

CATCA Environmental  
and Wildlife Society



# 2024-2025

## E-commerce of Canadian Rattlesnakes

# REPORT

**CEWS**



**NOTE:** Most of the pictures in this report are taken from classified ads, social media ads, and specialized websites found during this monitoring, for the strict purpose of education about the trade in Canadian rattlesnakes in North America. These are snapshots of the advertisements which are needed for this report. We must use the full ad, not just a photo from the ad, or its essential part.

According to the Canadian Fair Dealing Provision, for the sole purpose of research and education, Section 29 of the Copyright Act of Canada (research, private study, and education) does not infringe copyright.

CEWS is a wildlife conservation registered non-profit society that doesn't profit from these snapshots of wildlife e-commerce.

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Email: [catcaews@gmail.com](mailto:catcaews@gmail.com)

Website: [www.c-ews.org](http://www.c-ews.org)



Photo: C. oreganus Connor Long

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## Acknowledges

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**CEWS is what it has been for 38 years, thanks to you all!**

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# Report on the e-commerce of Canadian rattlesnakes (2024-2025)

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## Introduction

Rattlesnakes have been venerated for thousands of years by Mesoamerican cultures, especially by the Aztecs, the Mayans, and Native American peoples. Still, they have also been demonized for centuries across the Americas and North America. Rattlesnakes are often overlooked victims of the wildlife trafficking and trade.

The rattlesnakes are not particularly charismatic—especially given their fierce look—which has made them easy targets and victims of shady beliefs, superstition, ignorance, and religious zealots, as well as hunters and poachers.

In the early 20th century, Christian preachers in the Southern states of the US began handling rattlesnakes in rituals, so that if the handler got bitten, it meant he/she “lacked the true spirit”.

Since the mid-20th century, rattlesnake roundups have become popular in the mid- and Southern US, where rattlesnakes are displayed, killed, eaten, and sold. The aim was (and still is) to get rid of “rattlesnake pests” and to destroy and eradicate them from their area.

Most roundups target the Western diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus atrox*), though some events target Prairie rattlesnakes (*C. viridis*), Timber rattlesnakes (*C. horridus*), and the Eastern diamondback rattlesnake (*C. adamanteus*).[1] [2] In Texas, up to 125,000 snakes could have been removed annually from the wild during the 1990s.[3] Poaching and roundups have been devastating to Timber rattlesnake populations in the Northeastern United States.[4] Some groups are concerned that local Western *diamondback rattlesnake* populations may be declining rapidly, even if the global population is unaffected.[5] [6]

Widely exploited and completely misunderstood, the beneficial rattlesnakes continue to be the victims of a never-ending witch hunt, extensively poached for profit.

## References

- 1, 5 -Arena, Phillip C.; et al. (1995). "Rattlesnake Round-ups". In Knight, Richard L.; Gutzwiller, Kevin J. (eds.). *Wildlife and recreationists: coexistence through management and research*. Island Press. pp. 313–322.
- 2.-Fitch, H.S. 2003. Reproduction in the rattlesnakes of the Sharon Springs, Kansas Roundup. *Kansas Journal of Herpetology*
- 3, 4- Fitzgerald, L. A., and C. W. Painter. 2000. Rattlesnake Commercialization: Long-Term Trends, Issues, and Implications for Conservation. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 28:235–253.
- 5.- "American Society of Ichthyologists and herpetologists position paper on Rattlesnake roundups"





## Background

CEWS (CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society, formerly known as CATCA) has been conducting formal e-commerce monitoring at the international level since 2007.

CATCA was trained by PTOPI Salamandra Poland, a member of CEEWEB (Central and Eastern European WEB), a coalition of NGOs monitoring wildlife e-commerce. They have been formally assessing their e-commerce for two decades. CEWS is the only non-European animal conservation NGO doing this formal monitoring. Formally, it means that our team analyzes each advertisement in detail to extract as much information as possible on similar sales of endangered and protected CITES species, including the number of specimens (live, products, and derivatives) available.

Each one of our formal e-commerce monitoring takes about 18 to 24+ months, with a minimum of 12-15 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We do not base our monitoring on randomly searching data numbers of a specific species or name (e.g. ivory), and “sale” in Google, Bing, Yahoo, or any other basic search engines, which only gather a vast number of “specimens” found, without first checking each add and specimen or item thoroughly, as that instant obtained data tends to be quite wrong and misleading, providing a random combination of items with the same (or similar) name but based in colors, names, materials, with most of results not been the items intended to be searched initially.

For the minimum estimated number of specimens found (for live ones, we check the sellers profile, communications and ads), and make an estimate based on the smaller amount of live specimens reproduction numbers per species per year. For products and derivatives, we count the numbers available on the ads, plus we check the history of the sellers, to calculate how many they may sell a month and we take the minimum amount as possible. (e.g. un seller is selling 200 bottles of rattlesnake pills on one advertisement, but on other ads sell more of different amount or weight, so we calculate 500+, but in reality it could be 10 times or more the real amount.

Our CEWS results may not yield large, flashy numbers, but they are as accurate as possible given the available real numbers. Since 2007, CEWS has found thousands of live endangered wild animals, ivory, protected wildlife derivatives, and products sold illegally worldwide worth millions of USD.





## Results by species

### *Crotalus horridus*

| <i>Crotalus horridus</i> |                |          |          |           |                        |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------|----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Specimen Category        | Classified Ads | Websites | Facebook | Specimens | Other: Bottles / Vials |
| Alive                    | 16             |          | 5        | 21        |                        |
| Skin / Bones             | 11             |          |          |           |                        |
| Meat                     |                | 3        |          | 32        |                        |
| Derivatives              |                | 10       |          |           |                        |
| Pharmaceutical           | 96             | 12       |          |           | 4,364+                 |
| Total                    | 123            | 25       | 5        | 53        | 4,364+                 |

CEWS detected 15 classified ads with 21 live specimens, 11 ads with skins and bones, and 3 websites for meat (US and Canada) with an estimate of 32 specimens. We found 10 derivatives, 96 ads of pharmaceutical products in Canada, US, and Mexico, and 12 websites selling homeopathic products with a minimum estimate of 4,364 vials and bottles.

We detected 116 ads of *C. horridus* on eBay, but we still have to monitor and check each one.

We also found *C. horridus* products in Mexico, France, Spain, Puerto Rico, the US mainland, the UK, and India.

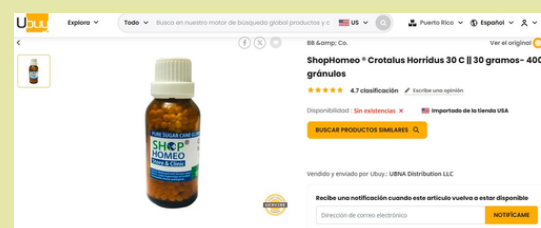
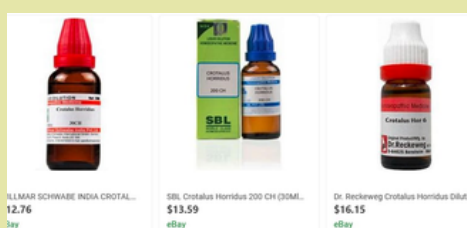
CEWS observed that the most searched for of these 4 rattlesnake species online is *Crotalus horridus*.

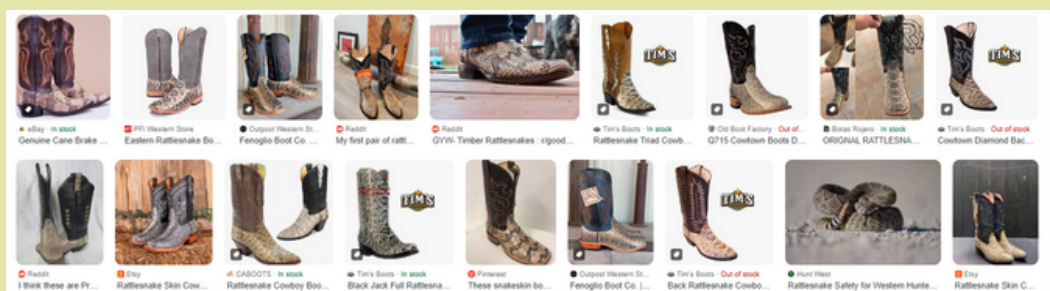
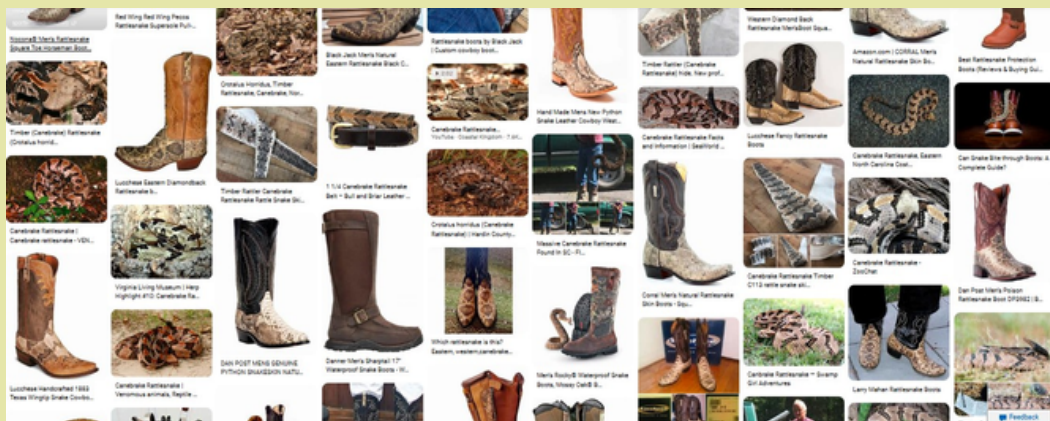
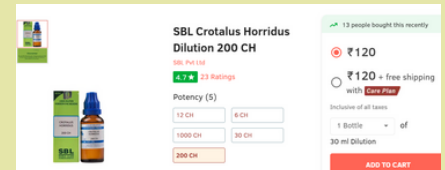
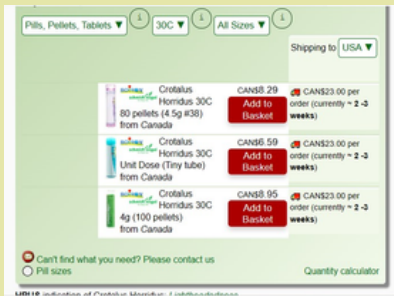
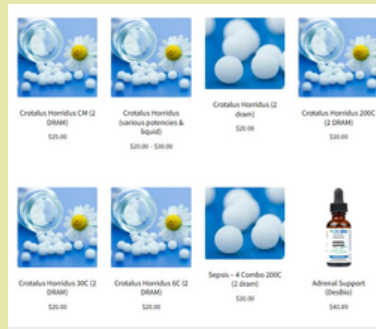
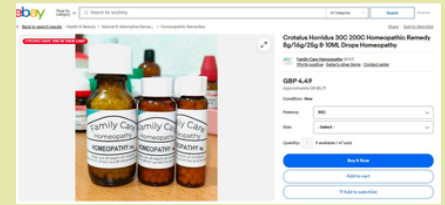
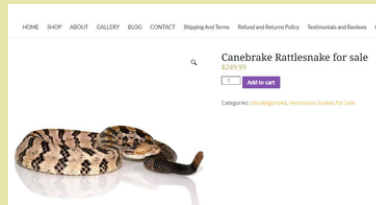
We found rattlesnakes alive, as products and their derivatives in Canada, Mexico and the US. One usual way to use the *Crotalus horridus* and several other species of rattlesnakes in Mexico, is in the form of oil sold as meat, soap, powder, gel, lotion, pills, dry and diluted solutions for pseudo curations and “miracle” cure to ailments that range from photosensitivity, headaches, infectious diseases, cancer support, rheumatism, malarial fever, malaria, vomiting, diarrhea, menopause, depression, constipation, to testicle atrophy and many more ailments.

There is at least one homeopathic laboratory in India that makes and sells worldwide *C. horridus* pills in various concentrated solutions. There is also a pharmaceutical laboratory in France that uses derivatives of this species as a lyophilized powder for its venom.

Leather for boots, shoes, jackets, ties, wallets, handbags, vests, etc., is widely available on classifieds and store websites in Mexico. Live *C. Horridus* is also the species most commonly found in reptile, snake, and exotic pet stores, as well as on Facebook private groups in the US and Mexico.

CEWS monitored the e-commerce of these species across 45 Facebook reptile/snake groups in Canada and the US, Facebook sellers and breeders, and classified ads from reptile websites.





CEWS observed lots of advertisements of *C. horridus* in Bing and Google search engines

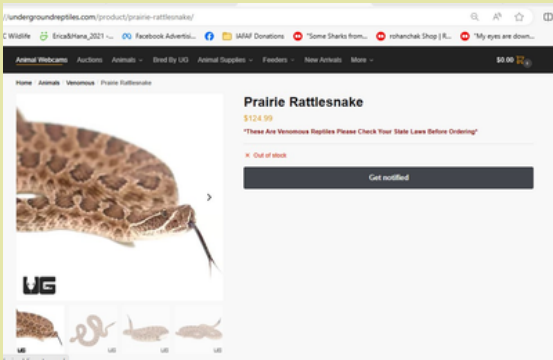
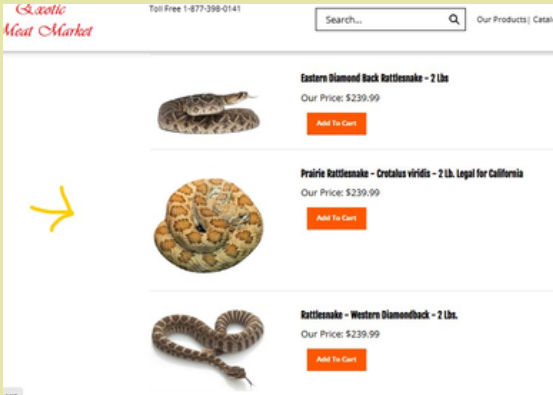
Crotalus viridis

| Crotalus viridis  |                |          |          |           |                        |
|-------------------|----------------|----------|----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Specimen Category | Classified Ads | Websites | Facebook | Specimens | Other: Bottles / Vials |
| Alive             | 4              |          | 1        | 49        |                        |
| Skin / Bones      | 2              |          |          | 3         |                        |
| Meat              |                | 1        |          | 20        |                        |
| Derivatives       |                | 10       |          |           |                        |
| Pharmaceutical    |                |          |          |           | 1,500+                 |
| Total             | 6              | 11       | 1        | 72        | 1,500+                 |

CEWS detected 49 live specimens on Facebook and classified ads. In 2 classified ads, we found 3 *C. viridis* bones for sale. on one website in the US, they were selling their meat, and in a laboratory in France, with a minimum equivalent of 5,500 vials or bottles, which could easily be up to 20,000 or more.



Facebook





## Crotalus Oreganus

| Crotalus oreganus |                |          |          |           |                        |
|-------------------|----------------|----------|----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Specimen Category | Classified Ads | Websites | Facebook | Specimens | Other: Bottles / Vials |
| Alive             | 5              |          | 1        | 8         |                        |
| Skin / Bones      | 1              |          |          | 1         |                        |
| Meat              |                |          |          |           |                        |
| Derivatives       |                |          |          |           |                        |
| Pharmaceutical    |                | 1        |          |           | 1,500+                 |
| Total             | 6              | 1        | 1        | 9         | 1,500+                 |

CEWS found 2 classified ads in the US, 3 in ads in Germany, and one in Facebook, with a total of 8 live *C. oreganus* specimens.

We observed 1 classified ad with skin, and one France laboratory website where they use their venom. 1,500+ is the very minimum estimated of vials available.



Facebook

Cart is empty

[Pure Venoms](#)
[Toxins & Plant Substances](#)
[Other Products and Services](#)
[About us](#)
[Contact us](#)
[New account](#)
[Worldwide Distributors](#)

[Home](#)
[Venoms](#)
[Snakes](#)
[Crotalidae](#)
[Crotalus](#)

Venom of  
*Crotalus oreganus oreganus* (Campbell & Lamar 2004)  
(Syn. - *Crotalus viridis oreganus*)

Copyright © Jett Miller

**SNAKE VENOMS**

Product ID

L881

Name

*Crotalus oreganus oreganus*

Common Name(s)

Northern Pacific Rattlesnake

Origin

Any Origin

Purity

>90%

Form

Lymphoid powder

Packaging

In vacuum sealed glass vials, in secured parcel

Taxonomic Classification

Class : Reptilia

**Sell Venomous snakes**  
**Crotalus, Bitis, Naja,.... (Bestandsverkleinerung)**

For Sale  
 1.1 **Crotalus oreganus** NZ20

## *Sistrurus catenatus*

| <i>Sistrurus catenatus</i> |                |          |          |           |                        |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------|----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Specimen Category          | Classified Ads | Websites | Facebook | Specimens | Other: Bottles / Vials |
| Alive                      | 6              |          | 1        | 7         |                        |
| Skin / Bones               | 1              |          |          | 1         |                        |
| Meat                       |                |          |          |           |                        |
| Derivatives                |                |          |          |           |                        |
| Pharmaceutical             |                | 1        |          |           | 2,000+                 |
| Total                      | 7              | 1        | 1        | 8         | 2,000+                 |

CEWS detected 3 live specimens of *S. catenatus* alive: 2 in classified ads and one on Facebook. We also found today, as I finished the report, 4 alive for sale in advertisements in Germany. A pharmacological laboratory in France uses many live specimens to extract their venom. This is the very minimum of vials estimated, but it could easily be 5 or 10 times more.



Photo: *S. catenatus*, St. Louis Zoo

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Product ID     | L1264  |
| Name           | <i>Sistrurus catenatus</i>                       |
| Common Name(s) | Eastern Massasauga                               |
| Origin         | USA  |
| Purity         | >99%   |
| Form           | Lyophilized powder                               |
| Packaging      | In vacuum sealed glass vials, in secured parcel. |

Offer Venomous snakes

### *Sistrurus catenatus* und *miliarius barbouri*

1 week ago - Wormstadt

Hallo wegen umzug verkaufe ich meine 3 gruppe catenatus 1.0

### Sell Venomous snakes

#### *Sistrurus catenatus* tergeminus

1.3 zuchtgrupe *Sistrurus catenatus* tergeminus alle drei sind verpaart mit terrarium 150 60 60

3 years ago    Bartłomiej Mucha

45881    Gelsenkirchen

Ads of *S. catenatus* for sale in Germany

## Other results

CEWS found in these 5 weeks that the most common rattlesnake species found on e-commerce sites in North America is the Western Diamondback (*Crotalus atrox*). This species, followed by the Eastern Diamondback (*Crotalus adamanteus*), is overexploited in every possible way for profit, as it is commonly used for meat, leather, body parts, and taxidermy worldwide.

Additionally, we found 14 ads in Mexico featuring skins of 162 rattlesnakes. Most are Western diamondback rattlesnakes.

At this time, CEWS didn't have enough time to capture all the rattlesnake data from eBay, Etsy, Amazon, and more.

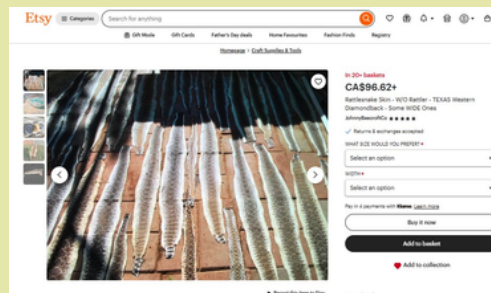
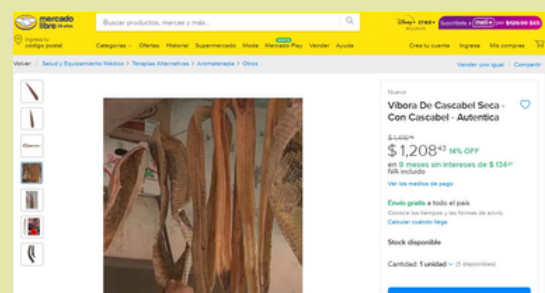
Our final report will be ready in 2025 for the CITES CoP20.

## Challenges

CEWS found many Facebook groups with hundreds of posts, but we lacked the time to check them.

We were initially declined from joining them with our new fake Facebook profile, created especially for this monitoring. Weeks later, when we were approved, there was not enough time to check them all. But we will continue to monitor them.

### Classified ads in Ebay, Mercado Libre and Etsy



CEWS found this information from the NGO ASP and we thought it may be interesting to share it with you

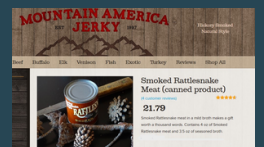
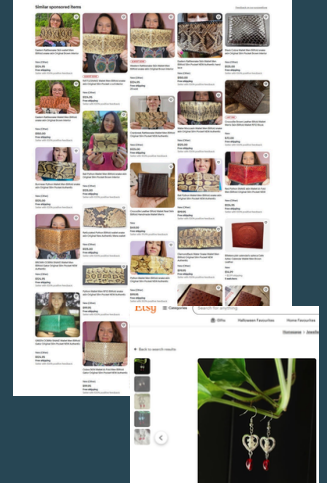
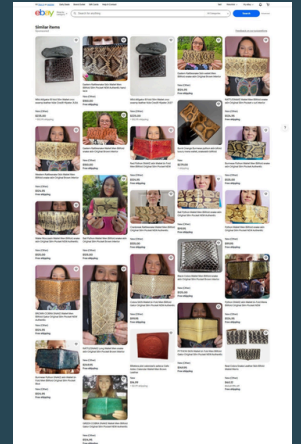
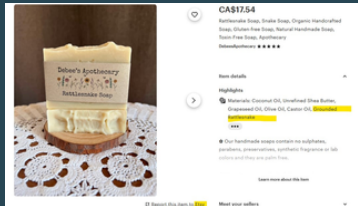
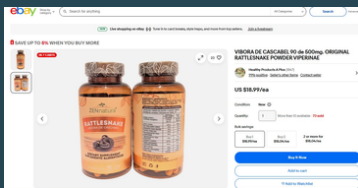
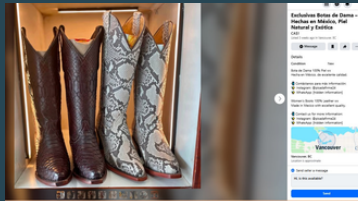
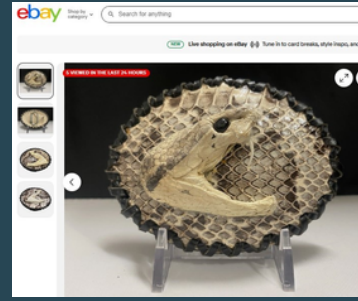
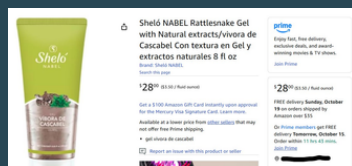
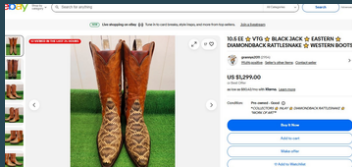
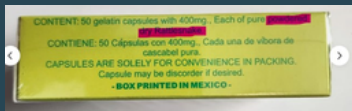
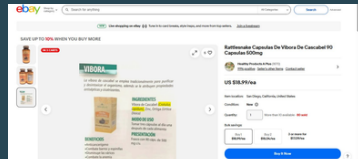
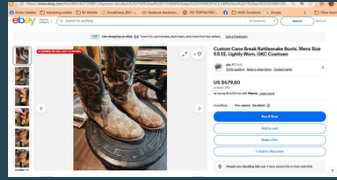
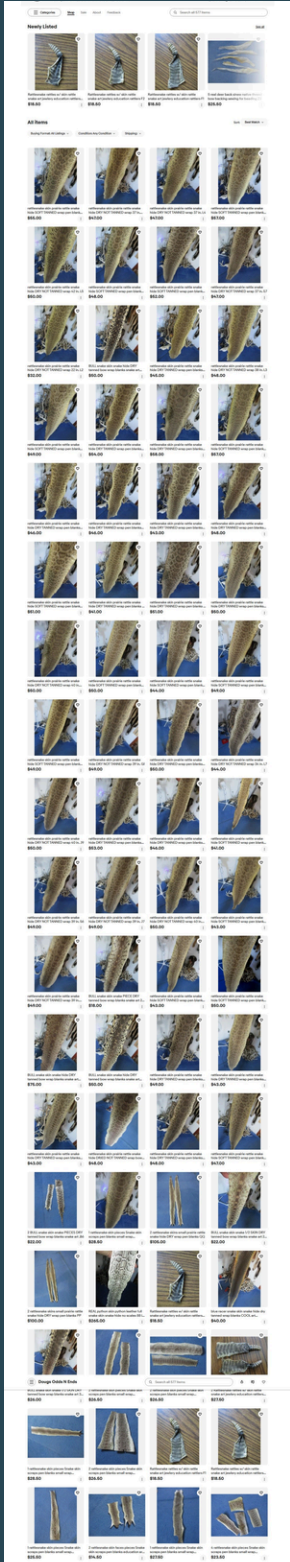


Where Does Your Rattlesnake Meat Come From?  
– Rattlesnake Roundups

<https://www.rattlesnakeroundups.com>



# 2025 monitoring results



## eBay

CEWS found an alarming number of rattlesnake items, including skin, bones, rattles, and whole rattlesnakes, on the platform eBay.

But there are also many pill bottles with rattlesnake products and soaps.

Nowadays, there are so many rattlesnake products, especially for muscle pain. Still, it was interesting to find that many companies now use menthol and some herbs instead of the original version, commonly using rattlesnake oil or rattlesnake powder. Still, many real rattlesnake products for acne or skin issues are deceptive, claiming to be “vegan”, “herbal,” or “cruelty-free”, yet the ingredients list real rattlesnake oil, which comes from snake fat. This is mainly in the US, but also from Mexico, India, Austria, France, and other countries.

Sadly, in Mexico, it is still quite common to find multiple products made of real rattlesnakes used in phony and fictitious medicine that supposedly work as a miracle against acne, cancers and everything in between.

This is what we found: CEWS checked each one of over 2,000 rattlesnake advertisements on eBay.com alone. Disturbingly, many of the ads featured real rattlesnake products or their derivatives.

### Unspecified rattlesnake species

| Skin, rattles, bones & whole body | Soaps | Pill bottles | # ads |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| 958+                              |       |              | 117   |
|                                   | 5540+ |              | 31    |
|                                   |       | 4380+        | 15    |

There are many pseudo-medical bottles of *Crotalus horridus* capsules/tablets for sale on eBay.com. The prices vary from \$8 to \$35 USD per bottle. CEWS also found many bones sold by the bunch, or by dead snake, in jewelry, decorations, whole animals in taxonomy, or inside resin.

| Specimen Category                  | Ads | Specimens | Other: Bottles / Vials |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----------|------------------------|
| Alive                              |     |           |                        |
| Skin, bones, rattles and full body | 7   | 53+       |                        |
| Meat                               |     |           |                        |
| Derivatives                        |     |           |                        |
| Pharmaceutical                     | 41  | Unknown   | 6800+                  |

In eBay we also found several rattlesnake species (Not endemic to Canada)

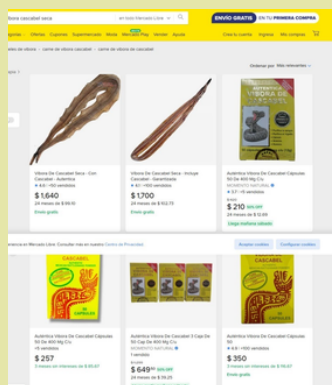
| Species   | Ads | Soap | Skin,bones rattles & bodies | Other: Bottles / Vials |
|---|-----|------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Eastern diamond<br/><i>Crotalus adamanteus</i></b> | 31  |      | 183                         |                        |
| <b>Western diamond<br/><i>Crotalus atrox</i></b>      | 38  |      | 294                         |                        |
| <b>South American<br/><i>Crotalus durissus</i></b>    | 1   | 300+ |                             |                        |
| <b>Rock rattlesnake<br/><i>Crotalus lepidus</i></b>   | 11  |      |                             | 7500+                  |

The numbers of bottles and vials are calculated based on the minimum available, taking into account all the different dosages and the different numbers of pills and drops sold. If it is an individual selling them, we take the exact amount available, but if it is a pharmacy or a laboratory making them, we have to calculate. It is most likely that these numbers are in the thousands of bottles for the pharmacies and laboratories.

| Species                         | Ads | Soap  | Skin,bones rattles & bodies | Other: Bottles / Vials |
|---------------------------------|-----|-------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| <b><i>Crotalus Horridus</i></b> | 112 | 3540+ | 208                         | 15,336+                |
| <b><i>Crotalus viridis</i></b>  | 59  |       | 219                         |                        |

## Mercado Libre

There were 15 advertisements with a minimum of 357 skins and 4 ads selling rattlesnake pills, with 300-500+ rattlesnake pill bottles



- ACNE
- ALERGIAS
- ANEMIA
- ANGINAS
- ASMA
- ARTRITIS
- COLITIS
- CONJUNTIVITIS
- CALCULOS BILIARES
- CALCULOS RENALES
- CANCER
- CIATICA
- CIRROSIS
- CISTITIS
- HEMORROIDES
- HINCHAZONES
- DIABETES
- DIARREA
- ENFERMEDADES VENEREAS
- ERUPCIONES
- HEZQUIMOS
- QUEBRADURAS
- SABINA
- TUMORES
- IMPOTENCIA
- LEUCEMIA
- LUMBAGO
- MAREOS
- PIORREA
- REUMAS
- TORCEDURAS
- ULCERAS

Se recomiendan. 2 capsulas diarias, una por la mañana y una por la noche

De Click en el enlace de abajo para mas informacion sobre la venta de las capsulas.



## Amazon

CEWS found that Amazon.com has few advertisements but sells a large number of items. Rattlesnake soaps are quite popular.

| Species                  | Ads | Soap   | Skin,bones<br>rattles &<br>bodies | Other:<br>Bottles /<br>Vials |
|--------------------------|-----|--------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Unknown                  | 11  | 10,850 |                                   |                              |
| <i>Crotalus durissus</i> | 1   |        |                                   | 500                          |


## Fauna Classifieds, Terraristik.com, and Species Trader

CEWS found these websites selling live specimens of *Sistrurus* and *Crotalus* species.

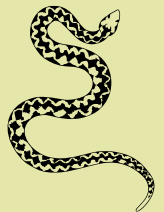
The sellers were mainly found in the US and in Europe. Many of the specimens were wild-caught.

**Naja, Crotalus, sistrurus, aspidelaps**  
 4 weeks ago - saarländ  
 For Hamm

1.1 naja nivea NZ20 ( 400€ )  
 1.0 Sistrurus barbouri NZ23 ( 100€ )  
 2.1 Sistrurus tergeminus NZ 18 + 9 NZ25 ( 350€ )  
 1.1 Crotalus cerastes NZ 19 + 5 Jungtiere von 1.8.25 ( 500€ for all )  
 1.1 Aspidelaps scutatus NZ 17 ( 450€ )  
 1.1 Trimerurus insularis blue NZ 22 ( 500€ )  
 1.1 Aspidites ramsayi NZ12 ( 800€ )  
 0.3 T. Albolabris ( each 80€ )



| Rattlesnake species                   | Ads | Specimens<br>alive |
|---------------------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| <i>Sistrurus catenatus terminus</i>   | 2   | 5+                 |
| <i>Sistrurus catenatus</i>            | 18  | 45+                |
| <i>Sistrurus miliarius</i>            | 4   | 13+                |
| <i>Sistrurus m barbouri</i>           | 3   | 5+                 |
| <i>Sistrurus tergeminus</i>           | 2   | 11+                |
| <i>Sistrurus tergeminus edwardsii</i> | 3   | 6+                 |
| <i>Crotalus viridis nuntius</i>       | 2   | 3+                 |
| <i>Crotalus atrox</i>                 | 2   | 3+                 |
| <i>Crotalus pyrrhus</i>               | 2   | 2+                 |
| <i>Crotalus lepidus klauberi</i>      | 2   | 2+                 |
| <i>Crotalus cerastes</i>              | 1   | 6+                 |
| <i>Crotalus adamanteus</i>            | 1   | 1                  |
| <i>Crotalus aquilus</i>               | 1   | 1                  |
| <i>Crotalus morulus</i>               | 1   | 2+                 |
| <i>Crotalus horridus</i>              | 16  | 25+                |
| <i>Crotalus oreganus</i>              | 17  | 30+                |
| <i>Crotalus viridis</i>               | 18  | 26+                |



## Facebook

CEWS found 16 pages and this time we were accepted in a couple of snake groups. The results of live rattlesnakes were: 1 *Crotalus ravus*, 10+ *Crotalus lepidus*, 3 *Sistrurus catenatus* and 2+ specimens of other species of *Crotalus*. We found and estimated 147+ specimens sold as skin, bones and whole bodies. There are also stores selling unsettling hybrid mixtures of rattlesnakes with other wild animals, as well as unusual items more often found on Etsy, including jewelry made of bones, rattles and heads. We also found several ads for rattlesnake leather items openly sold in Canada.

## Instagram

We found at least 3 skins from unknown species of rattlesnakes.

## Tiktok

There were 2 skins for sale from unknown species of rattlesnakes

## Whatsapp

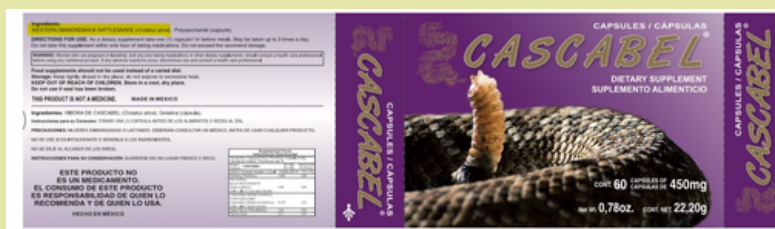
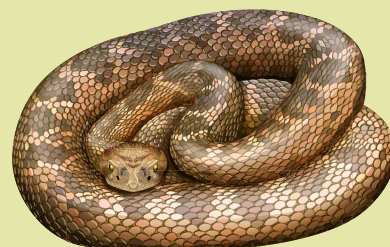
A minimum of 500+ bottles with rattlesnake pills

## Online stores

CEWS detected one company selling 45,000 + bottles of *Crotalus lepidus* pills (minimum estimated number of 30 potencies available in 3 different sizes); one selling a minimum of 7,500 bottles of *Crotalus durissus* in the US, and a similar number was found in Canada with a minimum estimated of 7,500 bottles of pills made of *Crotalus durissus*, another one of a company selling Austrian pills made of *Crotalus lepidus*, and a very minimum of 45,000 pills calculated. We discovered 3 more stores selling rattlesnake pills, with estimated bottle counts ranging from 200+ to 1,500+. each, but the number could be much higher. Some of the pills found are made in India.

CEWS detected 4 more stores selling a minimum of 200 rattlesnake soaps to 5,000+. Fruugo Canada was selling at least 30+ rattlesnake soaps.

Rattlesnake meat was on 4 different websites in the US and at a witch store.



## Conclusions

- CEWS found that these 4 Canadian rattlesnake species are popular on classified websites in Canada and the US, in platforms such as Etsy, eBay, Mercado Libre, and many other classified websites, and social media.
- About 90-95% of the ads that sell rattlesnakes are NOT LEGAL, do not provide CITES documents or any proper papers. A few sellers are aware that they cannot ship live specimens between Canadian provinces or US states, but many do not care about the regulations. Such violations are more common in the US and Mexico.
- In Canada and the US, the hunting licenses and regulations vary by province and state, but in Canada, they offer more protection to rattlesnakes than in the US. Anyhow, such laws are not enough to protect them from being taken from the wild, sold alive, their parts and derivatives, by the many people who violate the law, to profit and exploit them.
- *Crotalus horridus* is the most exploited species among these 4 rattlesnake species.
- The most exploited rattlesnakes that we found (not Canadian) are the Western diamondback rattlesnake and the Eastern diamondback rattlesnake. We detected lots of ads for skin and other products in Canada, the US, and Mexico. The same is true in Europe, where rattlesnakes are widely sold alive, and their products and derivatives are available online.
- Most of the live rattlesnakes found are wild-caught.
- Several rattlesnake products and derivatives do not specify the rattlesnake species. Most of them are made in Mexico and sold in Canada and the US. In Mexico, such products are commonly found online, in pharmacies, and in natural stores.
- On Facebook, many reptile sellers use special words and abbreviations to openly sell and/or exchange rattlesnakes and other wildlife, to pass undetected by the Facebook algorithm. The Facebook META algorithm has proven many times over to be inefficient at censoring and blocking such ads, as it more often than not censors and rejects good, proper, and even legitimate posts. Still, somehow, it allows many videos, reels, pages, groups, and individuals to go undetected while continuing to sell wild and endangered animals as exotic pets. It is also common to find people exploiting animals and harming animals on purpose, and pretending to rescue them just for likes. The sellers have outsmarted the algorithm for years. Facebook META needs many real humans moderating their social networking service to efficiently remove and block the traders' and sellers' posts and pages.
- The sellers on other social media groups and classified ads on different platforms help each other with advice on how to get licenses to capture and keep wild-caught rattlesnakes, by getting a hunting license according to their province or state, to collect them privately, breed, or to sell them.
- Look-alike products after tinting and processing of the leather or using the snakes in pseudo medicine are challenging, if not impossible, to identify by species.
- Rattlesnakes (alive, products and derivatives) are sold in India, in many European countries, Mexico, the US, Canada and all over Latin America.

## Recommendations

- It is urgent to implement strategies to regulate the trade of rattlesnakes.
- The researched 4 rattlesnake species, along with the other rattlesnake species mentioned in this report, are widely found in North America and the global e-commerce. The e-commerce of rattlesnake species (live, dead, products, and derivatives) is unregulated; therefore, rattlesnakes are exploited in every possible way across the Americas and Europe.
- All the rattlesnake species should be included in CITES Appx II.
- It is crucial that the IUCN assess all the *Crotalus* and *Sistrurus* species.
- Enforcement of the legal and illegal trade of rattlesnake species and other wild fauna needs to be enforced by the proper authorities and taken seriously, especially with the current out-of-control global e-commerce of wildlife.
- Cooperation between the different platforms and their own governmental enforcement agencies is required, and this must closely share their data with INTERPOL. It is urgent to establish more robust national e-commerce enforcement and well-trained personnel to monitor the internet in each country to curb the out-of-control global e-commerce.



**For a complete report on the trade of rattlesnakes in Mexico, please visit our CITES Mexican TEYELIZ colleagues' website: [www.teyeliz.org](http://www.teyeliz.org)**  
**THE LEGAL AND ILLEGAL TRADE OF RATTLESNAKES IN MEXICO**





# Expert Legal and Policy Analysis on the Online Trade in Rattlesnakes

**Dr. Meganne Natali – Legal Expert in Wildlife Crime & International Environmental Law**

The online trade in rattlesnakes is one of the clearest examples of how e-commerce can circumvent traditional wildlife trade regulations. Across major marketplaces (eBay, Etsy, Mercado Libre, Amazon), social media (Facebook groups, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp), and reptile-specialist platforms, rattlesnakes and their derivatives circulate openly through transactions that frequently breach domestic wildlife-trade rules, customs law, and—in cases involving listed species—CITES provisions. The scale and anonymity of online commerce have created an environment in which illegal or high-risk trade appears normalized, while enforcement remains structurally unable to respond.

## Legal Status and Enforcement Gaps

A recurring misconception among sellers is that a provincial or state hunting permit authorizes online resale. In reality, these permits only allow personal, non-commercial harvest within the issuing jurisdiction. They do not authorize interstate commerce or international trade.

When wild-caught rattlesnakes are advertised online and sold across borders, the transaction may constitute: a customs offence for unlawful export or undeclared wildlife shipments;

a CITES violation if the species is listed, misdeclaring, or traded without permits;

a breach of national wildlife-trade law where commercial sale of wild-caught specimens is restricted.

The problem is compounded by the fact that online listings rarely include species identification, origin, or legal documentation, effectively disabling enforcement. With traceability essentially non-existent, authorities cannot determine legality, provenance, quantity, or sustainability.

## The Case for Listing All Rattlesnake Species in CITES Appendix II

The rationale for a genus-wide Appendix II listing is compelling and rests on four pillars:

### Non-detriment concerns:

Rattlesnakes have slow life histories, low reproductive rates, and high adult mortality under exploitation. Current extraction levels—evident from thousands of online listings for live animals, skins, meat, venom, and pseudo-medical products—cannot be assessed for sustainability. Without Appendix II, there is no mechanism for non-detriment findings.

### High trade volumes:

The diversity and quantity of online products (live specimens, skins, dried bodies, oils, powders, vials, pills) demonstrate a significant and persistent commercial market operating without oversight.

### Absence of traceability:

The rattlesnake trade occurring through online marketplaces is structurally opaque. Listings rarely include information on species, geographic origin, method of acquisition, or legal documentation. Sellers typically provide no harvest permits, no evidence of captive breeding, and no export authorizations, even when advertising internationally.

This absence of verifiable documentation means that authorities cannot distinguish legally obtained specimens from those stolen from the wild, laundered through false claims of captive breeding, or moved across borders without permits. In practical terms, the online environment collapses the distinction between legal, grey, and illegal trade, creating a single undifferentiated market in which enforcement agencies are unable to assess the legality or sustainability of any given transaction.

## Look-alike enforcement challenges:

Online vendors routinely omit species names or provide only generic labels such as “rattlesnake,” “*Crotalus* spp.,” or “venomous snake.” In many cases, the products themselves (skins, dried bodies, oils, powders, pills) no longer retain distinctive morphological features, making species identification impossible from photos or visual inspection at customs.

This creates a classic look-alike enforcement problem: even if only some rattlesnake species were listed under CITES, authorities would have no practical way to distinguish listed from non-listed species at border control or in online monitoring. Partial listings, therefore, become unenforceable because officers cannot determine which shipments require permits. A genus-wide Appendix II listing is the only realistic regulatory solution because it allows enforcement agencies to treat all rattlesnake specimens and derivatives as requiring documentation, eliminating the identification barrier that currently prevents meaningful control.

## Platform Accountability

A significant portion of rattlesnake commerce occurs on platforms that lack binding due diligence obligations. Sellers exploit coded language, abbreviations, emojis, and closed or invitation-only groups—particularly on Facebook—to remain invisible to automated moderation systems. Although major platforms publicly assert commitments to combating illegal wildlife trade, their detection and reporting mechanisms remain largely ineffective. As a result, illicit listings persist, circulate, and reappear with ease, revealing a structural gap between voluntary corporate policies and the actual governance needed to curb wildlife trafficking online.

Introducing legal obligations on Meta, eBay, Amazon, and similar intermediaries is essential.

These should include:

- proactive detection of wildlife-trade content;
- mandatory reporting to enforcement authorities;
- swift removal of illicit listings;
- transparent cooperation with investigations.

Without binding rules, online wildlife trafficking continues to flourish unchecked.

## Enforcement Priorities

Addressing the online trade in rattlesnakes requires structural reforms, notably:

- creation of specialized digital wildlife-trade monitoring units within wildlife agencies;
- systematic collaboration with customs services to detect shipments linked to online sales;
- operational coordination with the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group to address cross-border networks.

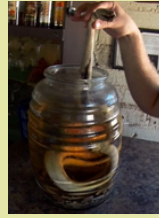
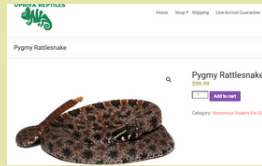
## Conclusion

Rattlesnakes illustrate how species can become structurally vulnerable when oversight is fragmented across jurisdictions and platforms. Only a subset of species benefits from CITES listings, and national permitting systems are frequently misinterpreted or misused to legitimize commercial trade that was never intended to extend beyond local contexts. Meanwhile, online marketplaces provide a parallel avenue for cross-border transactions that escape both wildlife and customs controls.

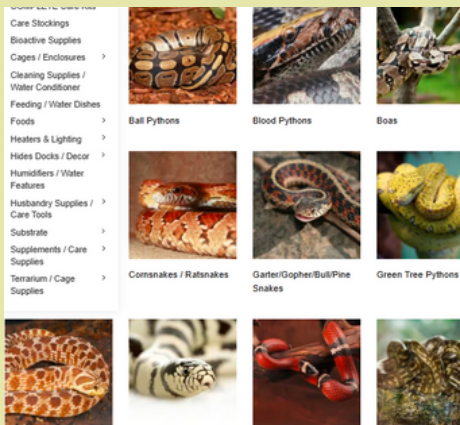
To address these systemic weaknesses, a coherent international approach is needed: a genus-wide Appendix II listing to establish baseline traceability; legally binding due diligence obligations for digital platforms; and dedicated online-trade monitoring capacities within wildlife and customs authorities. Together, these measures would transform the current opaque and high-risk market into one subject to meaningful scrutiny, enforceability, and conservation safeguards.



# The other rattlesnakes...



There are thousands of ads on websites, classified sites, and social media selling live rattlesnakes, several products, and rattlesnake derivatives. As we mentioned it before, many are wild caught. All state or national regulations can be violated to collect from the wild or breed for the sellers in North America and globally.



## The other animals...

Snakes and other reptiles are widely sold globally online. They, along with arachnids and insects, are among the forgotten victims of the wildlife trade.

Boas and pythons are quite popular, but you can find venomous and non-venomous snakes online easily. The red bush viper is quite common in Facebook groups.

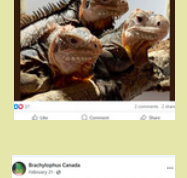
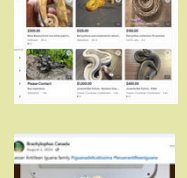
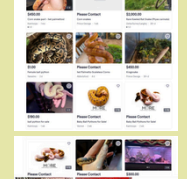
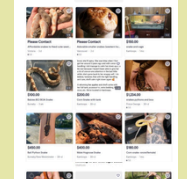
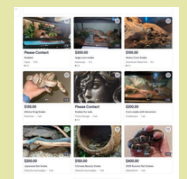
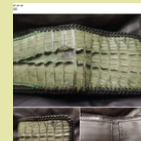
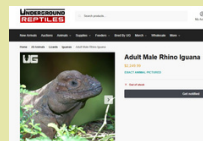
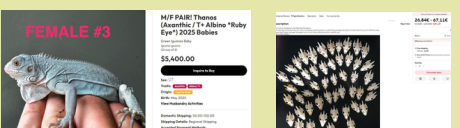
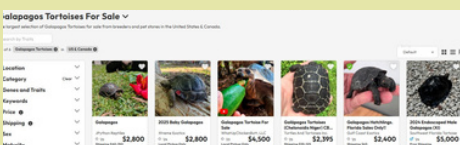
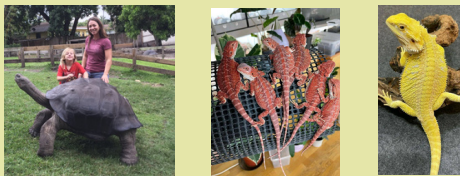
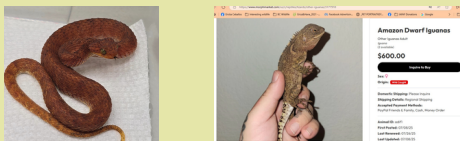
To the right, you can see pictures of dozens of snakes sold in Kijiji in British Columbia.

There are iguanas and lizards of all species online.

CEWS discovered a large number of Fiji iguanas —Fiji crested iguanas, Fiji/Lau banded iguanas, and Central Fijian banded iguanas — for sale in Canada and in many other countries.

There are Galapagos iguanas for sale online. We found many ads for Galapagos tortoises and Aldabra giant tortoises; they are quite trendy now.

Turtles are popular in general e-commerce, alive or dead, their leather, bones, etc. On Etsy, eBay and AliExpress, there are dozens of ads selling their skulls and bones.



**This is the last report that CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society will make.**

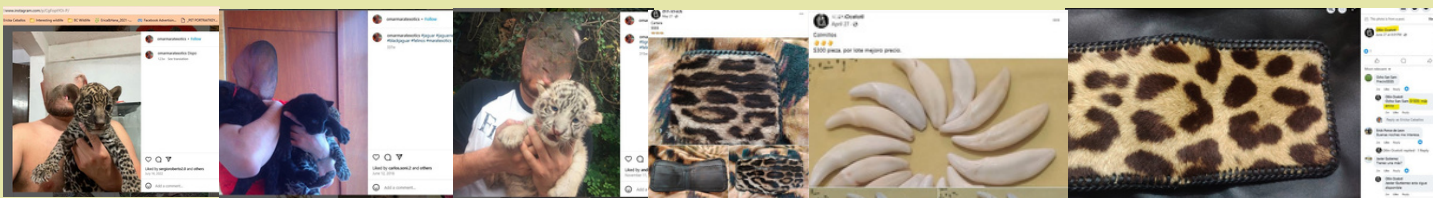
**CEWS will retire after 38 years of international work, and as its founder and CEO, I will retire too. It has been a great honor to work with you at CITES for 2 decades in animal conservation.**

**Thank you and keep up the great work protecting wildlife.**

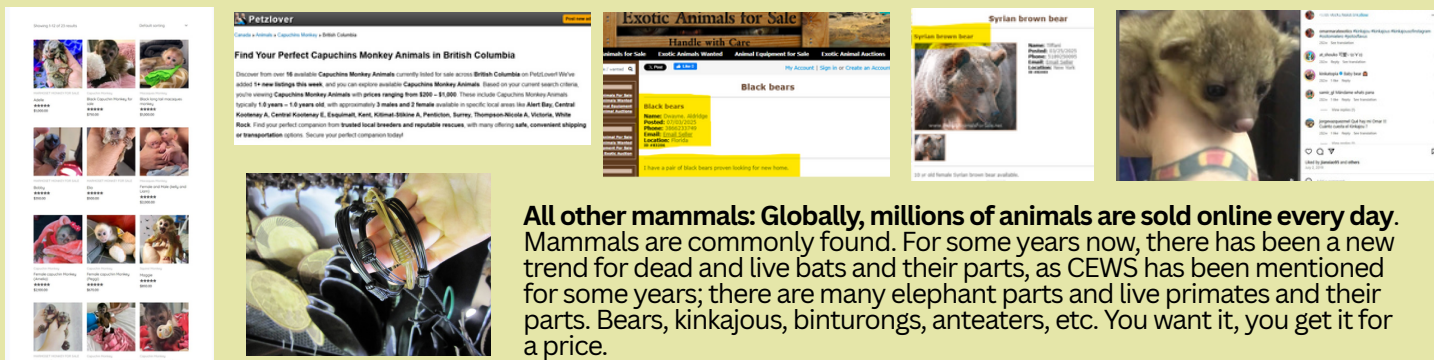
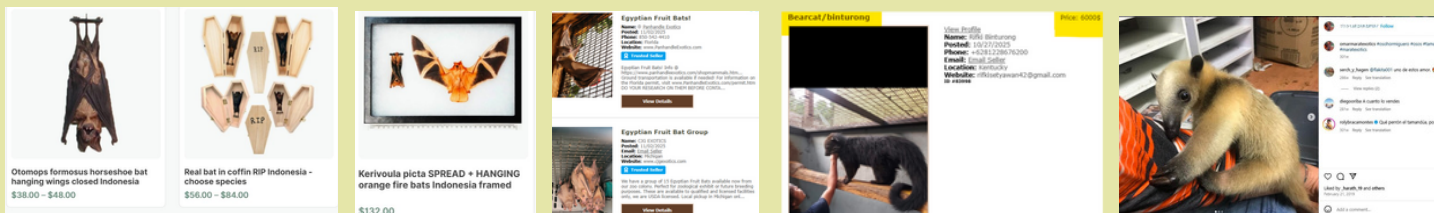
**Best wishes,  
Ericka Ceballos**



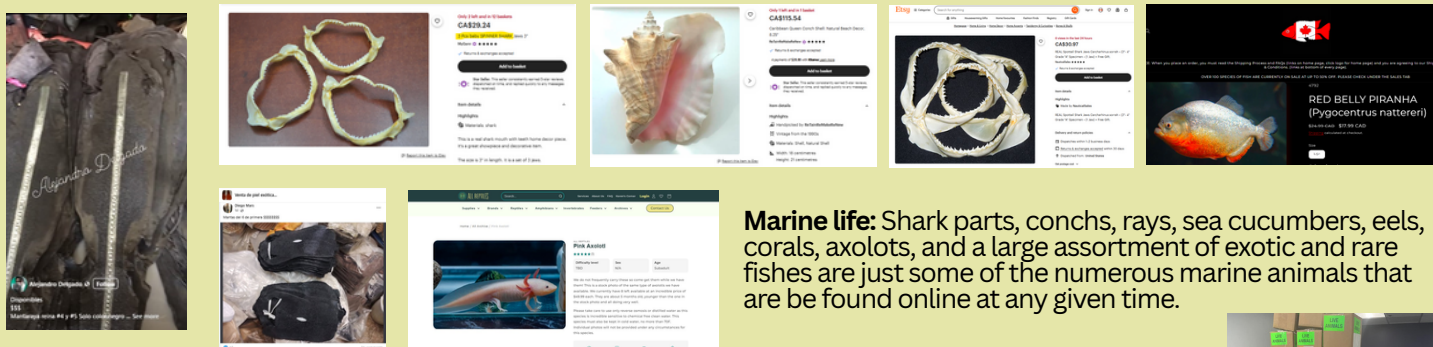
## The other animals...



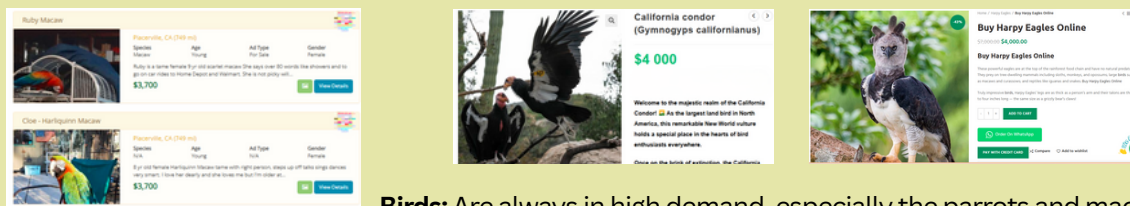
**Felines:** Tigers, jaguars, lions, hybrids, ocelots, and so on. Live and dead are always in demand



**All other mammals: Globally, millions of animals are sold online every day.** Mammals are commonly found. For some years now, there has been a new trend for dead and live bats and their parts, as CEWS has been mentioned for some years; there are many elephant parts and live primates and their parts. Bears, kinkajous, binturongs, anteaters, etc. You want it, you get it for a price.



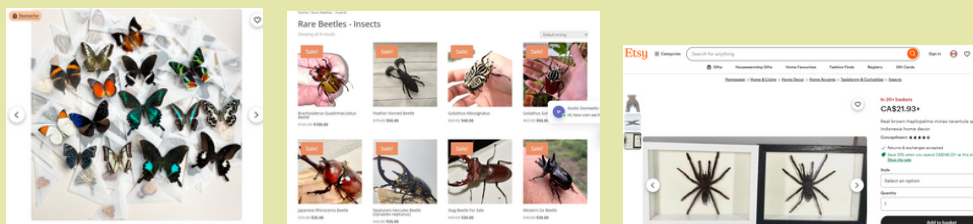
**Marine life:** Shark parts, conchs, rays, sea cucumbers, eels, corals, axolots, and a large assortment of exotic and rare fishes are just some of the numerous marine animals that are be found online at any given time.



**Birds:** Are always in high demand, especially the parrots and macaws.



### Boxes with live animals to be shipped



**Insects, arachnids, etc.** “Bugs” are increasing in popularity and demand, live and dead as well as parts.



# Support the rattlesnakes

## Proposal 25

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We know that we are not “cute”  
or “charismatic’ species.

Rattlesnakes may appear scary  
and aggressive to you, but we are  
shy creatures. We urgently need  
protection from the excessive and  
uncontrolled global trade in our  
species, both legal and illegal.

We are worth saving!



**CATCA Environmental  
and Wildlife Society**

