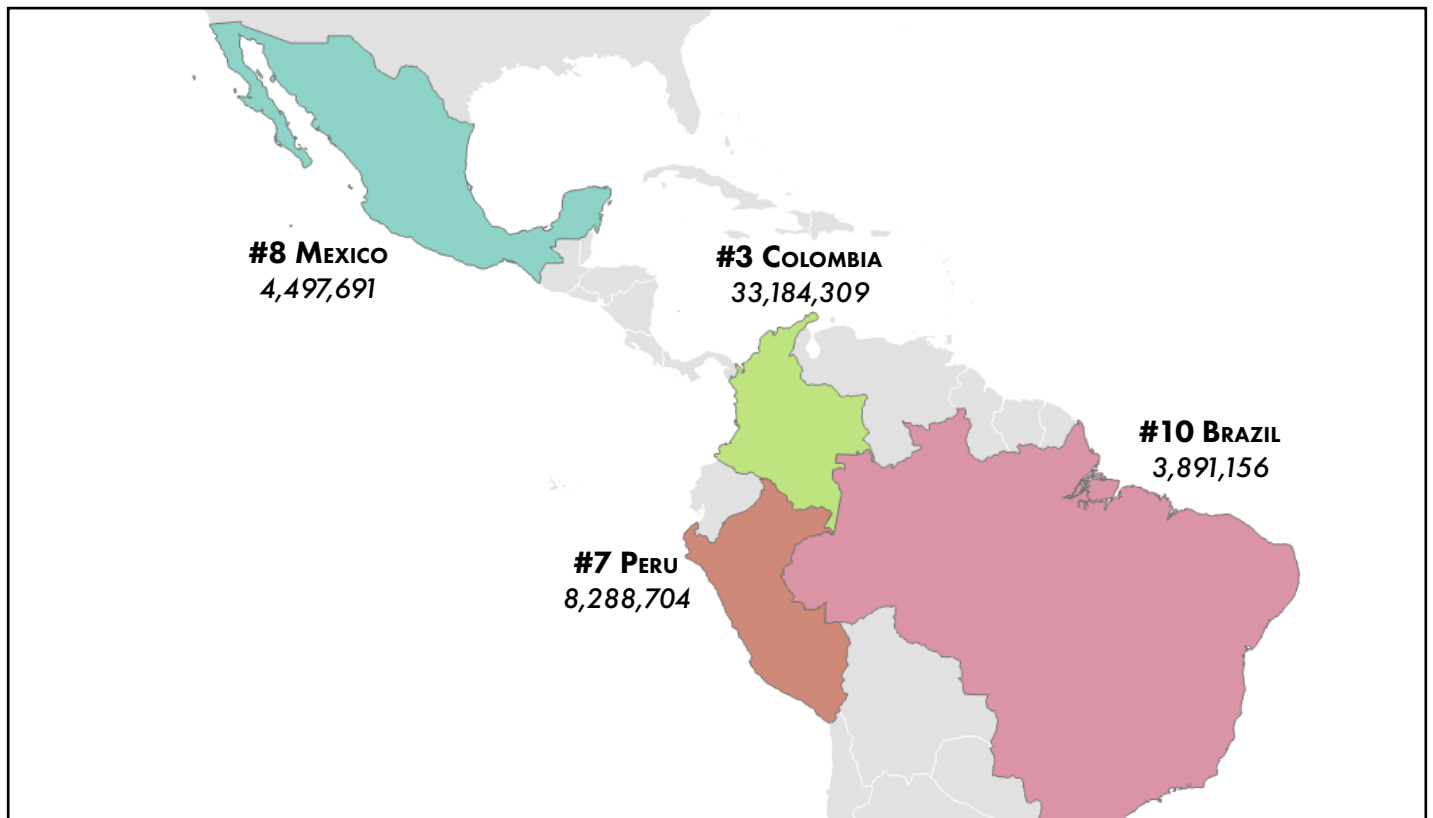
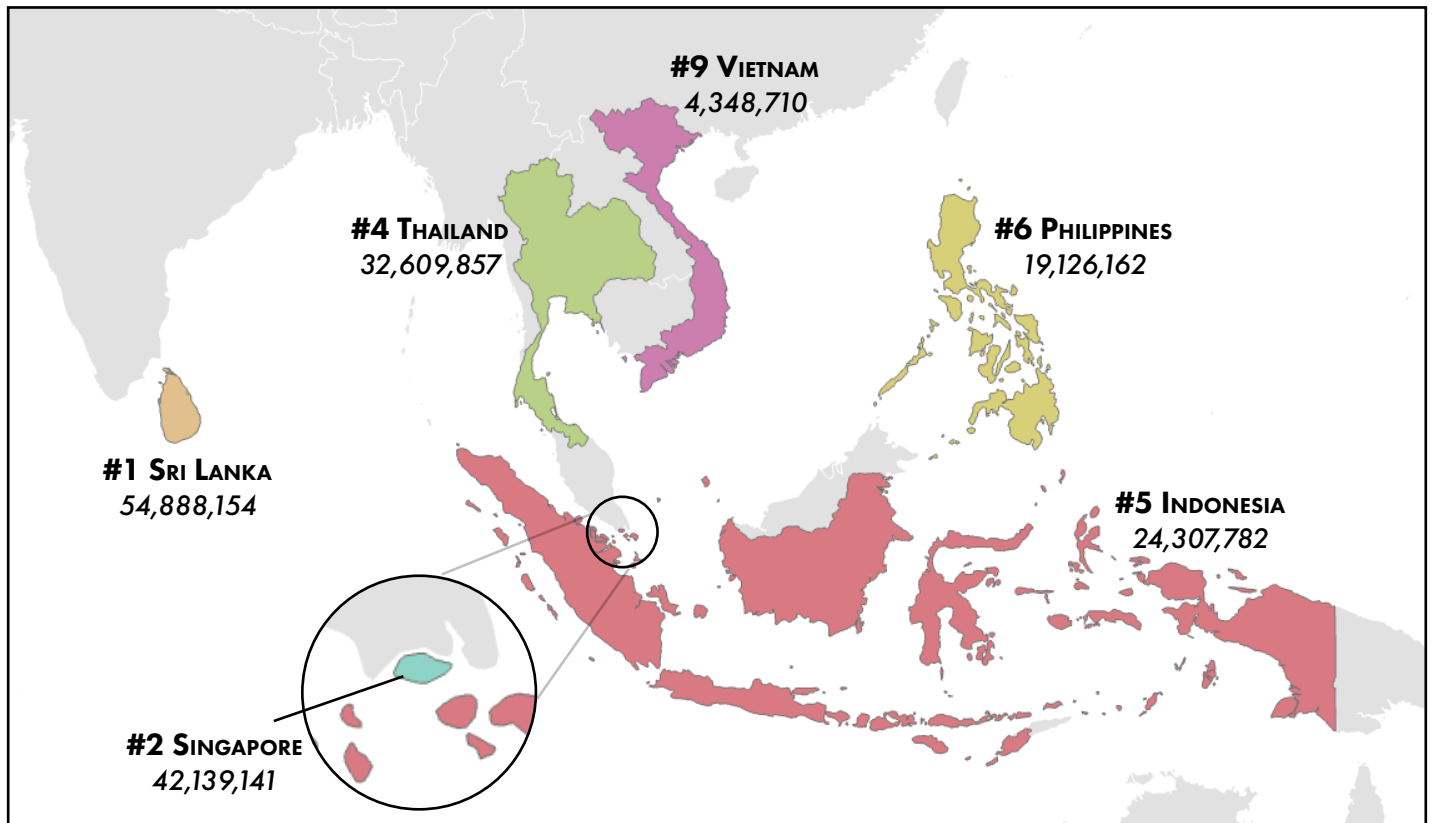
Critically Endangered			
	Zebra pleco	Peacock tarantula	Home's hingeback tortoise
Endangered			
	African red-eyed tetra	Southeast Asian box turtle	Pebas stubfoot toad
Vulnerable			
	Pla kud	Russian tortoise	Gaboon viper



# WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

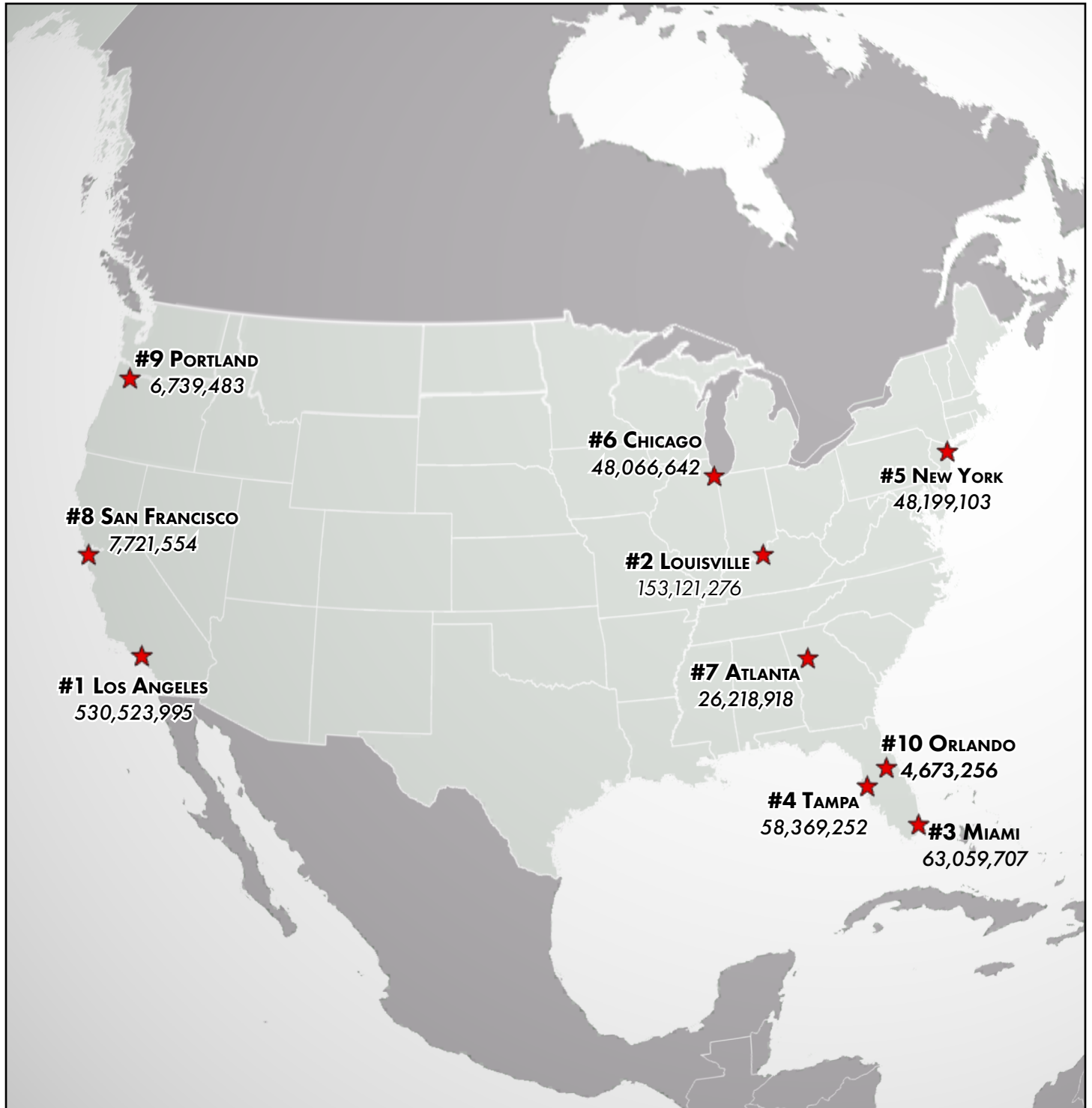
## Top 10 countries supplying U.S. wild-caught pet imports from 2016 to 2024

Most of the pets imported into the United States that were captured from the wild are sourced from biodiversity hotspots in Southeast Asia and South America.



# HUBS IN THE PET TRADE

Top 10 U.S. ports where pets are imported and exported and quantity of pet imports and exports at each port from 2016-2024



# SNATCHED FROM THE WILD

Top 10 highest-volume species sourced from the wild and imported into the U.S. for pets (amphibians, arachnids, birds, fish, mammals, and reptiles) from 2016 to 2024



1. Goldfish, *Carassius auratus*.  
**1,591,998**



2. Siamese fighting fish, *Betta splendens*.  
**1,274,697**



3. Marble goby, *Oxyeleotris marmorata*.  
**495,081**



4. Guppy, *Poecilia reticulata*.  
**379,173**



5. Cardinal tetra, *Paracheirodon axelrodi*.  
**325,876**



6. African dwarf frog, *Hymenochirus boettgeri*.  
**298,519**



7. Common house gecko, *Hemidactylus frenatus*.  
**282,421**



8. Western dwarf clawed frog, *Hymenochirus curtipes*.  
**214,935**



9. Asian grass lizard, *Takydromus sexlineatus*.  
**208,552**



10. Guyana pinktoe tarantula, *Avicularia avicularia*.  
**187,749**



# WILD-CAUGHT EXPORTS FROM THE UNITED STATES

Top 10 highest-volume species caught in the wild and exported from the U.S. to foreign nations for pets (amphibians, arachnids, birds, fish, mammals, and reptiles) from 2016 to 2024



1. Red-eared slider, *Trachemys scripta elegans*.  
**1,591,998**



2. Common musk turtle, *Sternotherus odoratus*.  
**607,145**



3. Razor-backed musk turtle, *Sternotherus carinatus*.  
**495,081**



4. Alligator snapping turtle, *Macrochelys temminckii*.  
**249,325**



5. Goldfish, *Carassius auratus*.  
**236,725**



6. Common snapping turtle, *Chelydra serpentina*.  
**214,362**



7. Eastern mud turtle, *Kinosternon subrubrum*.  
**174,700**



8. Yellow-bellied slider, *Trachemys scripta scripta*.  
**151,848**



9. River cooter, *Pseudemys concinna*.  
**135,259**



10. Ouachita map turtle, *Graptemys ouachitensis*.  
**131,821**



# TRADING ANIMALS THAT ARE IN CRISIS

## AMPHIBIANS

The United States plays a major role in the amphibian trade, importing 13.3 million amphibians for pets from 2016 to 2024. Amphibians, such as frogs and salamanders, are the most endangered group of vertebrates on earth because of disease, habitat destruction<sup>14</sup> and trade.<sup>15</sup> Right now 2 of every 5 amphibian species that have been assessed by scientists are threatened with extinction,<sup>16</sup> although we lack data to assess many species. Researchers believe that 85% of data deficient amphibians are likely quietly facing a risk of extinction without anyone knowing.<sup>17</sup>

More than 250 species of amphibians are threatened by overexploitation, including by demand from the pet trade.<sup>18</sup> Close to half of frogs and 74% of salamanders that are collected for human use are destined for the pet trade;<sup>19</sup> others are consumed as food. Of those species in the pet trade, more than a quarter of frogs and more than half of salamanders are already threatened with extinction.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to pet demand diminishing amphibian populations by removing animals from the wild, the global amphibian trade is the primary driver of the spread of chytrid fungi, pathogens that have decimated populations around the world.<sup>21</sup> The spread of chytrid fungi has contributed to known declines in 501 amphibian species.<sup>22</sup> Worryingly, 90 species have already gone extinct likely because of chytrid fungi, and 124 more species have suffered population declines of over 90%.<sup>23</sup>

Yet hope remains for amphibians if we take action to protect them. Since 1980, 63 amphibian species receiving conservation efforts have shown a reduced risk of extinction.<sup>24</sup> Extending protections to more amphibian species, especially those threatened by the pet trade, is critical for preventing further declines in amphibian populations around the world.

### Species highlight: Golden mantellas

Golden mantellas (*Mantella aurantiaca*) are brightly colored frogs that are about as long as a paper clip. Endemic to central-east Madagascar, golden mantellas are endangered and have a severely fragmented population due to habitat loss for agriculture, logging, and mining, and demand for the pet trade.<sup>56</sup> The United States is by far the largest importer of these little frogs, and most of the animals in trade are collected from the wild.<sup>57</sup> Our analysis shows that despite the threats golden mantellas face, the United States imported more than 20,000 of them from 2016-2024. Imports appear to be declining over time, likely because they are harder to find in the wild as the pet trade drives them closer to the brink of extinction. Consumer awareness and legal protections from trade are urgently needed to save golden mantella frogs and let them recover in the wild.



Golden mantella by  
Rafi Amar

## REPTILES

More than 20% of reptiles are threatened with extinction.<sup>25</sup> This alarming statistic is likely an underestimate, as many species have not been studied thoroughly enough to determine their risk of extinction. Scientists estimate that an additional 21% could be classified as at risk if more comprehensive data were available.<sup>26</sup> Yet reptiles including lizards, turtles and snakes are regularly traded as pets.

More than 13 million reptiles are kept as pets in the United States in 4.7 million households, and the industry generates up to \$1.4 billion in revenue each year.<sup>27</sup> Unsurprisingly, the country is a major importer. The United States imported more than 5.3 million reptiles for the pet trade from 2016 to 2024, close to 40% of whom were collected from the wild. The top countries of origin for wild-caught imported animals by volume were Vietnam, Togo, Indonesia, Ghana, and Madagascar.

The United States is also a major exporter of reptiles, particularly turtles, including species that were once common but are now hard to find in their native ponds and desert habitats. The country exported 8.7 million reptiles from 2016 to 2024. More than half of those animals were directly sourced from wild populations.

### Species highlight: Blue tree monitor lizards

Blue tree monitor lizards (*Varanus macraei*) are rare, arboreal monitor lizards endemic to a single island and surrounding islets in Indonesia.<sup>58</sup> They have the smallest distribution of any monitor lizard.<sup>59</sup> Assessed by IUCN as endangered in 2017,<sup>60</sup> experts have stated that the conservation status of blue tree monitors is "of severe concern."<sup>61</sup> The leading threat to the species is the international pet trade, primarily to meet the demand of the U.S. market.<sup>62</sup>

Despite declining and extirpated populations<sup>63</sup> and warnings from scientists dating from 2013,<sup>64</sup> U.S. imports have grown.<sup>65</sup> The United States reported importing 910 blue tree monitor lizards from 2013 to 2023.<sup>66</sup> In 2024 the U.S. government finally used its emergency authority under the Endangered Species Act to temporarily halt imports, but those protections expired in 2025.<sup>67</sup> A permanent trade ban is desperately needed to allow blue tree monitors to recover their wild population.



Blue tree monitor lizard by  
Greg Hume/Wikimedia



## AQUARIUM FISH

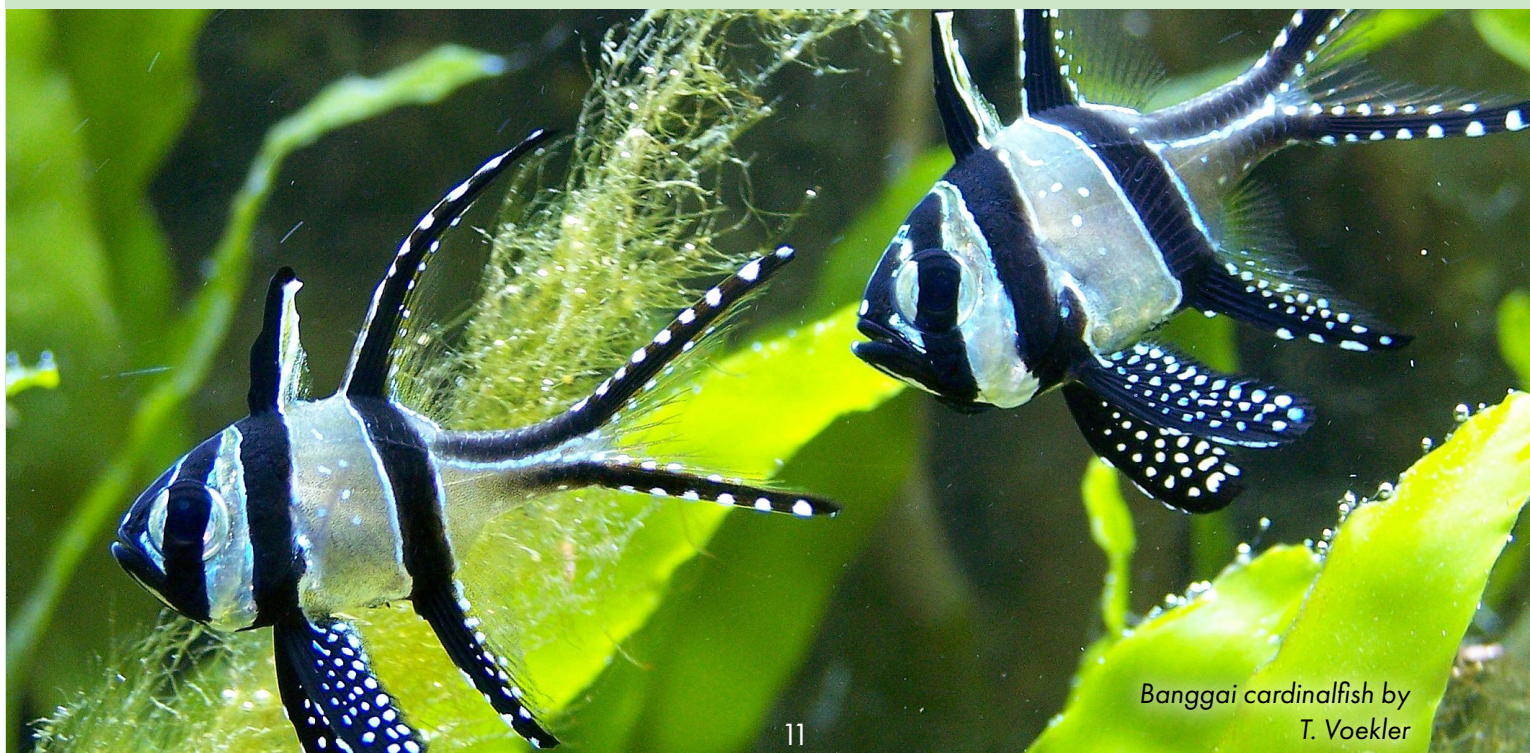
The United States is the world's largest consumer<sup>28</sup> in the multibillion-dollar global aquarium trade.<sup>29</sup> This enormous industry remains largely untracked and unregulated. Our analysis found that 94% of aquarium fish coming into the United States were labeled only as either marine or freshwater fish, without the species identified. As a result, it is impossible to know the volume of trade in any particular species — even threatened species — or when trade restrictions are needed.

Our analysis found that more than 640 million fish were imported to the United States to supply the aquarium trade from 2016 to 2024, with about 38% marked as sourced from the wild. The most common countries of origin for fish imports included Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, and Colombia. For more than 66 million aquarium fish imports, the country of origin was only listed as “various,” further exemplifying the need for better data tracking in the aquarium trade.

The United States also exported 145 million fish for the aquarium trade from 2016 to 2024, with 13% of the trade wild-sourced. The main countries that received aquarium fish exports from the United States were England, Mexico, Canada, Costa Rica, and Chile.

### Species highlight: Banggai cardinalfish

The Banggai cardinalfish (*Pterapogon kauderni*) is a small fish with bold black bands and white-speckled fins that inhabits coral reefs and seagrass beds surrounding Indonesia's Banggai Islands and is one of the 2,600 fish species found in the marine aquarium trade each year.<sup>68</sup> Assessed by the IUCN Red List as endangered,<sup>69</sup> these cardinalfish have suffered severe population declines since they became popular in the aquarium trade in the 1990s<sup>70</sup> and have vanished from areas where they were once common.<sup>71</sup> The United States is a major source of demand for Banggai cardinalfish, importing more than 173,000 from 2016 to 2024, including more than 53,000 sourced directly from wild populations. Despite declining populations, traders continue to collect Banggai cardinalfish from the wild to supply the international aquarium trade.<sup>72</sup> The United States listed Banggai cardinalfish as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2016.<sup>73</sup> While this is an important first step, the U.S. government has not yet implemented any trade restrictions to protect the species. Protections and strict enforcement are urgently needed in both Indonesia and the United States to help Banggai cardinalfish recover and thrive in the wild for generations to come.



Banggai cardinalfish by  
T. Voekler





## OTHER TROUBLING TRADE CONSEQUENCES

### Invasive species in trade

Because of the pet trade, hundreds of nonnative and invasive animal populations from around the world have been introduced into U.S. and foreign ecosystems.<sup>30</sup> The pet trade is the leading cause of nonnative reptile and amphibian introductions worldwide.<sup>31</sup> Introduced pet species that become invasive can proliferate and harm biodiversity, communities and even economies.<sup>32</sup>

For example, Burmese pythons (*Python molurus bivittatus*), native to Southeast Asia, have been established in Florida since the 1990s.<sup>33</sup> Burmese pythons can grow 10-16 feet long and compete with Florida's snakes and other native predators for food.<sup>34</sup> They prey on native birds and mammals, including several wading birds, bobcats (*Lynx rufus*), and white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), among others.<sup>35</sup> They have even been known to consume small alligators.<sup>36</sup>

Scientists have raised concerns about Burmese pythons causing declines in native wildlife populations<sup>37</sup> and preying on threatened species. Among the threatened species that have been found in Burmese python stomachs are federally endangered Key Largo woodrats (*Neotoma floridana smalli*) as well as limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*) and white ibis (*Endocernus albus*), which are species of special concern in Florida.<sup>38</sup>

Red lionfish (*Pterois volitans*), which are native to the Indo-Pacific, were introduced to the Caribbean Sea in the late 1980s or early 1990s and have become invasive. Initially imported as aquarium fish, red lionfish compete with native species throughout the Caribbean for food and resting sites.<sup>39</sup> The presence of invasive lionfish reduces the number of native fish that survive to adulthood — just one lionfish on a coral reef can lead to a 79% reduction in native reef fish recruitment.<sup>40</sup> Because invasive lionfish disrupt the food web and compete with commercially significant fish such as groupers and snappers, their presence can harm commercial and recreational fisheries.<sup>41</sup>



# Illegal activity in the pet trade

## Confiscations

Our analysis also highlights the U.S. role in the trade of illegally sourced pets, based on seizures at the border. From 2016 to 2024, 21,327 pets in 506 shipments were seized. Reptiles, arachnids, and aquarium fish were most commonly seized. Specifically, red-eared sliders, unidentified scorpions, goldeneye cichlids (*Nannacara anomala*), narrow-bridged musk turtles (*Claudius angustatus*), unidentified tropical fish, and Siamese fighting fish (*Betta splendens*) were among the most common animals in seized shipments.

Some species in the pet trade have received legal protections under domestic and international laws. These include permitting requirements and restrictions on wild collection as well as complete trade bans. However, enforcement in many foreign nations is often weak or inconsistent, allowing illegally sourced animals to enter trade.

Illegal shipments of animals pose a serious conservation threat, even when intercepted. Confiscated animals have already been removed from their natural habitats and often endure harsh, inadequate transport conditions. As a result, many cannot be safely returned to the wild because of the risk of introducing diseases to native populations. Thus, even when illegal trade is disrupted, the damage to wild populations is not reversed.

## Confusing labels and laundering

Consumers looking to purchase an exotic pet may seek out animals bred in captivity, hoping to minimize the impact of their purchase on the species' wild population. In many cases, however, animals advertised as captive-bred may actually have been sourced from the wild.

For example, each year, the United States imports an average of 6.3 million pets from Indonesia, one of Earth's most biodiverse countries and one of the top suppliers of U.S. pet imports. In interviews, reptile and amphibian traders in Indonesia have stated that animals collected from the wild are being sent to licensed captive-breeding facilities to then be exported falsely labeled as captive-bred.<sup>42</sup> According to researchers, most green tree pythons (*Morelia viridis*) exported from Indonesia and labeled "captive-bred" were actually sourced from the wild.<sup>43</sup> About 92% of traders interviewed said they could "easily circumvent laws and regulations by paying off officials."<sup>44</sup> Despite Indonesia's restrictions and guidelines to regulate the wildlife trade, "few actors abide by these laws."<sup>45</sup> U.S. consumers cannot be confident that their purchase of a "captive-bred" animal was actually sourced directly from its wild habitat.

Red lionfish by  
Alexander Vassenin



### ***Cruel and unhygienic conditions***

Animals suffer and frequently die because of poor conditions throughout the supply chain for the global pet trade. Researchers have noted “disastrous handling and unhygienic conditions at local collectors and traders”<sup>46</sup> and “improper husbandry at various stages along the trade chain.”<sup>47</sup>

Some animals are subject to inhumane and bizarre transportation methods, including cockatoos stuffed in water bottles,<sup>48</sup> chameleons in socks and empty ice cream containers,<sup>49</sup> and parrots in a pair of boots.<sup>50</sup> Many animals experience death by “crushing, asphyxiation, starvation, dehydration, temperature shock, disease, injury, or stress.”<sup>51</sup> Reptiles, particularly monitor lizards and turtles, have been observed either with injuries or already deceased throughout the trade chain.<sup>52</sup>

Unhygienic conditions also lead to the spread of disease in trade.<sup>53</sup> One shipment of 100 eastern box turtles (*Terrapene carolina*) seized before export from the United States revealed sick, dehydrated turtles that had been stuffed in socks to prevent them from scratching their containment box.<sup>54</sup> Many of the turtles had eye and ear infections, and about half ultimately died from a ranavirus outbreak among the group.<sup>55</sup>

## **METHODOLOGY**

We analyzed U.S. wildlife import and export data from 2016 to 2024 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS) database, accessed through a public information request.

Because the LEMIS database does not specify which animals are traded for “pets,” we first selected data for all live amphibians, arachnids, birds, fish, mammals, and reptiles that were traded for commercial purposes. We excluded all crustaceans and insects due to difficulties determining whether they were intended for pets and to prevent skewing the data with species that are traded in extremely large quantities.

To ensure these live animals were imported and exported as pets, as opposed to other purposes, we further narrowed this larger dataset by removing: (1) all fish species that are primarily traded for food, (2) mammal species that are not commonly imported or exported for pets, including badgers, bats, bears, big cats, caracals, civets, coatis, grisons, hyenas, kangaroos, otters, primates, sables, servals, tayras, ungulates, wallabies, and wolves, (3) live birds not primarily kept as pets, including raptors, ducks, geese, turkeys, and quail (4) all mites, and (5) all crocodilians, as it was difficult to determine whether they were imported as part of the pet trade or the reptile skin trade.

For mammals that are traded in both the pet and biomedical industries, like guinea pigs, we reviewed companies with five or more rows of data in the 2016-2020 data and removed shipments that were associated with biomedical companies. For the 2021-2024 data, which included general industry categories rather than company names, we modified the methodology, removing all rows of data with the industry category “biomedical.” We followed a similar methodology for live bullfrogs, which are traded in both the food and pet industries, removing companies with five or more rows of data that were associated with food retailers from the 2016-2020 data, and removing all rows of data with an industry category that included “food” or “human consumption” in the 2021-2024 data.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 In this report, we use “exotic pet” to refer to all non-domesticated animals kept as pets, whether sourced from a foreign country or native.
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