

2 weeks. Extrapolating from this, there could be over 30,000 goldfinches, 7,000 serins and 4,500 linnets sold per year in the 21 weekly markets we visited. The birds sold in the hundreds of pet shops around the country, the weekly markets we did not visit, and those sold online would add substantially to this number.

Vendors reported that goldfinches are becoming increasingly difficult to source from the wild but that there is no lessening of demand. Already, the pressure has shifted from the Algerian to Moroccan populations because of the difficulty in securing sufficient numbers of birds. The illegal songbird trade in Algeria is threatening wild populations of European goldfinches across North Africa and potentially threatening other species of finch. We therefore recommend that the Algerian government enforce its wildlife trade laws to ensure the conservation of these, and other, species.

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Evidence to action: research to address illegal wildlife trade

The Oxford Martin Programme on the Illegal Wildlife Trade (illegalwildlifetrade.net) has launched a key research brief, *Evidence to Action: Research to Address Illegal Wildlife Trade* (osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/35ndz). This brief, addressed to policy makers and practitioners, outlines areas where research evidence can support effective illegal wildlife trade policy, highlights critical uncertainties where research is required, and emphasizes the need for better design and evaluation of interventions that can help improve the effectiveness of efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade. Tools and expertise to improve the evidence base for national and international illegal wildlife trade policy already exist but are underutilized. Tapping into these resources could produce substantive benefits for wildlife conservation and associated sectors, enabling governments to fulfill their obligations under the Sustainable Development Goals and international biodiversity conventions. This could be achieved through enhanced funding support for inter-sectoral research collaborations, engaging researchers in priority setting and programme design, increasing developing country research capacity and engaging researchers and community voices in policy processes.

The *Evidence to Action* brief is the first of a new set of tools and guidance for researchers and practitioners. The latest addition is a brief reviewing the scale of *Darknet Usage in the Illegal Wildlife Trade* (osf.io/preprints/

[socarxiv/fg9rd](https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/fg9rd)), which includes recommendations for researchers and policymakers. The darknet is a network of websites that can be accessed only via special software that hides the details of the user's connection, and allows websites to be hosted without revealing their location or operator. Large-scale darknet marketplaces exist for illegal drugs, firearms, hacking tools, stolen identity documents, and a wide variety of other illicit goods. However, the darknet has not, to date, proven to be an attractive platform for the buying and selling of illegal wildlife products (see also *Oryx*, 51, 393–394). Despite this, it provides a marketplace of last resort that becomes increasingly attractive over other, more accessible, online services as law enforcement and platform operators enforce policies against trading in illegal wildlife products. This makes the ongoing study of darknet markets an important avenue for research as other policies against online illegal wildlife trading emerge.

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Halting the release of the pangolin *Manis javanica* in China

As global travel and trade increase, so has the numbers of species spreading beyond their natural ranges. Introduction of alien species, intentionally or unintentionally, as a result of human activities may lead to the extinction of native species via interbreeding, predation, resource competition or the spread of disease. Pangolins are widely trafficked (S. Heinrich et al., 2017, *The Global Trafficking of Pangolins: a Comprehensive Summary of Seizures and Trafficking Routes from 2010–2015*, TRAFFIC South-east Asia, Selangor, Malaysia), and with the Chinese government improving wildlife protection and strengthening law enforcement the release of confiscated pangolins by law enforcement departments is increasing. There have been at least 10 cases of the release of confiscated pangolins into the wild in China since 2016, including one case each in October 2016, January, July and September 2017, May, June and August 2018, and three cases in July 2018 (mp.weixin.qq.com/s/zWQ27feivJiO4bBjZPKvFQ). In at least five cases the release was of *Manis javanica*, which is native to South-east Asia, including cases in Zhanjiang city, Hengyang city, Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, and Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture.