

# Combating illegal wildlife trade — an appeal to Africa’s digital platforms



**LOVED TO DEATH:** African grey parrots perch on a branch in the wild, where they belong.



**DYING OUT:** Although the African grey parrot species is endangered, advertisements for the birds still appear. Pictures: WORLD PARROT TRUST/ ELAINE HENLEY

Civil society organisations want online sites in the continent to implement policies and legislation that will counter a growing trend of illegal wildlife trade

The rapid expansion of the internet ecosystem in Africa has inadvertently given rise to illegal wildlife trade, with a flood of African wildlife and products smuggled out of the continent.

Now, civil society organisations, alarmed at the destruction of habitats and the threat to tourism and other sectors, maintain that digital platforms can and should play a pivotal role in combating wildlife trafficking.

They can do this by taking measures to ensure that internal policies on their content are consistent with laws and policies forbidding the advertisement and sale of endangered species.

“Across the globe platforms have taken steps to address the issue of illegal wildlife sales.

Several countries are considering legislation to compel platforms to take action,” explained Momballa Mbun, senior project officer at Traffic’s Reducing Trade Threats to Africa’s Wild Species and Ecosystems project.

Civil society organisations, including the Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime, Traffic, and the World Parrot Trust, have united in calling for action from African digital players to combat illegal wildlife sales on their platforms.

Mbun called for proper and concrete monitoring systems at African digital platforms that align with global trends.

Beyond the immediate threat of species extinction, the lack of regulation also impacts community livelihoods and raises the risk of new zoonotic diseases.

Wildlife civil society organisations are urging platforms to adopt best practices, including clear policies against illegal wildlife sales, collaboration with relevant organisations, user

awareness, effective monitoring, and co-operation with law enforcement.

Recent reports have shed light on the glaring gaps in this space.

A 2022 report by Traffic revealed a significant threat to African wildlife due to the absence of regulations governing cyber-enabled wildlife trade in Central African countries and Nigeria.

The report found that Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Nigeria have witnessed a surge in digitally facilitated illegal wildlife sales at rates similar to the growth in internet use in these countries. Consequently, various wildlife species, including CITES-regulated timber products, live birds and monkeys, continue to be sold through digital channels.

Notably, the African grey parrot, a popular pet bird species known for its remarkable mimicry skills and lively personality, is banned under mul-

tilateral agreements and national laws.

“African grey parrots have been decimated in the wild by trapping for the pet trade ... trapping wild animals and bringing them into our homes is not only driving species to extinction but leads to suffering and risks spreading zoonotic diseases,” Rowan Martin of the World Parrot Trust, said.

Despite being classified as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, 782 online advertisements for African grey parrots were found on platforms mainly in Kenya, Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, and Angola within six months. Experts assert that the lack of regulation not only jeopardises species with extinction but also threatens community livelihoods and increases the risk of zoonotic diseases.

Furthermore, unregulated digital activity involving wildlife has direct links to crimes such as fraud, corruption, and illicit financial flows.

According to Interpol’s 2020

update on the state of wildlife crime, wildlife trafficking is rising at an alarming rate of 5% to 7% annually.

Some platforms are already leading a change.

Jumia, one of the largest e-commerce retail platforms on the continent, has designated wildlife and wildlife products as prohibited, with similar commitments made by Afribobo and Afribaba.

According to a joint statement, Afribobo — an African online classifieds platform — has removed all advertisements for illegal species and implemented filters to prevent new ads that violate their policy or that of Cameroon.

Similarly, Afribaba — a Kenya-based version of Alibobo — intends to introduce similar filters in 12 additional countries across central, eastern, and Southern Africa.

A 2019 World Bank report values illegal logging, fishing and wildlife trade at more than US \$1-trillion (R18-trillion) annually. — bird story agency




“I dream of the realization of the unity of Africa, whereby its leaders combine in their efforts to solve the problems of this continent.  
I dream of our vast deserts, of our forests, of all our great wildernesses”  
**Nelson Mandela**

**17 - 18 JULY NELSON MANDELA INTERNATIONAL DAY**

**DATE: 17TH JULY 2023 | PUBLIC MEMORIAL LECTURE | TIME: 15H00 TO 17H00**

**DATE: 18TH JULY 2023 | VENUE: NELSON MANDELA MUSEUM YOUTH & HERITAGE CENTRE, QUNU**

**PROGRAM: HANDING OVER OF A LIBRARY | TIME: 08H00**

**UNVEILING OF STATUE - NELSON MANDELA MUSEUM, MTHATHA, NELSON MANDELA MUSEUM YOUTH AND HERITAGE CENTRE | TIME: 10H00**

**VENUE: NELSON MANDELA MUSEUM YOUTH & HERITAGE CENTRE, QUNU**

**DATE: 29TH JULY 2023 | GOLF DAY | VENUE: MTHATHA COUNTRY CLUB**

**DATE: 23RD TO THE 30TH JULY 2023:** 400km Icons Journey from Forthare University via Queenstown, Cofimvaba, Ngcobo, Clarkbury, Bityi, Mqhekezweni, Qunu, Vidgiesville, Ookolweni and Finish at the Nelson Mandela Museum.

**DATE 30TH JULY 2023:** 103 km from Clarkebury Bityi, Mqhekezweni, Quni, Vidgiesville, Ookolweni and finish at the Nelson Mandela Museum

**African grey parrots have been decimated in the wild by trapping for the pet trade ... trapping wild animals and bringing them into our homes is not only driving species to extinction but leads to suffering and risks spreading zoonotic diseases**

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**MPL. P. Ndamase**  
Chairperson: Economic Development, Environmental Affairs & Tourism Portfolio Committee

The Portfolio Committee on Economic Development, Environmental Affairs & Tourism invites interested persons and stakeholders to submit written comments on the **Eastern Cape Environmental Management Bill, 2022 and the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency Bill, 2022**. Interested persons and stakeholders are requested to submit written inputs to **email: mtyiwani@ecleg.gov.za**. Enquiries can be addressed to the Portfolio Committee on Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, for attention the Committee Coordinator, **Mr Makabongwe Tiywani on 079 496 6490**. The closing date for accepting written submissions on **Friday, 25 August 2023**.

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