

the dark web, where law enforcement faces much greater challenges.

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### Instagram-fuelled illegal slow loris trade uncovered in Marmaris, Turkey

Exploitation of wildlife on social media is becoming a matter of international concern. Even the most commonly used social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, remain unresponsive to the exploitation of protected species illegally kept as pets and featured in hundreds of viral images and videos. Researchers have shown that people who see threatened species in a human context perceive them as less threatened and as suitable pets. Asia's slow lorises (*Nycticebus* spp.) are one taxon heavily exploited on social media and featured as both pets and photograph props for tourists. Until now the latter threat has been largely restricted to Thailand, as made infamous by a selfie of pop singer Rihanna, who posted on Instagram an image of herself in Thailand in 2013 with two illegally traded pygmy slow lorises (*N. pygmaeus*). Here we present the first evidence of the expansion of the tourist photograph prop trade of slow lorises into Europe. Through exploration of Instagram and direct observations in Turkey, we highlight the popular tourist destination Marmaris, Turkey, as a prime location for slow loris photograph props.

We located photographs on Instagram of animal props in Marmaris, including 135 of slow lorises (37% showed *N. pygmaeus* and 63% showed the Bengal slow loris *N. bengalensis*) posted between August 2012 and January 2017. Other wild animals appearing in posts included sugar gliders, macaws, turtles, vervet monkeys and rabbits. In the posts with slow lorises, uploaders hash tagged them as slow loris, lemur, monkey or bushbaby. Although 83% of the photographs were taken at night, the remainder showed the slow loris paraded in bright daylight; 62% of photographs featured

the slow loris dressed in clothing. Females (84%) were much more likely to post a photograph of themselves with a slow loris than males (16%).

To obtain presence data and assess the welfare of slow loris photograph props first hand, we conducted two investigations in Marmaris in April (7 days) and June (4 days) 2016. When we located wildlife photograph props we recorded the species and descriptive information on health and welfare. We collected evidence while posing as normal tourists, without encouraging or promoting the illegal wildlife trade.

We located two Bengal slow lorises (one juvenile and one adult), and one adult pygmy slow loris in a beach bar in Marmaris. The vendor referred to the slow lorises as lemurs, whereas the bar owner referred to them as sloths. For 10 lira (c. USD 2.75) tourists could have their photograph taken by the vendor and printed out to take away, or they could play with the slow loris, and take photographs with their own devices. Although we did not observe slow lorises during daylight, hours, the bar contained bright lights, and flash photography was frequently used, causing both stress and potential damage to the sensitive eyes of the slow lorises.

When not being used to entice tourists or being held by tourists, the slow lorises were stored behind a small DJ booth. They were fed unsuitable foods, including cherries, grapes and even a wedge of orange taken from a cocktail. Feeding by the vendor or the tourists occurred only when tourists paid to play with the animals. Contrary to evidence we gathered from Instagram, we did not observe slow lorises dressed in clothing. Both of the Bengal slow lorises had had their teeth clipped; this is normally done to prevent them from inflicting their venomous bite.

Bengal and pygmy slow lorises are categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and included on Appendix 1 of CITES, and capturing them is illegal in all range countries where they occur. According to the CITES Trade Database, no non-human primate has ever been legally imported into Turkey, confirming the illegal import of these individuals. Efforts are needed to continue to raise awareness of the plight of slow lorises. Without a change in attitude from the public, the use of slow lorises as photograph props is likely to continue and to spread.

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### A new seed bank for Hispaniola to support the conservation and sustainable use of the Caribbean native flora

In the Caribbean Islands global biodiversity hotspot, a highly diverse flora (13,000 plant species, of which 6,550 are endemics) struggles to coexist with a high human population