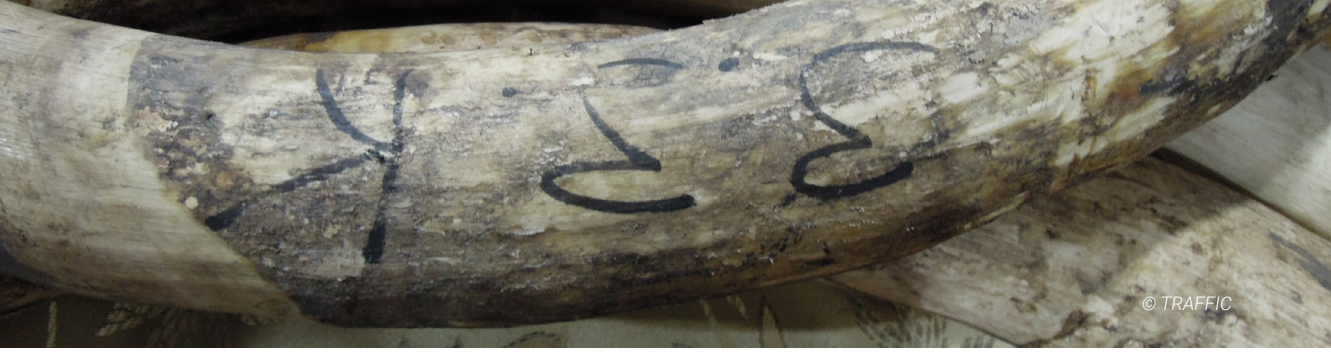
EASTERN AFRICA TWIX

Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange

TRADE IN WILDLIFE INFORMATION EXCHANGE: PROMOTING INFORMATION SHARING AND CO-OPERATION TO REDUCE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE IN EASTERN AFRICA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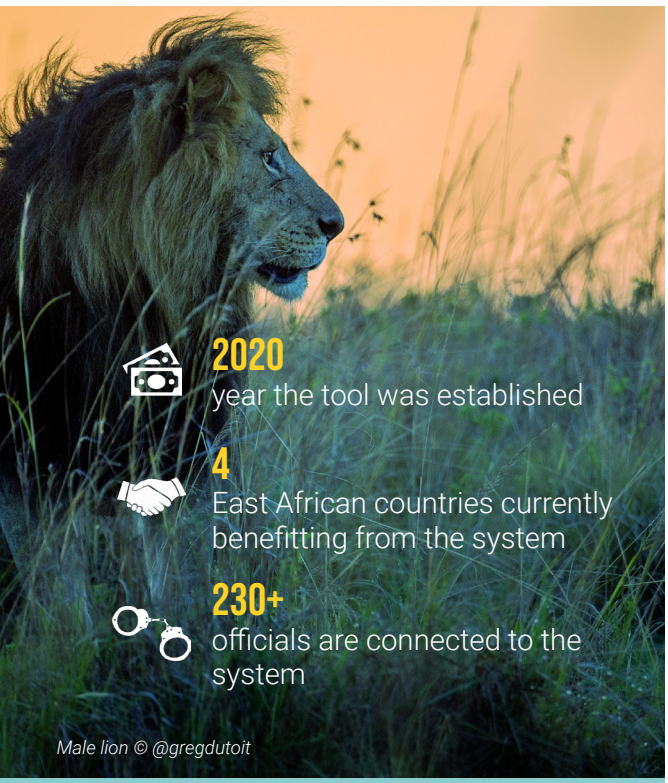
WHAT IS EASTERN AFRICA-TWIX?

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

THE EASTERN AFRICA TRADE IN WILDLIFE INFORMATION eXCHANGE (TWIX), IS AN ONLINE TOOL DEVELOPED TO FACILTATE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND PROMOTE CO-OPERATION

The tool is aimed at law enforcement and management authorities responsible for combating illegal wildlife trade and implementing the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in eastern Africa.

The African continent is one of the largest legal and illegal exporters of wildlife products in the world. The majority of African nations are signatories to CITES, yet many of them continue to experience high levels of poaching and illegal trade. High consumer demand from Asia and elsewhere for a wide variety of illicit wildlife products continues to pose challenges to conservation actions, whilst national enforcement agencies are often hampered by a lack of resources and the existence of transboundary administrative barriers. If wildlife crime detection and prosecution efforts hope to succeed, international co-operation and information sharing between enforcement agencies is vital.



Male lion © @gregdutoit

THE TOOLS OF EASTERN AFRICA-TWIX

The Eastern Africa-TWIX system provides users with a mailing list which facilitates the rapid exchange of information, expertise and experience on wildlife trade enforcement within participating countries. Enabling users to share information on emerging trends or specific illegal activities quickly and easily can be the difference between a successful or failed investigation.

Eastern Africa-TWIX also includes access to a dedicated website containing useful resources to support enforcement efforts as well as a database of wildlife seizures. Individual law enforcement agencies maintain ownership rights to their data and any use thereof requires approval by an agency representative.

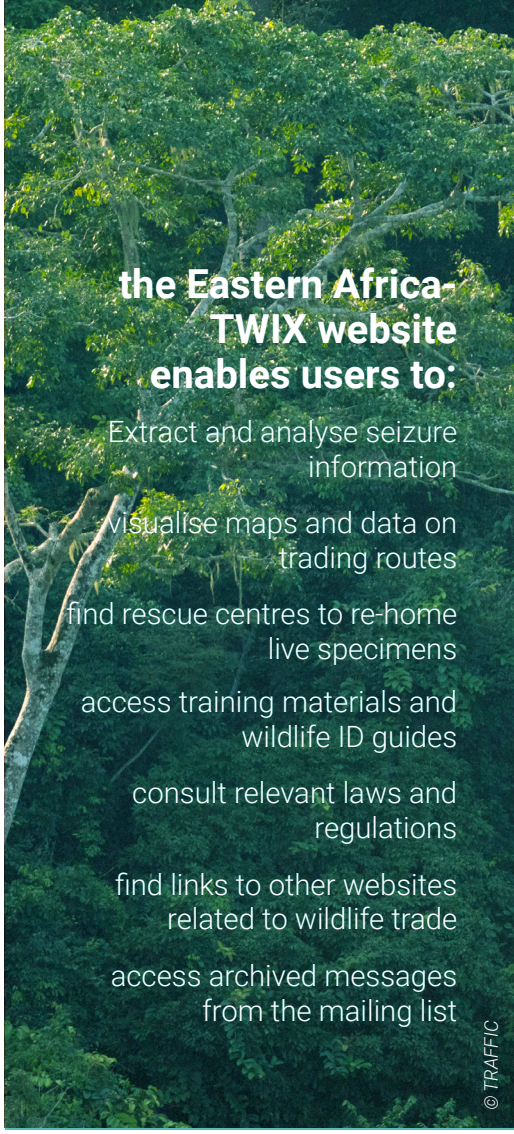
EASTERN AFRICA-TWIX MEMBERSHP

Due to the confidential nature of the information collected, Eastern Africa-TWIX is accessible only to enforcement and management officials responsible for implementation of CITES in the participating countries.

Agencies who are eligible to participate include, among others, Wildlife and Forestry authorities, Customs, CITES Management Authorities (MA), police, environmental inspection services, veterinary and phytosanitary services, prosecutors and the judiciary. Several international/regional organisations working on illegal wildlife trade issues are also connected. If you meet these criteria and wish to gain access, please contact: **contact@eastern-africa-twix.org**

THE OTHER TWIX PLATFORMS

Eastern Africa-TWIX is the newest of four TWIX platforms currently in operation around the world. Each platform functions independently and covers a specific region, including Europe (EU-TWIX), Central Africa (AFRICA-TWIX) and SADC region (SADC-TWIX).



Hands holding rhino horn © Ola Jennersten / WWF-Sweden

INTERNATIONAL SCOPE

SUPPORTING LAW ENFORCEMENT THROUGH COLLABORATION

The mandate for the establishment of an Eastern Africa TWIX emanates from the East Africa Timber Trade Stakeholders' Forum in 2016 and is in line with the East African Community's Strategy of 2017 to Combat Poaching and Illegal Trade and Trafficking of Wildlife and Wildlife Products.

Declarations, commitments and meetings which also support an Eastern Africa-TWIX:

- ✓ The African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa, May 2015;
- ✓ Zanzibar Declaration on Illegal Trade in Timber and Forest Products, September 2015;
- ✓ The 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Annual East Africa Timber Trade Stakeholders' Forum, 2016 to 2019;
- ✓ UNDP Transboundary Environment Crime Experience Sharing Workshop, Arusha, Tanzania, December 2017;
- ✓ EAC meeting of wildlife management experts and development partners, March 2018 UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya;
- ✓ EAC wildlife law enforcement experts meeting on establishing TWIX, Arusha, Tanzania, December 2018; and
- ✓ UNODC workshop on Strengthening of International Cooperation in Wildlife Criminal matters in Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, February 2020

BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- ✓ **Connects officials from different Eastern African countries** via their work email address
- ✓ **Real time information sharing**: alerts, routes, dissimulation methods and other relevant information
- ✓ **Rapid identification assistance**
- ✓ **Creates an international network of officials** implementing CITES at different levels
- ✓ **Knowledge sharing**
- ✓ **Quick sharing of seizures** and stolen specimens alerts
- ✓ **Triggers investigations**
- ✓ **Reveals scope of illegal trade networks**
- ✓ **A fount of useful information** such as training materials, identification guides, and legal texts
- ✓ **Indicator of capacity building needs**
- ✓ **Used to monitor current illegal trade patterns** (e.g. species, countries, concealment methods most relevant in illegal trade): enabling determination of enforcement priorities.

With over 130 messages shared since 2020 between law enforcement agencies on Eastern Africa-TWIX mailing list, countries' member officials can exchange information on seizures of wildlife products and concealment methods, identification techniques of wildlife species traded in Eastern Africa, relevant regulatory and legal advancements and share their experience in the fight against IWT in their daily work.

THE FIRST SUCCESS OF EASTERN AFRICA-TWIX

UGANDA/ TANZANIA/ THE PHILIPPINES: In September 2020, a reptile trafficker attempted to smuggle over two hundred threatened reptiles from Uganda to the Philippines. The trafficker was purportedly from Uganda, with a fake Uganda CITES permit and a bank account in Tanzania. The Eastern-Africa TWIX facilitated communication between Ugandan CITES officials and Tanzanian CITES officials as well as Tanzania's National Taskforce Antipoaching. This allowed an effective response resulting in the arrest of two suspects in Tanzania; investigations are ongoing as of March 2021.

> **"TWIX is a great initiative which should be embraced, Eastern Africa-TWIX has come a long way and I am very glad to see that it has come to fruition**
>
> *Mr. Thomas Jatiko, Uganda's Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions*

Temminck's ground pangolin © naturepl.com / Neil Aldridge / WWF

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The initiation and implementation of Eastern Africa-TWIX has been made possible through the support of the USAID-funded projects, Wildlife Trafficking, Response, Assessment, and Priority Setting (Wildlife TRAPS) and now, Conserving Natural Capital and Enhancing Collaborative Management of Transboundary Resources in East Africa (CONNECT), together with WWF Finland through its support to the East Africa Wildlife Crime Hub of WWF and TRAFFIC.

This report was made possible with support from the American people delivered through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of USAID or the U.S. Government.

For further information, please contact:
Eastern Africa-TWIX Project Manager, TRAFFIC
Plot No. 175/12 Mawalla Road, Mawalla Heritage Park,
P.O. Box 14129, Arusha, Tanzania.
contact@eastern-africa-twix.org

Design by Marcus Cornthwaite
marcus.cornthwaite@traffic.org

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