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Vietnam species 'risk extinction'



Malayan Tapir, photo by Martin Harvey/WWF-Canon

The tapir is one of the animals facing extinction in Vietnam

Experts in Vietnam have warned that the Vietnamese could be eating a number of wild species into extinction.

The chairman of the Vietnam Zoology Association said animals at risk included the rhinoceros, the white-handed gibbon, the civet and the tapir.

He said that demand for wild animal meat had spread from mountain communities to rich urban areas.

Some 200 species are traded in Vietnam - 80 of them rare, according to the Thanhmien News.

The most common ones include snakes, monitor lizards, pangolins, turtles, wild cats, tigers, leopards, bears, elephants, wild boars, deer, monkeys, chamois and porcupines, the newspaper said.

It quoted Prof Dang Huy Huynh, the Vietnam Zoology Association chairman, as saying that wildlife meat was now served in many Vietnamese restaurants and resorts.

An estimated 3,400 tonnes of wild meat - or a million individual animals - are consumed each year, 18% of them illegally, an official from Vietnam's national assembly said.

More than 66% of poached wildlife is used for food, 32% is exported, and a small number of animals are used for pets and medicinal purposes, another official was quoted as saying.

The experts were speaking at a conference for discussing ways to protect Vietnam's wildlife and natural resources.

It was the first time an advising body to the ruling communist party has been involved in efforts to raise awareness about the illegal wildlife trade, according to Traffic, a wildlife trade monitoring network that took part.