

*Cruising with a Conscience:  
Reducing the Wildlife Trade Impact  
of North American Cruise Ship Tourism*

Every year, millions of tourists travel to the Caribbean, Mexico and Central America and most purchase souvenirs to bring home memories from their vacations abroad. Some of the wildlife used in products commonly found in this trade includes hawksbill and green turtles, birds of prey, corals, conch shells, crocodiles and caimans. Some live animals frequently purchased by tourists include parrots, turtles and iguanas. Some of these items, though perhaps legally traded, are produced in volumes that are not sustainable and further threaten already imperiled species.

**TRAFFIC North America Recent Caribbean Market Surveys**



**March 2006-Dominican Republic – a major cruise line destination**

- **50,000 Hawksbill Turtle** products available for sale in 249 shops.
- Over 95% of the businesses surveyed in Santa Domingo, traded in marine turtle products, mostly jewelry and decorative products.

**March 2006-Colombia**

- Hawksbill products were available in 60 shops/craft markets/street vendors.
- Roadside vendors were also seen selling **marine turtle eggs**.



**May 2007: Cruise Ship Ports in Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico**

- Wildlife products were available in **half of the 500 stores** visited in seven port areas of the Yucatan Peninsula.
- Locally-occurring species such as **Queen Conch**, sea stars, sea fans and **Black Coral** were widely available.
- Coral was the most common wildlife product available with **over 9000 items** observed for sale, mostly in jewelry.
- Many species found were not endemic to the Caribbean such as Red, Pink, Bamboo and Sponge Corals, abalone and a wide variety of other shells.
- Queen Conch and Black Coral are listed in CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna) Appendix II and require an **export permit** from the country of origin.



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**Addressing the Issue:** TRAFFIC's objective in undertaking market surveys in the Caribbean was to update information about the main types of products available to tourists at cruise ship ports. The results of TRAFFIC North America's market surveys indicate that many types of wildlife products, including some protected domestically and internationally (CITES), are being bought extensively by cruise ship passengers. There are little or no controls at sale or export regarding protected species.



**Moving Forward:** TRAFFIC is confident that the best way to address the potential illegal and unsustainable trade in wildlife products is to partner with cruise lines to educate tourists about the souvenirs they are buying. Cruise Lines understand and know their target audience better than anyone else and have many opportunities to influence their passengers buying behavior.

**Educating Consumers:** TRAFFIC is exploring partnerships with cruise lines to develop an outreach campaign. Potential education materials include leaflets, luggage labels, posters and educational materials for use in children's onboard activity clubs. A brief information video on wildlife souvenirs for the in-house channel of the cruise ship would be an excellent way to reach out to all passengers. Additionally, providing training or awareness materials to cruise line staff on wildlife products, laws, and how live wildlife is captured and smuggled would help them spot problems onboard. The awareness program would be highly positive in nature, empowering passengers to make informed decisions. TRAFFIC firmly believes that many consumers are simply confused about what types of souvenirs are available, where they are from, and whether or not they are legal and sustainable. Cruise Lines and TRAFFIC can partner together to reduce some of this confusion and enhance the passengers enjoyment of their vacation while helping to conserve wildlife.

**TRAFFIC North America**

- is highly regarded for its expertise on wildlife trade in North America and conducts pioneering work on species in trade, policy impacts, market dynamics and countering illegal trade.
- advises governments on CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) policy development.
- conducts capacity building for government agencies and industry to meet CITES implementation requirements.

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