

CATCA Preliminary Report of the e-monitoring of Narwhal whales and Polar bear specimens in Canada, the US and abroad



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Introduction

In preparation for the CITES E-Commerce workshop in Vancouver this month, CATCA under the CMEPS request, conducted a program from December 15, 2008 to February 15th 2009, to monitor on the Canadian internet, the commercial trade of two specific Arctic marine mammal species: the narwhal whales and polar bears.

CATCA followed a different methodology to monitor the e-trade in Europe developed by the Polish Protection for Nature Protection *Salamandra*. *PTOP Salamandra* has been training CATCA for over a year to conduct e-monitorings in the strict way as they do their internet monitorings, which have succesfully introduced in Poland and all over Central and Europe in the last years, providing reliable results.

Due to the short amount of time to conduct this e-monitoring and the specific species specimens that we were looking for in the internet, we had to improvise a completely different method, but we kept been under the expert advise of PTOP experts to guide Ericka all the way.

To do this e-monitoring, we focused on internet auction services, auction houses, art galleries, internet ads and animal forums.

We used Google and Yahoo search engines in this investigation.

Narwhal Whales (*Monodon monoceros*)

General information

- Government researchers for Fisheries and Oceans Canada claim that there are 50,000 narwhal whales in the Canadian Arctic. Independent Canadian researchers doubt that the narwhal population is even half of that.
- An average of 500 narwhals are hunted in Canada exceeding annual government quotas. Inuit also slaughter narwhals trapped in the ice flows, and earlier this year, they killed 600.
- Greenland kills about 660 narwhals a year. Whalers in both countries target males with longer single tusks and any double-tusker in the pod.

The results of this CATCA e-monitoring research show that there is an active e-trade of narwhal whale tusks in Canada, as well as in the United States and the United Kingdom.

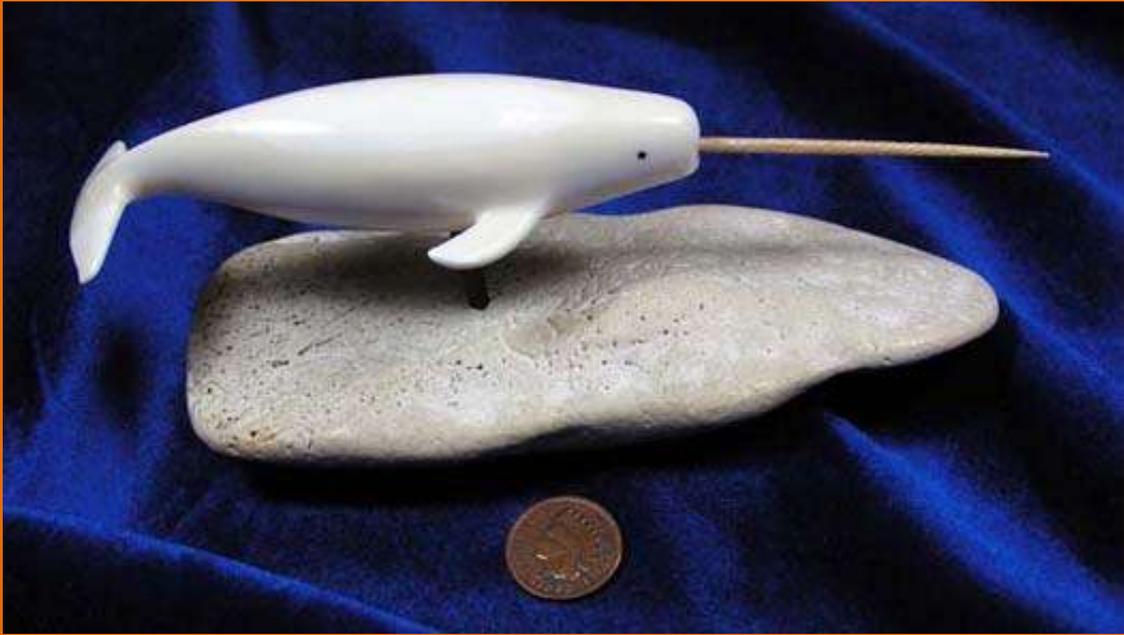
During the research program, we found 128 narwhal specimens for sale on 14 websites of: e-stores, auction sites, galleries and e-classifieds.

A small piece of a narwhal's ivory tusk can reach prices from \$20 to \$300 Canadian dollars, depending on the carving detail; and from \$450 to \$2,000 for a complete narwhal tusk.

The most expensive single tusk specimen that CATCA found in this investigation, was one auctioned in London, England for \$41,700 Canadian Dollars. Skulls with double tusks are the most lucrative items for sale regularly fetching almost \$100,000. on the market.



Pictures taken from online advertisements in Canada

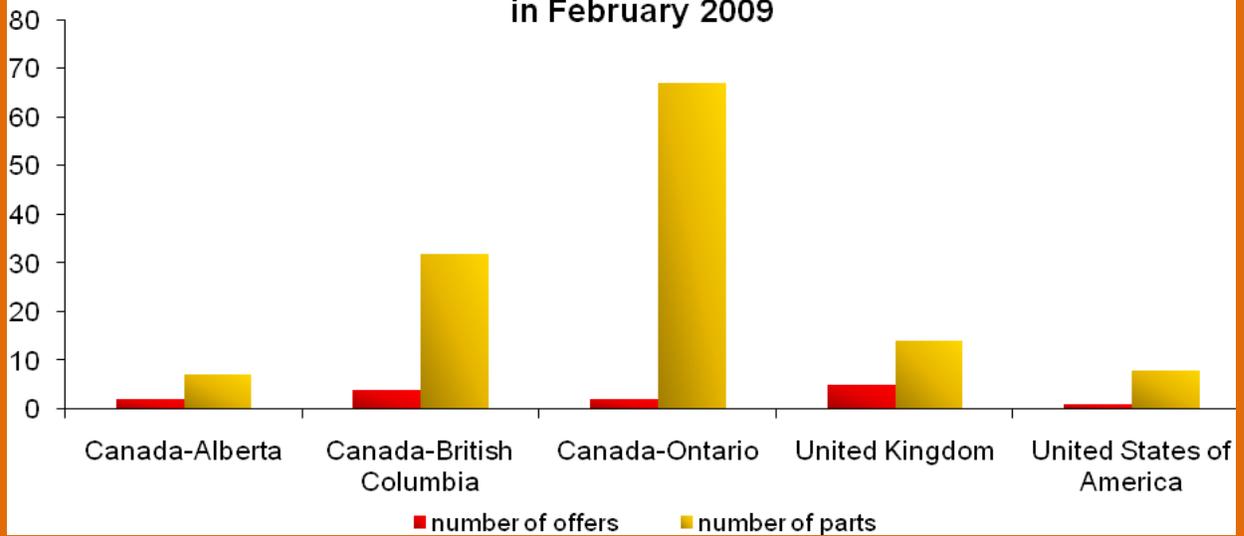


Narwhal tusk ivory carving

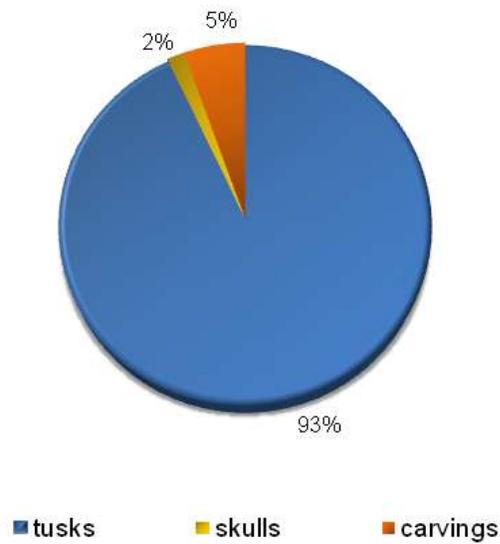


Narwhal whale skulls for sale in Canada

Localization of narwhal whales parts offered for sale on the internet, found during the survey of English language web-sites in February 2009



Percentage of narwhal whales, tusks and carvings offered for sell on English- language internet sites



Polar Bears (*Ursus maritimus*)

General information

- According to the World Conservation Union Species Survival Commission's Polar Bear Specialist Group, there are between 20,000 and 25,000 polar bears worldwide and half of them are in Canada. The species is listed as "vulnerable".
- Between 700 and 900 polar bears are hunted and killed every year around the Arctic circle, with about 500 to 600 polar bears being killed in Canada alone.
- Trophy hunting is the reason most of the polar bears are killed in Canada.
- Many sport hunters (specially from the United States of America and mostly Europeans from Germany, Poland, so on) pay between \$20,000 to \$35,000 dollars to hunt and kill a polar bear.
- The Inuit outfitters get their trophy hunting permits from the Canadian government as part of sustenance hunting quotas.

Results

During the internet monitoring, CATCA found polar bear parts and products for sale mostly in Canada, but also in the USA. Most e-advertisements from online stores, declare having the necessary documentation and CITES permits to sell the bear specimens. However, 27 classified advertisement in Canada sold polar bear rugs and did not mention any information about required documentation.

The results of the research show that polar bear parts and products were on sale on 38 websites, and there were a total of 107 postings.

This e-monitoring showed that the most popular polar bear specimens found are the polar bear rugs, followed by skulls and skins.

The majority of the websites were related to e-stores, e-classifieds, and general sites regarding polar bears, as well as other species for sale.

The prices for polar bear rugs were from \$1,250 to \$12,000 Canadian dollars. The length of these rugs were from 6' 6" to 9' 5". The majority of these e-shops mentioned CITES permits and seemed legal. However, there were some sites that seem to be trading illegal Polar bear parts.

When CATCA contacted these sites, their e-mail replies were not particularly convincing. Because of this reason we are concerned that there might be sellers that disregard international law and do not obtain the necessary permits before they sell polar bear products.



Advertisement in Canada



Polar bear skull in England



Polar bear rug in Canada



Skull for sale in the United States

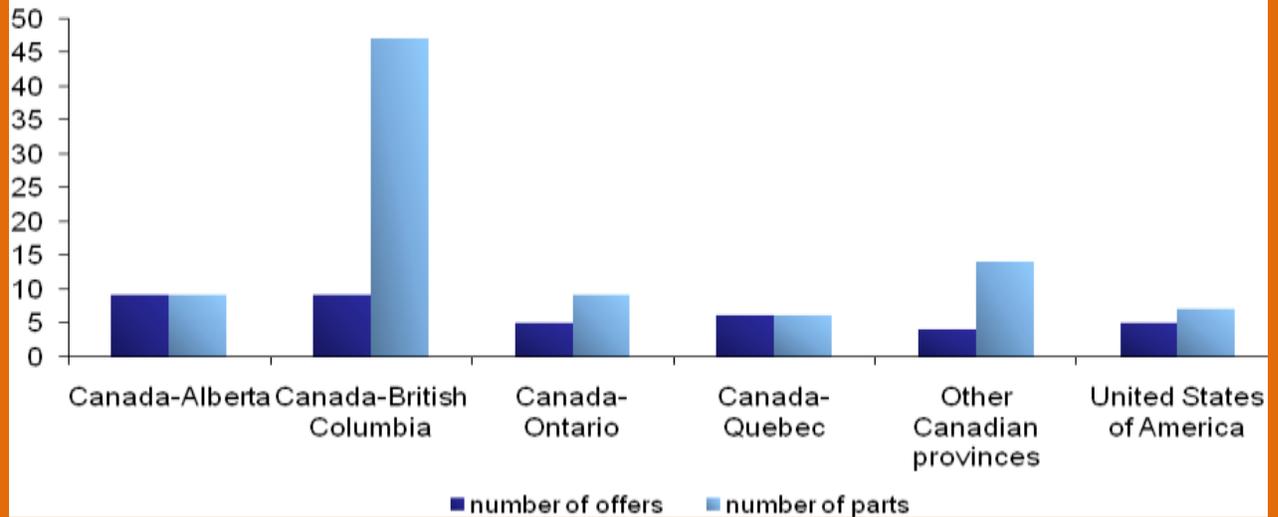


Skull sold in Canada

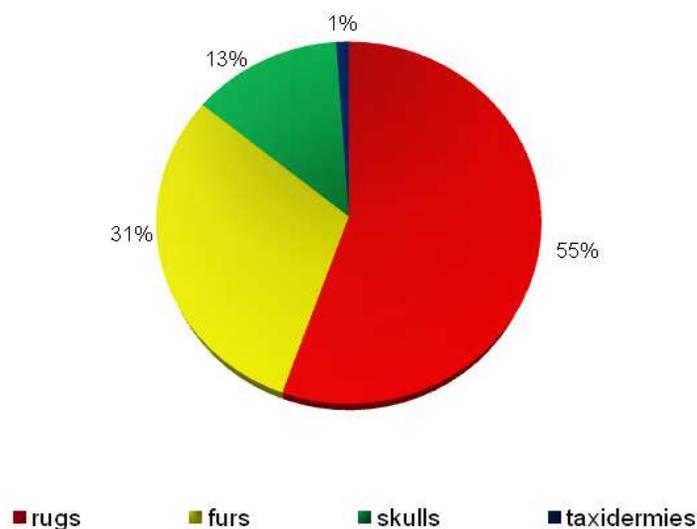


Skull for sale in another website in Canada

**Localization of polar bear parts offered for sale on the internet,
found during the survey of English language web-sites in
February 2009**



**Percentage share of different kinds of polar bear parts offered
for sale on the internet, found during the survey of English
language web-sites in February 2009**



Smuggling

Scientists claim that polar bear hair functions as fiber-optic conductors. These hairs are 2-6 inches long, translucent with hollow centers that absorb UV light. But here's something new. Some sport fishers like to use polar bear hair for fly tying. CATCA found that in a Washington State fly-fishing blog site, British Columbia sport fishers were recommending using polar bear hair and telling Americans that it can be bought all over the province, especially in Kamloops, BC.

That blog also instructed how to smuggle polar bear and seal hair into the United States:

“You can bring a fly-tying kit across the border with all sorts of stuff in it for your fishing trip and it is very hard to tell if anything is endangered, if there are labels, or if they are mixed in with everything else. It is also tough to tell if it was bought in the US or if it was smuggled in from Canada.”

Conclusion

Recent e-monitoring reports done in Central and Eastern Europe show a continuing increase on the trade over the internet of protected species of flora and fauna.

Preliminary results of e-monitoring throughout the American continent also shows that the e-trade is growing rapidly, especially in North America where basically all flora and fauna may be found for sale on-line using internet search engines.

We found that when it comes to the Narwhal whale and Polar bear, Canada seems to lead the international commercial internet trade in specimens found from these two Arctic marine mammal species at risk.



Raw hides at a fur auction

Research, design and production

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CATCA

Acknowledges

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This Report was completed on February 23, 2009

Some non related E-Commerce references

“Canada’s Narwhal Whales: A Species On The Edge” www.cmeps.org

“Chemistry, Calibre and Climate: The Plight of Canada’s Polar Bear” www.cmeps.org