

A man holding up a tiger skin

WILDLEAKS

2014 Nominet Trust 100 Winner

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2014

WHISTLEBLOWING WEBSITE FOR WILDLIFE CRIMES

Project URL: wildleaks.org

Project Twitter: [@wildleaks](https://twitter.com/wildleaks)

- Environment & Sustainability
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WildLeaks is the world's first wildlife crime whistle-blower website, transposing the WikiLeaks model to stem the vast illegal trade in endangered species and protected timber.

The site uses state-of-the-art Tor encryption so anyone at any point along the sector's supply chain, from poaching or logging, to shipping or retail, can share information in total safety and anonymity: be that the names of traffickers, traders, businessmen, corrupt government officials and shipping companies, or information on events.

Law enforcement has struggled to keep pace with the nimble and well-funded criminal cartels that control the trade in illegal logging, poaching and smuggling. The industry, worth \$20bn annually, uses sophisticated techniques to protect its interests, whereas law enforcement has stuck with old approaches, and been slow to adopt technology.

WildLeaks founder Andrea Crosta, executive director of the Elephant Action League, launched the site in February 2014 with a consortium of international NGOs and government agencies in order to skew the balance back in the favour of wildlife protection. Crosta is famous for his 18-month investigation exposing the hundreds of thousands of dollars Somalia's terrorist group al-Shabaab was accruing from the ivory trade. He says it was that work that inspired him to launch the site: 'There are a lot of people who know a lot,' he says: 'you can't, for example, export containers full of ivory from Mombasa without bribing people left, right and centre. But if you don't go there and take it out somehow, that important information stays with the [communities].'

Few people will approach local police, he explains, because of the likelihood they are complicit in the crime, and for fear of reprisals. All tip-offs received on WildLeaks are evaluated by the world's leading experts in ecology, law and security: once vetted, the experts decide whether to launch an investigation, share information with partners, or leak to the media.

In the first six months they have already received dozens of actionable tips: documenting environmental crime happening everywhere from Hong Kong and Mexico, to Siberia and Alaska, and prompting the launch of three new ivory investigations alone. 'The response has been beyond our wildest imagination,' says Crosta. Wildlife crimes are rarely prosecuted and even less frequently punished, despite the huge scale of the industry (it is the fourth most lucrative transnational crime after narcotics, humans and weapons), and the toll it takes on the Earth: decimating forests and habitat threatening extinction of whole species, including elephants, rhinos and pangolins. 'The goal is always to expose wildlife crime and to put the responsible individuals behind bars,' says Crosta.

The site, which is neutral and independent with servers hosted in Geneva, is backed by UK's Environmental Investigation Agency, S Africa Oxpeckers Center, Netherlands, Ecojust in the Netherlands, Africa Southeast Asia's Global Eye and 100Reporters. It is available in 16 languages.

Image courtesy of WildLeaks

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