

# [Press release: Border Force seizes banned ivory in anti-wildlife crime operation](#)

As part of the 6 week global [Operation Thunderstorm](#), Border Force officers made 276 seizures containing tens of thousands of products banned under CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) at UK ports and airports.

Operation Thunderstorm (which ran from 1 to 31 May) involved police, customs, environment, wildlife and forestry agencies from 92 countries and was coordinated by INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO). The international operation has targeted the networks behind global wildlife crime and resulted in millions of dollars-worth of seizures.

The worldwide effort saw 1,974 seizures including 43 tonnes of wild meat (including bear, elephant, crocodile, whale and zebra); 1.3 tonnes of raw and processed elephant ivory; 27,000 reptiles; almost 4,000 birds; several tonnes of wood and timber and 48 live primates.

Border Force officers at ports and airports across the country have intensified their activity to coincide with the international operation. UK seizures include:

- 7 kilos of banned ivory
- more than 120 live Orchid plants
- more than 2,000 Rosewood musical instruments and parts
- more than 3,000 Rosewood carved items
- more than 1,000 orchid extract tablets
- 7,600 cactus extract tablets and 4 live cactus plants
- 9 products derived from crocodile
- 10 large cat skulls
- 4 products derived from snake
- 2 live reptiles

As well as the co-ordinated effort to support Operation Thunderstorm, Border Force has also recently supported an ivory surrender, led by the International Fund for Animal Welfare. The surrender ran from mid-July last year to the end of January but continues to receive support from the public. In April, Border Force officers from the Heathrow CITES team took receipt of more than 118kg of voluntarily-surrendered ivory which was subsequently destroyed at a secure location.

Grant Miller, head of the Border Force CITES enforcement team said:

Our participation in Operation Thunderstorm, as well as our support for the ivory surrender, underlines our commitment to tackle

wildlife crime which has a devastating environmental impact.

Operation Thunderstorm is a crucial part of a global response to a global issue. The trade in endangered species is driven by organised crime groups and the movement of banned animal products is key to how they operate.

This is why our specialist CITES officers will continue their vital work at the border to prevent the importation of endangered animals and plants, as well as linking with enforcement partners such as the National Wildlife Crime Unit, to stamp out this cruel and exploitative trade.

Border Force is responsible for frontline detection and seizure of items covered by the CITES convention, which tackles the illegal trade in endangered animals and plants. The trade in ivory is strictly controlled under CITES and Border Force plays an important role in preventing the illegal importation and exportation of ivory.

The Heathrow-based Border Force CITES team are specialist officers who are recognised as world leaders in their field.

Anyone with information about activity they suspect may be linked to smuggling and trafficking of any kind should call the UK hotline on: 0800 59 5000.