CHIMPFACE: AN UPDATE

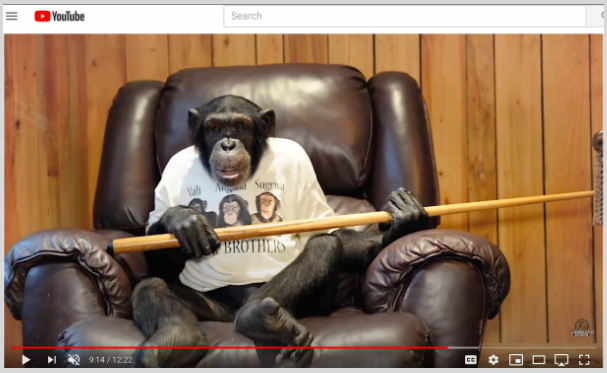
SOFTWARE TO DETECT WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING ONLINE

The illegal wildlife trade is a $7-23 billion dollar industry. Increasingly, buyers and sellers are turning to the internet to facilitate illicit transactions. In 2017, the International Fund for Animal Welfare conducted a six-week study covering four countries - recording over 11,000 endangered and threatened wildlife specimens for sale via 5,381 advertisements, worth nearly 4 million U.S. dollars. Experts agree the amount of wildlife trafficked over the Internet is difficult to estimate, identify, and respond to without a cumulative and automated effort.

CF algorithm locating young chimp faces during testing.

ChimpFace (CF) is developing software to identify, disrupt, and help decrease the international, online trade in wildlife. Using keyword detection and image recognition algorithms for highly trafficked species, ChimpFace will detect illicit posts more accurately and at a much greater scale than current manual search efforts. Intelligence collected will help uncover criminal networks, providing a critical method for significant progress towards targets and commitments outlined in national policies and international conventions.

In April 2020 ChimpFace pilot tested its software to detect wildlife trafficking online by deploying an algorithm to detect baby/juvenile chimpanzee faces within publicly available YouTube videos. The algorithm has very high precision and a low false-positive rate. The deployment targeted videos tagged with key words associated with the sale of animals (species name, sale, pet, etc.) and automated the detection of chimp faces. The test returned approximately 100 recent videos matching the search parameters, including clear instances of chimpanzee exploitation. Pilot testing confirmed the technical feasibility and potential of this approach.



A YouTube video detected by CF algorithm.

The ChimpFace team requests your support in continuing to improve, test, and deploy our technology.
To inquire, please reach out to alexandra.h.russo@gmail.com.

Volunteer & Research

Support data collection and labeling efforts.

Investigate platform APIs and data sharing policies.

Research wildlife trafficking trends.

Connect & Mentor

Refer appropriate staff at social media platforms.

Advise on latest data science techniques, algorithm application, and optimization.

Connect to potential partners, customers, and stakeholders.

Fund & Elevate

Donate to or fund ongoing project development.

Help reach donors, funders, and other appropriate audiences for project development.

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