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FROM SEIZURE TO SENTENCE

An Assessment of Tiger Trafficking
Prosecutions in Southeast Asia



A GuArdean, WWF Tigers Alive Initiative, and TRAFFIC publication.

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On the Cover

In 2017, Nepal burnt its stockpile of wildlife parts demonstrating the nation's commitment towards zero tolerance of wildlife crime.
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ACRONYMS

BKSDA	Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam (Natural Resources Conservation Centre)
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CoP	Conference of the Parties
CR	Critically Endangered (IUCN Red List)
DNP	Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (Thailand)
EIA	Environmental Investigation Agency
EN	Endangered (IUCN Red List)
ENV	Education for Nature - Vietnam
IDR	Indonesian Rupiah (currency)
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWT	Illegal wildlife trade
JWM	Justice for Wildlife Malaysia
KHR	Cambodian Riel (currency)
LAK	Laotian Kip (currency)
LC	Least Concern (IUCN Red List)
MMK	Myanmar Kyat (currency)
MYR	Malaysian Ringgit (currency)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NED	Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Suppression Division (Thailand)
NP	National Park
NT	Near Threatened (IUCN Red List)
PDR	People's Democratic Republic (Lao)
SIPP	Sistem Informasi Penelusuran Perkara (Case Tracking Information System)
SVIS	Species Victim Impact Statement
THB	Thai Baht (currency)
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USD	United States Dollar (currency)
VND	Vietnamese Dong (currency)
VU	Vulnerable (IUCN Red List)
WARPA	Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act
WITIS	Wildlife Trade Information System (TRAFFIC)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wild tiger populations across Southeast Asia remain threatened by illegal trade, driven by persistent demand for skins, bones, live animals, and other derivatives. Despite decades of international and national legal protections, trafficking networks continue to exploit uneven enforcement, inconsistent judicial responses, and systemic gaps across the region. This report provides a comprehensive regional assessment of tiger-related arrests, prosecutions, and judicial outcomes across the seven tiger range countries¹ in Southeast Asia: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, covering the period 2019–2024, with an additional in-depth analysis of court documents for Indonesia spanning January 2015–June 2025.

Although all seven countries designate tigers as protected species, the criminal justice responses vary. A major barrier is the limited transparency of judicial records. Except in Indonesia, prosecution data are not publicly accessible, preventing cross-agency accountability, comparative analysis, and targeted capacity development recommendations. The absence of transparent records also obscures case attrition, making it difficult to understand why cases fail and where interventions are required. In several countries, the use of suspended sentences, low fines, and inconsistent judicial outcomes risks reinforcing the perception that tiger offences carry minimal consequences, undermining the criminal justice response and public trust.

Indonesia stands out for its comprehensive, publicly accessible sentencing records. These documents highlight several factors associated with strong prosecution outcomes: effective interagency coordination, the routine use of forensic evidence, information from community members, undercover operations, and clear evidentiary chains. The majority of prosecuted individuals were lower or mid-level actors (e.g., hunters, transporters, or small-scale traders) whose involvement was often linked to economic vulnerability, opportunism, human-wildlife conflict, or social networks. However, high-level organisers and financiers remain largely absent from court proceedings, likely reflecting both the difficulty of investigating complex criminal structures and the tendency for frontline offenders to bear the highest likelihood of prosecution.



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Documented cases rely almost exclusively on wildlife legislation, with no use of anti-money laundering, corruption, financial crime, or organised crime statutes. Drawing on these statutes could provide legal pathways to target higher-level actors and dismantle trafficking networks. Expanding the use of civil and administrative penalties, restorative justice mechanisms, and Species Victim Impact Statements (SVISs) may also strengthen accountability and repair harm. In parallel, enhancing community-based guardianship (e.g., by supporting public reporting of crime) through outreach, education, and coordination could help improve the identification of illegal activity, case quality, and judicial outcomes.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of effective enforcement from investigations, through seizures and arrests, to prosecutions and sentencing. Countries also require coordinated national and regional approaches grounded in transparency, diversified legal strategies, strong interagency cooperation, community partnerships, and effective guardianship systems. By strengthening these elements, governments can reduce the drivers of tiger trafficking, increase risks for offenders at all levels of the supply chain, and build criminal justice systems capable of delivering credible protection for tigers, as well as benefitting other species.

¹Whilst tigers are functionally extinct in the wild in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam, they are formally recognised as tiger range countries because they are part of tigers' historic range and active in long-term plans for reintroduction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the seizures, arrests, prosecutions and sentences for tiger trafficking crimes across the seven tiger range countries in Southeast Asia identified gaps in the prosecution process after arrests for tiger trafficking, with variation between different countries on success and issues.

The analysis of court documents from Indonesia provides further valuable insights, with greater detail, which can inform future interventions not only in Indonesia, but also across the region.

The following recommendations offer targeted activities which can help governments and partners improve the criminal justice response. These can be prioritised based on the national context.

1. Enhance Transparency in the Criminal Justice Response

Improving transparency across the entire enforcement and judicial process is essential for strengthening accountability, identifying systemic weaknesses, and promoting confidence in wildlife crime prosecutions.

- **Increase free public access to court documents**, including judgments, charges, sentencing notes, and reasons for acquittals. Making non-sensitive information available for cases that do and do not result in successful prosecution is particularly valuable for diagnosing procedural gaps, evidentiary shortcomings, or investigative limitations. A transparent record system would also enable other governmental organisations to coordinate more easily and allow the judiciary to operate more efficiently. Other countries could look to Indonesia as an example of a publicly accessible domestic database. In addition, Indonesia and other countries could consider expanding accessible records to include documentation of cases that did not result in a conviction. This would make it possible to analyse the factors that contribute to successful prosecutions.
- **Harmonise data reporting** across agencies (environmental authorities, prosecutors, courts, customs, police) and facilitate regional information sharing platforms to track networks and repeat offenders. This would align with Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP20) (paragraph 1e), of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) where range states

are urged to implement a system for recording information on illegal Asian big cat trade, and share this information for coordinated law enforcement efforts.

- **Disseminate examples of successful prosecutions** domestically and internationally, to highlight effective investigative strategies, charging approaches, use of evidence and experts, courtroom practices, and coordination mechanisms. Databases such as the IUCN-operated WILDLEX and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC's) SHERLOC, which record legislation and case law, could serve as established routes for sharing successful prosecutions.² Sharing prosecution outcomes may also raise awareness and act as a signal that these cases are being taken seriously.
 - **Institutionalise regular documentation and analysis of the criminal justice response**, including annual reviews of wildlife crime cases, patterns in prosecutorial decision making, and common defence arguments. This is crucial in identifying gaps, bottlenecks and evaluating the success or failure of cases (e.g., delays in evidence processing, obstacles to interagency communication, investigative gaps that compromise trials, challenges in establishing intent and others). This also serves as a learning process that can feed into improved prosecutorial outcomes.
- ## 2. Strengthen Legal and Judicial Frameworks
- To ensure wildlife crimes are prosecuted effectively and consistently, legal frameworks must provide clear, enforceable standards. See *Law of the Tiger* (Wingard et al. 2025) for detailed legal recommendations for tiger trade.
- **Review and, where possible, systematically use parallel legal pathways**, as recommended in the *Law of the Tiger* report, to broaden the basis for charges, reduce evidentiary barriers, and increase the range of available penalties. For example, criminal activities frequently involve individuals higher up the trafficking hierarchy who receive substantial illegal earnings and avoid taxes; legal measures for tax evasion could be enforced in such cases. Leveraging anti-money laundering laws, customs regulations, fraud statutes, forgery and identity-document laws, corruption provisions,

and organised crime laws could provide alternative pathways to prosecution. Where appropriate, amend laws to treat tiger and wildlife crime as organised and financial crimes.

3. Strengthen the Criminal Justice Response

To ensure wildlife crimes are prosecuted effectively and consistently, criminal justice systems must be equipped with the tools, expertise, and coordination mechanisms necessary to build strong, evidence-based cases.

- **Invest in continuous and targeted professional development for judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement.** Training should be specific to each group to ensure it is relevant to their work. It should include specialised training in wildlife crime statutes, evidentiary standards, valuation of environmental harm and the impact of the crime on nature and society, evidence handling (including digital), chain of custody procedures, species identification, procedural justice, and the upholding of human rights. Jurisdictions should also explore innovative mechanisms, such as wildlife crime prosecution units, embedded forensic analysts, mobile evidence-collection tools, and mentorship programs with experienced environmental prosecutors. Regional and international best practices should be brought into the fray amongst prosecutors, judges, and magistrates to ensure a shared understanding and knowledge of the impact of wildlife crime.
- **Strengthen inter- and intra-agency and transboundary coordination and collaboration,** particularly between law enforcement agencies and prosecutors, to improve information sharing and judicial processes (e.g., evidence handling, chain of custody and case preparation to ensure evidence is handled accurately and consistently throughout the case process). This should include a system for assessing success, failure and challenges in cases, allowing a feedback loop to bridge the gap between investigations and prosecutions. Learnings from this process can be channelled into pathways for improvements through targeted training. Encourage interagency collaboration (customs, tax authorities, anti-corruption bodies) to identify the most effective legal avenues for each case.
- **Enhance awareness of the laws,** including outcomes from successful cases to ensure the public clearly understands the risks associated with participating in tiger trade, preventing a lack of legal knowledge from serving as a defence.
- **Support public education and resources for identifying and reporting illegal tiger trade to the authorities.** Fostering positive relationships and communication between informal guardians (e.g., communities, bystanders) and law enforcement may help more incidents of illegal trade be identified and prosecuted. Supporting mechanisms for reporting (e.g., hotlines) through

adequate funding, training, staffing, and resources will help ensure these mechanisms are effective.

- **Support and expand the use of forensic evidence,** such as DNA analysis, isotope testing, digital forensics, and traceability techniques, to strengthen evidentiary foundations and support expert witness statements. For example, TigerBase DNA registry system can be used to verify the origin of captive-bred tigers (Ewart et al. 2025). Additionally, involving ecological experts earlier in investigations and establishing standardized evidence collection procedures can further improve prosecutorial success.

4. Target Higher-Level Traffickers and Organised Networks

Arrests and prosecutions often focus on low-level actors, such as transporters or couriers, while organisers, financiers, and cross-border coordinators evade accountability. To address this persistent problem, authorities should:

- **Develop targeted strategies to identify, investigate, and prosecute higher-level actors,** including mid- and upper-tier traffickers, corrupt facilitators, financiers, and those who run transnational networks. Strengthening investigations is crucial to securing strong convictions.
- **Strengthen intelligence gathering and financial investigations,** including tracking financial flows, analysing communications, and using digital investigation tools to uncover network structures. To support these efforts, coordination with telecommunications companies and bank systems is crucial.

5. Strengthen Research to support Evidence-based Criminal Justice Processes

Building a rigorous evidence base is crucial for improving prosecution strategies and judicial outcomes. This research will enable policymakers to design more effective interventions and training programmes grounded in real-world conditions.

- **Conduct in-depth qualitative research,** including interviews with investigators, prosecutors, judges, defence attorneys, and forensic specialists. This can uncover practical challenges such as evidentiary gaps, resource constraints, lack of expert testimony, or unclear statutory definitions. This information is crucial for identifying training needs to address specific problems.
- **Analyse sentencing outcomes** to understand how penalties are determined, whether they act as effective deterrents, and how different factors (e.g., prior offences, scale of trafficking, species involved, black market value or gains if the crime went undetected) influence judicial decisions. For example, by interviewing convicted offenders to understand the drivers of crime and the deterrent effect of penalties.



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- **Study case attrition** (where cases drop out of the system) to pinpoint where and why prosecution efforts fail and how to strengthen each stage of the process. Ensure records are available, even of those cases that do not lead to a conviction.
 - **Research the impacts of the criminal justice system** on offenders, their families, and communities, and evaluate the effects on recidivism (repeated offending) to understand the socio-economic impacts of penalties, perceptions of risks and rewards, and deterrence.
- 6. Enhance Accountability & Repair Harm**
Tiger trafficking causes ecological, cultural, economic, and social harm. Incorporating restorative approaches can strengthen justice outcomes and deepen public understanding of the severity of wildlife crime.
- **Assess the full economic cost of the crime**, including enforcement expenditures, ecological restoration costs, the financial value of lost biodiversity, and downstream impacts on tourism or community livelihoods.
 - **Develop and formalise the use or admissibility of species-impact statements** (or equivalent) outlining the illicit profits traffickers derive and the ecological effects of removing tigers, including impacts on ecosystem services, cultural values, and conservation costs. Prepared by qualified experts, these statements assist courts in understanding the impacts of tiger trafficking, leading to more proportionate penalties to repair the harm caused by the crime.
 - **Expand legal tools beyond criminal prosecution.** Recognising the immense harm caused to the environment and communities, alternative methods aimed at repairing this damage (e.g., conservation litigation, administrative penalties, restorative justice, and other parallel legal pathways) could offer ways to restore and repair the damage (e.g., habitat restoration, compensation schemes for affected communities) through court-ordered contributions to conservation programs. While not a replacement for criminal penalties, these mechanisms can complement prosecutions and reinforce the message that wildlife crimes cause real, measurable harm.

INTRODUCTION

TIGER TRADE

Tigers (*Panthera tigris*) are classified as Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List (Goodrich et al. 2022). The global wild tiger population is estimated to number around 5,700 individuals, confined to just ten countries, a dramatic decline from around 100,000 wild tigers at the beginning of the 19th century (Global Tiger Forum 2025, Goodrich et al. 2022, Duran & Stoner 2025). While recent surveys indicate population increases in some range countries such as India, Nepal, and Thailand, tiger populations remain fragmented, with numbers critically low and continuing to decline across much of Southeast Asia (Dinerstein et al. 2007; Goodrich et al. 2022; Wong & Krishnasamy 2022; Duran & Stoner 2025).

The decline of wild tigers is primarily driven by habitat loss and degradation, human-wildlife conflict, poaching, and illegal wildlife trade. Demand for tiger parts, especially whole animals (live and dead), skins, bones, teeth and claws, remains high across much of East-, South-, and Southeast Asia, where such products hold commercial value, and cultural and symbolic status. Globally, at least 2,551 seizures occurred between 2000 and 2025, totalling an estimated 3,808 illegally traded tigers (Wong & Krishnasamy 2025). Despite legal protections in range states and the inclusion of tigers in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), poaching for trade persists, fuelled by transnational criminal networks exploiting corrupt enforcement and complex trafficking routes across Asia (Wong & Krishnasamy 2022; Duran & Stoner 2025).

PROSECUTIONS

Prosecutions are the state's formal mechanism for filing criminal charges against individuals or groups suspected of violating the law, with outcomes that can include conviction and sentencing. They illustrate how laws are applied in practice and demonstrate that the criminal justice system actively responds to crime by gathering evidence and mobilising to address wrongdoing. Successful prosecutions reflect the state's commitment to upholding legal protections, including those for wildlife.



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Beyond simply carrying out the legal process, prosecutions send important social and institutional signals. From a deterrence perspective, they can serve as a possible pathway to specific deterrence, in which individuals who are caught and punished are dissuaded from re-offending, or to general deterrence, in which potential offenders observe others being prosecuted, reassess the risks of committing similar crimes, and choose not to engage.³ Although evidence on the deterrent effect of wildlife crime prosecutions and punishments is limited, it is likely that prosecutions at least increase the perceived certainty of being caught and punished, which is widely regarded as more influential on deterrence than the perceived severity of sanctions (Wilson et al. 2020). Prosecutions may also enhance the perceived legitimacy of the justice system by demonstrating transparency, responsiveness, and fairness (Nurse 2015). They ensure that wildlife crime is neither overlooked nor normalised, thereby raising its profile and demonstrating that it is being taken seriously (Nurse 2015). When governments prosecute crimes such as illegal wildlife trade, it signals that these issues, including ecosystem health and public welfare, are prioritised.

³See Wilson et al. 2020 for a review of deterrence in the wildlife crime context.



Antipoaching patrol, Belum-Temengor Forest Complex Malaysia © Emmanuel Rondeau/WWF-US

Analysing prosecution patterns offers valuable insights into the criminal justice system's response to illegal wildlife trade, including its investigative capacity, prosecutorial discretion, and judicial decision-making.

AIMS OF THE REPORT

Various reports have highlighted the ongoing illegal trade in tigers. These include TRAFFIC's "Skin and Bones" reports, which have been published for every CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP) since 2013 and offer comprehensive analyses of tiger seizures and trafficking incidents worldwide (see Wong & Krishnasamy (2025) for the latest in this series). These reports, together with other recent publications (Duran & Stoner 2025; Wingard et al. 2025), highlight key drivers of the illegal tiger trade, including social media-facilitated transactions, tiger farm complicity⁴, persistent consumer demand, especially in Southeast Asia, and ongoing challenges in enforcement and prosecution.

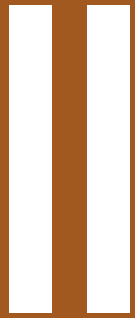
Building on these works, this report provides a comprehensive analysis of tiger enforcement actions and criminal justice responses across seven Southeast Asian countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. These countries are formally recognised as tiger-range countries in the region (noting that tigers are considered functionally extinct in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam (Goodrich et al. 2022)), and are also well-known source, transit, and/or consumer countries for tiger trade.

In the following regional and country overviews, we first examine reported tiger seizures, detailing where, when, and how they occurred, who was involved, and the nature and quantity of the confiscated commodities. For prosecuted cases, where possible, we identify various factors including: offences filed, when and where charges were brought, the types of sanctions imposed, whether cases proceeded to trial or were appealed, and the courts through which they were heard (e.g., regional, federal).

Additionally, we then examined the judicial process, the evidence presented, the prosecution outcomes, and the sentencing decisions in Indonesia, which had the most comprehensive set of publicly available court records documenting tiger-related cases. This analysis details the judicial process for successfully convicting offenders involved in tiger trade in Indonesia and provides valuable insights that could inform criminal justice practices in other parts of Southeast Asia.

This report aims to identify knowledge gaps, challenges, and opportunities to strengthen judicial responses to help protect remaining tiger populations in the wild.

⁴"Tiger farms" are facilities that keep or breed tigers in captivity for the purpose of trade, mostly found in countries such as China, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, Thailand, and South Africa (Wong and Krishnasamy 2022; Duran & Stoner 2025). They can increase the poaching threat to wild tigers by perpetuating or promoting demand and legitimising the use of tiger parts and products (EIA 2020; Musing 2020; Wong & Krishnasamy 2022). Although international regulations, such as CITES Resolutions and Decisions, prohibit commercial tiger farming, enforcement remains weak, and new facilities continue to emerge, particularly in Southeast Asia (Wong & Krishnasamy 2022)



METHODS

SEIZURE AND PROSECUTION DATA

To gauge the level of tiger related prosecutions across our target countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam), we collected seizure and prosecution data for the period January 2019 to 31 December 2024 from a variety of sources including the following non-governmental organisations (NGOs): Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Education for Nature - Vietnam (ENV), Justice for Wildlife Malaysia (JWM), TRAFFIC, and WWF. For Indonesia, records of tiger seizures and prosecutions were primarily extracted from the government website, *Sistem Informasi Penelusuran Perkara*—Case Tracking Information System (SIPP), an open-access database of court case information for each district in Indonesia (further details specified below).

In addition to data obtained from NGOs and SIPP, we also submitted formal requests to the CITES Management Authorities of all target countries for tiger seizure and prosecution data. The first request was sent in March 2025, with a follow-up in May 2025. Only Thailand responded, kindly providing seizure data; however, no corresponding prosecution records were available.

COURT DOCUMENTS

To better understand judicial processes, efforts were made to obtain case-specific records of tiger prosecutions (i.e., court-issued documents for individual cases). The approach to collecting these records differed across the target countries, as outlined below.

Indonesia

Court documents were obtained from the SIPP Putusan website of the Supreme Court of Indonesia.⁵ Data collection took place in November–December 2024, with a second search for additional and updated court documents conducted in June 2025. To conduct the searches, we accessed the 'PENCARIAN' (search) feature on the SIPP homepage. We used the keywords "harimau," "macan," and "panthera" to identify cases potentially involving tigers. After the search results were generated, the cases were filtered under the "Klasifikasi Putusan" (Decision Classification) category: *Pidana Khusus* (Special Criminal Offences). Additional filters were applied under the subcategories *Lingkungan Hidup*

(Environmental) and *Lain-lain* (Others). To minimise the likelihood of overlooking cases, results were reviewed year by year. We also obtained sentencing records for tiger-related cases prosecuted in Indonesia from January 2015 to June 2025. These documents include information about the defendants, the nature of the crime, the evidence presented in court, the criminal justice response, and the sentencing decisions. They were used for a detailed analysis of prosecutions in Indonesia (Section V).⁶

Each case was reviewed to determine whether it involved tiger (including poaching, possession, and illegal trade). The case documents typically provided a summary, including the court name, name(s) of the defendant(s), sentencing information, and a list of evidence. There are some notable limitations to these data. Not all tiger-related cases listed on each of the District Court SIPP websites were available on the SIPP Putusan website. Furthermore, court documents were not uploaded for all of the listed cases at the time of data collection (at least 24 known cases that occurred between 2019 and 2024). It is also possible that cases may have been incorrectly categorised under classifications other than "Lingkungan Hidup" (Environment) or "Lain-lain" (Others) within the "Pidana Khusus" (Special Criminal Offences) section. If such misclassifications occurred, relevant documents may not have appeared in the filtered search results.

Malaysia

Court documents were searched for in the LexisNexis database, which provides access to case laws and legislation relevant to Malaysia. To identify court cases pertaining to tigers, keyword searches were conducted using the following terms: "harimau," "panthera," and "tiger." Additionally, a search was conducted using Malaysia's primary wildlife legislation, the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010, to identify additional cases related to tiger crime. It is important to note that the LexisNexis database covers cases from the Federal Court, Court of Appeal, and High Courts, but the Sessions Courts, where the majority of wildlife crime cases are first heard, may not be included. Cases resolved through out-of-court settlements may also be missing. Therefore, the dataset represents only some court-adjudicated cases, resulting in a limited number of records.



Efforts were also made to obtain court documents directly from relevant Malaysian state courts through formal requests submitted in August 2025. Responses were received only from the courts in Kelantan and Pahang, with full access to court documents granted solely by the Temerloh High Court in Pahang for one case. Other responses comprised only brief summaries of case outcomes, thereby limiting the availability of comprehensive judicial records necessary for in-depth analysis.

Thailand

In May 2025, a formal request was submitted to the Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Suppression Division (NED) seeking prosecution data and court documents pertaining to tiger-related offences in Thailand. However, in response to our inquiry about specific tiger seizures and prosecutions, NED officials indicated that all cases remain under active investigation. Consequently, they were unable to provide any details on court proceedings, including case numbers or final judgments, citing confidentiality and the sensitivity of ongoing investigations.

Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam

For Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, data availability was particularly limited. Requests submitted to the CITES Management Authorities did not yield prosecution records, and no publicly accessible national database of court decisions exists. For Viet Nam, additional data requests were submitted to ENV, which maintains a database on wildlife crimes and prosecutions in Viet Nam and was able to provide summary statistics of prosecution outcomes. Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar lack systematic, centralised reporting on wildlife crime prosecutions. As a result, the dataset likely underrepresents the true scale of tiger-related enforcement and judicial outcomes in these countries.

COURT DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The court documents obtained from Indonesia and Malaysia were sufficiently comprehensive for systematic analysis. We qualitatively coded the documents to identify relevant information. This process involved developing a thematic codebook that provided clear definitions for each piece of qualitative information. The codebook focused on three broad themes: Criminal Event, Offenders, and Criminal Justice Response. These themes were further broken down into sub-themes and codes (Appendix A). The first draft of the codebook was developed and reviewed by international, regional, and in-country experts in tiger trade, international wildlife trafficking, and criminology. This version was used by two bilingual coders (Bahasa Indonesia and English), who independently coded three cases and translated the coded content into English. To ensure the robustness and reproducibility of the coding process, intercoder reliability and translation consistency were assessed by comparing results across coders. The discrepancies between their interpretations of the codes were used to inform subsequent codebook revisions. The revised codebook was then tested on two other cases, with only minor additional revisions. To confirm intercoder agreement, five other cases were coded by two coders using the final version of the codebook, resulting in high intercoder agreement. In total, ten cases contributed to the intercoder agreement assessment. Any coding issues encountered during the coding process were reviewed by the team and addressed through a consensus-based approach, culminating in the final version of the codebook (Appendix I). All coding was done in ATLAS.ti qualitative software, version 25.0.1 (32922).

Thematic and qualitative content were analysed in ATLAS.ti using code summaries and code frequencies. To further analyse results, we developed meta-matrices to

⁵SIPP Putusan website of the Supreme Court of Indonesia available at <https://putusan3.mahkamahagung.go.id/>

⁶We used all the available records from 2015 and into the first half of 2025 in Section V to provide a more comprehensive and longitudinal analysis of prosecuted tiger crime cases in Indonesia.



Tiger claws and teeth openly for sale, with ivory © Heather Sohl

summarise and compare data across themes (Miles et al. 2020). Some codes (e.g., commodity values, defendant ages, sentences, date ranges) were exported from ATLAS.ti for quantitative analysis in R (R and R Studio (v. 2024.04.2+764)). These analyses included descriptive statistics and network analyses. The following R packages were used: dplyr (Wickham et al. 2023), ggplot2 (Wickham 2016), tidyr (Wickham et al. 2024), stringr (Wickham 2023), lubridate (Grolemund & Wickham 2011), igraph (Csárdi et al. 2025), ggraph (Pedersen 2025), tidygraph (Pedersen 2024).

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to consider when reviewing and interpreting the findings of this report. Since prosecution records were not consistently available across all countries, our ability to compare seizure and prosecution rates internationally was limited. This may have led to undercounts and unintentionally biased results towards certain countries, provinces/states, crime types, or criminal justice systems (e.g., we may miss records from regional courts, or there may be restrictions on access to records involving sensitive issues such as corruption). We also acknowledge that even when records were available, they were not

always complete. For some court documents, we were able to comprehensively code most themes, whereas others were missing information (e.g., the defendant's occupation or how the crime was detected). It is difficult to determine whether this information is missing at random, if some courts are less inclined to include these details in their sentencing documents, or if the information was simply not reported. Regardless, missing data can limit the depth of analysis and may distort results; therefore, findings should be viewed with this caveat in mind.

Additionally, our analysis of court records was limited to sentencing documents, so we lack a full account of the judicial process. Consequently, we did not have systematic data on case attrition, preventing examination of the characteristics of incidents that did not advance through the criminal justice system. This restricts a comprehensive analysis of the criminal justice process and limits our ability to systematically evaluate the factors that contribute to successful prosecutions.

Finally, while this report focuses on the criminal justice response to tiger trafficking, it does not explore the broader question of what deters wildlife crime. What influences deterrence in wildlife crime is not all well

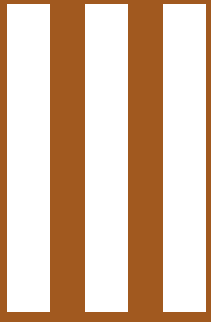


Tiger bone products © David Lawson / WWF-UK.

understood, but factors such as crime type, geography, culture, perceptions of the law's legitimacy, and the strength of the criminal justice system may play a role. This report starts to unpack some of these dimensions, but we emphasise that this report is not a test of whether arrests or convictions deter illegal trade. We also recognise that, based on previous criminological literature, tough-on-crime policies and severe penalties may not achieve the intended deterrent effect and may cause harm (Wilson & Boratto, 2020). Consequently, any conclusions about the effectiveness of prosecutions as a deterrent remain speculative, and we underscore the need for future research that integrates criminological and other social science perspectives. Despite these limitations, this study offers a detailed review of available prosecution records, providing new insights into offender characteristics, criminal events, and criminal justice processes, which can inform strategies to improve criminal justice systems addressing wildlife crime.



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REGIONAL OVERVIEW

TIGER SEIZURES

Between 2019 and 2024, 259 tiger-related seizures were obtained for the target countries, averaging approximately 43 incidents per year (Figure III.1). Seizures were highest in 2023 (n = 54) and lowest in 2020 (n = 31). The number of reported incidents varied markedly among countries (Figure III.2). Viet Nam accounted for the largest share with 107 seizures, followed by Indonesia (n = 99), Thailand (n = 21) and Malaysia (n = 20). During this same period, Lao PDR had seven seizures, Cambodia had three seizures, and Myanmar had two seizures.

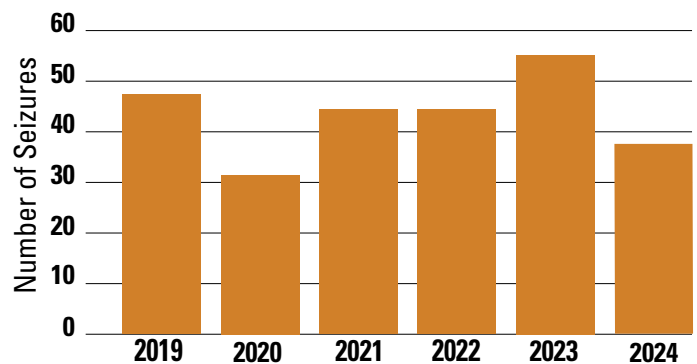
Drawing firm conclusions about trade trends is challenging because reported seizures largely depend on enforcement capacity, case detection, reporting practices, and various country-specific factors such as political will. Consequently, year-to-year fluctuations may reflect differences in reporting and operational activities as much as actual changes in illegal tiger trade. Moreover, the dataset is biased towards Viet Nam and Indonesia, which have relatively more robust data collection and accessible records in comparison to other Southeast Asian countries.

While beyond the scope of this study, a comprehensive assessment of tiger seizures in Asia, covering commodities, quantities, trafficking routes, underlying drivers, and temporal patterns over a 25-year period, is presented in the *Beyond Skin and Bones* report published in November 2025 (Wong & Krishnasamy 2025).⁷

ARRESTS AND PROSECUTIONS

Seizure outcomes, in terms of arrests and prosecutions, across the target countries varied widely between 2019 and 2024 (Table III.1, Figure III.3). The suspects were prosecuted predominantly under the respective wildlife protection legislations enacted by each country (Table III.2). The data indicate that at least 110 incidents (42%) resulted in convictions with monetary penalties and imprisonment. This figure is largely attributed to Indonesia (n = 51 incidents) and Viet Nam (n = 51 incidents). There were also an additional 35 incidents (14%) resulting in convictions, but these sentences were suspended. This was mainly attributed to Viet Nam (n = 33 incidents). It should be noted that the Indonesian data are based on a government database that has

Figure III.1: Number of seizures per year in all target countries



publicly available sentencing records, and therefore may introduce a bias toward successful prosecutions. Similarly, ENV maintains a database on arrests and prosecution outcomes for priority species in Viet Nam, making this dataset comparatively more robust than those of the other target countries.

A substantial number of cases had unclear outcomes: 63 incidents involved suspects who had been arrested, but whose case outcomes were unknown, and 48 cases had no available data. Only two cases ended in acquittal, and one was dropped due to the suspect's death. Viet Nam and Indonesia recorded the highest numbers of arrests, with 161 and 123 suspects respectively, of whom 69 (43%) were convicted in Viet Nam and 96 (78%) in Indonesia. Thailand and Malaysia had intermediate levels of enforcement action, with 36 and 35 arrests, and imprisonment of five and nine individuals respectively. In contrast, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar recorded relatively few arrests. Cambodia and Lao PDR each reported only one successfully prosecuted case, resulting in the imprisonment of five individuals in total (n = 2 and n = 3, respectively), while Myanmar reported no prosecution outcomes.

⁷Seizure incidents numbers presented here vary slightly from those in Wong & Krishnasamy (2025) as more data has become available since it was published.

Figure III.2: Number of annual tiger-related seizures reported per country

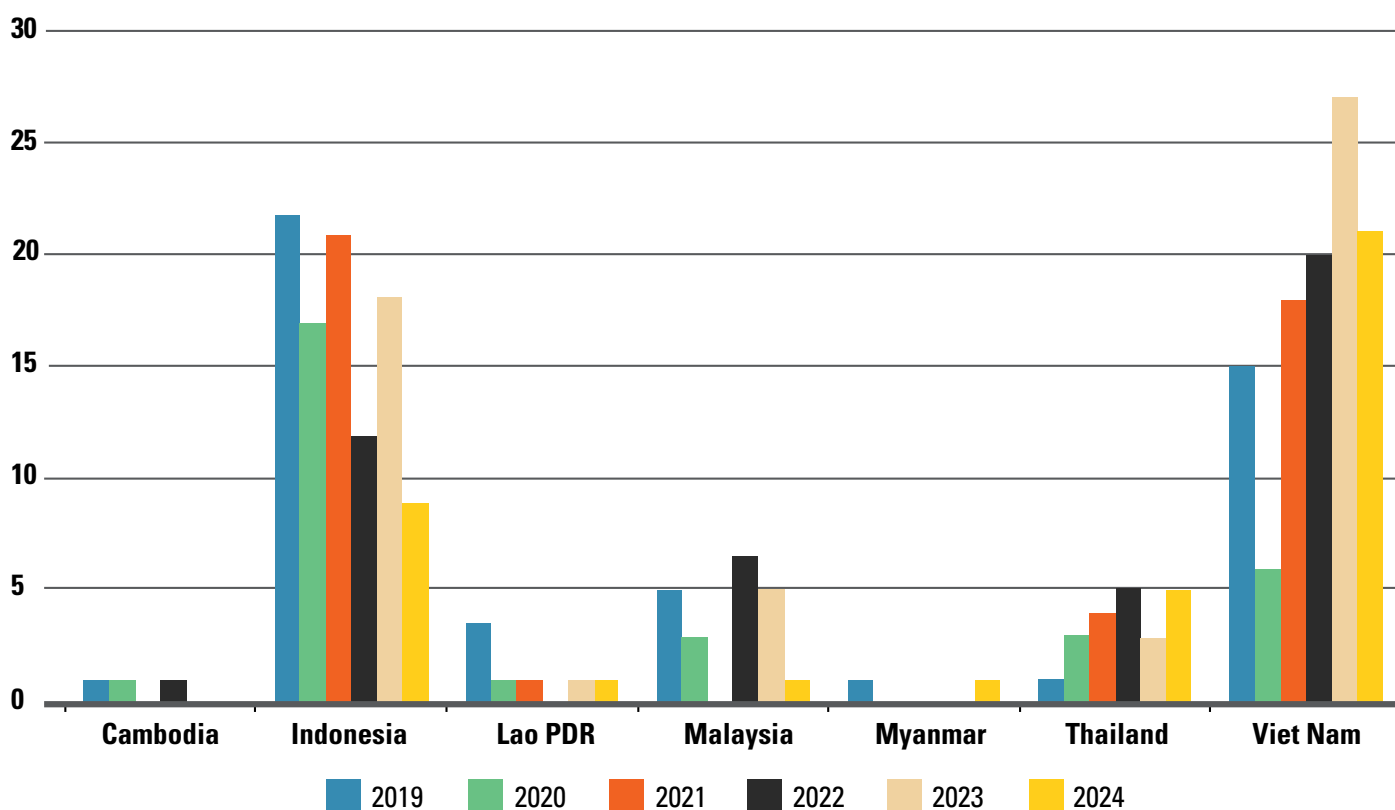


Table III.1. Reported outcomes of the criminal justice response to tiger-related crimes across target countries, 2019-2024

Outcomes	Number of Seizure Incidents
No arrests/data	48
Acquitted	2
Cases dropped (suspect died)	1
Cases resulting in penalties (fines, imprisonment)	110
Cases resulting in sentence suspended	35
Outcome unknown (of incidents with suspects arrested)	63
Total	259

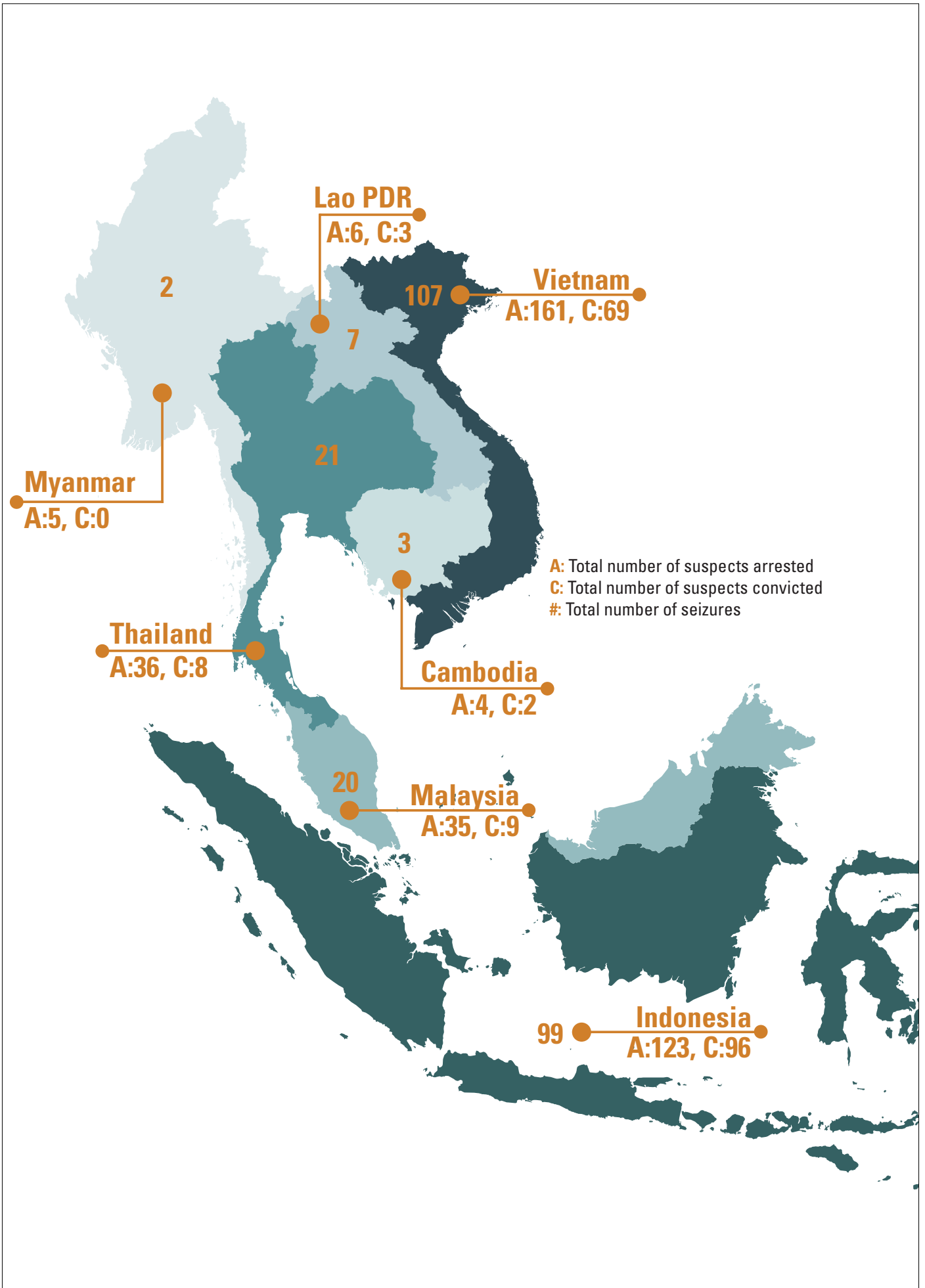
Table III.2. Primary wildlife legislation and their associated penalties[^]

Country	Primary Legal Framework	Offence Scope (Applies to Tigers & Protected Wildlife)	Max Jail (yrs)	Max Fine (Local currency)	Approx USD	Remarks
Cambodia	Forestry Law 2002+ Sub-decrees & Protected Forest/ Environmental Laws*	Hunting, trade, export, import of endangered/rare wildlife	10 (Class I offence)	KHR 150,000 (Class I)	~\$37.50	Serious wildlife offences (Class I) carry 5–10 yrs and fines, whereas lesser wildlife offences have lower ranges; CITES trade repeat offences include bans on future trade
Indonesia	Law on Conservation of Biological Resources & Ecosystems (new 2024)	Poaching, trading protected species	15 (individual) 20 (corporate)	IDR 5,000,000,000 (individual) / IDR50,000,000,000 (corporate)	~\$288,151 / \$2.88m	Revised law increased fines and jail terms significantly; corporate liability included.
Lao PDR	Penal Code 2017 & Wildlife & Aquatic Law (No.42/SNP 2023)	Hunting/ possession/trade of protected species (incl. CITES)	5	LAK 10,000,000	~\$1,225	Penalties raised recently for protected wildlife theft/possession; imprisonment up to 5 yrs, fines modest.
Malaysia	Wildlife Conservation (Amendment) Act 2022	Hunting/ possessing protected species, illegal trade/parts	Mandatory jail, up to 15 years	Minimum MYR 150,000 per tiger part, no maximum	Minimum \$37,500	Penalties include heavy fines and imprisonment; courts impose high sentences for wildlife crimes (even >MYR 1.5m fines seen).
Myanmar	Conservation of Biodiversity & Protected Areas Law (2018) + Penal Code	Hunting/ possession/trade of protected wildlife	3-10	Also with a fine	Older law with relatively low fines/jail for protected wildlife crimes; enforcement and statutory ranges limited.	
Thailand	Wild Animal Conservation and Protection Act B.E. 2562 (2019)	Hunting, possession, trade of reserved species (tiger)	~10 (trafficking)	THB ~1,000,000	~\$27,000	Latest revisions increased fines and jail terms from previous law; examples of trafficking penalties up to ~10 yrs and large fines exist.
Vietnam	Penal Code 2017 Amendment & Wildlife protection articles (esp. Art. 234 & Art. 244) and Circular No 27/2025/ TT-BNNMT	Hunting, killing, possession, transport, trade of wild/rare/ endangered wildlife	15	VND 2 billion (individual) / VND 15 billion (corporate)	~\$82,000 / \$620,000	Viet Nam’s Penal Code criminalises wide range of acts; serious cases with organized conditions carry heavy jail and fines.

[^]Penalties reflect those currently enforced under national legislation; however it is important to note that many of these laws underwent revisions over the period of time included in this study. In all countries, the legal framework of wildlife crime is dispersed across multiple statutes, regulations, decrees and policy frameworks—see Wingard et al. 2025 for more detailed legal analysis.

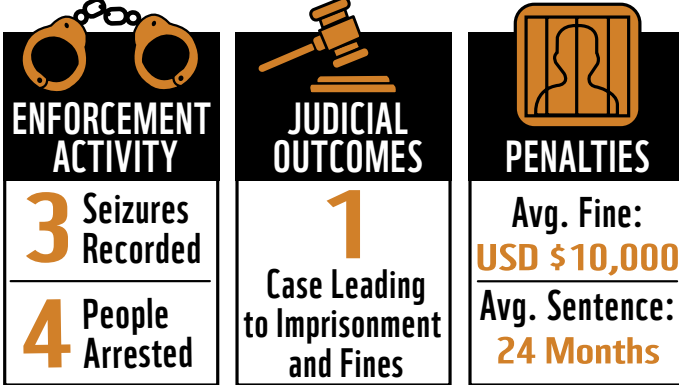
*The Environment and Natural Resources Code, 2023, prescribes new penalties and processes for dealing with and reporting environmental crime in Cambodia. Sub-decrees for its implementation are still being issued, and thus its application was not considered in this study and should be incorporated in future assessments of legal measures against tiger trade in Cambodia.

Figure III.3. Total number of tiger seizure incidents, and suspects arrested and convicted per target country between 2019 and 2024



IV COUNTRY OVERVIEWS

CAMBODIA



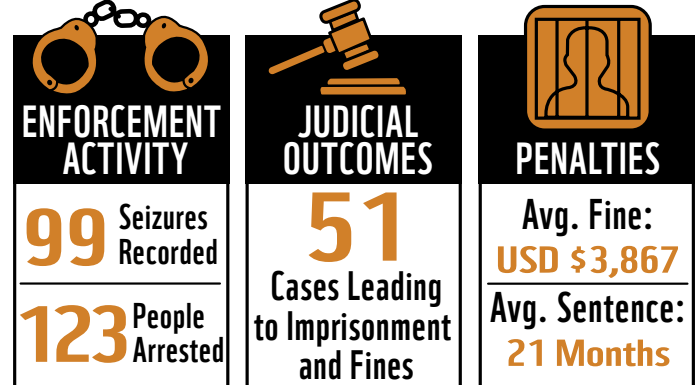
From 2019 to 2024, our search revealed three tiger seizures in Cambodia, each resulting in at least one arrest (Appendix B, Table B2). A total of four individuals were arrested: two Vietnamese nationals in 2019, one Chinese national in 2020, and one Cambodian national in 2022. At least three additional individuals associated with the 2022 incident were named as suspects but evaded arrest. Convictions were only secured in one case involving two Vietnamese nationals who were caught in 2019 at the Phnom Penh International Airport with tiger bones of unknown quantity. Both were charged under Articles 27 (illegal harvesting) and 98 (penalties) of the Law on Forestry (2002) and sentenced to 24 months in prison and fined USD 10,000 each, a relatively substantial penalty.

Overall, data on tiger-related crimes in Cambodia are limited, making it difficult to draw meaningful insights into arrest and prosecution outcomes. Only three tiger-related incidents were recorded over six years, suggesting either low levels of illegal trade, low detection rates, or under-reporting. The three seizures do suggest a consistent pattern of arrests following the detection of tiger-related crimes, but with relatively low prosecution and conviction rates. Enforcement in one incident in 2019 resulted in tangible judicial outcomes; however, incidents in 2020 and 2022 did not lead to successful prosecution or sentencing. These constraints hinder meaningful assessment of Cambodia's criminal justice response and point to broader systemic challenges in monitoring and prosecuting wildlife crime.

Cambodia's status as a country where tigers are considered functionally extinct adds an important dimension to the analysis. The absence of wild tiger

populations suggests that detected cases are likely linked to captive bred tigers or cross-border trafficking rather than to domestic poaching. This reinforces the need to strengthen border enforcement, intelligence-sharing, and regional cooperation, particularly with neighbouring countries such as Viet Nam and Lao PDR.

INDONESIA

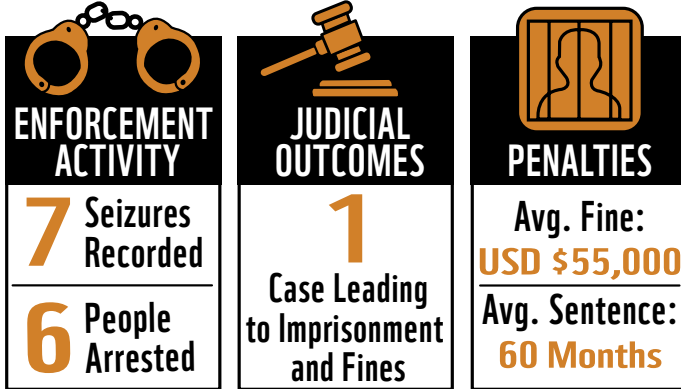


From 2019 to 2024, Indonesia reported 99 tiger seizure incidents (Appendix B, Table B3). Of these, 67 (68%) led to arrests, involving 123 suspects in total. Among these 67 cases, at least 51 resulted in convictions (imprisonment and/or fines) (see Appendix B for annual breakdowns). Of the remaining 16 incidents with arrests, one was discontinued after the suspect's death, one remains ongoing, and the outcomes of the other 14 are unknown.

All prosecuted cases resulted in prison sentences, involving a total of 96 individuals. Penalties imposed remained relatively stable over the years and generally aligned with the sanction levels prescribed by law. The only exception during the study period occurred in 2021, when a middleman in Jambi (Sumatra) was sentenced to prison and fined IDR 500 million (~USD 29,905) for attempting to sell a tiger taxidermy, the highest monetary penalty in Indonesia recorded to date.

Overall, these figures suggest that once tiger crimes are detected and suspects are identified, Indonesia's enforcement and judicial responses are relatively robust and consistent. Notably, every prosecuted case resulted in a custodial sentence. To develop a more nuanced understanding of Indonesia's prosecution patterns and outcomes, Section V of this report provides a detailed review of court documents over a longer time-frame, examining case narratives, charges, sentencing rationales, and judicial reasoning.

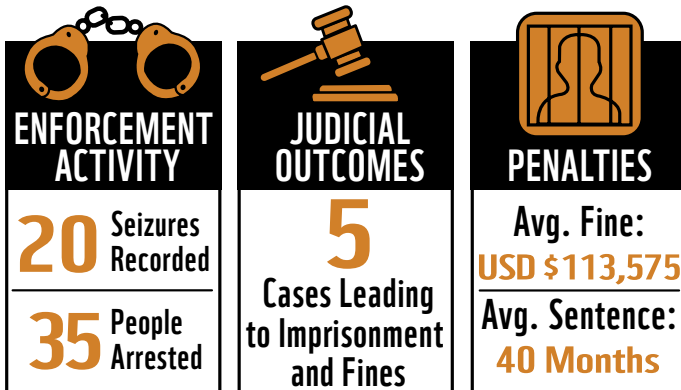
LAO PDR



From 2019 to 2024, Lao PDR recorded seven tiger seizure incidents of which four resulted in the arrest of six people, reflecting a relatively high arrest rate for known tiger-related seizures (Appendix B, Table B4). A total of six suspects were arrested across the seven incidents, one each in 2019, 2020 and 2021, and three in 2024. However, prosecutorial outcomes were limited with only one reported successful conviction. The sole prison sentence was issued in 2024, involving three Lao nationals who had smuggled 13.2kg of tiger bones from Myanmar into Lao PDR. Each individual received a prison sentence of 60 months and a fine of USD 55,000.

Overall, the paucity of data for tiger crimes in Lao PDR, with just one successful conviction in 2024, precludes meaningful insights into prosecution outcomes. Although the penalties in that case were relatively substantial, a single instance does not permit broader conclusions about prosecutorial rigour in the country. The low number of reported tiger seizures during the study period may indicate low levels of detection and enforcement, particularly given Lao PDR's repeated involvement in cross-border tiger trafficking with Viet Nam (n = 5 incidents) and Thailand (n = 3 incidents) reported in the other countries during the study period.

MALAYSIA



From 2019 to 2024, Malaysia recorded a total of 20 seizure incidents related to tigers, with 17 resulting in the arrests of a total of 35 suspects (Appendix B, Table B5). Of the 17 incidents with arrests, only 5 resulted in convictions. The remainder of the 17 incidents were either not prosecuted or information is unavailable (n = 8), are being appealed (n = 2), or resulted in acquittals (n = 1). At least one case is ongoing.

Sentencing outcomes also showed inconsistency. Only five cases led to prison sentences, and nine individuals were ultimately imprisoned. The first occurred in 2019, when two Vietnamese nationals were caught with ten tiger teeth and 37 tiger claws, as well as parts from various other protected species (e.g. sun bears (*Helarctos malayanus*), wild boars (*Sus scrofa*), leopards (*Panthera pardus*) and serow (*Capricornis sp.*)). Both individuals faced twenty charges under various sections of the law (e.g., Section 29 on snares, Section 60 on protected species, Section 68 on totally protected derivatives) of the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010, which resulted in each receiving a two-year prison sentence and a fine of MYR 1.56 million (~USD 390,000) or 16 years jail in lieu of the fine.

There were two cases in 2022. One involved three Malaysians who were caught with a dead tiger and one tiger skin. In this case, one individual was sentenced to four years imprisonment and a MYR 400,000 (~USD 95,400) fine; the other two individuals were sentenced to three years imprisonment and a MYR 300,000 (~USD 71,553) fine. The other case involved the arrest of five Malaysians with one dead tiger and two tiger skins, but ultimately only one individual was prosecuted and sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment and USD 255,981 or 36 months in lieu of the fine, and the last involved the arrest of a local with a tiger skin.

The last two cases occurred in 2023 when three Malaysian poachers and one Vietnamese were caught with tiger parts. The first case involved three suspects who were charged under Section 68 (hunting or taking/keeping any part of a derivative of a totally protected species without a permit) of the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 in the Gua Musang Sessions Court in 2023. Two of the suspects pleaded guilty and were sentenced to ten months in prison and a fine of MYR 450,000 (~USD 109,105) or an additional year in prison in lieu of the fine. Both individuals failed to pay the fine, and the courts sentenced them to a total of 22 months in prison. The government appealed this sentence, and in November 2023, the Kota Bahru High Court raised the two men's jail term from 10 months to two years each. The fine was maintained. The third suspect was charged, pleaded not guilty, and was not convicted. The second case involved a Vietnamese poacher caught with tiger bones and was subsequently sentenced to three years in prison and fined MYR 1,300,000 (~USD 332,694).

Overall, the data highlight that while enforcement efforts in Malaysia are relatively robust in terms of arrests following tiger seizures, there was limited follow-through in terms of prosecution (where about a third of the 15 known cases resulted in convictions), sentencing, and fines imposed, underscoring ongoing challenges within Malaysia's legal response to tiger trafficking (see Case Study I).

CASE STUDY 1: HIGH PENALTIES - EXCESSIVE OR DETERRENT?

Crime: Illegal keeping of one dead tiger cub and two skins

Location: Kuala Krau, Pahang, Malaysia

Date/Period: November 2022 – August 2023

Investigations and discovery:

Investigations by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia (PERHILITAN) led to the arrest of a 32-year-old Malaysian man, caught with a dead juvenile tiger and the whole skins of two other tiger individuals on 8 November 2022. The tiger and skins were found in a refrigerator, according to references in the grounds of judgment.

The arrest and seizure were made at a house in Kuala Krau, Temerloh district, in central Pahang, a state with large forest cover and protected areas. Temerloh also serves as a gateway to significant wildlife areas in the state, including Peninsular Malaysia's largest national park and tiger habitat, Taman Negara, the Al-Sultan Abdullah Royal Tiger Reserve and Tengku Hassanah Wildlife Reserve.

Charges and offences:

In December 2022, the accused was charged with three offences under the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010, one count for the juvenile tiger and two counts for each tiger skin. He pleaded guilty to all charges below, meaning there was no trial:

One count under Section 69 (1) for illegally keeping a (dead) juvenile tiger, punishable under Section 69 (2). This offence carries a maximum of MYR 500,000 (USD 125,000) in fines and up to five years of jail time.

Two counts under Section 68(1)(b) for illegally keeping one part of a tiger, punishable under Section 68(2)(c). This offence carries between MYR 100,000 (USD 22,900) and MYR 500,000 (USD 125,000) in fines and up to five years of jail time.

The Act has since been amended with heavier penalties for similar offences.

Landmark sentence after trial:

The accused was convicted in the Temerloh Session Court on 22 December 2022 and sentenced to a total of 10 years in prison and MYR 1,000,000 (USD 229,000) in fines:

4 years jail and MYR 400,000 (USD 91,740) in fines, and a further 12 months jail in default of the fine (for the dead juvenile tiger) and 3 years jail and MYR 300,000 (USD 68,807) in fines, with a further 12 months jail in default of the fine, on each of the two offences concerning tiger skins.

The Trial Judge ordered the sentences run consecutively from the date of his conviction. At the time, the penalty set a milestone as the highest given out for a tiger crime in Malaysia. According to the written judgement, the seriousness of the offence, evidenced by its five-year maximum jail term, guided the sentence. The judge also termed the accused's actions as inhumane, adding that

his actions were a crime befitting a heavy penalty. The judgement also considered the endangered status of tigers and threat to the species and its habitat, from poachers and from syndicates, making easy profits from the black market in total disregard for national and international laws.

While acknowledging the guilty plea, the trial judge wrote that it could not be taken as a mitigating factor without a defence with merit. On the severity of the punishment, the trial judge remarked that the penalties he issued were already "discounted" given that the law allowed for much more.

Lowered penalties on appeal:

In August 2023, following an appeal, the Temerloh High Court reduced the sentence and ordered that the terms be served concurrently:

One year jail and MYR 150,000 (USD 34,400), and a further 6 months in default of the fine (for the dead juvenile tiger) and one year jail and MYR 100,000 (USD 22,900), 6 months in default of the fine on each of the two offences concerning tiger skins.

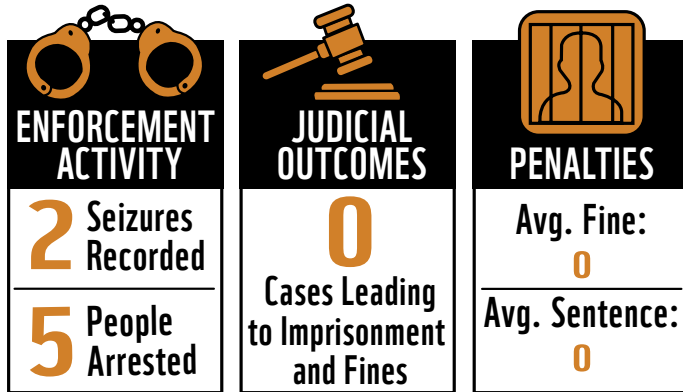
The Appeal Judge considered the sentence disproportionate, given he was a first-time offender and had admitted to the crime. In his written judgement, the Appeal Judge said the sentences should not have run concurrently as all offences happened at the same date, place, and time. He described the penalty as excessive and said the trial judge had failed to consider the "crushing effect" of the sentence on the accused and his family, as the fines were not commensurate with his earnings and ability to pay.

He wrote that a sentence driven by anger, resentment, or fear of public criticism would compromise justice for both the accused and society. While recognising the need to protect wildlife, the judge said that sentencing must be tempered with compassion and that public interest must be balanced with the interests of the accused. In this case, he noted there was no evidence of the accused's involvement in illegal hunting, only that he was found with the dead tiger and its skins. The judge further questioned the lack of supporting information and statistics for the black market price of the tiger quoted during the trial, and the assertion, during aggravation sentencing submissions, that wildlife crime was increasing yearly.

Sources:

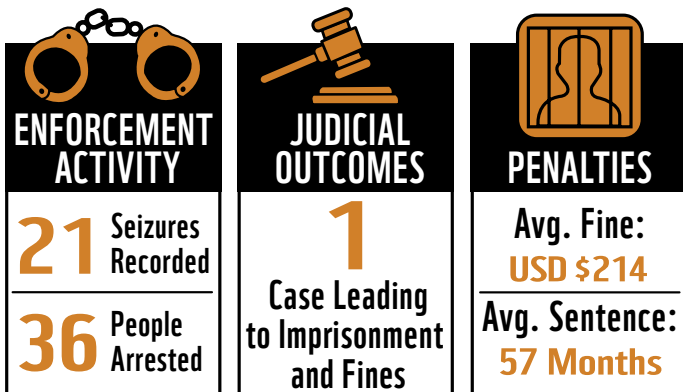
TRAFFIC (2023) Malaysia ends year of the tiger with conviction. <https://www.traffic.org/news/malaysia-ends-year-of-the-tiger-with-conviction/>
No. CB-62ES-3-11/2022 (Sess. Ct. Temerloh, Pahang, 2022) (Malay).
No. CB-42ES-1-01/2023 (High Ct. Malaya at Temerloh, Pahang 2023) (Malay). <https://efs.kehakiman.gov.my/EFSWeb/DocDownloader.aspx?DocumentID=afbe4c68-b2ae-4014-b3eb-ba07712e3...>

MYANMAR



Between 2019 and 2024, Myanmar reported only two tiger seizure incidents, which involved the arrest of five Chinese nationals in Myanmar for illegal possession of a live tiger and tiger bone; the outcome of incidents remains unknown (Appendix B, Table B6). Despite this limited official record, Myanmar has been implicated in numerous tiger trade seizures over the years, as documented by Wong and Krishnasamy (2025). This study identified at least three incidents in which Myanmar was noted as the origin of seized tiger skins and bones, specifically in Thailand (two incidents) and Lao PDR (one incident). As recently as March 2025, media reported that a significant tiger poaching syndicate smuggling tigers from central India to Mong La, Myanmar, was dismantled in India, resulting in arrests that included Myanmar nationals. These incidents underscore Myanmar's critical role as both a transit and destination market in regional tiger trafficking networks. However, the scarcity of seizures and arrests in Myanmar, coupled with the absence of any successful prosecutions (i.e., no suspect has been sentenced to prison to date), highlights systemic weaknesses in the country's law enforcement and judicial response to illegal tiger trade. Myanmar's ongoing political crisis is further exacerbating the issue, i.e. breakdown of governance, including law enforcement, as well as armed conflict, is likely to impact efforts to combat tiger trafficking.

THAILAND



Between 2019 and 2024, there were 21 seizure incidents involving tigers in Thailand, of which 18 incidents (90%) resulted in arrests (Appendix B, Table B7). The data show a consistent enforcement response, with arrests occurring for between 67–100% of seizure incidents each year. A total of 36 individuals were arrested across all incidents, with the highest number of arrests

occurring in 2022 (n = 13 individuals). Despite relatively high arrest rates, successful prosecution outcomes were extremely low: only three of the 21 incidents were known to be prosecuted, and of these, only one resulted in a conviction.

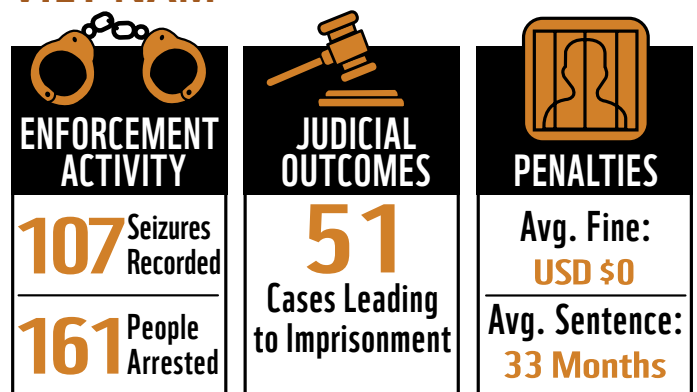
The first case occurred in 2021, when one Thai national was caught with three tiger skulls, two tiger skins and a tiger paw. He was charged under Sections 17 (possession of protected species), 29 (trade of wild animals), 89 (penalty - imprisonment not exceeding ten years and/or fine not exceeding THB 1 million) and 92 (penalty - imprisonment not exceeding five years and/or a fine not exceeding THB 500,000 (~USD \$15,670)) of the Wild Animal Conservation and Protection Act, B.E.2562 (2019). Despite this, the individual was sentenced to a six-month suspended term and fined USD 771.

The second case occurred in 2022 and involved five poachers who were caught with two tiger skins and body parts in the Thong Pha Phum National Park, and convicted (refer to case study 2).

The third case occurred in 2023 and involved two wildlife traders selling tiger skin and body parts on Facebook. Both were charged under Sections 17, 29, 89 and 92 of the Wild Animal Conservation and Protection Act, B.E.2562 (2019). Each received a suspended sentence of six months' imprisonment and was fined USD 771.

Notably, 30 suspects (83% of those arrested) were not (or may not yet have been) prosecuted. While the reasons for this are unknown, it highlights significant gaps between arrests, prosecutions and convictions. The use of suspended sentences further underscores weaknesses in the judicial response to tiger trafficking in Thailand.

VIET NAM



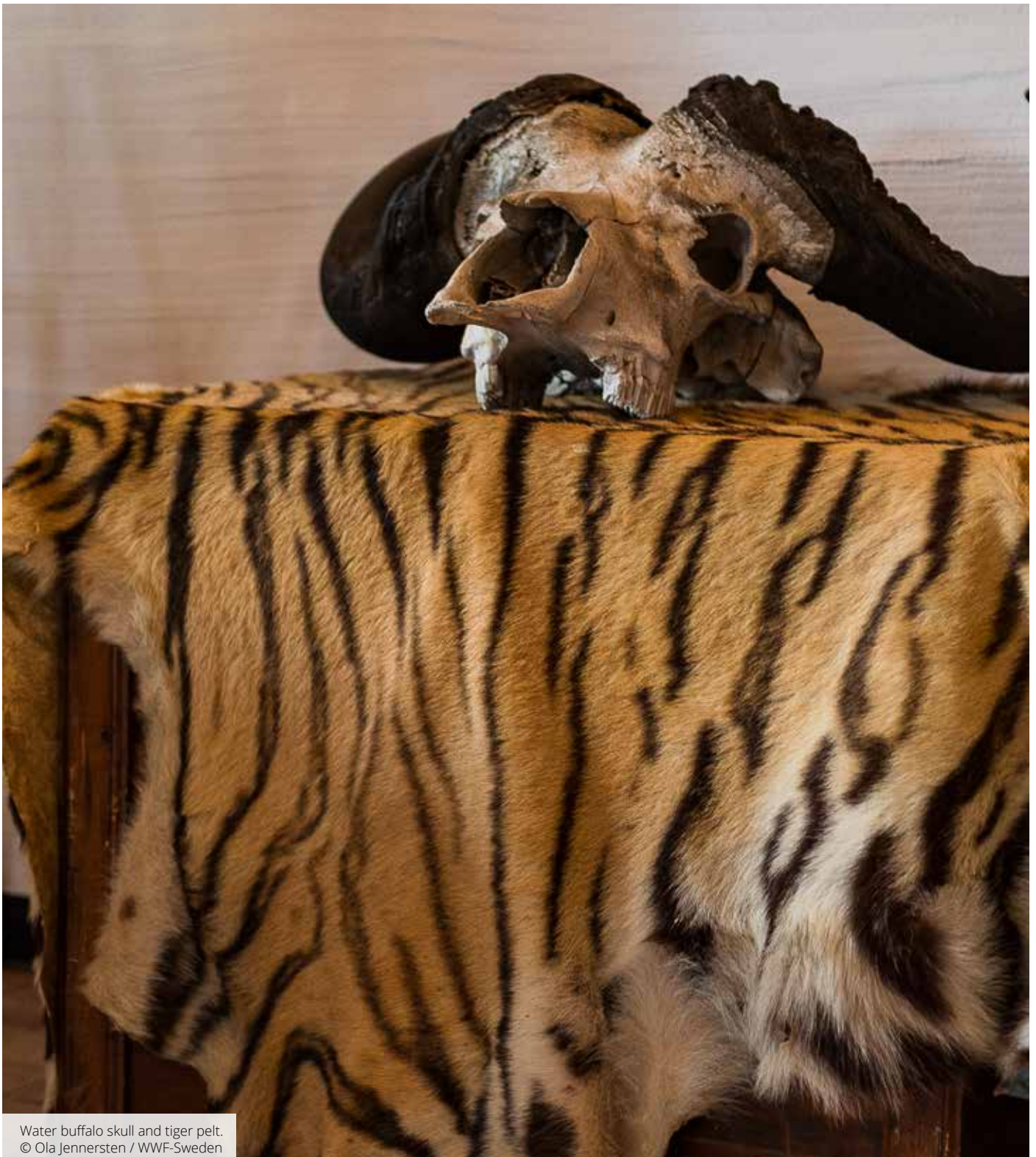
Viet Nam recorded 107 seizure incidents involving tigers from 2019 to 2024 (Appendix B, Table B8). Of these, 101 (93%) incidents led to the arrest of 161 suspects. The highest number of suspects was arrested in 2023 (n = 44), followed by 2022 (n = 33) and 2024 (n = 29). Of the 101 incidents with arrests, 89 were prosecuted. 51 (57%) of the 89 prosecuted cases resulted in prison sentences, while 33 (37%) resulted in suspended sentences. It is uncertain what the outcomes were for the remaining five cases. At least 69 individuals received prison sentences ranging from 7 months to 288 months. The overall average imprisonment term was 32 months, with

annual averages ranging from 1.76 to 4.69 years, suggesting that courts imposed harsher penalties in some years (e.g., 2021) than in others. No fines were recorded in any of the tiger-related cases. Under the law, courts impose either a monetary fine or custodial sentence but not both.

A comprehensive examination of court judgments and case files in Viet Nam is warranted. Although the study period shows that slightly over half of all incidents with arrests led to successful prosecution, only 47% of overall tiger related crimes resulted in imprisonment. This indicates scope to further strengthen enforcement and judicial follow-through. Furthermore, the relatively

frequent use of suspended sentences is concerning, as they not only undermine the seriousness of tiger-related crimes but may also reduce the overall deterrent effect of the law and could contribute to a perception of lower risk among offenders.

Systematic access to court judgments and case records in Viet Nam will be essential to analyse sentencing patterns, judicial reasoning and case characteristics, and to identify targeted legal and policy measures to further enhance the response to tiger trafficking in Viet Nam, particularly given the country's role as a key destination market for tiger parts.



Water buffalo skull and tiger pelt.
© Ola Jennersten / WWF-Sweden

CASE STUDY 2: CONFLICT OR TRADE?

Crime: Hunting and killing one female tiger and her male cub in a National Park

Location: Thong Pha Phum National Park, Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand

Date/Period: 9 January 2022 – 21 August 2023

Investigations and discovery:

On 15th January 2022, rangers patrolling in the Thong Pha Phum National Park, some 4km away from the Myanmar border, discovered two tiger carcasses that were being prepared for grilling at a campsite. They also found two tiger skins hung to dry, weapons and personal items. Four suspects fled the scene, but later turned themselves in, and confessed to killing the two tigers, one male and one female.

The four men were cattle and buffalo herders and claimed that 20 of their livestock were killed by tigers over a two-month period and wanted an end to this problem. They reported that on 8th January 2022, a tiger had attacked three of their cattle - they shot the tiger with their homemade gun. Fearing another imminent tiger attack, they used cattle as bait, trapping and shooting the second tiger that appeared later that night.

A fifth man later turned himself in, who confessed to joining the gang at the campsite, but did not participate in the killing. Three of the five were members of a local hill tribe. All five men, aged between 30 and 66 years old, later pleaded guilty to the 10 charges laid on them under the Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act (WARPA) B.E. 2019 and the Firearms Act 1947.

Investigations revealed that the female tiger was shot four times at close range while her male cub sustained three gunshot wounds, two to the skull and one in the tooth. Media reported that park authorities had not received any other complaints from local residents about their cattle being attacked, as claimed by the suspects.

Charges and offences:

A total of 10 charges were made under WARPA B.E. 2562 (2019) National Parks Act and Firearms Act 1947 (Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, Fireworks, and the Equivalent of Firearms Act B.E. 2490) involving: possession of firearms, ammunition and hunting tools in a national park, illegally entering a national park, for luring, removing and/hunting in a national park, disposing of flammable items that may cause a fire inside a national park and the illegal possession of wildlife carcasses.

Sentence:

On 7th March 2023, they were sentenced by the Thong Pha Phum Provincial Court to 8 years and 18 months imprisonment and a fine of THB 11,000 (USD 320) each for multiple offences.⁹ However, as they pleaded guilty, the court considered this a mitigating factor and halved their penalties to 3 years and 21 months and a fine of THB 5,500 (USD 164).

In addition, the court ordered the five to pay a total of THB 750,000 (USD 22,000) plus 5% interest per year, calculated from 9th January 2022 (the date of the poaching), as compensation to the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP).



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In the Thai judicial system, courts are known to impose a statutory interest rate on defendants ordered to pay compensation. This rate is accrued until the defendants pay the fine.

News reports indicate that the defence argued the accused should be shown leniency because they lived near the forest and needed to protect their rights and livelihoods, especially after their cattle were attacked. However, the court ruled that the accused were aware of their actions and investigations showed they intended to profit from them. According to media coverage, the judge stated that the men should have recognised the importance of conserving forests and wildlife, especially as they lived close to the forest. The judge noted that they had a responsibility to protect the forest rather than destroy it, and that they should therefore not have committed such acts. The court dismissed their argument that the killings were acts of retaliation, pointing out that the use of bait, intentional hunting, and the processing of carcasses for meat clearly showed premeditation. It was evident that they knew tiger parts had market value and intended to profit from them.

⁹ In Thailand, if there are multiple counts, the courts accumulate the penalties by year (365 days) separately from months (30 days/month).

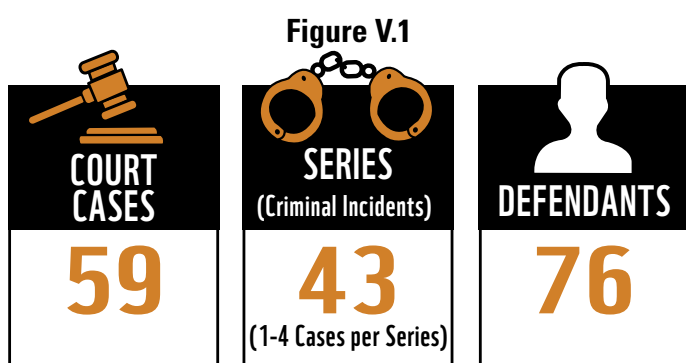
Source:

One31 (2023) Thong Pha Phum Provincial Court sentenced 5 hunters to 8 years and 18 months to 8 years and 18 months without probation. 06-March-2023. <https://www.one31.net/news/detail/61535>

V INDONESIA COURT DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

JAN 2015-JUN 2025

Indonesia's transparent system for documenting court sentencing records provides the most complete record of tiger prosecutions for seven countries looked at in the region. We collected court documents, specifically sentencing records, for cases initiated between January 2015 and June 2025. These records were available for 59 court cases. Although each case is discreet, the same criminal incident sometimes resulted in multiple court cases (e.g., multiple offenders in a single incident were tried separately). For our analysis, we grouped cases from the same criminal incident into a Series of cases. In total, there were 43 Series (separate criminal incidents) with the number of cases per Series ranging from 1 to 4. We also note that some cases involved multiple defendants. In total, there were publicly available court records for 76 defendants (Figure V.1).



CRIMINAL EVENTS

Descriptions of the criminal events documented in these court cases reveal a complex landscape of illegal activities involving tigers and other protected wildlife. They illustrate opportunistic poaching, organised trapping, possession, and structured commercial trafficking that intersect within the broader illegal wildlife trade (Figure V.2). These cases show both accidental and intentional killings of tigers, as well as the handling, storage, and transport of prohibited species and their parts and derivatives with the intention to sell,

generally for profit. They further expose the existence of coordinated trading networks. These networks range from small, presumably ad hoc, groups to organised groups of actors who leverage digital platforms and social networks to access buyers who consolidate inventory, at times with other protected species.

Figure V.2: Types of criminal activity in Indonesian cases of tiger trafficking*



*Some cases involved more than one activity

Illegal hunting of tigers and other protected species involved both intentional targeting and opportunistic killing. In several cases, defendants set out to hunt deer or other wildlife using snares and traps, unintentionally capturing a tiger. When a tiger was accidentally ensnared, the killing often involved multiple co-offenders hunting together, who later sold the tiger, leveraging

their social networks to find potential buyers. These incidents highlight the convergence of subsistence activities, opportunistic exploitation, and organised group participation in the tiger trade.

Illegal possession of protected wildlife was another prominent theme, with offenders found storing, holding, or transporting wildlife and wildlife parts (often multiple species). Trafficking and commercial sale represented the most structured and profit-driven category of offending in these court records. These cases involved active trade negotiations, pre-arranged transactions, and direct buyer-seller meetings, whether at roadside locations, in villages, or through online platforms. Offenders engaged in planned exchanges and financial agreements and, in some instances, operated within multi-person networks spanning provinces.

Commodities

In all cases examined, the tiger products involved were sourced from Indonesia. In 57 cases, the tiger was identified as a Sumatran tiger; in the remaining cases, the subspecies was not specified. 42 cases indicated that the tigers were wild-caught, but the origin of the tigers in the remaining cases was not reported. The age of the tiger was described in 26 cases, with estimated ages ranging from one to nine years.

The value of tiger products varied widely, with prices ranging from IDR 7 million (USD 413) to IDR 190 million (USD 11,208).¹⁰ For instance, one case involved a buyer willing to pay IDR 100 million (USD 5,898) for the parts of one tiger (skin, bones and fangs) [1], whereas another involved a purchase of only skin and bones for IDR 7 million (USD 413) [119].¹¹ In different instances, tiger skin parts and four canines were sold for IDR 70 million (USD 4,129) [111], and other tiger-related items fetched around IDR 60 million (USD 3,540) [20]. The highest recorded price was IDR 190 million (USD 11,208) for a tiger skin [8]. Prices fluctuated based on negotiation and perceived risk; for example, a buyer commented that a skin was “too small and risky” [1]. Some buyers also made deposits (e.g., IDR 1 million as part of a request to find a tiger skin [8]).

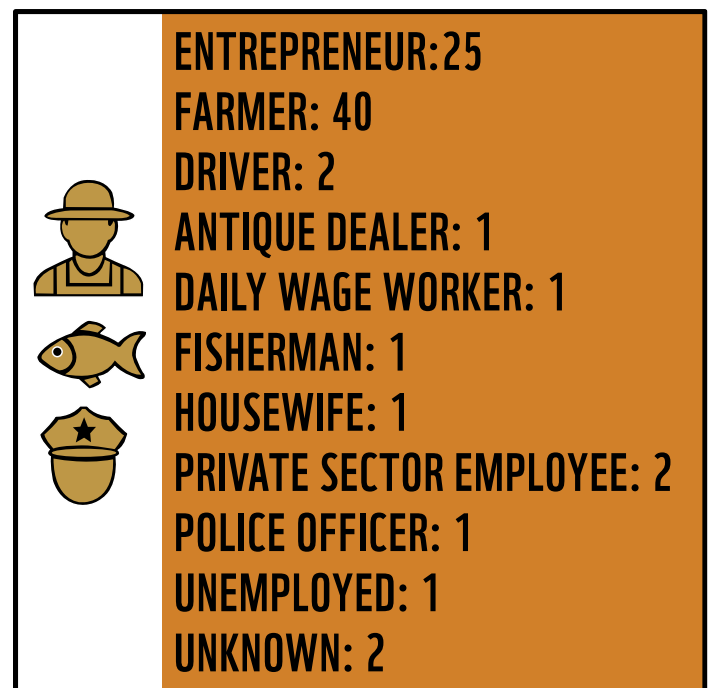
Tiger products were also often sold alongside other wildlife products (e.g., pangolin scales [27]). Some cases involved the trade of multiple species, demonstrating that tiger trafficking networks also target other wildlife, including land mammals, birds, reptiles, and marine species, many of which are protected by Indonesian law (Table V.1). The presence of multiple species, such as elephants, pangolins, corals, and various birds, underscores the complexity of trafficking networks, in which traders likely diversify their products to increase profits. Similar patterns were seen in previous studies of wildlife trade in Indonesia and across the region. For example, Wong and Krishnasamy (2019) found that at least 230 tiger seizure incidents in Asia from 2000 to 2018 involved multiple species smuggling. The presence of both taxidermy and processed wildlife items indicates

participation in the decoration, curio, and souvenir markets. Additionally, the simultaneous trade of marine and terrestrial species points to well-established routes that likely connect forest, coastal, and urban markets.

DEFENDANT CHARACTERISTICS

The court documents identified 76 defendants, predominantly male (99%), all from Indonesia, with a median age of 42, ranging from 24 to 74 years old. The predominant religions were Islam (n = 69), followed by Christianity (n = 7), including Catholicism, and one unknown. Information on educational level was missing for the majority of defendants (78%), making it challenging to determine an overall trend. Among individuals whose education levels were reported, most (88%) had a middle school or lower level of education. The defendants' occupations varied, but the majority were self-employed or worked in manual labour (see Figure V.3). The roles defendants played varied across cases, including hunting, transporting, acting as middlemen, and buying or selling.

Figure V.3: Documented employment of defendants in Indonesian cases



Criminal History

The files documented the criminal histories of nine defendants, several of whom had past convictions or wildlife crime records. Overall, the court documents described nine defendants with prior offences or ongoing involvement in criminal activity (Table V.2). However, most defendants in the analysed court documents had no criminal history, indicating they were likely first-time offenders or may have had prior involvement but had either evaded detection or avoided a record.

¹⁰Exchange rate USD 1=IDR16,954

¹¹We assigned a unique random number to each Series of cases; numbers in the square brackets reference the Series number.

**Table V.1: Other wildlife commodities in illegal trade with tiger specimens in Indonesia
(CR=Critically Endangered, EN=Endangered, LC=Least Concern, VU=Vulnerable, NT=Near Threatened)**

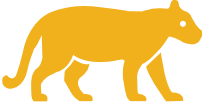

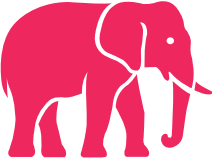

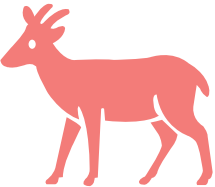


Taxonomic Group	Species	IUCN Red List Status	Items or Derivatives Found	CITES Appendix
 Cats	Asian golden cat (<i>Catopuma temminckii</i>)	VU	Taxidermy specimens, preserved heads & paws, claws, teeth, skins, belts, bags, jewellery	I
	Leopard (<i>Panthera pardus</i>)	VU		I
	Leopard cat (<i>Prionailurus bengalensis</i>)	LC		I (Thailand population) / II
	Sunda clouded leopard (<i>Neofelis diardi</i>)	VU		I
 Bears	Sun bear (<i>Helarctos malayanus</i>)	VU	Skins, claws, teeth, canines, ornaments, jewelry	I
 Elephants	Asian elephant (<i>Elephas maximus</i>)	EN	Bracelets, rings, carvings, tusks, teeth	I
 Pangolins	Sunda pangolin (<i>Manis javanica</i>)	CR	Scales (up to 15 kg), taxidermy specimen	I
 Ungulates	Anoa (<i>Bubalus spp.</i>)	EN	Taxidermy heads/specimens, skulls, antlers, horns, skins	I
	Muntjac (<i>Muntiacus spp.</i>)			
	Sambar (<i>Rusa unicolor</i>)	VU		
 Primates	Black-crested Sumatran langur (<i>Presbytis melalophos</i>)	EN	Taxidermy specimens, skins	II
	Siamang (<i>Symphalangus syndactylus</i>)	EN		I
 Small Mammals	Binturong (<i>Arctictis binturong</i>)	VU	Skins, taxidermy specimens	III
	Black Giant Squirrel (<i>Rafuta bicolor</i>)	NT		II
	Civet spp. (<i>Viverridae</i>)			
	Common kusimanse (<i>Crossarchus obscurus</i>)	LC		
	Red giant flying squirrel (<i>Petaurista petaurista</i>)	LC		
	Sunda porcupine (<i>Hystrix javanica</i>)	LC		
	Tree Kangaroo (<i>Dendrolagus sp</i>)			

Table V.1 (Contd.): Other wildlife commodities in illegal trade with tiger specimens in Indonesia (CR=Critically Endangered, EN=Endangered, LC=Least Concern, VU=Vulnerable, NT=Near Threatened)

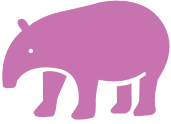



Taxonomic Group	Species	IUCN Red List Status	Items or Derivatives Found	CITES Appendix
 Tapir	Malayan tapir (<i>Tapirus indicus</i>)	EN	Skull	I
 Birds	Hornbills (<i>Bucerotidae</i>)		Beaks, powders, jewelry, taxidermy specimens	
	Oriental pied hornbill (<i>Anthracoceros albirostris</i>)	LC		
	Rhinoceros hornbill (<i>Buceros rhinoceros</i>)	VU		
	Birds of paradise (<i>Paradisaeidae</i>)			
	Indian Peafowl (<i>Pavo cristatus</i>)	LC	Feathers	III
	Eagle (<i>Accipitridae</i>)		One live specimen	II
 Marine Species	Hawksbill Turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	CR	Taxidermy, penises	I
	Green Turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>)	LC		
	Crocodile spp. (<i>Crocodylus spp.</i>)		Taxidermy, genitalia	I / II
	Saltwater crocodile (<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>)	LC		
	Dugong (<i>Dugong dugon</i>)	VU	Bone smoking pipes	I
	Shark spp. (<i>Selachimorpha</i>)		Jaws	II (some spp.)
	Triton sea snail (<i>Charonia tritonis</i>)		Shells & specimens	
	Chambered Nautilus (<i>Nautilus pompilius</i>)			
	Newt mussel			
	Horseshoe crab			
	Black coral (<i>Antipatharia spp.</i>)		Bracelets, decorations	II
 Unidentified	Multiple species		Bone/skin jewelry (ring, necklaces, bracelets), ornaments, dagger, carved pipes and others	

Table V.2: Examples of defendants with histories of prior offences

Defendants with histories of other offenses
Defendant had two prior convictions, one for receiving stolen cattle (18-month sentence) and another for receiving stolen buffalo (6-month sentence), both previously served at Arga Jail. This defendant also admitted to previously finding and skinning a tiger caught in a trap, then selling the skin for IDR15 million (USD 885), though this was not considered by the court, which treated him as having no prior convictions. [29]
Defendant had previously been listed as a wanted person in a 2014 tiger poaching case involving the sale of tiger parts, a record acknowledged by the court. [38] (see also Case Study 5)
Defendant was documented as having previously traded a protected coral species (akar bahar – black coral) and purchased Sumatran tiger skins on four other occasions in the early 2000s, demonstrating repeated involvement in the wildlife trade. Two other defendants in the same case were known to have engaged in the trade of animal parts, including fangs, claws, bones, and skins, though the species were unspecified. [84]
One individual participated in the 2023 trade of 2.1 kg of pangolin scales but claimed to have been unaware of their intended use. [119]
Defendant had a history of illegal wildlife trapping activities in 2018, 2023, and 2024, primarily targeting tigers and other protected species for profit, with digital evidence confirming his involvement. [128]
Defendant had a history of frequently hunting tigers in the Gunung Unca forest. [16]

Awareness of the law

In eight cases, at least one defendant claimed to be unaware of the law. For example, some stated that they did not know it was illegal to hunt or capture protected animals. One individual reported finding tiger bones in traps he had set and was unsure what to do with them, so he took them home, claiming he was unaware that the possession and storage of bones are prohibited [106]. Others also claimed they did not know that tigers are a protected species or that their actions constituted criminal offences. One defendant had been in possession of taxidermy for decades but did not have a valid permit (although they had previously held one that expired in 2014). This defendant stated that they did not participate in trade and instead collected items with the intention of opening a small museum or exhibition; although elsewhere in the document, it is recorded that the defendant knew they were protected species [74]. In another case, a defendant brought along another person to a sale (unknowingly with an undercover officer), and that individual claimed he was unaware of the tiger's protected status. Alongside claims they did not know the law, some also expressed remorse in this context for their involvement in wildlife crimes [34].

However, many defendants in the studied cases were aware of the law (n = 29 cases). Some admitted knowing that tigers are protected and cannot be hunted or traded [e.g., 1, 20, 26, 128], and others knew that storing protected species without proper permits constituted a violation of conservation laws [30]. In one case, the defendant fled when the police came, presumably because he knew he had broken the law. Some were also aware that they were trafficking endangered species [29]. A defendant in one case knew tigers are protected and had at one time personally participated in a conservation-related tiger release event [112]. In another case, the defendant aborted their first attempt to transport wildlife because there was a police raid, and they knew they would get into trouble if they were discovered [8]. Others actively used methods to obscure tiger parts (e.g., inside plastic bags [99]). In another incident, the defendant said he was shocked when he realised the item he was carrying for someone else in his bag was tiger skin, knowing that it was prohibited from sale, but he still participated in the trade because of a promise of payment [111]. Another defendant in this same Series was hesitant at first to participate in the tiger trade as he knew it was illegal [111].

Motivation

The court documents reveal a variety of motivations behind individuals' involvement in the illegal tiger trade. While financial gain is frequently identified as the primary motive, the documents also highlight broader social, environmental, and situational factors that shape decisions. Issues such as human-wildlife conflict, family connections, and personal interests influence different cases. These motivations often overlap, driven by opportunistic responses, obligations, social pressures, and the temptation of profit.

Human-wildlife conflict

Six court case records document the intersection between human-wildlife conflict and the tiger trade, particularly around livestock and coconut and palm oil plantations. In one case, the defendant found his goat dead and used poison to catch the animal that might have eaten it; the following day, he found the dead tiger, which he skinned and attempted to sell [20]. Similarly, another defendant had installed an electric wire around his coconut plantation to deter pests such as macaques and wild boars, but accidentally electrocuted a tiger [59]. Notably, in this case, the defendant was not sentenced for harming or killing the tiger, but for storing, possessing, trading, and transporting items derived from it. In another case, a villager installed an electric fence to protect his property from wildlife [112]. He was visited by a man who asked whether tigers were ever electrocuted and requested to be informed if it happened. When the defendant discovered a tiger that had been electrocuted, he contacted this man, and together they skinned and processed the tiger, conspiring to extract skin and bones, driven by the high market value. While this case might have seemed to be about human-wildlife conflict, information in the court documents suggests they may have set out to intentionally electrocute a tiger. In other



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cases, tigers were reportedly caught unintentionally in traps (e.g., those set for boars) [99, 128]. These examples show how human–wildlife conflict can very quickly blur into opportunistic or deliberate exploitation for financial gain.

Family and Friends

Family and friends were cited in some court documents as being involved in the tiger trade (family $n = 4$, friends $n = 25$), and in some cases, they were co-defendants. Family involvement in tiger trade cases occurred in multiple instances in which the defendant's relatives (e.g., spouses, fathers, sons, siblings, and nephews) were either directly or indirectly connected to the offences, often helping with the transportation and sale of wildlife. For example, in one case, the defendant's sibling and a friend caught a tiger and asked him to help sell it [1]. In other cases, the family member was likely unaware of their involvement, as in the case of a defendant's brother who loaned his car. However, some family members were aware and willing participants in the hunting, transportation, and sale of tiger parts. Some were caught up in the tiger trade because they were asked to participate in the sale or purchase by a friend or family member, sometimes with the promise of money or a commission [81, 16, 125]. Friends and acquaintances also played frequent roles by supporting the transportation and sale (e.g., helping to find buyers). For example, a defendant who had a whole dried tiger in their possession for eight years contacted their friend to help them find a buyer [41]. These examples show how family and social networks can play a meaningful role in motivating and facilitating wildlife crime, whether intentionally or unintentionally. While some relatives or

friends were clearly aware of their involvement, others appeared to be drawn in through routine actions, such as lending a vehicle or accompanying someone to a transaction. In other cases, participation was driven by the prospect of financial gain, either through direct payment or a commission for helping with a sale.

Monetary gain

The most frequently described motivation for participating in the illegal tiger trade was monetary gain ($n = 51$ cases). For people of low socioeconomic standing (e.g., workers on a rubber plantation), the promise of financial support to supplement their income is attractive [81]. In one case, the defendant was told that it would be wasteful to discard the dead tiger, and that the profits could cover his children's expenses [112]. In another incident, taxidermy was exchanged for IDR 20 million (USD 1,180) in the form of medicine and a week of hospital fees [52]. For some, the profits were used to pay off debts and cover daily needs [e.g., 59]. One defendant claimed he needed the money to repair his grandfather's grave and to buy cattle and pigs [48]. Often, the motivation was simply described as to gain profit. However, in one case, coercion may have driven involvement. The defendant testified that he was compelled to assist in the sale of a tiger skin to repay a debt [111]. Nonetheless, not all motivations were solely financial. One person collected taxidermy as a hobby [52], while another did so for its aesthetic appeal and unusual or distinctive appearance [74].

In summary, the case narratives demonstrate that motivations for involvement in the illegal tiger trade reflect a convergence of opportunity, social influence,

CASE STUDY 3: THREE DEFENDANTS, THREE SEPARATE CASES

Crime: Illegal hunting, processing, storing, and trading of a Sumatran tiger and its parts

Location: Kaur, Seluma, and South Bengkulu Regencies, Bengkulu, Sumatra, Indonesia

Date/Period: December 2020 – March 2021

Investigations and discovery:

A series of interconnected cases involving three defendants revealed a small, organised tiger hunting and trafficking network operating across Kaur, Seluma, and South Bengkulu. All three defendants were middle-aged Indonesian farmers with limited education, each fulfilling a distinct role within the criminal chain. Court documents show that Defendant 1 and Defendant 2 acted as the primary hunters. They set tiger traps in an area known for Sumatran tiger presence and, after capturing a tiger, skinned it and removed bones, canines, and teeth. These parts were stored at Defendant 2's residence. Defendant 3, a neighbour and friend, was later recruited to source buyers for the tiger parts. The group intended to profit from the illegal trade and sought IDR 110 million (~USD 8,488) for the entire set of tiger parts.

Authorities became involved when Defendant 3 contacted an officer at Kerinci Seblat National Park, (Bengkulu) and used the coded phrase "big striped item" to signal the availability of tiger parts. After verifying the information, officers coordinated with police to conduct a controlled operation. They first visited Defendant 3, who led them to Defendant 2's house, where they found tiger skin, bones, teeth, and canines, and confirmed the asking price. The hunters claimed the tiger was wild-caught and that they had processed the parts themselves. Officers then instructed the men to meet at a secondary location, where police had organised an interception. When the vehicle arrived, law enforcement searched it, seized the tiger parts, and arrested all three individuals.

Charges and offences:

The Bengkulu District Court charged all three with violating Law No. 5/1990, in conjunction with Article 55 of the Criminal Code, for "collectively intentionally storing and trading the skin and body parts of a protected animal".

Sentence:

All three defendants received the identical penalty of seven months imprisonment, and a fine of IDR 5 million (USD 295), with an additional three months' imprisonment if unable to pay the fine.

During the trial, which processed the cases simultaneously, the prosecution submitted tiger skin, bones, canines, teeth, processing knives, and mobile phones as evidence. Expert testimony validated that the items belonged to an adult Sumatran tiger. Witnesses from Kerinci Seblat National Park testified about the sting operation, the defendants' admissions, and the group's coordinated activities. Expert witnesses confirmed the species and age of the tiger as an adult Sumatran tiger. All three defendants admitted their involvement. The court acknowledged that the offences harmed



Tiger claw and tooth. © Heather Sohl

conservation and public interest but also noted that the men had no prior convictions, were cooperative, and had dependents relying on them. The court also credited time already spent in custody toward their sentences and required each defendant to pay court costs.

These cases collectively illustrate the interconnected structure of local tiger hunting and trafficking networks, the effectiveness of targeted enforcement operations, and the judicial approach to wildlife crime involving Sumatran tigers.

Sources:

No. 99/Pid.Sus/2021/PN.BGL (Bengkulu Dist. Ct., 2021) (Indo).
No. 100/Pid.Sus/2021/PN.BGL (Bengkulu Dist. Ct., 2021) (Indo).
No. 98/Pid.Sus/2021/PN.BGL (Bengkulu Dist. Ct., 2021) (Indo).

economic vulnerability, and, at times, the deliberate exploitation of human-wildlife conflict situations. Family members and friends may play enabling roles, whether knowingly or inadvertently, while financial pressures or the promise of potential profit can further incentivise engagement in illegal activities. A smaller number of cases reveal motivations linked to personal interests rather than monetary gain.

Corruption

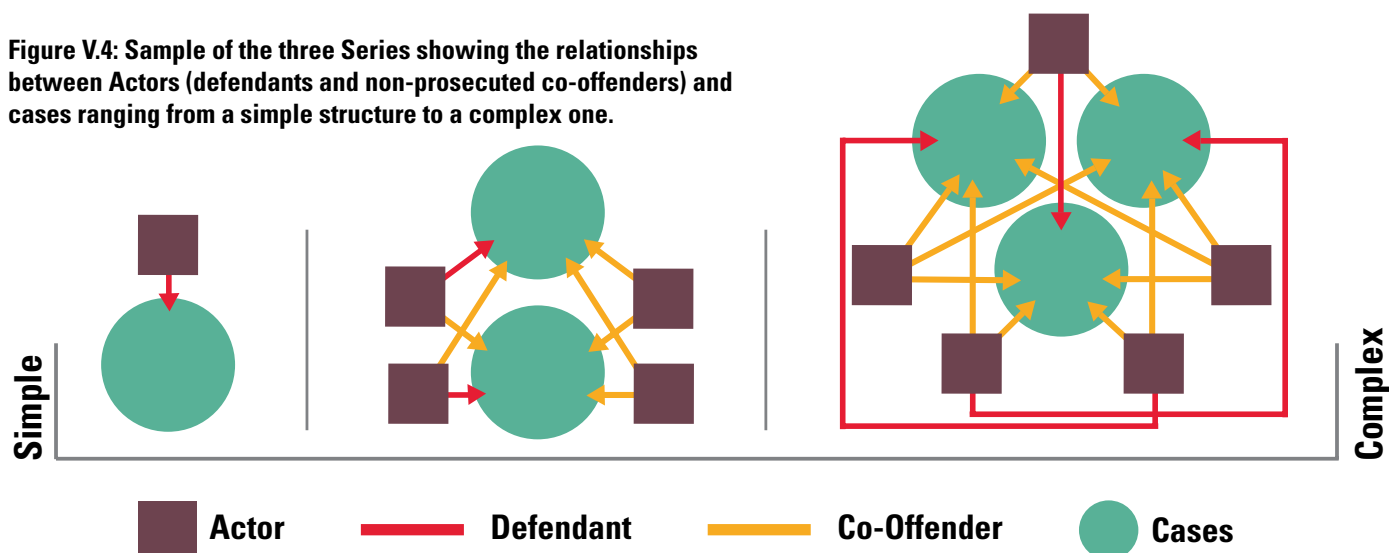
Reports of corruption in the reviewed court documents were minimal. A few documents mention cases involving individuals in power participating in the tiger trade. In one instance, two co-offenders involved in the tiger trade as part of a convicted case were members of the military, but they were tried in a military court (we were unable to access those court documents) [65]. Another case describes a military member as a co-offender [97]. Additionally, in one case, the defendant's father was a police officer [52], though this does not imply any corrupt activity. Overall, evidence of corrupt activities cannot be concluded from these documents. It remains unclear whether there is a true absence of corruption or whether corruption leads to potential cases being intentionally ignored, undocumented, or dropped.

OFFENDERS AND CO-OFFENDING

The analysis identified a clear pattern of multiple actors participating in the tiger trade. While some cases involved a single defendant without co-offenders, the majority included multiple co-offenders at different levels of the supply chain (Appendix C, Figure C.1).

As noted above, family and friends often played recurring roles in co-offending. In total, we documented 161 individuals in the court records, including defendants, co-offenders, witnesses, and others. Some co-offenders provided witness statements, while other co-offenders were not charged, potentially due to minimal culpability, for instance, acting as unwitting transporters or companions. Series of cases ranged from a simple structure with a single defendant in a case, to a complex with multiple cases, defendants and documented co-offenders (Figure V.4).

Figure V.4: Sample of the three Series showing the relationships between Actors (defendants and non-prosecuted co-offenders) and cases ranging from a simple structure to a complex one.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE

This section examines the broader criminal justice response to tiger trafficking cases in Indonesia, highlighting the range of law enforcement agencies, detection methods, judicial actors, legal charges, and evidentiary foundations that shape prosecution outcomes.

Crime Detection & Law Enforcement Agencies

For 41 Series (n = 55 cases), court documents described how crimes were detected. Crime-detection methods included one incident in which tiger parts were detected during airport screening and another involving vehicle inspections. An additional three cases were detected by forest rangers or people at the National Parks (NP) Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam – Natural Resource Conservation Centre (BKSDA, an Indonesian government agency under the Ministry of Environment and Forestry responsible for managing conservation areas, wildlife sanctuaries, and nature reserves) in Bengkulu Lampung, South Bukit Barisan NP and Kerinci Seblat NP.

In 35 Series (n = 47 cases), court records documented that law enforcement pursued these cases based on tips. Some tips came from local informants (n = 7 cases, n = 5 Series), including one reported by an NGO. Most tips came from local residents (n = 17 cases, n = 17 Series), including one tip from a village chief. Other tips were specifically described as anonymous (n = 3 cases, n = 1 Series), and for the remainder, the source was not reported. In eight Series, law enforcement responded to tips through undercover operations in which someone posed as a buyer, resulting in arrests and the collection of evidence to be presented in court. Sting operations, undercover purchases, controlled deliveries, and surveillance-based operations were explicitly mentioned in 20 Series.

Various law enforcement agencies were involved in addressing these cases. The police handled most cases (n = 43 cases, n = 31 Series), followed by Gakkum (Directorate General of Law Enforcement under the Ministry of Environment and Forestry), BKSDA and other law enforcement agencies. NGOs have also played a role in five cases, likely providing supplementary support.

CASE STUDY 4: ONE DEFENDANT, MULTIPLE OFFENDERS

Crime: Middleman in an organised tiger skin trafficking network involving multiple co-offenders

Location: Jambi Province, Sumatra, Indonesia

Date/Period: December 2022–August 2023

Investigations and discovery:

Defendant 1, a 38-year-old merchant from Jambi Province, played the role of a middleman in a coordinated tiger skin trafficking operation. While only Defendant 1 was formally charged, court documents identified three fugitive co-offenders: Co-offender 1 (the hunter and owner of the tiger skin), Co-offender 2 (the transporter), and Co-offender 3 (another intermediary).

The crime began when Co-offender 3 asked Defendant 1 to help locate a tiger skin. Defendant 1 contacted Co-offender 1, whom he knew through Facebook and described as a habitual forest hunter, to determine availability. When Co-offender 1 confirmed possession of a skin, the group arranged a plan spanning multiple locations to retrieve and sell the item. The profit structure further demonstrated the commercial nature of the operation: IDR 15 million (USD 885) to Co-offender 1, IDR 2 million (USD 118) to Co-offender 2, and IDR 5 million (USD 295) split between Co-offender 3 and Defendant 1. The transaction took place at a hotel,

where Co-offender 2 delivered the tiger skin in a sack to Defendant 1. Price negotiations with Co-offender 3 were underway when law enforcement intervened. Having received information from local residents about the tiger skin, police raided the hotel room. They found Defendant 1 in possession of the skin, which, according to court documents, was from a Sumatran tiger. CCTV footage recorded Defendant 1 carrying the sack into the hotel, corroborating the police account. Defendant 1 admitted he intended to sell the skin without a permit.

Charges and offences:

Based on the evidence, Defendant 1 was found legally and convincingly guilty at the Sungai Penuh District Court, Jambi, of “collectively trading the skin of a protected animal”, in violation of Article 40(2) and Article 21(2)(d) of Law No. 5/1990, in conjunction with Article 55 of the Criminal Code.

Sentence:

On 21 August 2023, Defendant 1 was sentenced to two years and six months imprisonment and a fine of IDR 50 million (USD 2,950), with an additional three months imprisonment if the fine was not paid.

During the trial, Defendant 1 claimed he was conducting an informal investigation into tiger trafficking citing his involvement with a forest patrol team partnered with Kerinci Seblat National Park. Defence witnesses, including a village head and a patrol officer, spoke of his background in forest monitoring and environmental activism, noting awards he had received for conservation work. However, the court found no evidence to support his claim of an undercover operation. He lacked assignment letters, written instructions, and investigative notes. Instead, the court concluded that Defendant 1 had misused his conservation related credibility and access to facilitate trafficking, rather than reporting it as legally required of him. The court assessed both aggravating and mitigating factors. Aggravating circumstances included the seriousness of trafficking a fully protected species and the harm caused to conservation efforts. Mitigating elements included Defendant 1’s lack of prior convictions, demonstration of remorse, and his history of environmental engagement. He was ordered to remain in custody and to cover court costs.

Source:

No. 102/Pid.B/LH/2023/PN Spn (Sungai Penuh Dist. Ct., 2023) (Indo) [109].



Tiger skull and skin
© Soh Koon Chng / WWF

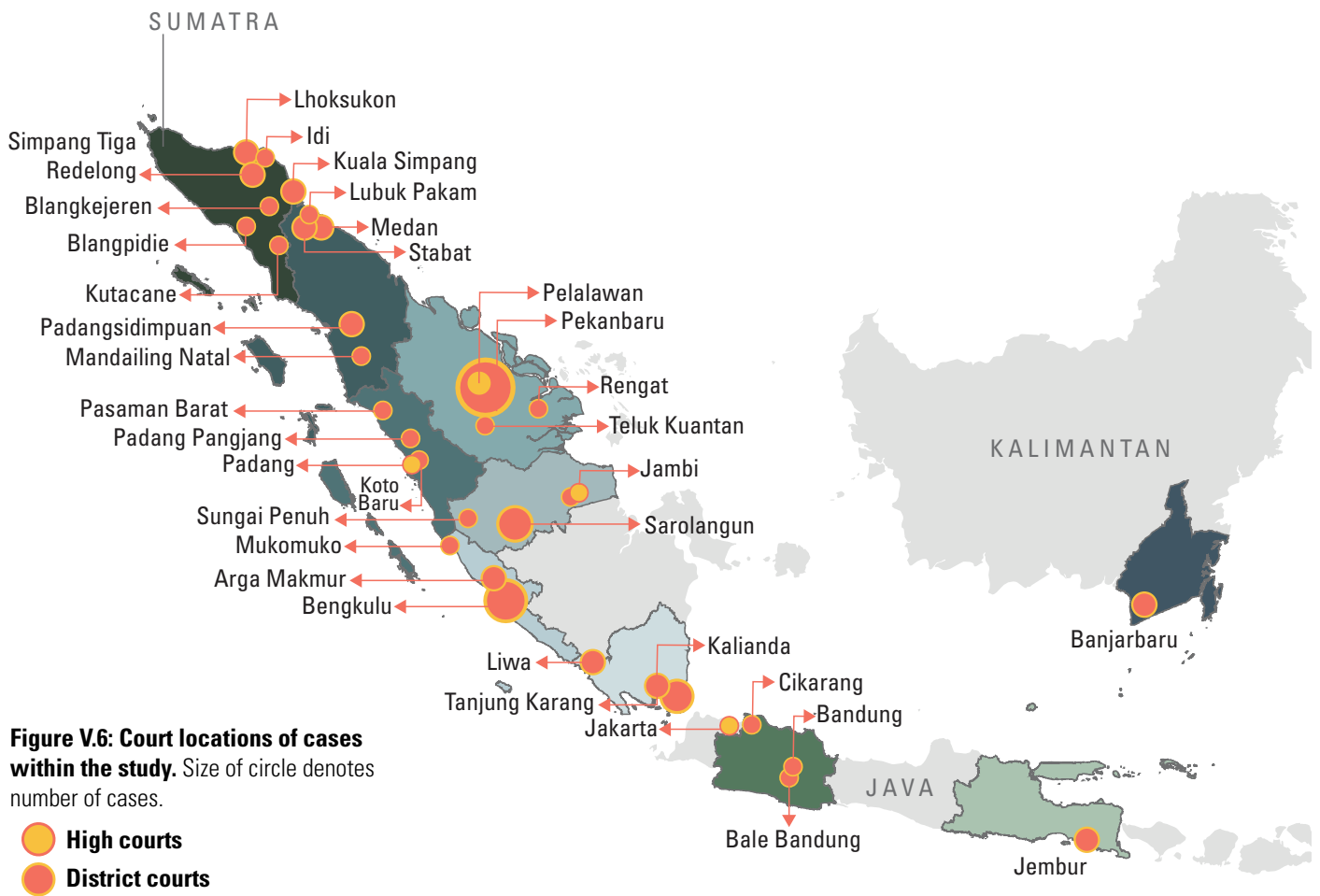


Figure V.6: Court locations of cases within the study. Size of circle denotes number of cases.

- High courts
- District courts

Charges

Based on the available legal documents, cases related to tiger trafficking are covered under provisions of the Conservation of Biological Natural Resources and Their Ecosystems Act, Law No. 5/1990. Specifically, all cases fell under Article 40, paragraph (2), in conjunction with Article 21, paragraph (2). Article 21 (2) prohibits persons from: (a) catching, injuring, killing, keeping, possessing, transporting or trading in a protected animal live, or (b) dead, as well as the (c) transferring of protected animals from one place to another, or (d) transferring, trading, keeping or possessing skin, bodies, or other parts of protected animals or goods made from these animals. Article 40 specifies the provision of criminal punishment for violations of Article 21. In 2024, Law No. 32/2024 was enacted as an amendment to Law No.5/1990 which included provisions for harsher punishments. It also introduced a categorised system for criminal fines, ranging from Category I to Category VIII, depending on the severity of the offence and whether the perpetrator is an individual or a corporation. Previous penalties under Law No.5 of 1990, for crimes against protected species, carried a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment and a fine up to IDR 100 million (~USD 5,981). The revision on penalties as per Article 40A (referring to violations of Article 21) now includes:¹²

- Individuals: imprisonment for a minimum of three years and a maximum of 15 years and a fine of at least category IV (IDR 200 million, ~USD 11,796) and a maximum of category VII (IDR 5 billion, ~USD 294,915).
- Corporations: imprisonment for a minimum of four years and a maximum of 20 years and a fine of at least category IV (IDR 200 million, ~USD 11,796) and a maximum of category VIII (IDR 50 billion, ~USD 2.95 million).

Some cases also applied the Criminal Code, including one under Article 53, paragraph (2), two under Article 56, paragraph (1), and thirty under Article 55, paragraph (1). These articles establish that crimes can be punished only by laws already in force, that judges must prioritise justice when applying those laws, that individuals cannot escape liability by creating excuses, and that corporations must be sentenced based on the scale, intent, involvement, and impact of their wrongdoing. In addition, one case [145] fell under Article 1, paragraph (1) of Law No. 12/Drt/1951, which prohibits unauthorised possession, manufacture, transport, or use of firearms, ammunition, or explosives, and prescribes penalties that include death or 20 years' imprisonment. This case involved an individual who was found to have a tiger taxidermy in their possession, with authorities also uncovering firearms and ammunition during their search of his home.

¹²Although not applied to any of the cases in this study, Law No. 32/2024 also allows for other criminal penalties for corporations, including restitution, costs for ecosystem restoration and animal rehabilitation, confiscation of wildlife or illegal profits, publication of the judgment, permit revocation, business closure or suspension, and corporate dissolution. If the corporation fails to pay or perform certain monetary/nature-restoration obligations, prosecutors may seize and auction its assets or income to satisfy them (Law No. 32/2024).

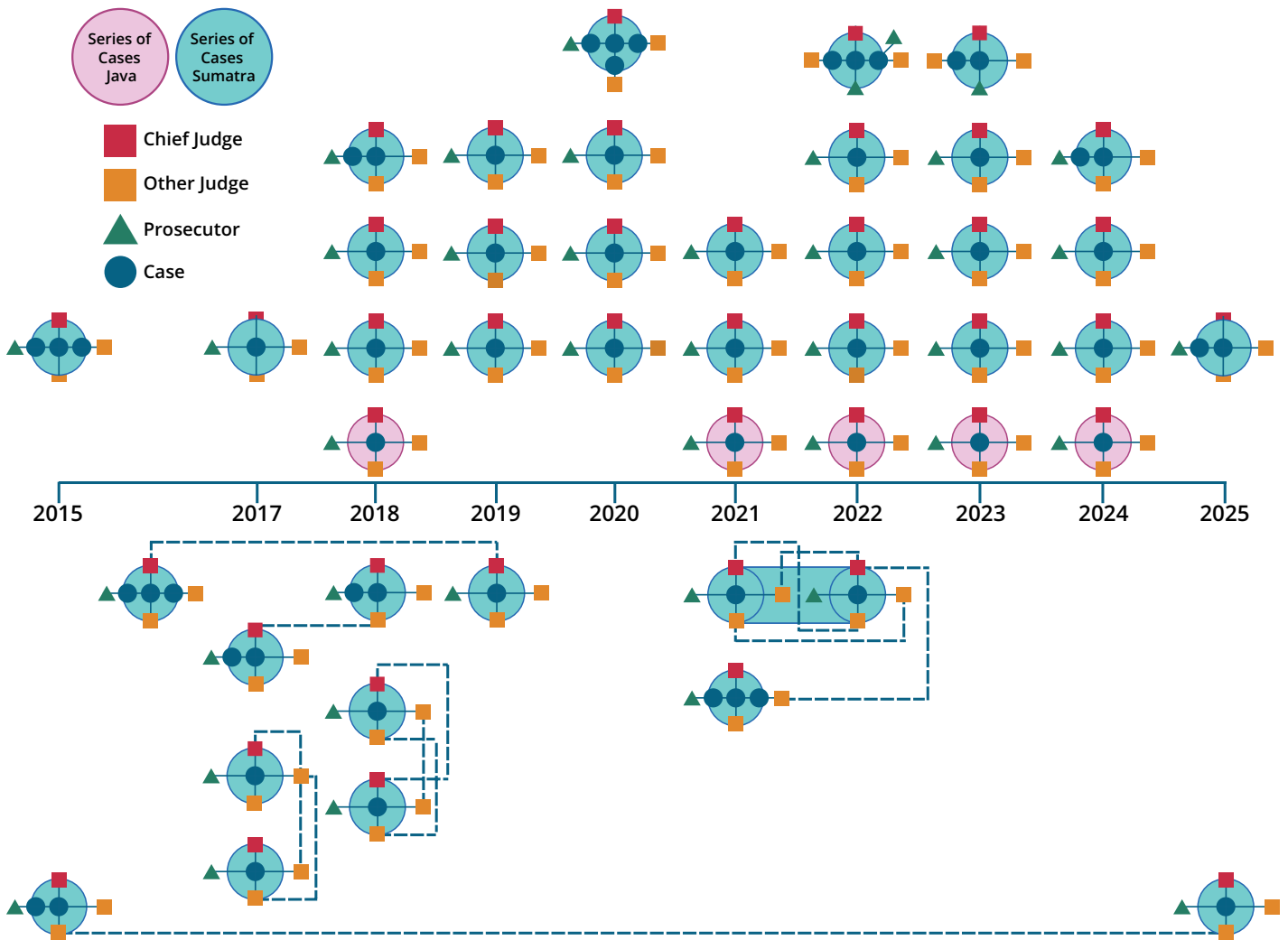


Figure V.7: Judicial actors (squares) in tiger trafficking cases grouped by Series (n=43), along a timeline (year of sentencing). The colour of the large circles represents the province. Within the large circles are small blue circles representing the cases in the Series. Judges and prosecutors who participated in only a single case or Series of cases are above the timeline. Below the timeline are Series where judges or prosecutors participated in more than one Series (indicated by a dotted line).

Evidence Presented

Successful prosecutions depend on the evidence presented in court. The court records show that prosecutors used different types of evidence, including forensics, witness statements, seized items, and other materials, in wildlife crime cases related to tiger protection in Indonesia (Figure V.8). Most cases included multiple types of evidence.

Forensic Evidence

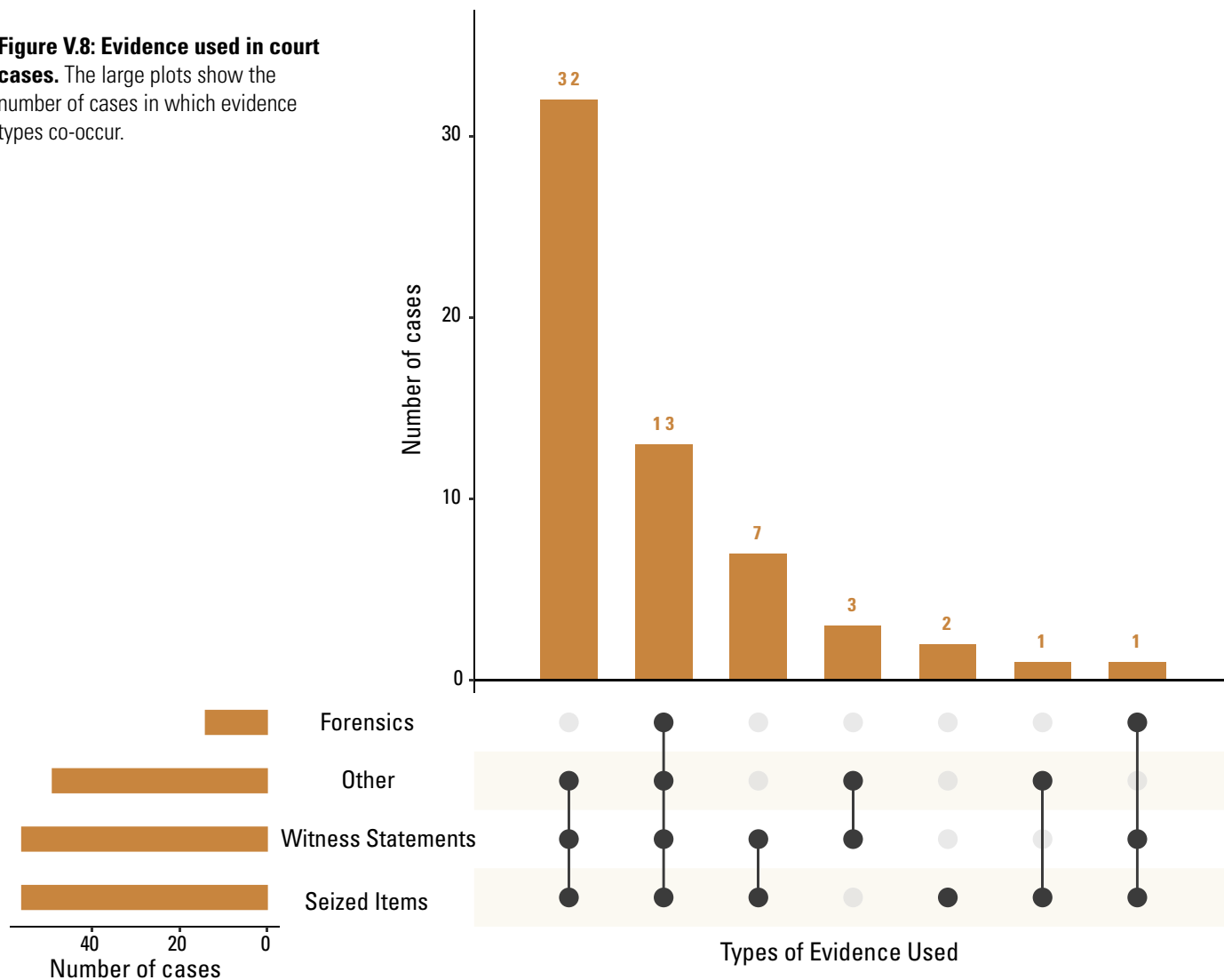
Forensic evidence provided key insights into the tiger's origin, population size, cause of death, and preservation. Multiple research organisations contributed this evidence across cases, including the deputy head of the DNA Forensic Laboratory, a senior researcher at the Eijkman Institute for Molecular Biology, a wildlife expert working under BKSDA, a veterinarian employed by Aceh BKSDA, and a veterinarian at a wildlife rescue centre.

In some cases, forensic evidence included necropsy reports documenting physical evidence, such as animal skins, bones, and preserved body parts (e.g., a necropsy report on a Sumatran tiger carcass [128]). They used a variety of techniques to determine the cause of death

in the tigers (e.g., examining blood clotting in the heart, haemorrhage and cyanosis in the respiratory system, and ruptured kidneys). These reports also identified evidence that the animal had been trapped. In one case, they found a pregnant female at approximately 100 days of gestation with two fetuses.

Additionally, they examined DNA evidence to verify species and subspecies and to determine whether multiple tigers were present. DNA evidence included sequencing, short tandem repeat, matching tests, and linking samples to known tiger or other species' genetic profiles, providing forensic species identification (e.g., of dried skin [39]). Forensic evidence was used to confirm that seized items (e.g., skin, bones, claws) belonged to protected species, substantiating charges under Indonesia's wildlife protection laws. Some forensic reports also provided subspecies classifications to strengthen the link to Indonesian regulations, such as determining whether it was a protected Sumatran tiger (e.g., [145]). Certain case documents noted that analyses were performed by official forensic laboratories (e.g., Indonesian government laboratories, university biology laboratories, or BKSDA-affiliated laboratories).

Figure V.8: Evidence used in court cases. The large plots show the number of cases in which evidence types co-occur.



Other evidence presented in court included smell and burn tests to determine whether any chemical preservatives had been used on the tiger skin and bones. The results indicated whether the defendant had used formalin or other chemical preservatives.

Witness Statements

Information regarding witness statements was included in the court documents of 56 cases. Witnesses included law enforcement officers, civil servants, civilians, and experts. Some testimonies described what suspects reportedly told officials or civilians, including admissions of hunting, selling, or transporting wildlife, claims of receiving parts from friends, hunters, or buyers, statements about previous sales, networks, or financial needs, and descriptions of attempts to justify possession (e.g., “found it”, “just helping a friend”). Witnesses frequently referenced WhatsApp messages. Some witnesses were also co-offenders; for example, one was an active military member involved in the crime as a middleman (it is unclear whether he was arrested and/or prosecuted in military court) [97].

Law Enforcement & Civil Servants: Witnesses were primarily police officers, Gakkum, forestry officials (e.g., BKSDA officers, Kerinci Seblat NP officer, Gunung Leuser NP officer), and investigators who described the

initial information they received, in some cases from an informant. They also described surveillance and arrest operations, including the vehicles stopped, controlled buys, and searches of homes and hotels. They outlined wildlife products seized, such as tiger skins, bones, live animal traps and weapons. Some statements included descriptions of the suspect’s behaviour and any admissions made to them at the time of arrest. They also shared documentation, such as photographic evidence. Their statements confirmed the illegal possession, trade or transport of tigers, how evidence was collected and secured and the chain of custody for seized items. Arrests commonly occurred during planned sting operations or when suspects attempted to sell or transport items.

Civilian Witnesses: Statements were also provided by civilians, including neighbours, village residents, drivers, acquaintances, and others present during the incident. Their accounts described observations of animals being kept, transported, and sold. Some also knew the suspects involved in hunting or trading wildlife. Their testimonies covered transactions such as meeting buyers, discussing prices, and determining the origin of wildlife products. Some confirmed that the suspects offered items for sale or requested transportation assistance, and shared contextual details such as their

first encounter with the suspect, what they observed (e.g., in a bag in a vehicle), and their own role (e.g., being asked to carry an item without knowing its contents).

Expert witness: Experts were also called to testify, including veterinarians, wildlife forensic specialists, forestry biologists, and conservation officials. They provided evidence to support species identification (e.g., Sumatran tiger, leopard, pangolin) and verified that carcasses, bones, skins, or claws were from protected species. They also assessed the animals' age, sex, and conditions. Their testimonies provided evidence of violations of wildlife protection laws. Some also provided information on the value of wildlife parts in the illegal market, ecological harm associated with trade and the legal status of protected species.

Other Evidence

Other evidence presented in court included physical items such as hunting and trapping tools, digital devices used in the wildlife trade, and firearms (e.g., pistols) and ammunition. Some of these items linked the defendants to the acquisition, storage, and sale of wildlife parts (e.g., steel wire, nylon ropes, and machetes used for trapping and hunting). Other evidence included envelopes and plastic bags used to conceal or transport parts [8]. Digital evidence included cell phones and data extraction reports from WhatsApp conversations. However, the

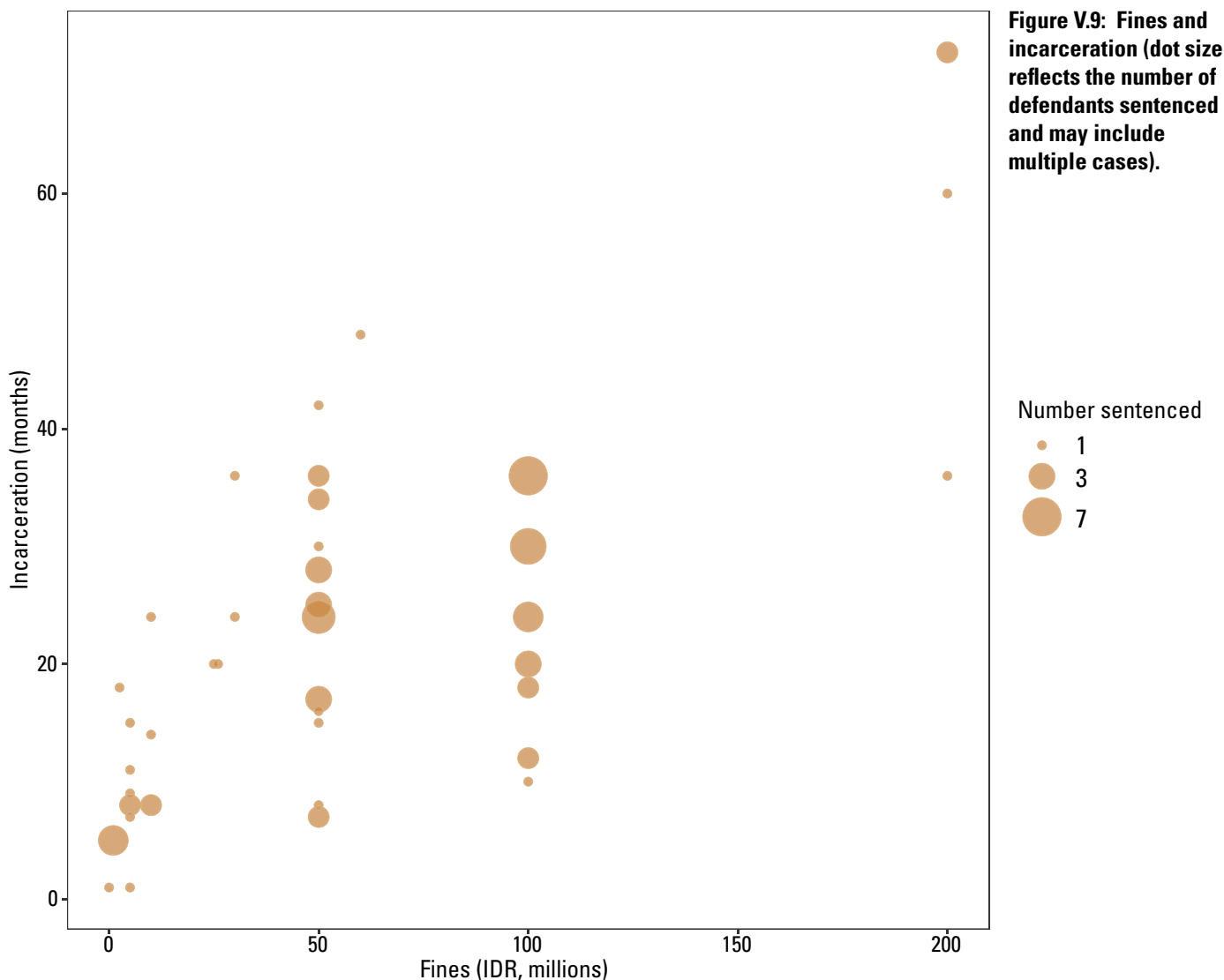
reviewed records do not indicate any use of Species Victim Impact Statements (SVISs).¹³

Case Outcome

For all the Indonesian court cases reviewed, the defendants were found guilty (n = 59). This reflects the fact that the publicly available documents we obtained were sentencing records, so we did not capture cases dropped prior to conviction. Across the reviewed cases, sentencing decisions were shaped by a combination of legally relevant and contextual factors, reflecting both the gravity of wildlife crimes and the characteristics of individual defendants. Severity of the offence emerged as one of the most consistently cited influences. It was noted in 51 cases, underscoring that courts, at least to some extent, recognise the seriousness of trafficking and possession of protected species.

Prior convictions played a relatively small role in the documented sentencing decisions, as few cases involved repeat offenders. However, 41 cases described the defendant(s) as having no criminal history, and, in some cases, the judge took this into account. The courts also considered socio-economic status in at least 14 cases, often acknowledging limited financial means and the

¹³<https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/species-victim-impact-statements-environmental-crime/>



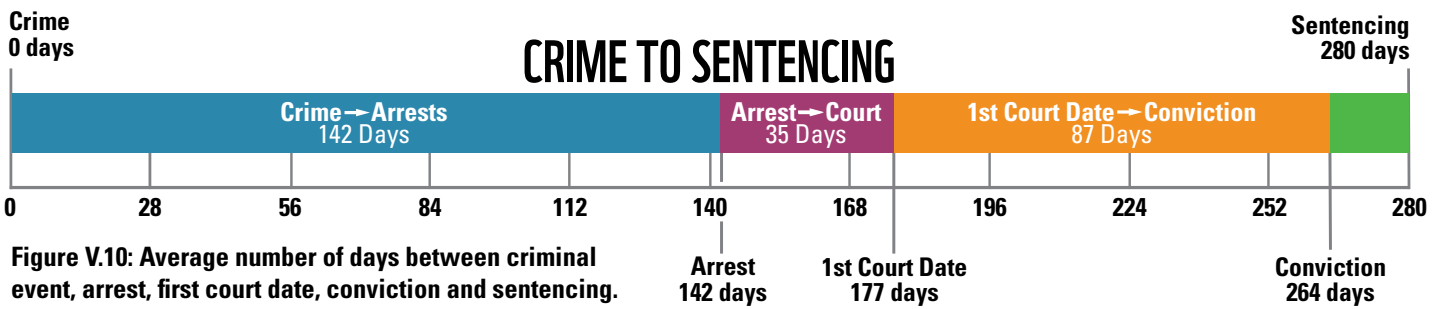


Figure V.10: Average number of days between criminal event, arrest, first court date, conviction and sentencing.

need to care for dependents when determining the size of fines or deciding whether imprisonment was appropriate.

Penalties ranged widely (Figure V.9). All of the defendants in our sample received custodial sentences, ranging from one month to 72 months (average 24 months). Only one case did not include a fine; the rest ranged from IDR 1 million to IDR 200 million (median IDR 50 million (USD 2,949)). The largest sentences and fines were imposed in 2025, with one defendant receiving 60 months and an IDR 200 million (USD 11,797) fine (or three additional months incarceration) [128], while two defendants in another case received 72 months of incarceration and an IDR 200 million (USD 11,797) fine (or six additional months incarceration) [157] (note these high fines and sentences fell outside the time frame of the country profile analysis (Section IV), but we included it here to highlight the recent large jump in penalties that followed the Law No. 32/2024 amendment to Law No.5/1990). Additionally, every sentencing decision required defendants to pay court fees ranging from IDR 2,000 (USD 0.12) to IDR 7,500 (USD 0.46).

Appeals

Four cases were appeals that went to the High Courts. The outcomes varied across these appeals. In one case, the High Court upheld the South Jakarta District Court's decision and ordered the defendant to bear the court costs at both levels of the trial (IDR 2,500 (USD 0.14) at the appellate level). One defendant was ordered to pay a fine of IDR 25 million (USD 1,474) and serve an additional one month of prison [145]. In another case, the High Court affirmed the Jambi District Court's decision and rejected the prosecutor's appeal to increase the sentence [52]. In a third case, the High Court rejected an appeal submitted by the public prosecutor and the defendant, upholding the decision of the Bukit Tinggi District Court, and declared that the defendant shall remain in custody, ordering the defendant to bear the court costs at both levels of the trial [47]. In a fourth case, the appeal submission was accepted and reviewed, but they rejected the prosecutor's appeal memorandum seeking to change the sentencing, instead, making the prison time shorter [65].

Criminal Justice Process Timeline

Prosecutions in Indonesia appear to have progressed relatively quickly through the court system, with the average time from law enforcement detection of a crime to sentencing being 151 days (Figure V.10; see Appendix C, Figure C.2, and Table C.2 for more details).

DISCUSSION

Exploring the progression of wildlife crime cases through Indonesia's criminal justice system offers insights into the factors that support prosecution and conviction for tiger crimes. This can help identify opportunities for improvement and inform prosecutions in other countries. The criminal justice process involves a variety of actors, including police, forest rangers, conservation agencies (notably BKSDA), forensic specialists, prosecutors, and judges, each with unique authority and expertise. From the initial detection of a crime to successful prosecution, the process moves from informal measures (such as community members reporting suspicious activity) to formal law enforcement and judicial systems that rely on interagency cooperation, sufficient institutional capacity, and adequate resources. Tiger prosecutions in Indonesia exemplify how these systems work together to consistently prosecute wildlife crime.

Criminal Events

The prosecuted cases show that tiger-related offences in Indonesia occur within a broader, interconnected landscape of the illegal wildlife trade. Some incidents stemmed from opportunistic encounters, such as tigers being unintentionally caught in snares set for other wildlife, while others reflected deliberate and organised efforts to kill, process, and sell tiger parts. In both situations, offenders often relied on social networks to locate buyers, arrange transactions, or assist with storage and transport. These patterns demonstrate how subsistence hunting, opportunistic exploitation, and structured trafficking can converge within the illegal wildlife trade, forming fluid networks that shift between informal and commercial activities.

Non-selective hunting practices, especially the use of snares, emerge as an important entry point into tiger trafficking in some cases. While some killings were accidental, the unintentional capture often resulted in deliberate exploitation once a tiger was caught. In such instances, offenders often utilised social connections to facilitate storage, transport, and sale, indicating that opportunistic events can be readily integrated into established trading networks. This dynamic underscores the role of informal social networks in linking local hunting activities with broader illicit markets.

The trafficking cases further demonstrate a degree of planning and coordination, including pre-arranged meetings, negotiations, and financial exchanges, sometimes extending across provincial boundaries. Price variation reflects differences in product characteristics,

CASE STUDY 5: ANTIQUES DEALER, APPEALED CASE TO THE HIGH COURT

Crime: Illegal possession, storage, and trade of Sumatran tiger parts and other protected wildlife through an antique shop operation.

Location: Bukittinggi, West Sumatra Province, Sumatra, Indonesia

Date/Period: April 2019 – October 2019

Investigations and discovery:

Defendant 1, a 51-year-old antique dealer from Bukit Tinggi, was involved in the illegal trade of Sumatran tiger parts and other protected wildlife species. Operating from his antique shop, he acted as an intermediary between two fugitives: Co offender 1, who sought to purchase a tiger skin, and Co offender 2, who supplied it. On 16 April 2019, Co offender 1 visited the shop and requested a tiger skin, paying Defendant 1 a deposit of IDR 1 million (USD 59). Defendant 1 then contacted Co offender 2, requested photographs of available tiger parts, and negotiated to purchase them for IDR 30 million (USD 1,770), intending to sell them to Co offender 1 for IDR 32 million (USD 1,887).

On 18 April 2019, a courier sent by Co offender 2 delivered the tiger skin to Defendant 1's home. A viewing was arranged for the following day. Co offender 1 later came to the antique shop, where an associate had brought the skin for inspection. Shortly afterwards, West Sumatra Police raided the premises and arrested Defendant 1. During the raid, officers seized not only the tiger skin but also a significant collection of other wildlife parts stored in the shop, including two tiger skulls, 14 tiger backbone pieces, 10 tiger leg bones, ribs, additional bone fragments, and a tapir skull. All items were classified as parts of protected species. The investigation established that Defendant 1 knowingly possessed and traded these items without legal permits.

Charges and offences:

The evidence formed the basis for the Bukit Tinggi District Court's charge under Article 40(2) in conjunction with Article 21(2) of Law No. 5/1990, which criminalises the possession, storage, and trade of protected wildlife and their parts.

Sentence:

On 18 September 2019, the defendant received a sentence of one year and three months imprisonment and a fine of IDR 5 million, with four additional months imprisonment in lieu of payment. Defendant 1 remained in custody, with time served credited toward his sentence. Although Defendant 1 was involved in a previous tiger-related crime, this was not considered by the court (see Table V.2).

Appeal:

Both the prosecution and the defence appealed. The prosecution sought a harsher penalty, while the defence argued that the expert testimony did not conclusively prove the seized items were from a Sumatran tiger. On 22 October 2019, the Padang High Court dismissed both appeals, upheld the Bukit Tinggi District Court's verdict,



© Ola Jennersten / WWF-Sweden

and confirmed that the seized wildlife parts, including tiger skin, bones, and a tapir skull, were protected under Indonesian law. Defendant 1 was also ordered to pay court costs at both judicial levels. The conviction and sentence were fully affirmed.

Source:

No. 1/Pid.Sus/2018/PN Mkm (Mukomuko Dist. Ct., 2018) (Indo) [38].



Tiger pelt displayed in the kitchen of a restaurant, Myanmar. © WWF-Myanmar

perceived enforcement risk, and bargaining processes, suggesting a level of market familiarity among participants. These features align with broader trends in the illegal wildlife trade, in which offenders balance opportunity and risk within semi-structured commercial environments.

Notably, tiger sales frequently co-occur with the trade in other protected wildlife species. This multi-species pattern shows that traders often diversify their activities across different taxa and product types, connecting forested regions, coastal areas, and urban markets. These findings align with Adhiasto and colleagues' analysis of multi-stakeholder collaboration, examining wildlife crime incidents from 2004-2019 in Indonesia. They found that most cases involved multiple species and noted that multi-species cases entail both greater ecological harm and a greater evidentiary burden (Adhiasto et al. 2023).

Overall, these criminal activities reflect broader trends in illegal wildlife trade, including reliance on social connections, opportunistic behaviour, and multi-species commercial markets.

Offenders

The offender profiles emerging from these cases suggest that individuals prosecuted for tiger trafficking in Indonesia are predominantly embedded in local or regional contexts and occupy lower- to mid-level positions within the trafficking chain. This pattern aligns with earlier research showing that wildlife crime prosecutions in Indonesia tend to capture the most visible and accessible participants in-country rather than

those who direct or finance large international trade networks (UNODC 2024). Notably, all the defendants prosecuted were Indonesian nationals. This contrasts with patterns observed in other countries included in this study, where foreign nationals were frequently implicated in the tiger trade. Explaining this discrepancy is challenging. Indonesia's archipelagic geography may present logistical barriers to cross-border poaching and trade, potentially limiting the direct involvement of foreign actors. Or it is possible that foreign nationals operate at higher levels of the supply chain and are therefore less likely to be detected or apprehended, particularly given that the cases examined in this study were domestic and did not capture cross-border transportation. As such, the absence of foreign defendants may indicate that either demand is largely domestic, or alternatively that transnational trade persists but remains difficult to detect, potentially reflecting more sophisticated trafficking networks, broader governance challenges (e.g., corruption or complicity), or evidentiary difficulties associated with prosecuting complex transnational crimes.

Although comprehensive socioeconomic data are unavailable for all defendants, the available information, combined with insights from the UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report (2024) on incarcerated wildlife offenders, suggests that many offenders likely occupy lower socioeconomic positions, have limited formal education, and are often described as first-time offenders without a criminal record. Again, these characteristics align with broader patterns observed among wildlife offenders in Indonesia, where those arrested tend not to be

high-level actors but rather individuals operating at the lower tiers of trafficking chains (UNODC 2024). For many, participation in the illegal wildlife trade appears motivated by the chance to earn supplementary income rather than subsistence needs or organised criminal intent. Monetary incentives, which often far exceed daily or monthly wages in rural areas, appear to play a central role in motivating involvement, even when offenders are aware of the illegality of their actions. At the same time, the presence of repeat offenders and individuals consolidating wildlife from multiple regions indicates that some mid-level actors are being prosecuted, though upper-tier facilitators or those commissioning the poaching and trafficking, who potentially cause the most harm, remain largely absent from court records. This suggests that current enforcement efforts are unlikely to disrupt or halt higher-level participants in organised trade, or to target or charge the key players in organised tiger crime (e.g., due to insufficient evidence). If low- to mid-level actors are easily replaced, this suggests that illegal trade will persist. Strategies focusing on “following the money” to identify where money is consolidated in the trade chain could lead to identifying high-level criminals and allow for prosecutions under other statutes, such as financial corruption or anti-money laundering laws, rather than solely wildlife laws. These approaches could provide mechanisms to target higher tiers of the supply chain (Yuliantiningsih et al. 2023; Wingard et al. 2025).

Overall, our results suggest that tiger trafficking in Indonesia involves a range of individuals influenced by varying economic and social motivations. Interpersonal relationships, such as those with family or friends, appear to facilitate introductions and criminal transactions, lowering entry barriers and likely normalising illegal activities. Understanding the interpersonal dynamics behind participation, including loyalty, social pressure, informal obligations, and economic need, is critical for designing effective prevention strategies. Interventions that focus on social networks, reduce economic vulnerability, and address local drivers of opportunistic involvement may be particularly effective at disrupting the recruitment pathways that sustain wildlife crime at the community level. Examining the roles of social and criminal capital will likely provide additional insights into the structures that sustain ongoing involvement in illegal trade among middle-level actors (e.g., those who consolidate wildlife for sale and onward shipment) and into the drivers of recidivism (i.e., repeat offending).

Criminal Justice Process

Court records indicate that crimes are typically detected through multiple pathways, including airport inspections, vehicle checks, forest ranger observations, and, most notably, community tips. The latter highlights the important role of informal guardians (e.g., community

members, the public) in identifying and reporting illegal activity, thereby laying the foundation for the initial stages of the criminal justice process.¹⁴ In the analysed cases, local community members had the knowledge and resources to report crimes and were willing to share this information with the relevant authorities (see Kahler et al. 2023; Gibbs et al. 2025 for more details on informal and regulatory guardianship). What could not be determined from the court documents was how information was transmitted from guardians to the authorities. Adhiasto et al. (2023) have documented the success of the Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) reporting system, and this may have played a role in initiating some of these cases.

Many cases also involved interagency coordination and specialised tactics such as sting operations, undercover purchases, controlled deliveries, and targeted surveillance. These activities highlight how proactive collaboration and operational expertise facilitate successful case initiation. They also demonstrate the advantages of combining formal resources with community intelligence. Identifying potential informal guardians, understanding their relationships and communication with law enforcement, and supporting these connections could provide a next step toward intercepting tiger crime more effectively in the future.

Based on available data, cases were mainly prosecuted in District Courts across Sumatra and Java, with a small portion reaching the High Courts on appeal.¹⁵ The judicial system was highly fragmented: 40 prosecutors and 120 judges participated in cases, often working in small, case-specific panels. Few judicial actors handled multiple tiger-related cases, and when they did, cases were usually separated by time. There was some overlap among judicial actors within a Series of related cases but little between Series. This fragmentation suggests limited specialisation or concentration of expertise in wildlife trade within Indonesia's court system. The diversity of judges may be due to cases being tried in thirty-two District Courts and four High Courts, most of which handled only one case during the study period. Prosecutors sometimes handled multiple cases in the same Series, but rarely prosecuted more than one Series. This suggests that for these crimes, prosecution is localised rather than specialised. Since the study focuses on tiger trade, it's unclear whether prosecutors have specific expertise in wildlife crime. The fragmented nature of these cases makes it unlikely that prosecutors will have specialised knowledge or experience with tiger crimes. Any future efforts to conduct training or awareness-raising activities would need to ensure that training is widely received by multiple judges and prosecutors across all regions. For complex wildlife crimes, specialist prosecutors or environmental courts should be considered (see Nurse, 2015).

¹⁴Criminologists define guardians as people whom a potential offender perceives as watching or who may respond to, or intervene in, a crime (Felson & Boba, 2010; Hollis et al., 2013; Nagin et al. 2023). Formal guardians, (e.g., law enforcement, park rangers) have an official role as a guardian, whereas informal guardians are not formally tasked with guardianship, but may still act to deter would-be offenders through reporting or intervention.

¹⁵In the only case in Kalimantan, a shipment originating from Java, containing a preserved tiger head, leopard head and two leopard paws, was seized at Syamsudin Noor Airport [22].



Smuggled tiger cub.
© WWF / James Morgan

Some cases were tried jointly, while others were tried separately. Joint trials may reflect clear, interconnected evidence, whereas separate trials for the same offence might suggest staged arrests, varying levels of cooperation, or strategic decisions by prosecutors. This could also indicate systemic variability, likely reflecting procedural differences across District Courts.

Prosecution outcomes were shaped by the evidentiary record, which commonly includes seized wildlife parts, forensic analyses, witness statements, and digital or physical tools used in hunting and trading. Forensic reports contributed to establishing species identity, subspecies classification, cause of death, and the presence of multiple tigers. They drew on expert testimony from veterinarians, wildlife biologists, and government forensic laboratories. Witnesses, from law enforcement officers to civilians and experts, provided additional layers of corroboration regarding arrests, operations, possession, and the defendant's involvement. This illustrates that successful prosecutions depend on strong, well-documented evidence chains. These chains reinforce one another, showing both the illegal nature of the act and the defendant's direct involvement. The importance of investigative procedures and interagency cooperation is likely to play a role in successful prosecutions.

The charges applied were relatively consistent, with all cases anchored in Article 40(2) of Law No. 5/1990, in conjunction with Article 21(2), which criminalises the killing, possession, or trade of protected species

and their derivatives.¹⁶ Sentencing outcomes appear to be influenced by a combination of offender characteristics (e.g., socio-economic status, perceived role in the trafficking chain) and the severity of the crime, particularly the number and protection status of the species involved. This demonstrates an understanding of how charges are applied and of the judicial reasoning under this law. However, other legislation can provide additional legal mechanisms which could be explored, such as anti-money laundering (see *Law of the Tiger* Wingard et al. 2025).

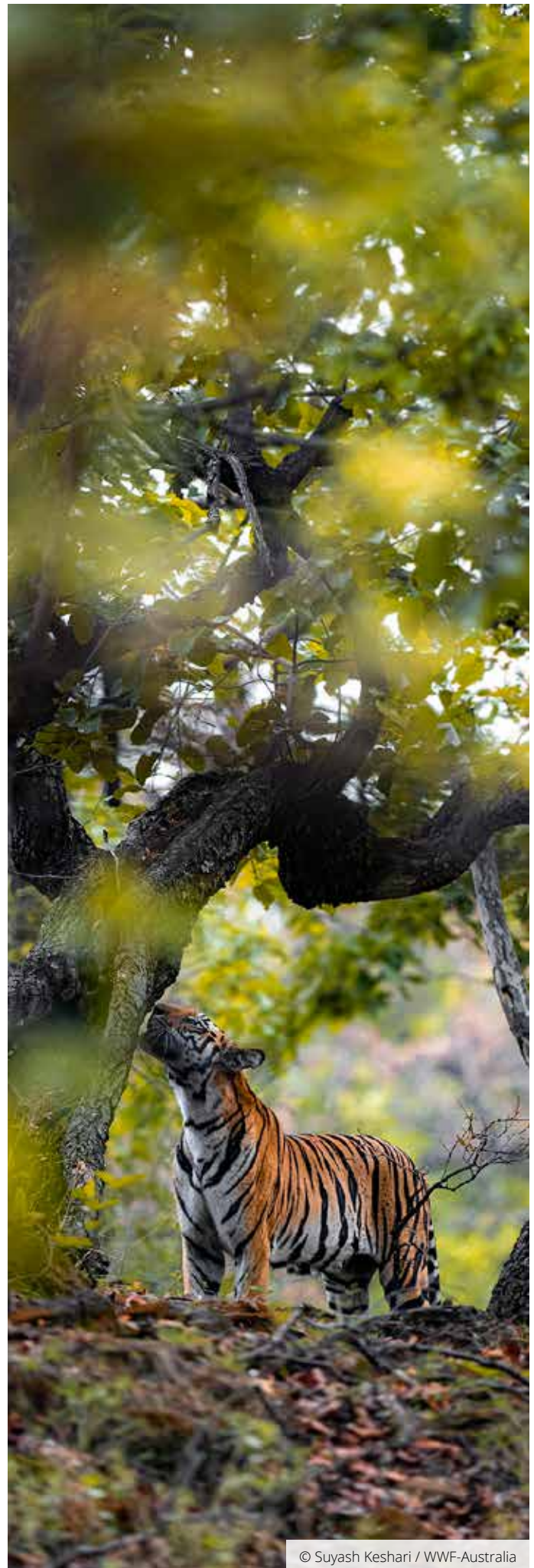
One of the most notable findings is that Indonesia's criminal justice system is processing wildlife cases rapidly, with prosecutors actively pursuing charges and achieving high conviction rates (see also Adhiasto et al. 2022). This demonstrates the swift processing of cases within the justice system, which may reflect an institutional commitment to combating wildlife trafficking. The speed of conviction may also reflect how law enforcement detected incidents of illegal trade. When law enforcement directly intercepted the sale or transport of tigers, they may have been able to gather strong evidence that helped the cases advance through the criminal justice system. More complex cases (e.g., those targeting high-level actors in organised networks) may take longer to progress through the criminal justice system and may not result in a conviction. However, without having unsuccessful cases for comparison, it is challenging to identify what predicts attrition or conviction.

¹⁶Notably absent were penalties under the newly implemented Law No. 32/2024, which allows for corporations to receive criminal penalties that repair harm (e.g., restitution, costs for ecosystem restoration and animal rehabilitation, confiscation of wildlife or illegal). While the prosecutions in this study involved individuals, it may be worth considering this approach in future cases involving businesses.

While the analysis of Indonesia's criminal justice process offers important insights into how tiger cases progress from detection to conviction, several gaps limit a full understanding of what drives prosecutorial success. Similarly, the sociological impacts of prosecutions, such as effects on rural livelihoods or community relationships, remain unexplored, leaving uncertainty about the effects of current penalties. These gaps all warrant further research.

Missing information across earlier stages of the justice process (in 30% of the recorded cases) also restricts analysis. As available court documents largely capture only final judgments, it is difficult to evaluate case attrition, determine why some cases fail to progress, or assess whether the system effectively deters offending. Recidivism (i.e., repeated offending) is also poorly understood. While there are some documented repeat offenders, the rate of recidivism is difficult to capture without more detailed records of offenders and ongoing monitoring of any future criminal activity. Again, access to records of cases in which no conviction was obtained would enable a more in-depth analysis of what impedes the progress of cases through the criminal justice system.

In summary, Indonesia's experience is important and relevant to other Southeast Asian countries. Although the reasons behind case progression are not fully clear, certain common factors were observed in successful cases. The outcome of a case ending in a conviction may depend on the nature of the crime, strong interagency cooperation, specialised investigative tactics, robust evidence, access to resources (e.g., forensic expertise and personnel who understand both wildlife laws and evidentiary standards), as well as prompt case processing. Factors that support successful prosecutions can inform regional reforms, while the identified gaps highlight common challenges. By enhancing transparency, strengthening guardianship, diversifying legal tools, and incorporating prevention measures, countries across the region can develop more credible and effective responses to tiger poaching and trafficking.



VI SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS



Tiger trafficking remains a persistent and complex criminal threat across Southeast Asia, characterised by diverse offending patterns, transnational linkages, and uneven institutional responses. Although tigers are legally protected in all target countries, enforcement and judicial effectiveness vary considerably. Indonesia and Viet Nam exhibit comparatively strong follow-through after arrest, while Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar show gaps between detection, arrest, prosecution, and sentencing. Malaysia and Thailand have made far more seizures and arrests, compared to the few that have led to successful prosecutions, pointing to gaps in enforcement and legal follow-through. However, a recent case in Malaysia (September 2025) stood out when three men received seven-year sentences and fines of RM 250,000 within one week of the offence, indicating a swift response to tiger crime. Despite some enforcement successes in the region, arrests do not always reliably or swiftly lead to prosecutions across all countries, and suspended or minimal sentences in several jurisdictions risk undermining the perceived legitimacy of the criminal justice system and the seriousness of tiger crimes. However, we note that these patterns should be interpreted with caution due to limited transparency and the absence of comprehensive prosecution data.

This not only restricts our ability to draw conclusions about the status of prosecutions in the region, but it also hampers accountability and impedes cross-country learning. Improving access to judicial data, harmonising national sentencing practices, and embedding transparency into prosecutorial decision-making will be vital for strengthening regional responses. Such data can be invaluable to the prosecutors themselves, and strengthen arguments in court regarding the severity of crimes and how this is treated across the region.

Indonesia stands out as an exception, with a publicly accessible database of court records for cases that resulted in a conviction. The detailed analysis of Indonesian court documents provides valuable insights into the prosecution of tiger crimes, illustrating that transparency, robust evidence, including forensic analysis, and interagency coordination can lead to successful prosecutions, with cases moving relatively quickly through the criminal justice system. Prosecutions are spread across numerous District and High Courts, and judges rarely preside over more than one case related to the tiger trade. As such, any training efforts need to cover numerous courts in Sumatra and Java and provide resources to a wide array of judges and prosecutors.

The Indonesian cases also highlight that both opportunistic offending and professional, structured trade networks are linked to trafficking in other high-demand, profitable species, including pangolins, elephants, hornbills, marine species, and other protected fauna. Motivations for illegal activities ranged from economic deprivation and opportunistic gain to human–wildlife conflict, yet many offenders knowingly violated the law, suggesting that perceived risks may remain low for some people. Prosecutions rarely extended beyond domestic trafficking chains, leaving higher-level individuals in organised and international criminal networks largely untouched. While Indonesia is rapidly prosecuting tiger-related crimes, these challenges demonstrate the need to extend judicial responses beyond criminal prosecution for wildlife offences alone.

When examining crime detection, identifying the roles and connections between potential informal guardians who can report crime (such as community members, transport workers, market intermediaries, and digital platforms), formal guardians (including interagency rangers, enforcement agencies, and border authorities), and the judiciary can reveal areas with strong protective oversight while highlighting weaknesses in communication, resources, or willingness to respond to non-compliance (see Regulatory Guardianship, Gibbs et al. 2025). Strengthening these guardianship systems through enhanced interagency cooperation, training, incentives, community partnerships, and technological support may create environments that make tiger trafficking riskier and less profitable.

Other approaches to tackling complex crimes include considering the use of other legal frameworks, specialised courts, and procedural justice. To target offenders involved in higher levels of illegal supply chains, legal frameworks focused on financial and organised crimes may open new pathways to prosecution (see Wingard et al. 2025). Since different agencies are mandated to implement different laws, this will likely require intentional and ongoing interagency cooperation. While most countries in the region have an anti-money laundering legislation that considers wildlife crime as a serious crime, this law is rarely used to investigate, let alone prosecute tiger crimes. Specialised environmental courts or prosecutors (see Nurse 2015) could also ensure there is sufficient expertise to support the prosecution of these complex cases, and reduce the need for widespread training across multiple courts. Ensuring the inclusion of procedural justice, which emphasises due process, procedural fairness, and transparency in the criminal justice system, will help to ensure equitable outcomes for all parties (see St. John et al. 2026). By establishing a judicial system with adequate expertise to prosecute under additional statutes and embedding procedural justice to create a transparent and fair judicial process, the courts could safeguard human rights, particularly of vulnerable populations, while also targeting the most egregious offenders.

Restorative approaches and civil sanctions may also provide a way to respond to these crimes and address the damage (Nurse 2015; Hübschle et al. 2021; Dore et al. 2022). Restorative justice centres around repairing harm rather than solely punishing an offender. It focuses on promoting accountability, healing, and reintegration by encouraging dialogue that gives victims a voice and supports the offender's recovery.¹⁷ This approach can be integrated into traditional criminal justice systems and may offer an option for handling cases involving poverty-driven issues or human–wildlife conflict, enabling offenders to repair the harm they caused through dialogue, accountability, and ecological restoration at community and ecosystem levels. Other restorative approaches, such as Conservation Litigation, apply civil and environmental liability laws to contexts of environmental harm, aiming to hold those responsible for causing damage accountable through restoration, compensation, and outreach (e.g., apologies, community engagement, financial support for environmental restoration, and education) (Fajrini et al. 2022). A previous study involving mock trials exploring Conservation Litigation specifically in the context of tiger trade in Indonesia, found that judges were likely receptive to these approaches (Fajrini et al. 2022). Indonesia recently implemented Law No. 32/2024, which imposes additional criminal penalties on corporations, including restitution, costs for ecosystem restoration and animal rehabilitation, and confiscation of wildlife, among other things, providing a pathway for repairing harm. These methods could also ensure that repeat or high-level offenders pay for the damage they cause. In summary, restorative and civil mechanisms can complement criminal prosecution by addressing the underlying drivers of offending, repairing harm, and supporting coexistence among communities living alongside tigers.

Ultimately, stopping the illegal tiger trade in Southeast Asia will help to safeguard the remaining wild tigers, but it requires an integrated approach that extends beyond isolated enforcement efforts. To address current gaps, it is essential to enhance transparency, consistency, and capacity within the justice system through coordinated regional actions, bolstered guardianship networks, application of multiple legal and judicial frameworks, and innovative approaches. Increasing publication of judicial records and expanding training in wildlife crime, especially in multi-species trafficking, digital forensics, and ecological valuation, can promote more consistent decision-making.

Recommendations

See the Executive Summary (page 7) for a detailed list of recommendations.

¹⁷Fhadilah et al., 2025 explored Restorative Justice in the context of environmental harm and communities in Indonesia. Victims in the case of wildlife crime can include, for example, local community members impacted by wildlife crime, conservation professionals, or some would argue the species themselves.

VII APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CODEBOOK

Table A.1: Codebook used to qualitatively code Indonesian court documents.

CODE	COMMENT
CRIMINAL_EVENT	
• COMMODITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOURCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source_Indonesia • Source_Other • Source_Southeast_Asia • SUB_SPECIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continental_subspecies • Other_subspecies • Sumatran_subspecies • Age_tiger • Captive_bred • Commodity_type • Goods_seized • Other_commodities • Quantity • Wild_caught 	<p>Source of tiger was Indonesia</p> <p>Source of tiger was a country other than one in Southeast Asia</p> <p>Source of tiger was Southeast Asia (excluding Indonesia)</p> <p>If they mention specifically that the subspecies is continental.</p> <p>If they mention another subspecies (even if that subspecies is not recognized by IUCN). Please write the name in the comments.</p> <p>If they mention the subspecies is Sumatran.</p> <p>Is the tiger product described in these documents as captive bred or suspected of being captive bred</p> <p>What tiger product type was involved (e.g., tiger skins, bones etc...).</p> <p>What was seized? Including seizure of non-tiger products or tiger products.</p> <p>What other commodities were involved in the criminal event? (e.g., drugs, other wildlife, firearms, legal goods...)</p> <p>How many tiger parts were involved in the crime (try to also highlight the unit)</p> <p>Is the tiger wild-caught or suspected of being wild-caught?</p>
• CORRUPTION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement_corruption • Family_corruption • Friend_corruption • Government_authority_corruption 	<p>Corruption involved a law enforcement officer.</p> <p>They have a family member that is in a position of power/authority figure</p> <p>They have a friend that is in a position of power/ authority figure</p> <p>Corruption that may include a person in a position of power in the government (e.g., high-level government official). Please include a description in the comments box.</p>

CODE	COMMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunistic_corruption Other_corruption 	<p>The opportunity arises to bribe or coerce an authority figure (e.g., they got caught and tried to pay off the officer).</p> <p>Any other mentions of corruption or descriptions of corruption.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CRIME_TYPE 	<p>What was the crime in this case? You can code more than one crime type.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buying_crime_type Other_crime_type Poaching_crime_type Possession_crime_type Selling_crime_type Transporting_crime_type 	<p>The crime involved purchasing tiger products.</p> <p>Other crime types</p> <p>The crime involved illegal hunting (of tigers or other species)</p> <p>The crime involved possession of tigers or tiger products</p> <p>The crime involved the sale of tigers or tiger products</p> <p>The crime involved the transportation of tigers or tiger products</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOCATION_CRIME 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location_description Location_geographic Location_type 	<p>Any narrative description of the location(s) involved in the crime.</p> <p>Where the criminal event occurred - geographic location (e.g., the name of the town, village, island)</p> <p>Type of location where the criminal event occurred (e.g., private residence, shopping mall, airport...)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MONETARY_VALUE 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value_monetary_tiger_only Value_monetary_total 	<p>What was the monetary value of the detected tiger products?</p> <p>What was the monetary value of the detected goods? Including tiger and non-tiger products.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOTIVATION 	<p>Motivation for participating in the Crime</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coercion_motivation Connection_family_friend_motivation Human_wildlife_conflict_motivation Monetary_family_motivation Monetary_other_motivation Other_motivation 	<p>Someone forced them to participate (threat of violence or other harm, paying back some form of debt, blackmail etc.)</p> <p>Motivated by connection to family or friend e.g., the person participated because a friend or family member asked them to become involved).</p> <p>The motivation was related to human-wildlife conflict.</p> <p>Needed money to look after their family or supporting basic living expenses - driven by the need for money to support their family</p> <p>Motivated by money.</p> <p>There was another motivation for participation in the crime.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NATURE_OF_CRIME 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human-wildlife-conflict Opportunistic Showed_intent 	<p>Human-wildlife conflict played a role in the crime (e.g., they killed a problem tiger).</p> <p>The crime was opportunistic (e.g., they were hunting other species and accidentally caught a tiger in their snare, and then they tried to sell the tiger).</p> <p>The offenders showed intent in their actions (e.g., they set out to hunt or sell a tiger, they looked for a buyer).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TRAFFICKING_DETAILS 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concealment_method 	<p>Did they try to conceal the goods? What method did they use to conceal goods?</p>

CODE	COMMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trade_route Transportation_type 	<p>Any description of the trade route.</p> <p>What type of transportation was used to move tiger parts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CO-OFFENDERS 	Any narrative description of any other people involved in the criminal event. Also include people not being charged with a crime.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DESCRIPTION_OF_CRIME 	Any description of the criminal event, or events that preceded or followed the crime.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ORGANISED_CRIME 	Do they mention organized crime in the document? Does this crime meet the definition of organized crime in this country?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OTHER_CRIMES 	Did the criminal event include any other types of crime (e.g., money laundering, trafficking in drugs, violence etc). Code even if they are not charged with that crime.
CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE	Details about what they used to decide on the sentencing. (e.g., what they used to decide how severe the crime is and therefore how severe the punishment should be).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CASE_OUTCOME 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissed Found_guilty Found_not_guilty Other_case_outcomes Reason_for_outcome 	<p>Insufficient information or other event or issue that stopped the case from proceeding through the courts</p> <p>Defendant found guilty</p> <p>Defendant found not guilty</p> <p>There was another outcome for the case.</p> <p>What reason(s) was given for the outcome (e.g., why did they dismiss the case, why was there a mistrial, why were they found not guilty)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHARGES 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charges_laid Charges_legislation 	<p>What crimes were they charged with. Any description of these charges, including min and max penalties for such charges. Note if there was more than one charge. Make note of who is being charged (i.e., which defendant)</p> <p>What legislation do the charges fall under? What are the max/min fines for this crime?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COURT 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COURT_LOCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court_Bali Court_Java Court_Kalimantan Court_Other Court_Sumatra Location_court_description Court_Other_Info Judge Prosecutors 	<p>Which court and where?</p> <p>Who was the judge that presided over the case?</p> <p>Who were the prosecutors? Where do they work?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CRIME_DETECTION 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LAW_ENFORCEMENT_AGENCY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BKSDA Customs Gakkum 	Which law enforcement agency(ies) was involved in the detection or response to the crime? Please write in the notes section which one led the investigation.

CODE	COMMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military • NGO • Other_law_enforcement • Police • Quarantine • How_crime_detected • Law_enforcement_actions • Other_Crime_Detection 	<p>How did law enforcement detect the crime (undercover investigators, hotline tip, intel...)</p> <p>What did law enforcement do when they detected the crime? What did the police or investigators do?</p> <p>Other information on how the crime was detected</p>
• EVIDENCE_USED_IN_COURT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forensics_DNA • Other_evidence • Seized_products_evidence • Witness_statements 	<p>Some form of forensic evidence (e.g., DNA, fingerprints)</p> <p>They used other evidence in court.</p> <p>They used the seized product as evidence.</p> <p>They used witness statements as evidence.</p>
• NUMBER_OF_DEFENDANTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1_defendant • 2_defendants • 3_defendants • 4_or_more_defendants 	<p>Number of defendants in this specific case.</p>
• SENTENCING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SENTENCING_DECISIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No_prior_convictions_sentencing • Other_factors_sentencing • Prior_convictions_offenses_sentencing • Severity_of_the_crime_sentencing • Socio_economic_status_sentencing • Appeals • Fines • Other_sanctions • Pay_damages • Payment_to_court • Prison_time • Probation • Sentencing_decisions • Sentencing_other 	<p>Any details about the sentencing decision</p> <p>Information used by the judge or court to influence their sentencing decisions</p> <p>Information used by the judge or court to influence their sentencing decisions - the person had no prior convictions or no criminal history.</p> <p>Information used by the judge or court to influence their sentencing decisions. Other factors influenced the judge's sentencing decision.</p> <p>Information used by the judge or court to influence their sentencing decisions. Prior convictions or criminal history were considered as part of the judges sentencing decision.</p> <p>Information used by the judge or court to influence their sentencing decisions. The severity of the crime (e.g., how serious (or not serious) the judge considers the crime.</p> <p>Information used by the judge or court to influence their sentencing decisions. The defendant's socio-economic status is considered in the judges sentencing decision.</p> <p>Were there any appeals to the sentencing?</p> <p>What fine was given?</p> <p>What other sanction were given (e.g., probation)?</p> <p>Were there any requirements to pay compensation or for environmental damages?</p> <p>Were there specific requirements to make a payment to the court outside of fines? e.g., processing fees.</p> <p>What was the prison sentence? Where and how long?</p> <p>Were they given probation? How long?</p> <p>What information informed their sentencing decision?</p> <p>Any other information about sentencing.</p>

CODE	COMMENT
DATES	
• COURT_DATE	What was the first recorded court date (describe the details of this date in the comments).
• DATE_ARREST	What date were they arrested?
• DATE_CHARGES_LAID	What was the date when the charges were laid?
• DATE_OF_CRIME	When did the criminal event occur?
• DATE_OF_DETECTION	What was the date the crime was detected? Or the date of law enforcement action.
• SENTENCING_DATE	What was the sentencing date?
OFFENDER	
• AWARENESS_OF_THE_LAW	What is the offender's awareness of the law? If there are multiple offenders also code the offender's name
• Did_not_know_law	They did not (or claimed not to) know the laws.
• Knew_laws	They knew the laws and had a fairly good understanding of what is illegal
• Minimal_understanding_of_laws	Had only a little knowledge of the law.
• Other_law_awareness	Any other description about the offender's awareness of the laws.
• CRIMINAL_HISTORY	
• Past_charges_sanctions_received	If they have received any sanctions for a previous offense, what was the sanction? Also include anything that went to court and the outcomes of that trial.
• Prior_offences	Any description of prior offenses (e.g., other crimes or other forms of non-compliance). Including offenses that have or have not been detected (e.g., confessions to other crimes).
• Subsequent_offences	Description of any offenses for any type of crime the offender was involved in since the tiger-related offense.
• EDUCATION	Defendant's level of education.
• Graduate_school	
• High_school	
• Less_than_primary	
• Middle_school	
• Other_schooling	
• Primary_school	
• University_bachelor	
• GENDER	Gender of the defendant(s)
• Female	
• Male	
• NATIONALITY	
• Indonesian	
• Southeast_Asian	
• Other_nationality	Their nationality if they are from outside Southeast Asia
• RELIGION	Description of the defendant's religion
• Buddhism	
• Catholic	
• Christian	
• Hinduism	
• Islam	
• Other_religion	

CODE	COMMENT
• AGE	Description of defendant's age
• EMPLOYMENT_HISTORY	Description of the offender's employment history, including any jobs they currently have or any previous employment.
• FAMILY	Description of the offender's family (e.g., if they have children, wife....)
• GENDER	Description of the defendant's gender
• MULTIPLE_OFFENDERS_CHARGED_TOGETHER	If there are multiple offenders tried together in ONE document.
• OFFENDER_OTHER	Any description of the offender that does not fit anywhere else, e.g. whether the defendant would have any connections to government or government representatives?
• SOCIO_ECONOMIC_STATUS	Description of the defendant's socio-economic status (e.g., if they are poor, wealthy, middleclass...). Anything about their income.
• OFFENDER_ROLE	Descriptions of the offender's role in the crime. In the notes section be sure to give the name of the offender if there are multiple and tag that offender. You can apply more than one role to an offender.
• Buyer	Did they buy, or attempt to buy tigers or tiger products? If there are multiple defendants, write the name of the defendant that this code applies to in the notes!
• Family_co_offender	Are they a family member of someone involved in illegal tiger trafficking? If there are multiple defendants, write the name of the defendant that this code applies to in the notes!
• Hunter	Did they hunt or trap tigers? If there are multiple defendants, write the name of the defendant that this code applies to in the notes!
• Keeper_live_animals	Do they keep live animals (e.g., as a pet)? If there are multiple defendants, write the name of the defendant that this code applies to in the notes!
• Middleman	Did they act as a middleman moving goods between people? If there are multiple defendants, write the name of the defendant that this code applies to in the notes!
• Other_offender_role	Did they have another role? If there are multiple defendants, write the name of the defendant that this code applies to in the notes!
• Possession	Were they in possession of tigers or tiger products? If there are multiple defendants, write the name of the defendant that this code applies to in the notes!
• Transporter	Did they transport tigers or tiger products? If there are multiple defendants, write the name of the defendant that this code applies to in the notes!
• Vendor	Did they sell or attempt to sell tigers or tiger products? If there are multiple defendants, write the name of the defendant that this code applies to in the notes!

APPENDIX B: COUNTRY SUMMARIES OF ANNUAL TOTALS

Table B.1: Definitions of Variables

Variable	Definition
Arrests and Prosecutions Year	The year of the seizure
Total criminal tiger seizures	Total number of incidents involving tiger commodities
Number of tiger seizures with arrests	Total number of seizure incidents in which one or more offenders were arrested
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % tiger seizures with arrests 	Total number of seizure incidents with arrests as a percentage of total incidents
Number of subjects arrested	Total number of suspects arrested across criminal tiger cases
Convictions	Total number of convictions cases that were prosecuted, resulting in penalties (imprisonment or fines). Excludes suspended sentences.
Pending/Ongoing prosecution	Total number of cases that are ongoing or pending prosecutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % cases prosecuted 	Total number of incidents that led to prosecutions as a percentage of number of incidents with arrests
Subject not caught or prosecuted	Total number of incidents in which no suspect was caught or prosecuted
Cases resulting in prison sentence	Total number of cases that resulted in a prison sentence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % cases resulting in prison sentence 	Total number of cases that resulted in a prison sentence as a percentage of total cases
Cases resulting in suspended sentence	Total number of cases in which a sentence was suspended
Number of subjects imprisoned	Total number of suspects whose sentence included prison time.
Sentence range (months)	Lowest and highest prison sentences recorded
Sentence length (total months)	The total length of all recorded prison sentences combined
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average sentence length (months) 	The average length of the recorded prison sentences per convicted person
Fine range (USD)	Lowest and highest fines recorded
Total fines (USD)	The total sum of all recorded fines combined
Average fines (USD)	The average amount of the recorded fines

CAMBODIA

Table B.2: Summary of tiger prosecution outcomes in Cambodia from 2019 to 2024.

Arrests and Prosecutions	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Total criminal tiger seizures	1	1	-	1	-	-	3
Number of tiger seizures with arrests	1	1	-	1	-	-	3
• % tiger seizures with arrests	100%	100%	-	100%	-	-	
Number of subjects arrested	2	1	-	1	-	-	4
Convictions	1	0	-	0	-	-	1
Pending/Ongoing prosecution	0	1	-	1	-	-	2
• % cases prosecuted	100%	0%	-	0%	-	-	
Cases resulting in prison sentence	1	0	-	0	-	-	1
• % cases resulting in prison sentence	100%	0%	-	0%	-	-	
Cases resulting in suspended sentence	0	0	-	0	-	-	0
Number of subjects imprisoned	2	0	-	0	-	-	2
Sentence range (months)	24	0	-	0	-	-	24
Sentence length (total months)	48	0	-	0	-	-	48
• Average sentence length (months)	24	0	-	0	-	-	24
Fine range (USD)	10,000	0	-	0	-	-	10,000
Total fines (USD)	20,000	0	-	0	-	-	20,000
Average fines (USD)	10,000	0	-	0	-	-	10,000

INDONESIA

Table B.3: Summary of tiger prosecution outcomes in Indonesia from 2019 to 2024.

Arrests and Prosecutions	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Total criminal tiger seizures	22	17	21	12	18	9	99
Number of tiger seizures with arrests	17	10	12	8	12	8	67
• % tiger seizures with arrests	77%	59%	57%	67%	67%	89%	
Number subjects arrested	29	22	25	13	18	16	123
Convictions	12	9	11	8	8	3	51
Pending/Ongoing prosecution	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
• % cases prosecuted	71%	90%	92%	100%	67%	38%	
Cases resulting in prison sentence	12	9	11	8	8	3	51
• % cases resulting in prison sentence	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Cases resulting in suspended sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number subjects imprisoned	22	20	24	13	12	5	96
Sentence range (months)	6-30	7-36	7-42	5-48	2-36	15-24	
Sentence length (total months)	358	420	545	354	278	93	2,048
• Average sentence length (months)	12	21	22	22	23	19	21
Fine range (USD)	300-5,981	300-5,981	3-29,905	60-5981	2,990-5,981	600-2,990	
Total fines (USD)	46,598	82,843	127,997	48,055	56,818	8,974	371,285
Average fines (USD)	2,219	4,142	5,333	3,697	5,165	1,795	3,867

LAO PDR

Table B.4: Summary of tiger prosecution outcomes in Lao PDR from 2019 to 2024.

Arrests and Prosecutions	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Total criminal tiger seizures	3	1	1	-	1	1	7
Number of tiger seizures with arrests	1	1	1	-	0	1	4
• % tiger seizures with arrests	33%	100%	100%	-	0	100%	
Number subjects arrested	1	1	1	-	0	3	6
Convictions	0	0	0	-	0	1	1
Pending/Ongoing prosecution	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
• % cases prosecuted	0%	0%	0%	-	0	100%	
Cases resulting in prison sentence	0	0	0	-	0	1	1
• % cases resulting in prison sentence	0%	0%	0%	-	0	100%	
Cases resulting in suspended sentence	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
Number subjects imprisoned	0	0	0	-	0	3	3
Sentence range (months)	0	0	0	-	0	60	60
Sentence length (total months)	0	0	0	-	0	180	180
• Average sentence length (months)	0	0	0	-	0	60	60
Fine range (USD)	0	0	0	-	0	55,000	55,000
Total fines (USD)	0	0	0	-	0	165,000	165,000
Average fines (USD)	0	0	0	-	0	55,000	55,000

MALAYSIA

Table B.5: Summary of tiger prosecution outcomes in Malaysia from 2019 to 2024.

Arrests and Prosecutions	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Total criminal tiger seizures	5	3	-	6	5	1	20
Number of tiger seizures with arrests	5	3	-	4	4	1	17
• % tiger seizures with arrests	100%	100%	-	67%	80%	100%	
Number subjects arrested	7	4	-	10	8	6	35
Convictions	1	0	-	2	2	0	5
Pending/Ongoing prosecution	0	0	-	0	0	0	0
• % cases prosecuted	20%	0%	-	50%	50%	0%	
Cases resulting in prison sentence	1	0	-	2	2	0	5
• % cases resulting in prison sentence	20%	0%	-	50%	67%	0%	
Cases resulting in suspended sentence	0	0	-	0	0	0	0
Cases in appeal	0	1	-	1	0	0	2
Cases resulting in acquittal	1	0	-	0	0	0	1
Number subjects imprisoned	2	0	-	4	3	0	9
Sentence range (months)	24	0	-	36-120	22-36	0	22-120
Sentence length (total months)	48	0	-	240	80	0	368
• Average sentence length (months)	24	0	-	60	27	0	40
Fine range (USD)	390,000	0	-	71,553-255,981	332,694	0	71,553-390,000
Total fines (USD)	390,000	0	-	494,487	332,694	0	1,022,181
Average fines (USD)	195,000	0	-	123,622	110,898	0	113,575

MYANMAR

Table B.6: Summary of tiger prosecution outcomes in Myanmar from 2019 to 2024.

Arrests and Prosecutions	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Total criminal tiger seizures	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
Number of tiger seizures with arrests	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
• % tiger seizures with arrests	100%	-	-	-	-	100%	
Number subjects arrested	1	-	-	-	-	4	5
Convictions	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Pending/Ongoing prosecution	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
• % cases prosecuted	0%	-	-	-	-	0%	
Cases resulting in prison sentence	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
• % cases resulting in prison sentence	0%	-	-	-	-	0%	
Cases resulting in suspended sentence	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Cases resulting in acquittal	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Number subjects imprisoned	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Sentence range (months)	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Sentence length (total months)	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
• Average sentence length (months)	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Fine range (USD)	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Total fines (USD)	0	-	-	-	-	0	0
Average fines (USD)	0	-	-	-	-	0	0

THAILAND

Table B.7: Summary of tiger prosecution outcomes in Thailand from 2019 to 2024.

Arrests and Prosecutions	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Total criminal tiger seizures	1	3	4	5	3	5	21
Number of tiger seizures with arrests	1	2	4	5	2	4	18
• % tiger seizures with arrests	100%	67%	100%	100%	67%	80%	
Number subjects arrested	4	4	5	13	4	6	36
Convictions	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Pending/Ongoing prosecution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
• % cases prosecuted	0%	0%	25%	20%	50%	0%	
Cases resulting in prison sentence	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
• % cases resulting in prison sentence	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	
Cases resulting in suspended sentence	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Cases resulting in acquittal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number subjects imprisoned/fined	0	0	1	5	2	0	8
Sentence range (months)	0	0	0	57	0	0	57
Sentence length (total months)	0	0	0	285	0	0	285
• Average sentence length (months)	0	0	0	57	0	0	57
Fine range (USD)	0	0	771	170	771	0	1,712
Total fines (USD)	0	0	771	850	1,542	0	3,163
Average fines (USD)	0	0	771	170	771	0	214

VIET NAM

Table B.8: Summary of tiger prosecution outcomes in Viet Nam from 2019 to 2024.

Arrests and Prosecutions	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
Total criminal tiger seizures	15	6	18	20	27	21	107
Number of tiger seizures with arrests	14	6	17	19	24	21	101
• % tiger seizures with arrests	93%	100%	94%	95%	89%	100%	93%
Number subjects arrested	21	7	27	33	44	29	161
Convictions	14	5	17	18	20	15	89
Pending/Ongoing prosecution	0	0	0	0	5	6	11
• % cases prosecuted	100%	83%	100%	95%	83%	71%	88%
Cases resulting in prison sentence	9	2	9	10	12	9	51
• % cases resulting in prison sentence	64%	40%	53%	56%	60%	60%	57%
Cases resulting in suspended sentence	5	3	7	8	7	3	33
Number subjects imprisoned	14	2	11	15	17	10	69
Sentence range (months)	12-72	24	9-288	9-66	12-66	7-60	7-288
Sentence length (total months)	574	48	619	330	488	211	2,270
• Average sentence length (months)	41	24	56	22	29	21	33
Fine range (USD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total fines (USD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average fines (USD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX C: INDONESIA COURT CASE SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Table C.1: Courts where cases were prosecuted in Indonesia.

	Province	Court Name	Court Type	Number of Cases	
Java	East Java	Jember District Court	District Court	1	
	Jakarta	Jakarta High Court	High Court	1	
	West Java	Bale Bandung District Court	District Court	1	
		Bandung District Court	District Court	1	
		Cikarang District Court	District Court	1	
Kalimantan	South Kalimantan	Banjarbaru District Court	District Court	1	
Sumatra	Aceh	Blangkejeren District Court	District Court	1	
		Blangpidie District Court	District Court	1	
		Idi District Court	District Court	1	
		Kuala Simpang District Court	District Court	2	
		Kutacane District Court	District Court	1	
		Lhoksukon District Court	District Court	2	
		Simpang Tiga Redelong District Court	District Court	2	
		Bengkulu	Arga Makmur District Court	District Court	3
			Bengkulu District Court	District Court	5
	Mukomuko District Court		District Court	1	
	Jambi	Jambi District Court	District Court	1	
		Jambi High Court	High Court	1	
		Sarolangun District Court	District Court	3	
	Lampung	Sungai Penuh District Court	District Court	1	
		Kalianda District Court	District Court	3	
		Liwa District Court	District Court	2	
		Tanjung Karang District Court	District Court	2	
		North Sumatra	Lubuk Pakam District Court	District Court	1
	Mandailing Natal District Court		District Court	1	
	Medan District Court		District Court	2	
	Padangsidempuan District Court		District Court	2	
	Stabat District Court		District Court	2	
	Riau		Pekanbaru High Court	High Court	1
			Pelalawan District Court	District Court	6
		Rengat District Court	District Court	1	
		Teluk Kuantan District Court	District Court	1	
	West Sumatra	Koto Baru District Court	District Court	1	
Padang High Court		High Court	1		
Padang Panjang District Court		District Court	1		
Pasaman Barat District Court		District Court	1		

Figure C.1: Relationship between actors (defendants, co-offenders, and witnesses) and cases. Clusters of cases related to the same seizure incident form a Series. Note that some Series involve multiple actors and defendants, while others are simple with a single defendant.

Roles

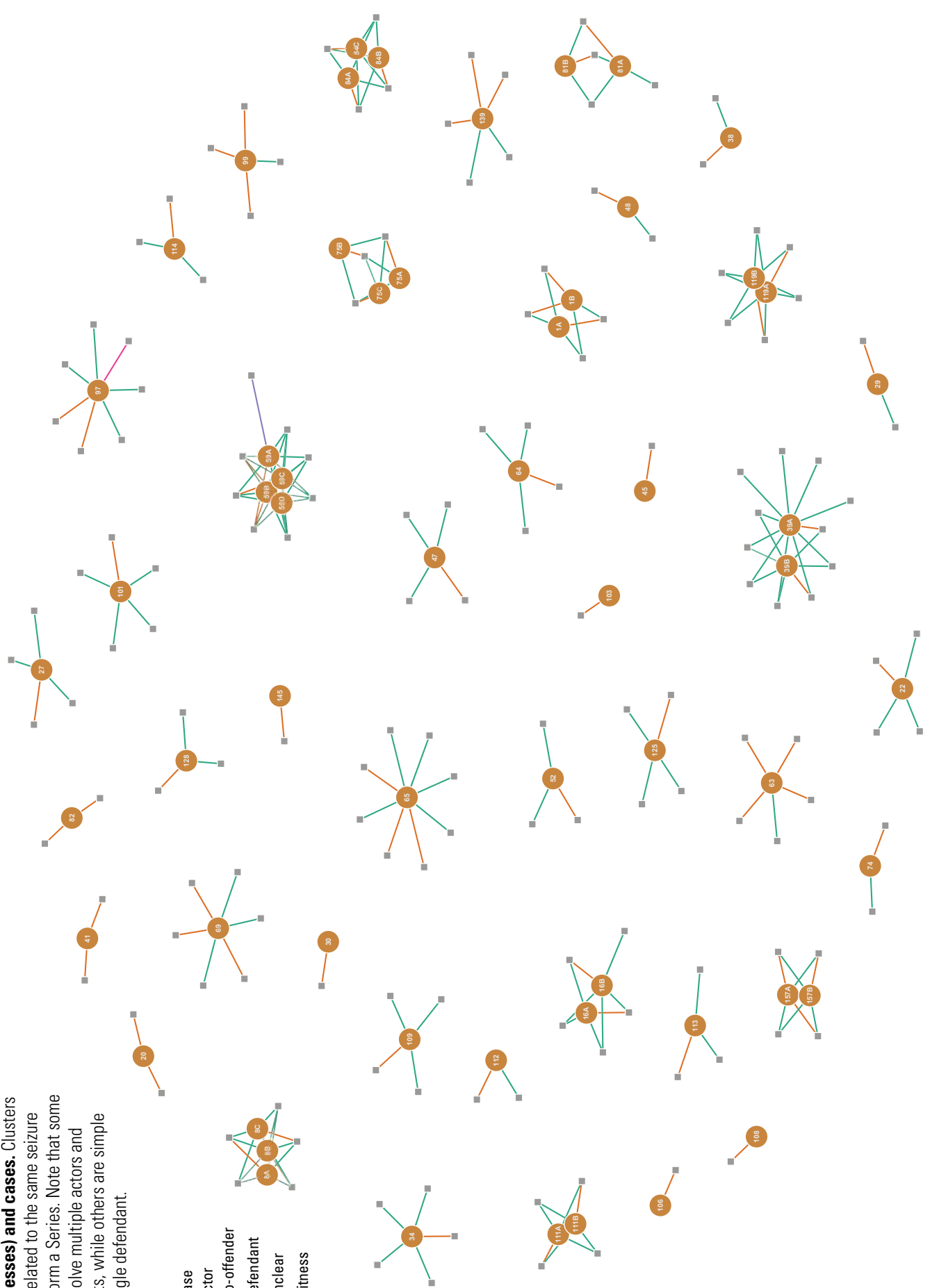
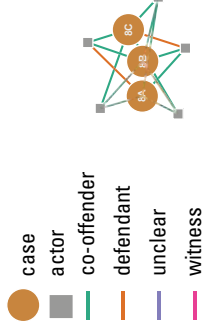


Figure C.2. Timeline of events from the date of the crime through to the final sentencing.

Each line represents a separate case, and each dot represents an event in that case. Note that some of the long periods between the date of the crime and detection are related to the first date when some acquired tiger parts or derivatives.

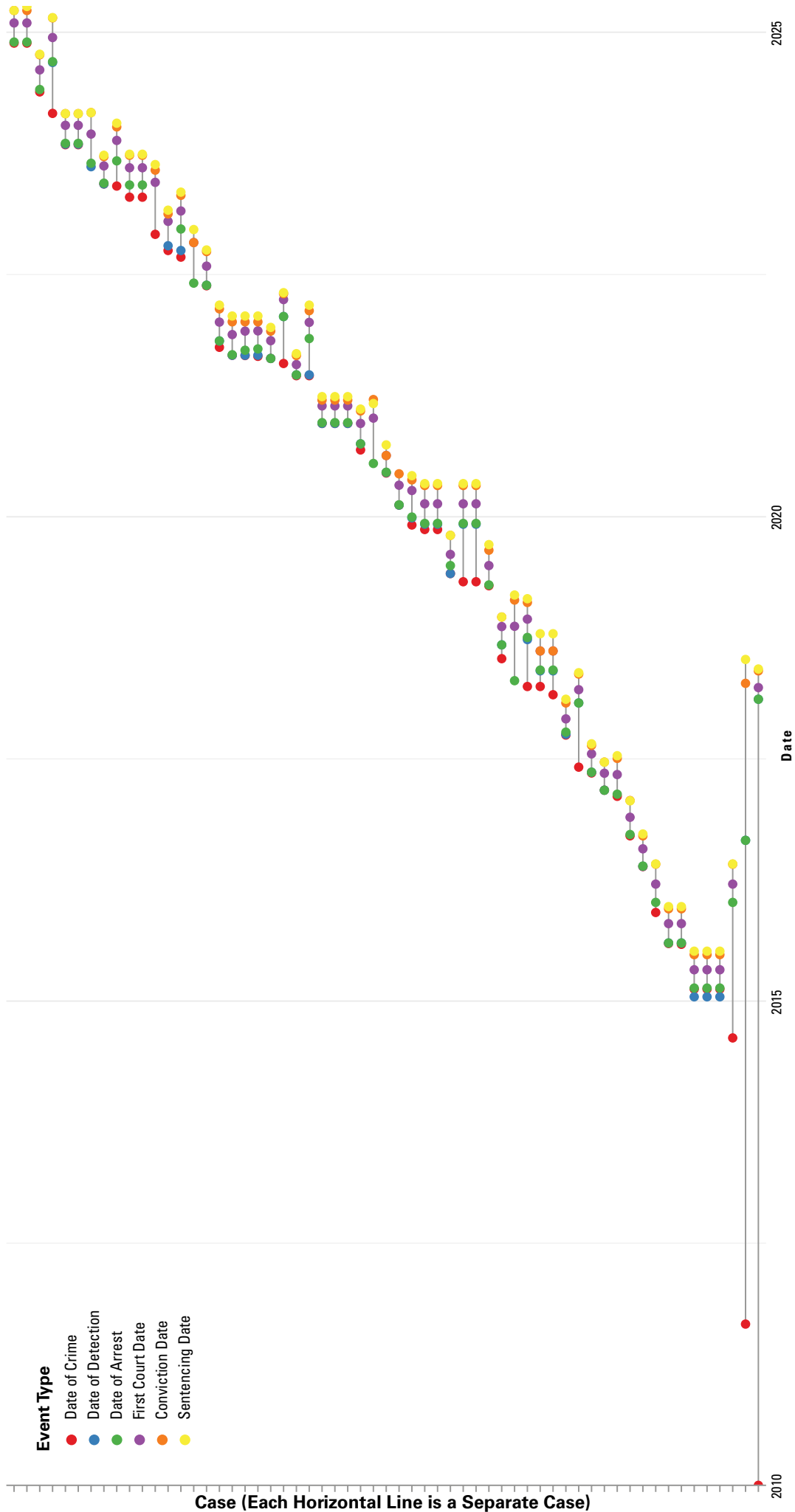


Table C.2: Average number of days between different stages of the judicial process (Case-level)

	Crime	Arrest	1st Court Date	Conviction	Sentencing
Crime	0	142 (min 0, max 2964)	177 (min 42, max 3008)	264 (min 66, max 3071)	280 (min 83, max 3078)
Arrest		0	75 (min 39, max 205)	132 (min 63, max 592)	145 (min 80, max 682)
1st Court Date			0	48 (min 0, max 99)	60 (min 26, max 118)
Conviction				0	13 (min 0, max 90)

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