



## **The Endangered Wildlife Trust releases integrated report for 2017/18**

13 November 2018

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The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) has released its 2017/2018 [integrated report](#), which for the first time is supplemented by additional [digital content](#) about the organisation's work. CEO, Yolan Friedmann, has penned an insightful opener, addressing the issues surrounding illegal wildlife trade:

“The illegal wildlife trade is nothing new, and has appeared among some of humanity’s worst traits for centuries. In 2017 and 2018, this issue featured more strongly in the rhetoric of politicians, global media, and the public, as we began to face the very real possibility of losing a number of species if serious action is not taken.

Human beings have been trading for around 300,000 years. Evidence from Middle Stone Age sites in southern Kenya suggests that hominins were exchanging goods with others, as weapons uncovered at these sites are made of materials not locally found. The ancient Grecians had Hermes as their god of trade and the Roman god Mercurius was their god of merchants. Given the human propensity for breaking laws as soon as they are established, one can assume that human beings have also been trading illegally for as long as there have been laws to regulate trade. So why the increasing fuss around Illegal Wildlife Trade? It is not a new issue and rather, is one that conservationists have been grappling with for decades.

So what has changed? On the upside, many countries and cultures that previously engaged in enormous volumes of wildlife trade have decreased their consumptive use of wildlife. In several countries, there is a strong awareness that many wildlife species cannot sustain large volumes of trade; that the trade is often cruel and unethical; and that better alternatives for their uses (fashion, medicinals, and so on) are available for less money. In some cultures, the use and trade in wildlife has even become stigmatised. On the downside, the consumption of wildlife and their products has increased in many parts of the world, due to increasing wealth, popular beliefs, financial speculation and ‘investment’, and ease of access to illicit markets. Coupled with the decline in many species and the associated increasing value of their body parts; the free flow of illicit goods via established black markets; the ease of access for buyers and sellers to social networks and the “Dark Web”; the escalation in corruption globally, and its impact on law enforcement; and the dynamic nature of illicit trade flows, it is little wonder that several species now face a very real extinction risk. Or may already have succumbed. South Africa has, although not many people know this, already lost three cycad species to illegal trade in the past decade and several others face a similar future.

Around 100 elephants and three rhinos are poached every day across our continent. One need only do the maths to estimate how long populations of around 415,000 elephants and 29,000 rhinos will persist. Much has been said about various solutions and those that are attached to their favourite

solution will go to great lengths to slate alternative options. But before we can propose conservation-oriented solutions, we need to consider a few contributing factors, most of which have nothing whatsoever to do with the conservation sector or even what we do or say.

1. There are more than 7.6 billion people on the planet. This is roughly double the number of people alive in 1970. There are too many sensitivities around talking about the human population. One has to tread carefully and politicians, religious leaders, and social activists shy away from risking their futures to ever suggest that there are too many of us. Sociologists believe that there are not in fact too many humans, and many technocentrists believe that with enough clever technology, billions more of us could still eat, drink, and live meaningful lives. This is simply not rational. With more and more people, there is less quality education for all, fewer jobs, less space for housing, and less materials for building. Less food, less water, less cheap mass transport solutions, and simply put: less space. There is more competition for resources, more urbanisation, more pressure on the planet, and more demand for finite resources that simply cannot sustain the energy demands of an exploding human race. Human beings have been successful in reducing infant mortality by over 15% in the last decade, and extending human lives by almost double in the last two centuries. This domination of human life over other species has come at a great cost to almost all other forms of life on the planet, most of which are in sharp decline. There are too many of us and this has to be addressed if the conservation of any other lifeform is to be successful.
2. We are selfish. Human beings need to justify the existence and persistence of almost every other lifeform on Earth in terms of what it can do for us. We have coined phrases like “if it pays it stays” and we need to motivate our conservation actions or expenditures in terms of why it is important for human life, wellbeing and prosperity. In 2017, the donations made by Americans to charities supporting animal or environmental causes was only 3% of total giving, and in the UK this jumped to only 8%. We only like to support ourselves and what our money can do for our species. It is this same selfish gene that drives the illicit wildlife trade by either the consumer, the trader or the poacher. It is the same selfish gene that drives many of the users of wildlife products, from fashion to claims of increased virility, strength and power.
3. Education is often cited as the solution. Billions in donor funding is poured into environmental education under the belief that if we teach children to conserve our wildlife, they will change the fate of doomed species in the future. Despite decades of environmental education taking place in the classrooms of private and public schools, from urban centres to rural outposts, the future of our wildlife has never been more bleak. We forget that children become adult humans. They become wealthy and desire more, or they become poorer and have fewer choices. For the rural poor, it is possibly better to invest in education programmes that focus on science, maths and literacy. To equip young people to become employed, economically active, and have options. Evidence has shown that when people are gainfully employed, they make better life decisions, they have smaller family sizes, and they invest and participate in charitable and social causes. Teach our kids but teach them the skills and tools to become future leaders. Get them employed, help them to break the cycle.
4. After human population, the next taboo for conservationists is corruption. We live in a world where almost everyone is either engaged in, or confronted by, corruption on a daily basis. Corruption spreads, and like a virus, it adapts, infects and destroys systems. It leads to social decay and moral depression. It erodes border controls, and feeds off greed. It is ignited by the selfish-gene and resists simple remedies. And yet it is the single biggest factor in the fight to stamp out the illicit wildlife trade that thrives in a system of corrupt rangers, game ranchers, border control agents, policeman, judges and magistrates, politicians, retailers, consumers

and many other who are “hiding in plain sight”. An entire chain of corrupt individuals and actions can render the very good work done by several good people holding the very same positions in society, useless. In this numbers game, the work of several good people can unravel with the action of just one corrupt individual. It takes a chain of people ALL doing the right thing to make a law effective and a system work. And the conservation sector is just one link in this chain.

But the links CAN be fixed and the chain CAN work, when we form cross-sectoral partnerships that work to address the weak links. The EWT has long recognised that we have to address all the weaknesses in the system, even if we only do this one baby step at a time. The EWT has embraced the concept of Population, Health and the Environment (PHE) to address human population and sustainable family sizes. We work with the Department of Health and our partners working on human health and sexual rights. We support several projects that address the broader educational standards in schools in the communities in which we work; and we work with partners who address literacy levels, adult education, and skills development for unemployed people. We work with law enforcement agencies to enhance skills for fighting crime and we support those champions in the criminal justice system to work collaboratively, effectively and with increased knowledge.

The EWT’s 2017/8 Integrated Report is filled with reports on how our passionate staff, friends, and partners have achieved positive gains with measurable impact, across a diversity of species, habitats and issues. We are continually expanding our partnerships to embrace all the challenges facing the future of wildlife on this continent. And we have done this well. The report highlights many exciting successes and remarkable achievements. The Trust delivers on our promises and we are a solid investment option for the generous sponsors who choose the EWT as their partner to deliver on their passion for protecting our African wildlife.

Despite 2017/8 being a year that challenged and tested us, the EWT has achieved some remarkable conservation gains. I am proud and blessed to work alongside some of the continent’s most passionate, committed and talented people, both within the EWT staff as well as in our Trustee Body. I learn from you all every day and I am inspired by your energy and love for our Africa. To the partners and donors who choose the EWT – thank you.”

Yolan Friedmann

Chief Executive Officer

Endangered Wildlife Trust

For the full report, and to learn more about the EWT’s work in the past year, [click here](#), and view additional content [here](#).

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