



THE TRADE OF LIVE TARANTULAS AND SCORPIONS IN A SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT – Tarantulas and scorpions are diverse groups of arachnids. The international trade of live arachnids as pets is widespread, with undescribed or newly described species being particularly sought-after by enthusiasts due to their novelty and perceived rarity. Previous studies on wildlife trade in the Philippines have focused on vertebrates (e.g. reptiles, birds, mammals). This study was conducted to provide baseline data on trade dynamics of arachnids. We surveyed five Facebook groups specializing in the trade of live arachnids in 2020 and 2022 which documented more than 16,000 individuals representing 135 and 25 species of tarantulas and scorpions, respectively. Price per individual tarantula ranged from PHP 20 (USD 0.38) for a commonly traded species to PHP 20,000 (USD 382) for an undescribed species. Legality in sourcing and trade is a concern. Non-native arachnids are smuggled regularly by post into the country, while native species are poached and illegally shipped domestically and internationally to supply the pet trade. The Philippine wildlife authorities and Facebook are urged to collaboratively address the ongoing illegal live arachnid trade.

Keywords: arachnid, CITES, Facebook, illegal wildlife trade, Theraphosidae



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