Wildlife trafficking is an international crisis. An unprecedented global demand for exotic wildlife and wildlife products has triggered an industrial-scale killing spree of endangered and threatened species, including elephants, rhinos, tigers, lions, and many other animals. Populations of endangered species have plummeted over the past decade, yet the illegal trade shows no indication of slowing down. The United States — as one of the largest consumer markets in the world — is helping to drive demand for illegal wildlife products around the globe. Wildlife experts have confirmed that if we don’t act quickly, trafficking will wipe out many wild animals in our lifetime. All of civil society must band together to stop consumer demand and cut off supply chains and market access for illegal wildlife and wildlife products.

THE PROBLEM
Wildlife trafficking is decimating many endangered species around the globe due to an organized and highly sophisticated illegal trade of wildlife and wildlife products. Wildlife trafficking has quickly become a multi-billion dollar transnational criminal activity that is not only a critical conservation issue, but is also a threat to security. It is ranked as the fourth most profitable transnational crime, only behind the drug trade, arms trade, and human trafficking. Wildlife trafficking undermines conservation efforts, fuels corruption, threatens the rule of law, and destabilizes communities that depend on wildlife for eco-tourism revenues.

The illegal wildlife trade is threatening the survival of many species in the wild. According to a World Wildlife Fund report, the world has already lost 58% of wildlife in the past four decades; and by 2020, we may lose two-thirds. The Great Elephant Census, shows us that elephants are in crisis — African savanna elephant populations are down 30% in the last seven years alone. Rhinoceros populations are being decimated at rates of more than 1,000 killings per year. African lion populations have plummeted by 42% in the past twenty years, with fewer than 20,000 lions remaining in the wild. Fewer than 3,900 tigers are left in the wild; and dozens of other endangered and threatened species are victims of the illegal trade.

BIPARTISAN SUPPORT
In 2014, the White House released the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking, which called for a collaborative effort with foreign governments, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to reduce supply and demand for illegal wildlife products. On July 31, 2015, the U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance was announced to coordinate this “whole of civil society” approach to combat the scourge of wildlife trafficking.

Congress also supported this effort through its bipartisan passage of the Eliminate, Neutralize and Disrupt (“END”) Wildlife Trafficking Act in October 2016. The Act continues the work of the National Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking and requires ongoing reports of progress made under the National Strategy and its Implementation Plan.

“Wildlife trafficking is a global epidemic, and is driving some of the world’s most beloved animals to the brink of extinction. In the past two years, the U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance has made significant progress in building public-private partnerships across a variety of sectors to tackle the poaching epidemic. AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums are world leaders in saving animals from extinction, and the strategic alignment with the U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance creates and sustains powerful momentum.”

DAN ASHE, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF AZA
WHO WE ARE

The U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance (USWTA) is a coalition of more than 50 leading companies and nonprofit organizations that are working together, in close collaboration with the U.S. government, to reduce the purchase and sale of illegal wildlife and wildlife products. USWTA works with a variety of partners whose active engagement is essential to the success of the USWTA goals.

In 2018, USWTA joined forces with the Association of Zoos & Aquariums in a united effort to fight the global epidemic of wildlife trafficking. USWTA is now a program of AZA, where efforts will continue across a variety of industry sectors and will include coordinated efforts with AZA-accredited facilities in their efforts to protect wild animal populations around the world via the AZA SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction program.

WHAT WE DO

The U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance coordinates efforts to:

• Raise the public's awareness of the scope of the wildlife trafficking crisis;
• Reduce consumer demand for wildlife and wildlife products; and
• Mobilize companies to adopt best practices to assure that their goods and services are not being utilized by illegal wildlife traffickers, and to assist in raising public awareness and reducing demand.

OUR NGO PARTNERS

The U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance includes more than thirty leading nonprofits and foundations working in wildlife conservation, including African Wildlife Foundation, National Geographic Society, Vulcan, Inc., Wildlife Conservation Society, and World Wildlife Fund, all committed to fighting the illegal wildlife trade. NGO partners of USWTA contribute assets, expertise, and their powerful communications channels to mobilize a diverse and powerful global constituency to achieve our goals.

OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS

Leading companies across a variety of sectors are motivated to help the U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance in the fight against poaching. More than twenty companies have made significant commitments to combat wildlife trafficking including, Carnival Corporation, Discovery Communications, eBay, JetBlue Airways, Richline Group, Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd., and Tiffany & Co. The private sector has a pivotal role to play in fighting the illegal trade by adopting policies and best practices that seek to reduce, and eventually eliminate, market access opportunities for wildlife traffickers. Corporate entities also work with USWTA to implement effective communications with vendors and customers to help reduce demand for illegal wildlife products.

OUR AZA ZOO & AQUARIUM PARTNERS

AZA-accredited facilities across the globe are committed to protecting endangered species in the wild. AZA-accredited facilities like Cleveland Metroparks, San Diego Zoo Global, and Bronx Zoo/Wildlife Conservation Society, have made significant commitments to help the U.S. Wildlife Trafficking Alliance combat wildlife trafficking. By implementing site-based messaging and programming, AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums can reach millions of visitors each year to engage the public in the fight to save endangered species. AZA accreditation standards require members to adhere to AZA's Policy On Responsible Population Management with respect to animal acquisition, thereby thwarting wildlife traffickers’ efforts to sell and trade endangered wildlife or to market illegal wildlife products.