

CATCA Environmental
and Wildlife Society



2024

E-commerce of Canadian Rattlesnakes **DRAFT REPORT**



CEWS

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Photo: C. oreganus Connor Long

NOTE: Most of the pictures on this report are taken from classified ads, social media ads and specialized websites found in this monitoring, for the strict purpose of education about the trade of 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 important part.

According to the Canadian Fair Dealing Provision, the exception for the 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 for profit society, who doesn't profit by any means of these snapshots of the e-commerce of wildlife.

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CEWS is a Registered Canadian Society

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Draft Report of the e-commerce monitoring of Canadian rattlesnakes (2024)

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Introduction

Rattlesnakes have been venerated for thousands of years by Mesoamerican cultures, specially by the Aztecs and the Mayan, and the Native American people, but also they have been demonized for centuries all over the Americas and North America.

The rattlesnakes are not exactly a charismatic species - specially with their fierce look -, which has turned them as easy targets and victims from shady believes, superstition, ignorance and religious zealots, as well of hunters and poachers.

In the early 20th century, Christian preachers of the Southern states in the US, started to handle rattlesnakes in rites, so that if the handler gets bitten, that means that he / she “lacks the true spirit”.

Since half of the 20th century, the rattlesnake roundups became popular in the middle and Southern states of the US, in events where they are showed, killed, eaten and sold. The aim was (and still is) to get rid of “rattlesnake pests”, and to destroy and eradicate them completely 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 populations of Timber rattlesnakes 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 doing formal e-commerce monitoring since 2007 at an international level.

CATCA was trained by PTOF Salamandra Poland, which is part of CEEWEB (Central and Eastern European WEB), which is a coalition of NGO's monitoring the e-commerce of wildlife. They have been assessing their e-commerce in a formal way for two decades. CEWS is the only non European animal conservation NGO doing this formal monitoring. By formal it means that our team analyzes each advertisement inside out, to find and extract as much information of similar sales of endangered and protected CITES species, number of specimens (live, products and derivatives) are 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 monitorings by 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 very large 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 originally.

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

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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 found 15 classified ads with 21 live specimens, 11 ads with skins and bones, 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 found 116 ads of *C. horridus* in eBay, but we still have to monitor and check each one.

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

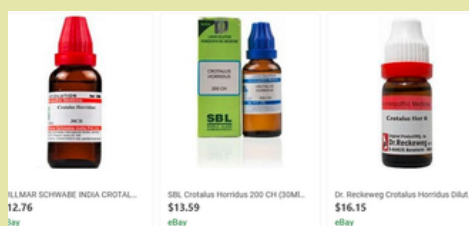
CEWS observed that the most traded of these 4 rattlesnake species searched online is the *Crotalus horridus*.

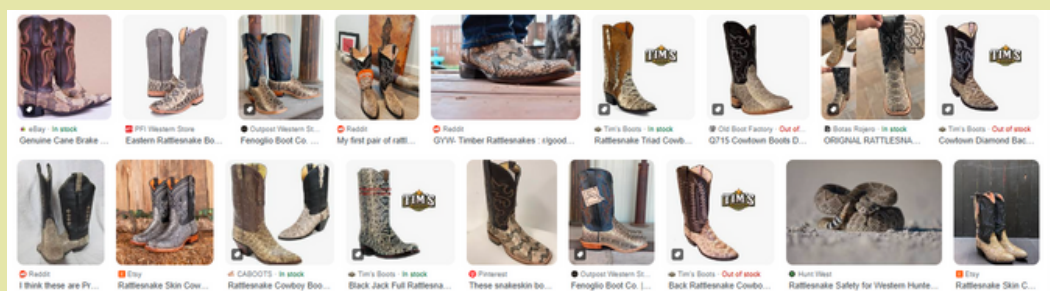
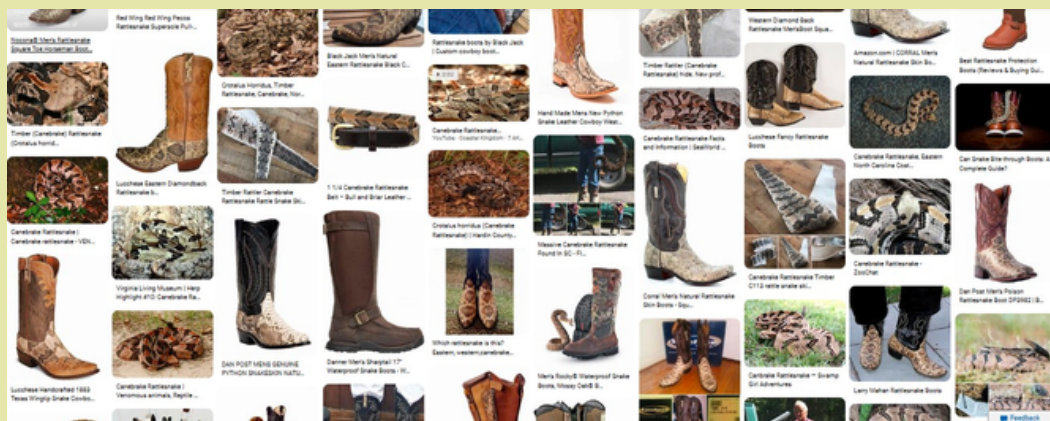
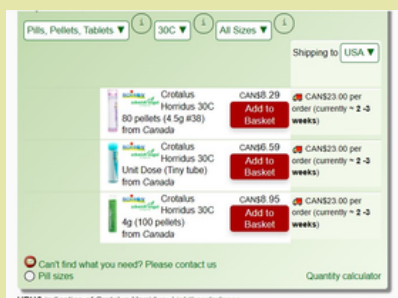
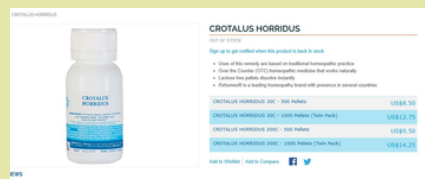
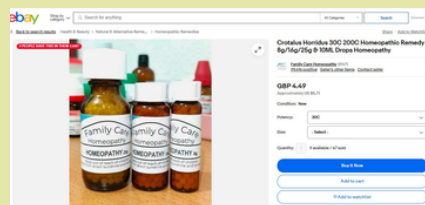
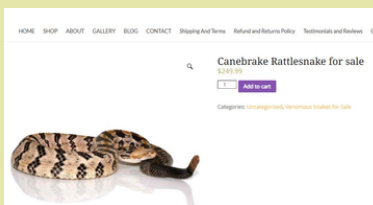
We found them alive, as products and their derivatives in Canada, Mexico and the US. One usual way to use the *Crotalus horridus* and several other species of rattlesnakes in Mexico, is in the form of oil sold as meat, soap, powder, gel, lotion, pills, dry and diluted solutions for pseudo curations and “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 a homeopathic laboratory in India that makes and sells worldwide *C. horridus* pills in many different concentrated solutions. There is also a pharmaceutical laboratory in France using derivatives of this species as lyophilized powder supplies for its venom.

Leather for boots, shoes, jackets, ties, wallets, handbags, vests, etc. are very common to find in classifieds and store websites in Mexico. Live *C. Horridus* is also the species most found in reptile, snake and exotic pet stores and Facebook private groups in the US and Mexico.

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





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

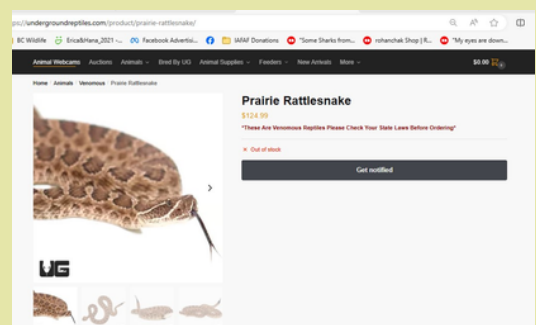
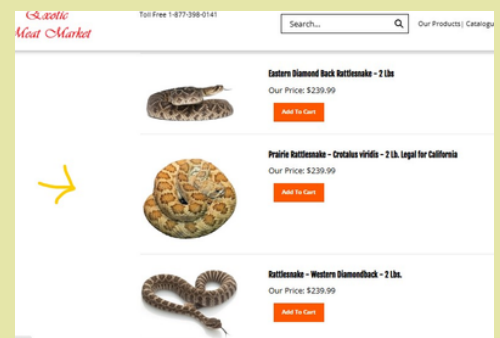
Crotalus viridis

<i>Crotalus viridis</i>					
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 found 49 live specimens in Facebook and classified ads. In 2 classified ads we found 3 *C. viridis* bones for sale, in one website from the US we found them selling their meat, and in a laboratory in France with a minimum equivalent of 1,500 vials or bottles, that could be easily up to 10,000 or more.



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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 found 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.

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Cart is empty

Pure VenomsToxins & Plant SubstancesOther Products and Services

About usContact usNew accountWorldwide Distributors

Home>Venoms>Snakes>Crotalidae>Crotalus

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

SNAKE VENOMS

Product ID

L1801

Name

Crotalus oreganus oreganus

Common Name(s)

Northern Pacific Rattlesnake

Origin

Any Origin

Purity

>90%

Form

Lyophilized powder

Packaging

In vacuum sealed glass vials, in secured parcel.



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Taxonomic Classification

Class : Reptilia

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

For Sale
1.1 Crotalus oreganus NZ20

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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 found 3 live specimens of *S. catenatus* alive: 2 in classified ads and one in Facebook. We also found today as I finished the report 4 alive for sale in ads in Germany. A pharmacological laboratory in France is using many live species for the extraction of 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

a week ago - Worrstadt

Hallo wegen umzug verkaufe ich meine 3 gruppe catenatus 1.0

Sell Venomous snakes
Sistrurus catenatus tergeminus
1.3 zuchtgruppe *Sistrurus catenatus*
tergeminus alle drei sind verpaart mit
terrarium 150 60 60

3 years ago
45881
Gelsenkirchen

Bartłomiej Mucha

CEWS found ads of *S. catenatus* for sale in Germany

Other results

CEWS found in these 5 weeks, that the most common rattlesnake species found in the e-commerce in North America is the Western Diamondback (*Crotalus atrox*). This species followed by the Eastern Diamondback (*Crotalus adamanteus*), are over exploited in all possible ways for profit, as they are commonly used for meat, leather, body parts and taxonomy all over the internet.

Additionally, we found 14 ads in Mexico with skins of a total of 162 rattle snakes. Most are Western diamondback rattlesnakes.

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

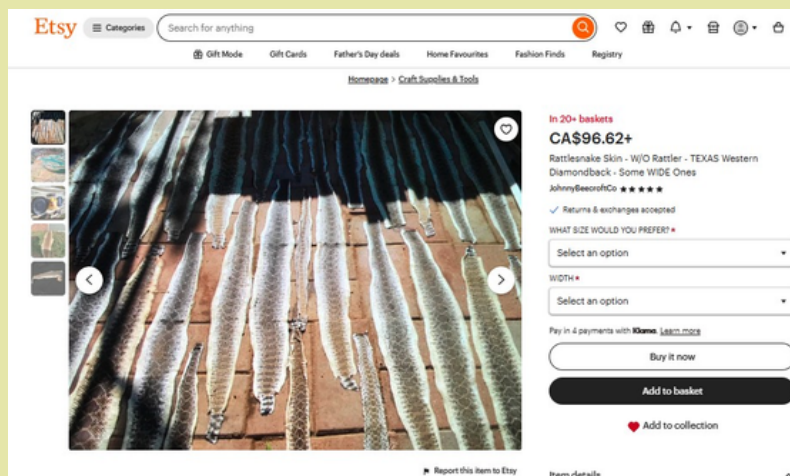
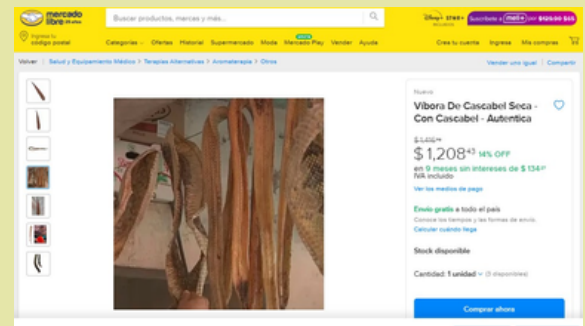
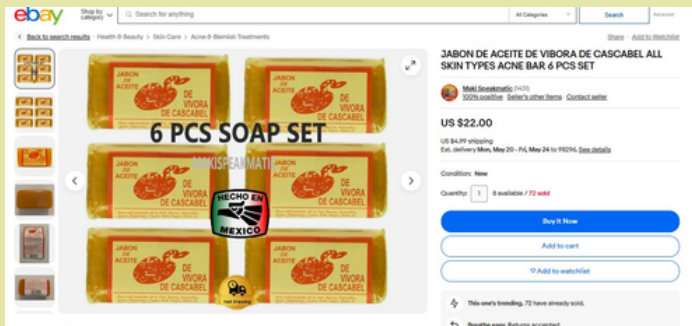
Our final report will be ready in 2025 for the CITES CoP20.

Challenges

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

As well, we were originally declined from joining them with our new fake Facebook profile, created specially 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.

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Conclusions

- CEWS found in this very short period of time, that these 4 Canadian rattlesnake species are popular in classified websites in Canada and the US, such as Etsy, eBay, Mercado Libre, many other classified websites, and social media.
- This is a draft report, which has been a challenge due to the short time to do it, so we are already capturing data and links to continue doing this e-commerce monitoring up to the CITES CoP20 in 2025.
- *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 found lots of ads of skin and other products in Canada, US and Mexico.
- Many of the live rattlesnakes found are wild caught.
- Other rattlesnakes 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 found commonly online, in pharmacies and natural stores.
- In Facebook, many of the reptile sellers use special words and abbreviations to openly sell and / or exchange rattlesnakes and other wildlife, to pass undetected by the Facebook algorithm. This algorithm has proven to be inefficient censuring such ads, as more than often it censures and rejects good, proper and even educative posts. Somehow allows many videos, reels, pages, groups and individuals to be undetected and continue to sell wild and endangered animals as exotic pets, as well people abusing animals for likes. The sellers have outsmarted the algorithm for years. Facebook needs many more humans moderating their social networking service, to efficiently remove and block the traders and sellers posts and pages.
- The sellers in Facebook and classified ads in websites, they help each other with advise in how to get licenses to capture and keep wild caught rattlesnakes, by getting a hunting license according to their province or state.

Recommendations

- It is urgent to have implementation of strategies to regulate the trade of rattlesnakes.
- These 4 rattlesnake species, along with the other ones mentioned in this draft report, are widely found in the e-commerce. Their e-commerce and regular trade is not regulated, therefore they are exploited in too many ways. For this reason, CEWS would like to recommend to the US CITES Authorities, to consider to bring back the *C. horridus* proposal at the CITES CoP20.
- The rattlesnakes in general should be protected by CITES.
- It is crucial that the IUCN assess the *Crotalus* and *Sistrurus* species.

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