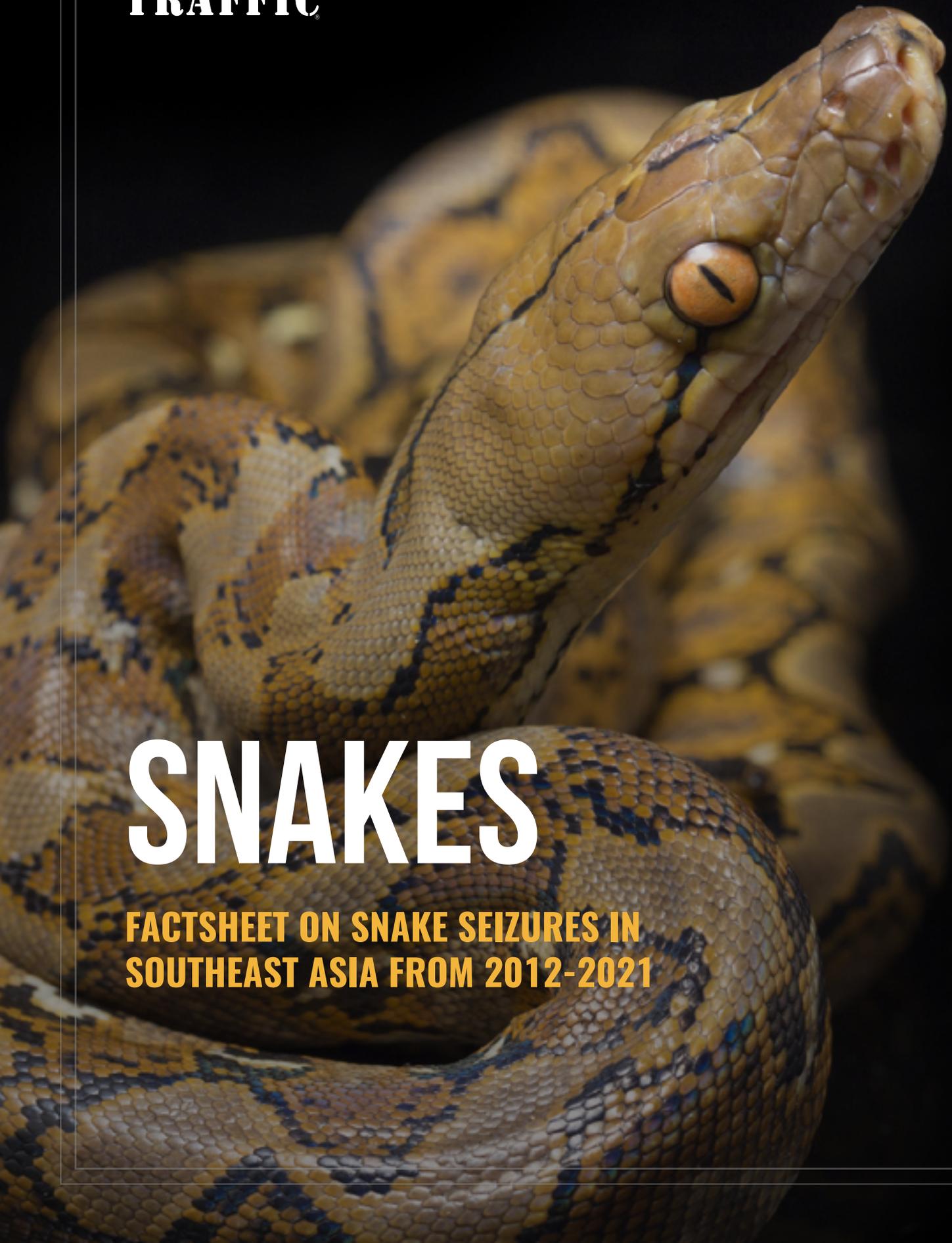


TRAFFIC

SNAKES

**FACTSHEET ON SNAKE SEIZURES IN
SOUTHEAST ASIA FROM 2012-2021**



**OVER 3,700 SNAKE SPECIES
HAVE BEEN DESCRIBED IN
THE WORLD SO FAR.**



DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly a million endangered and threatened snakes, on average are estimated to be sold on the international market every year. That however, this is likely far lower than the true scale of the trade that is both legal and illegal.

Snakes have always intrigued humans – love them or hate or fear them. For many, it's the first, which drives the collection, harvest and

trade of snakes worldwide. This is especially so for the exotic pet trade where deaths caused by snake bites to pet owners and the issue of keeping such pets is a growing issue.

The World Health Organisation notes that up to 2 million people are bitten by venomous snakes in Asia each year¹.

INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL TRADE IN SNAKES

International commercial trade is regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Currently, 164 snake species are regulated under CITES. Analysis of CITES trade data from 1975 to 2018 showed that trade involved:

- 6.2 million CITES-listed live snakes
- 34.5 million snake skins (either whole or processed into products such as handbags and belts)
- over 48,000 snake bodies, and hundreds of skulls, heads and other body parts.

Pythons dominated the global snake trade, accounting for almost 40% of all traded snakes. Live snakes were largely imported by China and the USA. Trade in venomous snakes was also popular, with over 75% of wild-sourced venomous snakes being sourced from Indonesia. The study highlighted that while captive-bred specimens were increasingly reported in trade, the majority of the snake trade assessed over the period were wild-sourced (over 65% from 2015-2017).



almost 40%
of global snake
trade is dominated
by pythons

Extract from: Hierink, F., Bolon, I., Durso, A.M., de Castanesa, R.R., Zambrana-Terrello, C., Eskew, A.E. and Ray, N. (2020). Forty-four years of global trade in CITES-listed snakes: Trends and implications for conservation and public health. *Biological Conservation*: Vol 248

The level of protection and regulation for snakes around the world is disparate. Some countries offer strong regulation and protection from unsustainable collection and trade, while others have minimum standards, or even lesser. When regulation and control is not harmonious across the world, and the business and economic gains are high, it opens the door for loopholes and malpractice, giving rise to illegal trade and laundering of specimens in trade.

SEIZURES OF SNAKES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The illegal trade in snakes is rife in Southeast Asia. Analysis of snake confiscations in the region shows that at least 292 seizures occurred between 2012 and 2021 (Figure 1). (Source: TRAFFIC data). Over half of these occurred in Indonesia and Viet Nam (Figure 2).

Governments do not always report successful action, and the covert nature of any illicit activity and the many variables that influence crime and detection effort means that the true extent is likely to be far greater than those reflected by these seizure records alone.

FIGURE 1
Number of snake seizure incidents in Southeast Asia from 2012-2021

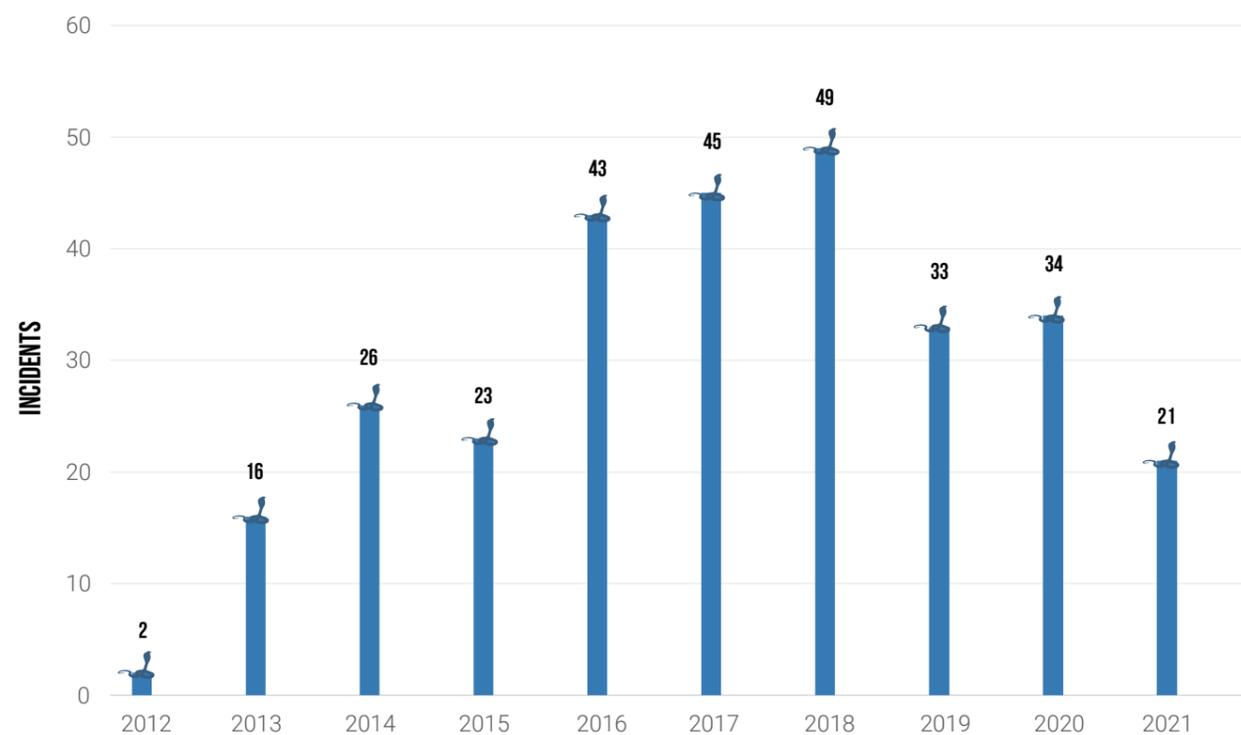
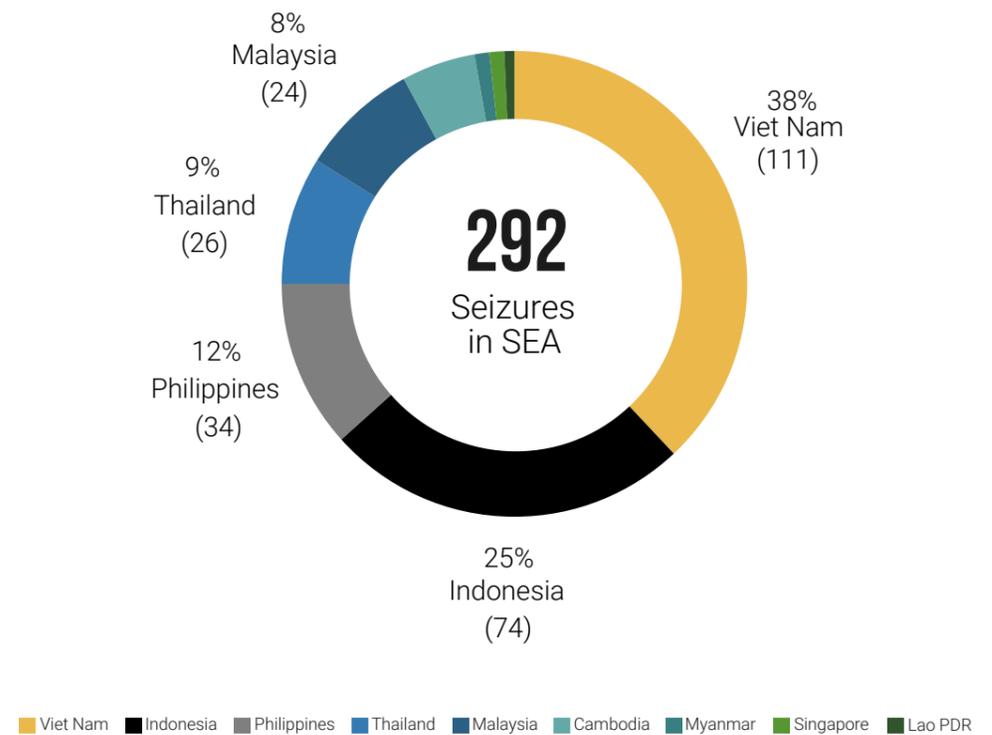


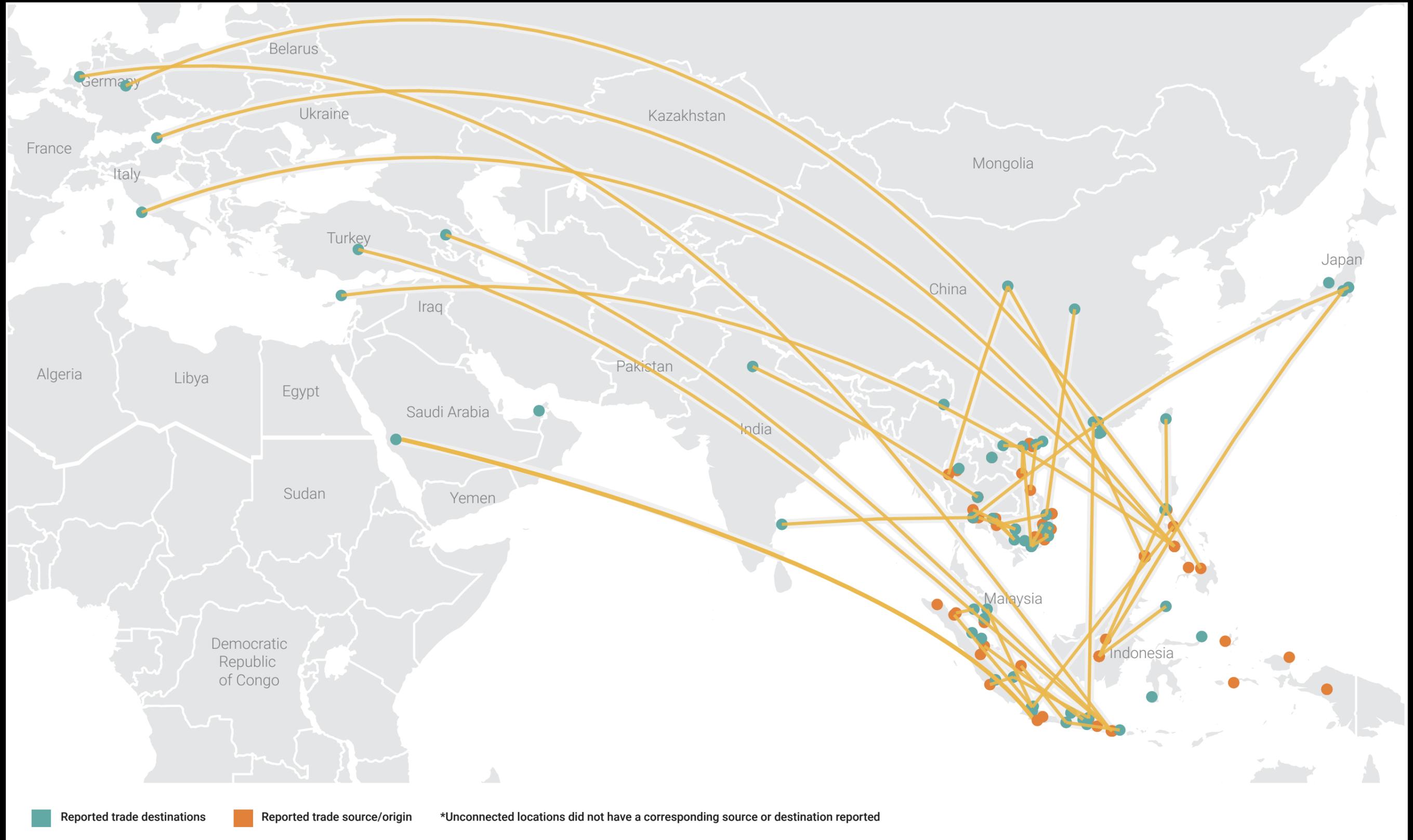
FIGURE 2
Distribution of snake seizures across Southeast Asia from 2012-2021



15%
confiscations occurred
within an airport
accounting for 20%
of all confiscated
snakes

195
incidents involved
CITES Appendix II
listed species

ROUTES FOR SNAKE TRAFFICKING INVOLVING SOUTHEAST ASIA FROM 2012-2021



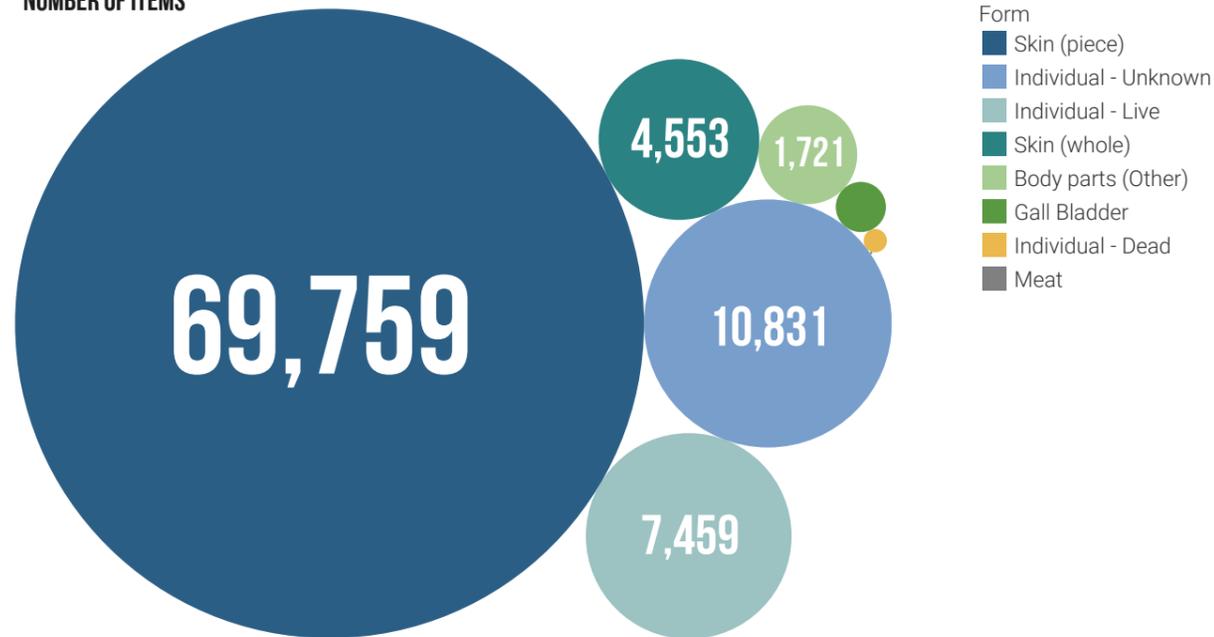
COMMODITIES SEIZED

Over 84% of all incidents included whole snakes (live and dead). Skins were by far the most voluminous individual item confiscated, comprising both skin pieces and whole skins (Figure 3).

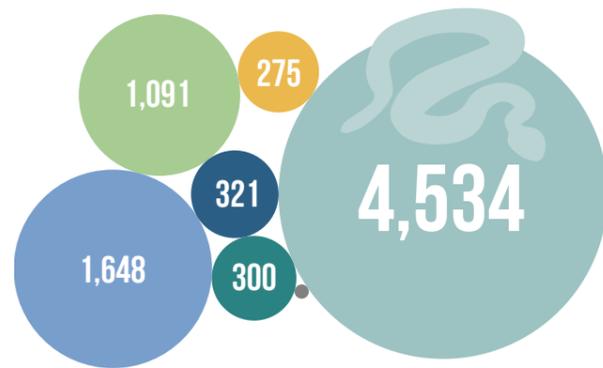
Snakes were also often reported by weight confiscated, with individual snakes accounting for over 5,445kg (84%) seized during this period.

FIGURE 3
Top commodity forms seized in Southeast Asia

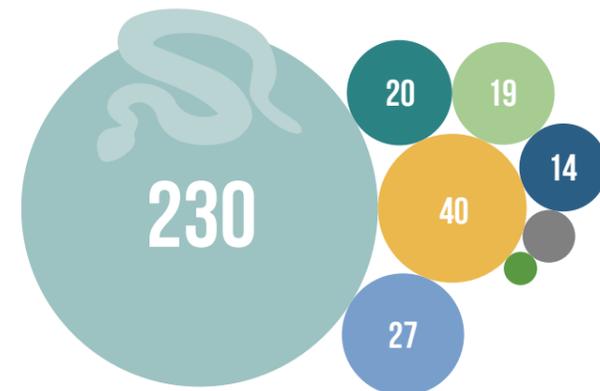
NUMBER OF ITEMS



WEIGHT (KG)



NUMBER OF INCIDENTS



TAXA SEIZED

Pythons (Pythonidae) were the top skins seized, accounting for over 74,200 skins and skin pieces.

Over 14,000 cobras (Elapidae) and vipers (Viperidae), which are venomous, featured among the seized taxa.

SNAKE TRADE AND REGULATION

Issues surrounding the global snake trade are complex. Given the high level of trade, both legal and illegal, improved management and control are needed.

Countries trading in CITES-listed snakes should establish non-detrimental findings (NDF) for wild-caught snakes. Guidance on this is available, including by [TRAFFIC](#).

Governments are also encouraged to set trade and harvest quotas based on scientifically robust and accurate data. Periodic inspections of captive-breeding facilities are needed to verify sourcing, trade and legality.

Governments should consider CITES listings when appropriate to guide responsible trade and regulation for snake species that are

impacted by international commercial trade. Further reading on recommendations from CITES: https://cites.org/sites/default/files/document/E-Res-17-12_0.pdf

More comprehensive research into this voluminous trade is needed, to help government and practitioners manage legal trade responsibly, and reduce illegal and unsustainable trade.

Governments and private sector bodies involved in this trade are encouraged to be vigilant. Take firm action on illegal and unsustainable trade.

Consumers must make responsible choices.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Krishnasamy, K. and Wong, R. (2022). *Snake seizures in Southeast Asia from 2012-2021*. TRAFFIC Southeast Asia Regional Office, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

SOURCE

1 <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/snakebite-envenoming>

IMAGE CREDITS

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WORKING TO ENSURE THE TRADE IN
WILD PLANTS AND ANIMALS IS NOT
A THREAT TO THE CONSERVATION
OF NATURE

TRAFFIC

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