

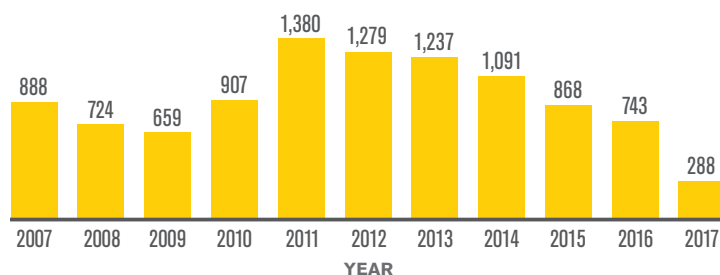


TO BETTER UNDERSTAND wildlife trafficking from Latin America (Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America and South America) to the United States, Defenders of Wildlife reviewed 10 years of data on seizures of wildlife and wildlife parts and products from the Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS) Trade Database managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). In the 10-year period reviewed (April 2007 through May 2017), FWS seized a total of 10,082 wildlife shipments, and 2011 was the year with the most seizures (1,380). The seized shipments included 10,966 live animals and over 70,000 pounds of wildlife products. Most of this trade (87 percent) was sourced from wild populations and declared imported for personal use. The top U.S. ports for wildlife seizures were El Paso, Texas, and Miami, Florida, accounting for 56 percent of all shipments seized. Mexico was the top exporter with a total of 5,776 seized shipments—57 percent of all exports—originating there. This illegal trade is yet another threat to the wildlife of Latin America, the most biologically diverse region in the world. The neotropical index, a measure of the state of the region’s biodiversity, shows a dramatic 83 percent decline in wildlife populations since 1970.¹

Seized Wildlife Shipments

In the 10-year span analyzed, FWS seized 10,082 wildlife shipments. This included 10,966 live animals and over 70,000 pounds of wildlife and wildlife products, 7,364 eggs among them. The annual average number of wildlife seizures was 914. Looking at seized shipments by year (Figure 1), 2011 had the highest number with a total of 1,380 cases seized.

Figure 1. Number of Seized Cases by Year



Live Trade

FWS seized a total of 10,996 live animals within the 10-year period. Breaking down these seizures by year (Figure 2), 2013 was the year with the most live animals seized (4,051). A single shipment seized in Miami included 1,328 live red belly toads from Paraguay and

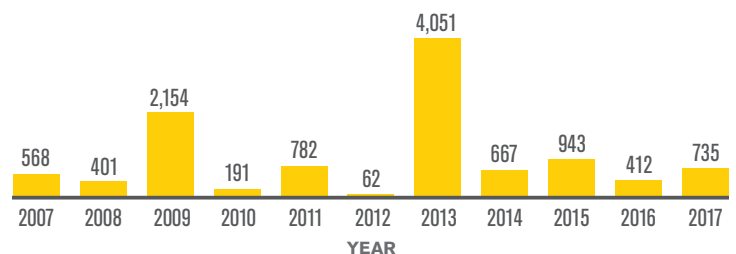


RED BELLY TOAD © S. RIOS/PYBIO.ORG

accounted for 32.7 percent of live seizures in 2013—more than in any year except 2009 when a single shipment of 966 live tarantulas from Guatemala accounted for 44.8 percent of the total number of live animals seized (2,154).

The data on U.S. seizures of shipments containing live animals, which does not account for the quantity of

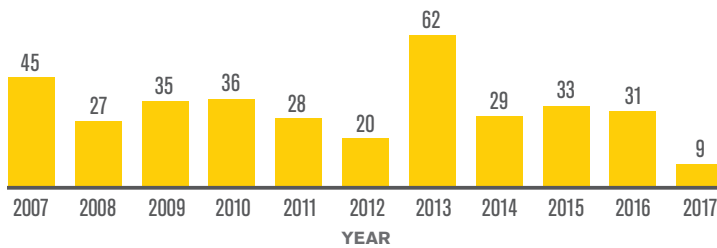
Figure 2. Number of Live Animals Seized by Year



¹Living Planet Report 2014, http://assets.worldwildlife.org/publications/723/files/original/WWF-LPR2014-low_res.pdf?1413912230&_ga=2.117227398.1478974227.1548449323-1512090897.1548449323

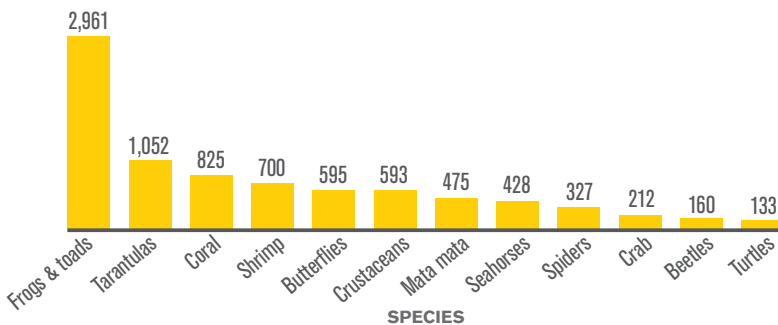
animals in those shipments, also shows 2013 was the year with the most seizures (62) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Number of Live Animal Shipments Seized by Year



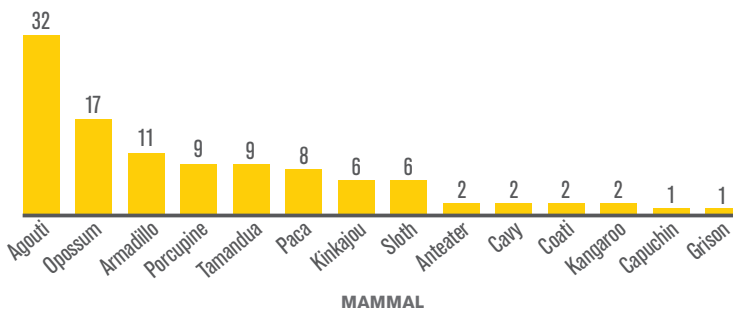
Frogs and toads were the live species most trafficked from Latin America to the United States (Figure 4) with a total of 2,961 individual animals seized, most of them from Paraguay. The illegal trade in frogs and toads exported to the United States is more than double that of the second most trafficked live species, tarantulas, most of which come from Guatemala (966) and Chile (70).

Figure 4. Total Number of Live Animals Seized by Species



The live mammals with the most seizures (Figure 5) were agoutis (32), followed by opossums (17) and armadillos (11). The majority of these animals are imported to the United States for the international pet trade.

Figure 5. Total Number of Live Mammals Seized by Species, 2007–2017



Countries of Export

Mexico tops the list of the largest exporters of wildlife and wildlife products to the United States (Table 1) by far, accounting for 57 percent of all shipments. But because Mexico serves as a hub between the United States and South America, many of the shipments that come from Mexico do not originate there. The top two countries of export, Mexico and Haiti, account for 68 percent of all wildlife shipments. Nonetheless, Mexico’s numbers exceed those of any other Latin American country, with a difference of 46 percent between Mexico and Haiti and an even greater difference between Mexico and the other high-ranked countries of export.

Table 1. Top Countries of Export

Rank	Country of Export	Number of Shipments Seized	Percentage of Total Shipments
1	Mexico	5,776	57%
2	Haiti	1,099	11%
3	Peru	723	7%
4	Bahamas	262	3%
5	Bolivia	203	2%

U.S. Ports of Entry

El Paso, Texas, is number one among the top five U.S. ports of entry for illegal wildlife traffickers by total number and percentage of total shipments (Table 2). El Paso accounts for 32 percent of all wildlife seizures in the United States, most of which come from Mexico. Miami is number two with 24 percent of total seizures. Miami tends to be the primary port for shipments coming from the Bahamas and other Caribbean islands. Two of the top-five ports of entry, El Paso and San Diego/San Ysidro, are on U.S.-Mexico land borders.

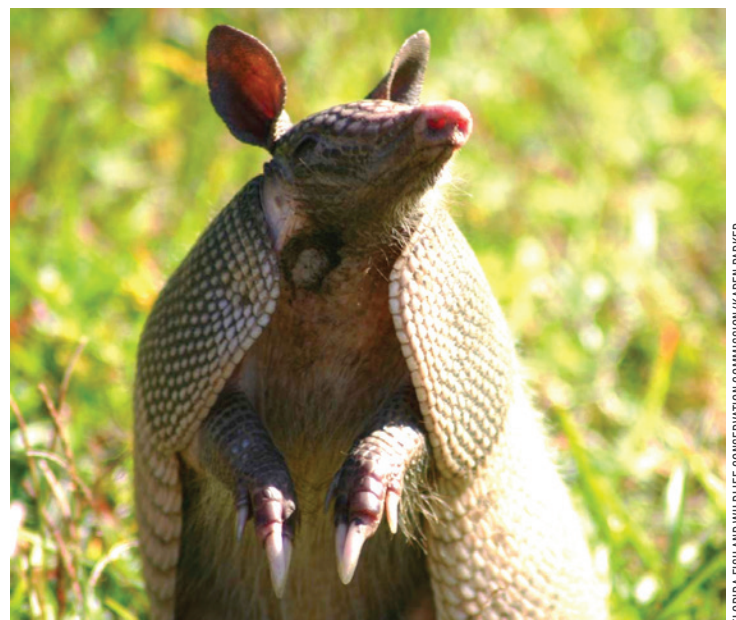


Table 2. Top U.S. Ports of Entry

Rank	U.S. Port of Entry	Number of Shipments	Percentage of Total Shipments
1	El Paso, TX	3,234	32%
2	Miami, FL	2,431	24%
3	San Diego/San Ysidro, CA	836	8%
4	Houston, TX	726	7%
5	Louisville, KY	437	4%

Shipments by Genera

The genus with the highest number of shipments seized (Table 3) was *Strombus*, which includes medium to large sea snails, plus mollusks and conches often used for meat products or souvenirs. FWS seized 1,507 *Strombus* shipments, 15 percent of total shipment seizures. In demand for use for traditional medicine in oil and powder form, *Crotalus*, the genus for rattlesnakes, is the second most trafficked genus. The other genera in the top five account for only 9 percent of total shipments.

Table 3. Top Seized Shipments by Genera

Rank	Genera	Number of Shipments	Percentage of Total Shipments
1	<i>Strombus</i>	1,507	15%
2	<i>Crotalus</i>	735	7%
3	<i>Iguana</i>	460	5%
4	<i>Cheloniidae</i>	405	4%
5	<i>Crocodylus</i>	387	<1%

Shipments by Class

Table 4 breaks down seized wildlife shipments by class. Reptiles are the most seized class, and the reptile products most commonly seized in the United States are meat, eggs and skin pieces. The most trafficked live reptiles are turtles and tortoises. The top three classes in seized shipments, reptiles, mollusks and mammals, represent 65 percent of total shipment seizures.

Table 4. Top Seized Shipments by Class

Rank	Class	Number of Shipments	Percentage of Total Shipments
1	Reptiles	3,256	32%
2	Mollusks	1,870	19%
3	Mammals	1,373	14%
4	Birds	944	9%
5	Fishes	592	6%



© ALEJANDRO VEGA-ZEPEDA

Shipments by Volume and Quantity

Table 5 shows the total volume in pounds of all wildlife parts and products seized each year. 2015 was the year with the highest volume, 27,225 pounds, which accounts for 38 percent of the total volume in the 2007–2017 period analyzed. The average annual volume was 6,473 pounds, about four times less than in 2015 alone.

Table 5. Volume by Year

Year	Pounds
2007	1,380
2008	1,732
2009	1,810
2010	21,405
2011	7,911
2012	1,239
2013	2,879
2014	2,969
2015	27,225
2016	2,041
2017	623

Figure 7 shows the type and volume/quantity of wildlife products seized. Table 6 (next page) breaks down wildlife shipment seizures between 2007 and 2017 by class and quantity.

Figure 7. Product Type by Volume and Quantity

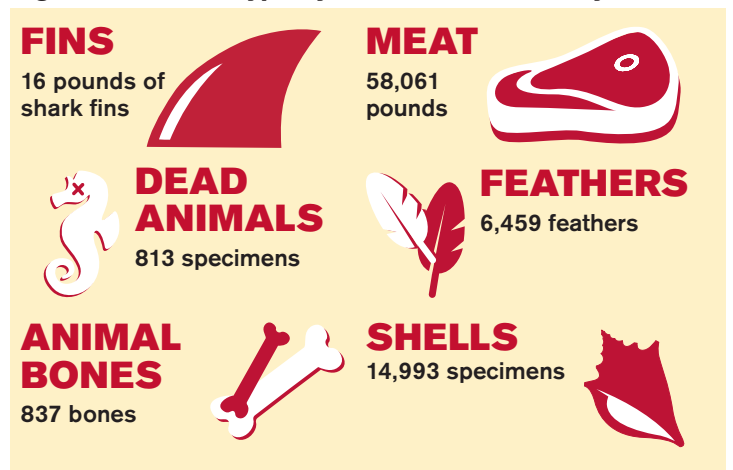


Table 6. Wildlife Products Seized by Class and Quantity



Mammals

2,802 pounds of mammal meat

1,379 mammal specimens

616 mammal horns

388 mammal skin pieces

318 mammal hair samples



Reptiles

21,977 pounds of reptile meat

6,775 reptile eggs and egg parts

4,460 reptile skin pieces

3,871 small leather products

3,581 reptile medicinal parts and products



Birds

5,204 bird feathers

1,280 pounds of bird meat

984 bird products

657 bird specimens

506 bird eggs

For more information please contact Alejandra Goyenechea: agoyenechea@defenders.org.

For a full report on combating wildlife trafficking from Latin America to the United States, more fact sheets and updates on the illegal wildlife trade, visit www.defenders.org/combating-wildlife-traffic