

DUSKY LEAF MONKEYS POPULAR ON YOUTUBE: RISING ILLEGAL EXOTIC PET TRADE ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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YouTube has become an increasingly popular social media platform for the illegal exotic pet trade of dusky leaf monkeys (*Trachypithecus obscurus*) in Southeast Asia. Here, we identified the number of pet dusky leaf monkey videos, their popularity, and engagement on YouTube. One of the authors identified videos with English-language and local language search terms for four Southeast Asia countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar) from September till October 2019 to establish a prior understanding of the potential importance of the illegal exotic pet trade demands through YouTube. The number of videos portraying pet dusky leaf monkeys increased from 2016 to 2019, and in parallel, their popularity and engagement had also increased. The highest increases in both the number of videos produced and their popularity occurred in Malaysia and Myanmar. The results reflect the current "trending" videos that existed to be influential in posting viral pet dusky leaf monkey videos at an international rate. At a domestic rate, potentially effective videos tended to be established by five individual dusky leaf monkey owners. Based on comments such as "I want a baby monkey" and "I like to get one" in the English-language videos, it showed the potentials for driving demand amongst their viewers. These increases in popularity and social media activities highlighted the portrayal of the dusky leaf monkey as a suitable pet. Based on the results, we advise strengthening the wildlife trade legislation and regulating social media in keeping pace with the rapidly shifting nature of the Internet worldwide.