

# Japanese retailer Rakuten slammed over ivory and whale meat products

LONDON, UK: Japanese e-commerce retailer Rakuten is the world's largest online marketplace for elephant ivory and whale meat products, an environmental campaign group said. It said that running the advertisements for these products was akin to arming poachers.



Rakuten needs to withdraw all ivory products from its websites claims the EIA. Image: [World Wild Life](#)

The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) said a search for "ivory" on Rakuten's Japanese website last month yielded more than 28,000 advertisements for elephant ivory products.

A search on the site in June 2013 for "whale" called up more than 1,200 food products, many of them originating from protected species, the London-based group said in a report.

EIA's president Allan Thornton said the advertisements were effectively as deadly as giving bullets to elephant poachers and harpoons to whalers.

"Rakuten must act immediately to ban all ads selling elephant and whale products or its global brand will be irrevocably tainted with the ongoing mass slaughter of these species," he urged.

The Tokyo-based company owns several shopping sites around the world including Rakuten Shopping in the United States, Play.com in Britain and PriceMinister in France. It also owns Canadian e-book reader Kobu and is a major shareholder in Pinterest.



Hundreds of whales are slaughtered every year, mainly by Far Eastern whaling companies. Image: [Surviving Collapse](#)

The commercial hunting of whales is prohibited in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, which was designated by the International Whaling Commission in 1994, but Japan catches the animals there under a "scientific research" loophole in the moratorium.

Ivory trading was banned in 1989 under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, an international agreement between governments, but the illegal ivory trade - estimated to be worth up to US\$10bn a year - continues to be fuelled by demand in Asia and the Middle East.

Africa's elephant population is estimated at 500,000 animals, compared with 1.2m in 1980 and 10m in 1900, and they are listed as vulnerable.

The EIA ran a successful campaign against Amazon.com in 2012 to force it to ban the sale of all whale products, and last year condemned Google for failing to abide by its official policy banning the sale of elephant ivory or whale products.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge