

Bears, chimpanzees and pangolins to be better protected after new funding boost for world's most endangered animals

- Tackling the illegal wildlife trade is essential to halting biodiversity loss and protecting some of our most threatened and endangered species
- Illegal wildlife trade also fuels corruption, creates instability, is linked to organised crime, and can increase the risk of the spread of zoonotic diseases

Endangered and threatened plants and animals, including bears, chimpanzees and pangolins, are set to be better protected thanks to new funding to [tackle the illegal wildlife trade](#) announced by the UK Government today (Friday 01 July), further cementing our position as a leading contributor to the end of this devastating illegal trade.

The illegal wildlife trade not only threatens species with extinction, fuels corruption, creates instability and deprives some of the world's poorest communities of sustainable livelihoods, but is linked to organised crime and zoonotic disease outbreaks.

Grants of up to £1.5 million will be made available to environmental organisations across the world which tackle the vile and devastating illegal trade in animals.

Beneficiaries include two projects in Liberia which are working to reduce the demand for chimpanzee bushmeat and improve wildlife law enforcement, and a project in Laos which will boost the capacity of law enforcement agencies to tackle the trafficking of wild bears by criminal gangs and support wildlife sanctuaries to create livelihood and educational opportunities.

It is thanks to the decisive action taken by this Government that the UK is tackling the illegal wildlife trade head on and leading efforts to bend the curve on biodiversity loss around the world, including through the commitment to halt and reverse global biodiversity loss as set out in the world leading Environment Act.

There are 22 successful projects in total. Other projects being awarded funding today include:

Dismantling illegal pangolin trade in Vietnam

- Building on past successes in three key pangolin habitats, this project will strengthen law enforcement and improve livelihoods to reduce the demand for critically endangered pangolins. (Save Vietnam's Wildlife)

Preventing the extinction of Bolivia's critically endangered red-fronted macaw

- The project will fund teams of local farmer stewards to patrol nest sites and help prevent the trafficking of eggs and chicks which threaten the survival of Bolivia's critically endangered red-fronted Macaws. (Fundacion Natura Bolivia)

Demand reduction for threatened freshwater turtles and tortoises in Bangladesh

- The project will identify freshwater turtle and tortoise consumption and trade hotspots and then conduct a targeted behaviour change campaign to reduce demand for products linked to these species. (Wildlife Conservation Society)

Harnessing technology to end the illegal trade in succulent plants

- This project will address the supply and sale of illegally trade South African succulent plants to stop their extinction. Development of chemical fingerprinting and marking techniques will enable traceability and transparency in trade, while aiding the reintroduction of confiscated plants. (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and TRAFFIC)

International Environment Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

Biodiversity loss is one of the greatest challenges humanity faces today. The illegal wildlife trade threatens wild animals and plants with extinction, destroys precious ecosystems and increases the risk of zoonotic diseases spreading.

The UK is leading calls to halt and reverse global biodiversity loss and the funding announced today comes less than six months ahead of the crucial COP15 Biodiversity Summit, where we will be leading a coalition of high ambition countries committed to agreeing a new global biodiversity framework with targets for 2030.

Independent Chair of the Illegal Wildlife Trade Advisory Group John Scanlon said:

Illegal wildlife trade drives many species towards extinction. It is also highly destructive to entire ecosystems, including their ability to sequester carbon, and is disrupting their ability to support local and indigenous communities. Preventing and combating these serious crimes is one of the biggest environmental challenges we face today.

The UK Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund is a unique and

highly valuable source of funding dedicated to preventing and combating wildlife crime. Its well-targeted projects – such as reducing the demand for endangered pangolins, protecting the iconic red-fronted macaw and using technology to end the illegal trade in succulent plants – will help ensure that wild animals and plants are not plundered by organised criminals, thereby ensuring their many benefits can flow to the local and indigenous peoples of source countries and the global community.

To date, the IWT Challenge Fund has supported 136 projects in over 60 countries to a value of over £43 million. Previously supported projects have included efforts to protect the endangered Royal Bengal Tigers in Nepal by building capacity in park rangers and strengthening wildlife enforcement, as well as protecting elephants along the Nigeria-Cameroon transboundary Green Corridor by improving co-operation between agencies tasked with conserving this iconic species.

Round 9 of the IWT Challenge Fund is now open for applications. For more information on previous projects as well as how to apply please visit:

<https://iwt.challengefund.org.uk/>

Combating illegal trade of bears and diversifying livelihoods in Laos (Free the Bears Fund Inc)

- The placement of confiscated wildlife remains a major obstacle to effective law enforcement in Laos.
- By increasing capacity to house confiscated bears, this project will enable government agencies to effectively implement legal deterrents in order to end the trafficking of bears in Laos and help maintain the ecological intactness of forest ecosystems.
- Additionally, it will demonstrate the role that well-run wildlife sanctuaries can play in poverty reduction through the creation of diverse livelihood and educational opportunities.

Successful Round 8 Applicant and regional director of Free the Bears, Brian Crudge, said:

Bear bile farming and illegal trade are major threats to the survival of sun bears and Asiatic black bears in Southeast Asia. With limited possibilities for returning animals to the wild, rescue facilities are necessary to allow for confiscation and rehabilitation of threatened species.

With support from the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, Free the Bears is supporting the efforts of the Government of Laos to tackle the issue of wildlife farming and illegal trade through the development of sanctuaries which provide space for confiscated animals as well as providing forest-edge communities with sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Increasing chimpanzee guardianship values to reduce the illegal wildlife trade in Liberia (PCI Media Impact)

- Illegal trade of endangered Western Chimpanzees in Liberia is a complex issue driven by poverty, systemic development challenges, and insufficient management of demand.
- This project aims to reduce demand for chimpanzees by fostering guardianship values among urban consumers.
- It will work with a coalition of local partners to design an effective Social and Behaviour Change Communications strategy model that drives the revival and cross-ethnic expansion of existing chimpanzee guardianship values, ultimately reducing IWT.

Successful Round 8 Applicant and project lead at the Livable Plant Program, Brett Matulis, said:

Even though trade in chimpanzees is illegal, the demand for bushmeat and household pets is driving a decline in this iconic species – with only about 35,000 Western Chimpanzees remaining.

Our project in Liberia will tackle this demand by forging a coalition of environmental, gender equity, and poverty alleviation charities with an aim to reduce the consumption of chimpanzee meat and foster local guardianship values for this critically endangered species. If successful, this could be scaled up across Liberia and the region to protect even more animals. The funds we have received today will play a key role in achieving this.

IWTCF schemes expanded:

This latest round is the first time we have introduced 'evidence' and 'extra' schemes, expanding the eligibility criteria for both the grant size and length. The criteria for all three schemes are:

- Evidence – Projects which gather evidence to design an intervention will be funded between £20,000 and £100,000.
- Main – Projects which test new and innovative interventions to provide proof of intervention on a smaller scale will be funded between £100,000 and £600,000.
- Extra – Projects which have already demonstrated success and can have a bigger impact at a larger scale will be funded between £600,000 and £1.5 million.

These new schemes will help better support projects at different points in their development.

Launch of Round 9 of IWTCF

- Today's announcement also marks the launch of Round 9 of IWTCF funding for projects working to tackle the illegal trade of any species of

flora, fauna and fungi in sub-Saharan Africa, East and South-East Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Applicants have until 22 August to submit their Stage 1 application.