

Research Article

A Brief Overview of the Online Bird Trade in Vietnam

Boyd T. C. Leupen^{1,2,*}, Lalita Gomez^{1,2}, Minh D. T. Nguyen³, Loretta Shepherd¹ and Chris R. Shepherd¹

¹*Monitor Conservation Research Society (Monitor), Box 200, Big Lake Ranch, B.C., V0L 1G0, Canada*

²*Oxford Wildlife Trade Research Group, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford OX4 1NF, United Kingdom.*

³*Independent researcher, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

**Corresponding Author's E-mail: boyd.leupen@mcrsociety.org*

(Received: February 4, 2022; Revised: April 14, 2022; Accepted: May 31, 2022)

ABSTRACT

Unsustainable commercial exploitation poses a serious threat to many of Vietnam's native bird species. Here we report on a survey of the country's online bird trade, conducted across four major online platforms. Between 9 March and 3 April 2020, a total of 434 posts were recorded, accounting for 834 individuals of at least 50 species, ten of which have not been recorded in Vietnamese trade before. Ninety-two percent of the recorded species were native to Vietnam and 18% (n=9) of the species, accounting for 15% (n=115) of the recorded individuals, are protected under Vietnamese law. Recorded prices ranged between VND16,667 (~US\$0.7) and VND7 million (~US\$303), depending on the species and on a bird's specific singing qualities. The highest trade numbers were found on Chợ Tốt (186 posts, 335 birds), followed by Facebook (161 posts, 325 birds), Chợ Vinh (82 posts, 169 birds) and Chim Cảnh Đất Việt (5 posts, 5 birds). The scale of the observed trade appears to confirm a partial shift towards online platforms in Vietnam's bird trade, or at least an increase in the use of online platforms to trade wild birds. In anticipation of a further development of this trend, we urge the Government of Vietnam to improve regulations and to take greater enforcement action against illegal online trading practices.

Key words: Asian songbird crisis, Bird conservation, Illegal wildlife trade, Social media, Songbird trade

