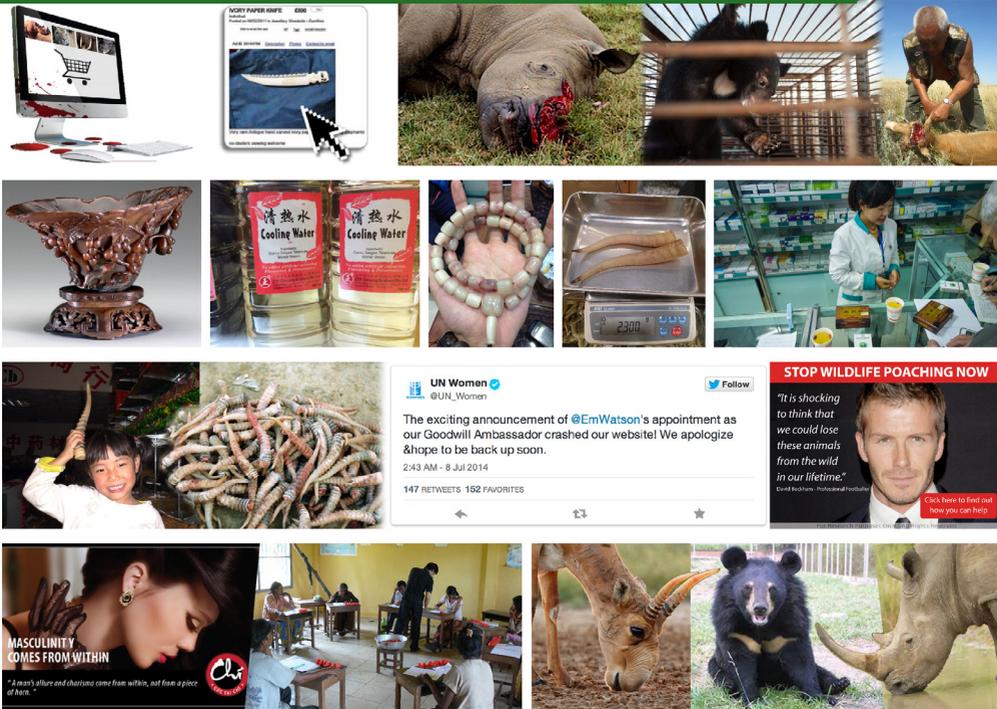


# Oxford Martin Programme on the Illegal Wildlife Trade - Launch Meeting Report



## Context:

In December 2016, almost 50 stakeholders attended the launch meeting of the new Oxford Martin Programme on the Illegal Wildlife Trade (OMP-IWT). This is a programme seeking to address this huge societal challenge by making a step change in scientific understanding of how to tackle the threat, and by providing an international hub for interdisciplinary research into the illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade, which makes real-world impact in reducing this threat to the survival of wildlife species. The aim of this meeting was not only to celebrate the programme's launch, but also to present the programme vision and receive feedback and ideas from stakeholders on its development (reflected in this report).

## Attendance:

Stakeholders in attendance included programme advisors, researchers, collaborators, end users as well as academic colleagues and other funders. The following external entities were represented: Fauna & Flora International, International Fund for Animal Welfare, IUCN, Leadership Mastery Pty Ltd, Oak Foundation, Oxford Brookes University, RARE Foundation, Royal Foundation, Royal United Services Institute, San Diego Zoo Global, Save the Rhino International, TRAFFIC, UNEP-WCMC, University of Bristol, University of Kent DICE, University of Sussex, Wildlife Conservation Society, WWF - Luc Hoffman Institute, Zeitz Foundation and Zoological Society of London.

## Presentations:

Achim Steiner, Oxford Martin School Director opened the day by welcoming guests. E.J. Milner-Gulland, Paul Montgomery and Joss Wright shared the programme vision (copies of full presentation available upon request).

E.J. Milner-Gulland outlined how the crisis of wildlife populations coincide with the value of the illegal wildlife trade (\$8-10 billion/year) and highlighted the dichotomy between this and the limited funding allocated for demand reduction, even though it is recognized as a fundamental component of the long-term solution. The challenge of whether scientific evidence actually influences policy and international decision-making, particularly those



made at the Conference of Parties, requires reflection on what academia's position is, if science is reaching the right people in the right way and at the right time. Attention was brought to the necessity to understand illegal wildlife trade not a single entity, but as a spectrum including food, pets, medicines, utilities, luxuries and others; thus involving different people – producers or consumers, who have different motivations. Understanding their motivations is the key to changing behaviour and this underpins the research questions and challenges OMP-IWT will focus on. E.J. introduced the team and outlined how we will characterize the online trade, assess how to intervene effectively, gain a predictive understanding, carry out case-studies and translate all of this research into impact through dissemination and engagement of stakeholders, collaborators and the wider IWT community.



Paul Montgomery discussed why most published research may be false and how a high majority of research funding is being wasted, but how this can be avoided through transparency to increase value. Trials aimed at assessing the impacts of resource provision and education as potential interventions for psychosocial wellbeing illustrate how lessons learnt, techniques and research from public health, psychology, social work and other disciplines can be applied to OMP-IWT. To combat unsustainable use of wildlife products, the power and applicability of evidence-based approaches to complex interventions can be utilized, specifically the MRC framework, which will be adapted to reduce consumption of saiga horn in Singapore.

Joss Wright gave an overview of the need to understand patterns of internet censorship, whether at a global or national perspective, and the relationship between citizen behaviour and filtering events. Global trends can be detected using network measurements such as usage numbers of Tor, the most widely used internet circumvention tool. Tor is a network that allows anonymous



web browsing and hosting of webpages, and is the means to access most of the “dark web”. Anomalies in network usage can be identified by creating models of typical usage, and seeing where the model becomes particularly inaccurate. Points of interest, and ways this field can be applied to OMP-IWT, stem from combining data sources such as human usage data and social indicators to target, identify and understand correlations between shifts in internet usage and political and social events.

## Break-out groups:

In Session 1, stakeholders shared views on the questions: **what difference can the OMS IWT make?** What insights could the programme provide, how can it move the field forward in theory and practice, what barriers and constraints might prevent this and how can these be addressed, and what opportunities exist that could be grasped?

In Session 2, stakeholders were asked: **how can the IWT community support the programme to make that difference?** How can we as a community of interest ensure that the programme is inclusive and makes a change in the real world effectiveness of IWT interventions?

The following are the main points (not an exhaustive list) that arose from discussions.

## Session 1 Summary:

**Programme vision, values, success and motivations should be critically evaluated:**

- The general consensus is that changing consumer behaviour is the critical aspect to focus on (to gain an understanding, coordinate initiatives, disseminate information on and test interventions for), rather than treating the symptoms after the fact. However, a pragmatic perspective also needs to be taken in terms of the value of time and money spent on consumer behavioural change as opposed to in-situ wildlife conservation.
- Programme success needs to be quantified and defined, with the recognition that different stakeholders will have different perspectives of

desired outcomes and this will be challenging. To truly understand consumer motivations, the role of behavioural change interventions and create a definition of success, a clear Theory of Change for the programme needs to be developed through a collaborative process. Assumptions and terms need to be clearly defined.

- Different motivations will drive different objectives between NGOs and academics, yet this programme can capitalize on the unique stance of linking the two, assisting one another with resources and knowledge, ultimately for greater effectiveness.

**OMP-IWT needs to fit into the wider IWT landscape effectively, without duplicating efforts and by engaging with people along the entire supply-demand chain of illegal wildlife trade.** This is particularly important because there is a lot of other on-going academic research and sharing of best practice; it is important OMP-IWT fills its niche as a hub by clear communication and reaching out to invoke a strong sense of inclusiveness and disseminating developed thinking to practitioners and stakeholders. **How and to whom information is disseminated needs to be well thought out.**

**Language use and word choice could open the door to criticisms, discrepancies and wrong interpretations depending on the target audience** (pertinent for surveying, interventions and programmatic awareness). For example: the use of the phrases *shifting norms* or *changing societal values* may be more appropriate than *change societal norms*; the words *changing* or *modifying* are suggested over *reducing demand*; even the word *trade* can be ambiguous.

**Case studies are focused and species-specific, yet the programme as a whole is broader and strategized to create generalisability.** Current case studies focus on internationally traded terrestrial mammal species of high value, however future studies could look at those traded on the regional level, such as food products (i.e. bushmeat including associated complexities and issues) and those derived from lower profile species including fisheries and timber. Producing methodological frameworks will allow applications to other taxa and contexts.

**Identifying target groups** for behaviour change interventions, what entities they are from and what their **motivations** and **influences** are is necessary to fully understand how to implement campaigns, the most culturally applicable way to convey messages and pitch points.

Often there are many uses for one product, thus **many approaches** must be taken and in the end, consumers determine what existing interventions could work. **Current and past campaigns should be reviewed for their impacts, identifying what works and what doesn't.** There is a range of approaches

which can be effective for behaviour change interventions, some of which have yet to be tried, tested and/or used in the appropriate way, thus there is potential to do so within OMP-IWT. Ideas were shared such as using human health as a lever to influence consumption, 'name and shame' tactics, exploring the business case for legal trade, offering alternatives without pushing negatives, finding positive messages and conveying messages via celebrities.

**Unexpected consequences can arise from interventions, and be affected by surrounding cultural and political factors.** Consideration must be given to these aspects, further emphasising the importance of understanding how different audiences should be meaningfully engaged.

- There is a history of campaigns that are actually counter-productive, producing negative impacts. For example, people may not be aware of a product, but because of the attention drawn, traders/sellers can opportunistically tap into the market and make it highly sought after.
- Note that reducing the profile of demand may be different from actually reducing demand itself. Demand is not always solely reliant on the consumer, but the trader; for example, the only reason a pet shop may stock captive animals is to sell pet food, which brings in a greater profit.
- Policy and the regulatory framework are often part of the solution; choices will not change overnight and a regulatory nudge may help support behavioural change.

**Guidance tools and evaluation platforms are critical.**

- Academia is well placed to play a role as an impartial, credible evaluator of campaigns and interventions; a unique opportunity created from the NGO-academic bridge and something that should be capitalized through this programme.
- A framework for impact monitoring (with indicators) can be built into a standardized system or set of criteria to assess multiple projects consistently, meaningfully and simply (if done on the ground by practitioners as self assessments).
- Value of investment can be obtained through monitoring for effectiveness over time as the OMP-IWT hub establishes long-term.

**Collating and sharing information and research, databases,** potentially through a neutral, central and federated data system or register, including what is legal and illegal from place to place and how this changes over time, as well as protocols and sampling methods. There is a need to collate all related information, continuously do background research, look at what others are doing and create a timeline of other projects in production to avoid overlap. However, it is often very difficult to know when and what exactly and request access. Thus, there is a strong need to collaborate. This type of platform is also costly to establish and maintain, and is

not currently budgeted into the programme. **Learning should come from other sectors and applications.**

**There are often legal and illegal market interactions that need to be assessed for different products to understand the whole picture and see the way forward.** This may include:

- There are complex interactions between legal and illegal markets and the consequences of redesignating a product as one or the other can be very hard to predict and control for.
- Products with both wild and synthetic versions can cause interactions and a high risk of uncertainty, particularly if one market grows rapidly.
- Products may be characterized as illegal (resulting in seizures), not just in terms of CITES, but also be based on other regulations, such as human health, sanitary conditions or trading and collection standards.
- Some products are designated illegal and legal in different places, resulting in mixed perceptions and conflicting provincial, national or regional regulations.

**Great opportunities lie in unexpected partnerships**, often derived from networking and potentially including capitalizing on the citizen science movement, online tech companies, or connecting wildlife trade experts to cyber crime/cyber security experts. The programme is well placed to capitalise on these opportunities.

**The OMP-IWT needs to support strengthening the Science-Policy interface to influence policy direction.** This could be done through CITES engagement, or some other platform, but a critical factor is to know who influences the decisions and policies along the chain and when influence should be interjected, which will require collaborations.

**Predicting trends** next on the rise will be particularly useful for policy, to provide knowledge of when critical times are to intervene as well as how and where trade will go. Horizon scanning can be effective tool to assist, and this is envisaged within the programme.

**There are knowledge gaps and opportunities OMP-IWT can fill**, for example:

- Guiding behavioural change campaigns through market analyses
- Understanding consumers and buying behaviours within and across borders
- Trade interactions between social media, online and physical market places
- Using the dark web to help identify where traders are, moving and how

**Online search methods can be optimized by involving industry**, determining appropriate search **indicators**, recognizing and quantifying online **authenticity** and moving forward to **pre-emptively produce an all-encompassing tool for**

**all wildlife products, platforms and countries.** However, data confidentiality and access must also be considered, perhaps there is potential to explore 'trusted partners' list. Data anonymisation is a limiting factor as is research ethics in identification of users.

**Overlap with other illegal traded products (drugs, arms, humans etc.) and interactions of politics, corruption and terrorism** have caused ivory to be traded on the black market like a commodity such as gold.

- What may fuel the increased amount of poaching is not necessarily straightforward, it is complex and should also be addressed. Middlemen may be dangerous criminals entangled in larger criminal networks and illegal trafficking trade routes.
- Numerous cases links to organised crime, sometimes through the internet. When organized crime is in power, there is low risk, but high reward for committing crime.
- Some illegal products are linked to wildlife, but that's incidental because it's not the 'illegal wildlife' component that the crime is flagged for.

Other suggestions include investigating **all drivers of trade**, not only the consumer demand element. However, caution needs to be taken to avoid spreading capacity and resources too thin.

## Session 2 Summary:

*How can we help make the programme's activities sustainable?*

**Assist with government engagement and effect policy change by:**

- Identifying and engaging appropriately with key government individuals
- Helping facilitate public support and pressure on politicians to motivate change
- Seeking how to get involvement from influential organizations, such as CITES and CBD, which should be engaged from the beginning
- Identifying entry points to CITES
- Identifying what can influence governments and what their research needs are and what questions they need answered
- Assessing the political environment and then bringing in the relevant people
- Advising governments where to spend resources and facilitating the reach of messages

**Provide connections and partnerships to leverage buy-in from practitioners,** particularly engagement with NGOs in major IWT countries to: provide real-world applications and knowledge, connections to build local capacity, provide contextual knowledge, make the programme dynamic, test tools and develop best practices

guides in line with actualities.

**Provide introductions, links and contacts to other sectors and potential partners.** This will continuously encourage inter-disciplinarity for expertise to enrich existing partnerships and research, lay down opportunities to involve the corporate and marketing sectors to assist with understanding what people like (and value), why and their motivations to consume are.

**Contribute to and support data sharing** of a main database (possibly with standardized, unstandardized and meta data) or complementary library of databases. This can assist to map value creating systems and use of existing long-term datasets from which supply-side trade data can be matched with OMP-IWT consumer demand data providing the potential to follow impact up to species populations and provide other insights.

**Provide input into the planning and review process** of mapping the programme, identifying research needs, what has and hasn't worked in the past, external periodic reviews of the programme and encouraging self reporting.

**Identify the best way to engage various players for different purposes and at different scales.**

This should be inclusive of as many arms of government (local, national, enforcement) as possible as they are all needed for a change of behaviour. At the local level, address the need to engage with local initiatives and practitioners to be fully integrated, including traders, traditional medication practitioners, associations and centres on different platforms. At the intermediate level, utilize Theory of Change to fully understand the appropriate vehicle to use. At the global level, obtain a broad and varied reach, potentially through engagement of online marketplace vendors through corporate social responsibility/public relationship angle or by using media as an ally.

**Focus on an evidence base:** behavioural change is not yet evidence-based enough – the assumption is that it is needed, but this viewpoint and how is not always shared. There is a conflation of awareness-raising, demand reduction and behavioural change. Evidence of concepts is required from research to be taken forward and scaled up.

*What barriers and constraints exist, how can we as a broader community address them, and what opportunities can be exploited to improve impact?*

**Time and resources:** we need to question why is there so little investment in changing wildlife consumer behaviour, perhaps it is too abstract for funders and

there is little emotional attachment as opposed to the supply-side. However, to seriously affect demand for wildlife products, long-term and significant investment is needed - there is high potential for projects/case-studies to be jointly funded. Note should be made that donors generally want to see quick results so a long-term sustainable case of doing things right has to be made appropriately.

**Employ additional external expertise as required to address emerging complications, for different considerations and contexts to achieve greater impact.**

**There are some examples of where behaviour change can be made through regulation.** Thus, there is a need to understand what package works best for this particular issue and what the best model is to follow. Other campaigns generally fall on the side of awareness raising so what needs to be done differently?

**Think about who isn't in the room and how to engage with them.** This includes government officials, more donors, stakeholders and researchers from the regions where we are conducting research, which is particularly important because OMP-IWT is currently focused on Asian consumers and yet Asian partners were not represented at the launch.



## Upcoming events linked to the programme and next steps:

- February 23, 2017, Oxford, UK: **Oxford Martin School lecture** by Joss Wright, *Knowing what not to know: sharing and hiding information in digital societies* <http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/event/2405>
- March 1, 2017, Cambridge, UK: **Cambridge Conservation Forum** seminar by Amy Hinsley, *Understanding consumer demand in the wildlife trade* <http://talks.cam.ac.uk/show/index/33519>
- March 22, 2017, Oxford, UK: **Internal Programme Workshop** for researchers to share ideas, present progress on their work thus far and provide a forum for in-depth discussion. The workshop will also coincide with an **Internal Advisory Committee Meeting**.
- Late 2017 (dates TBC), Oxford, UK: **First Annual Symposium: *Influencing demand for wildlife products traded for medicinal use***, held in collaboration with San Diego Zoo Global. Aimed to showcase new ideas and provide a forum for discussion and collaborative opportunities surrounding demand reduction as well as short courses and workshops, targeting students and early-career researchers working in countries where there is a high demand for wildlife products. Registration for the symposium, and submission of posters and talks, will be open to all, further details to follow.
- We are creating a programme **logo** and want your ideas! There will be a prize for the winner and our new design will hopefully be announced at our programme workshop.
- Stay tuned for our first **e-newsletter** and the launch of our **online platforms!**

*Please contact Nafeesa Esmail for any comments, inquiries or to share your illegal wildlife trade work with the rest of the network!*

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Web: <http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/research/programmes/illegal-wildlife-trade>