

IUCN/SSC TRAFFIC GROUP

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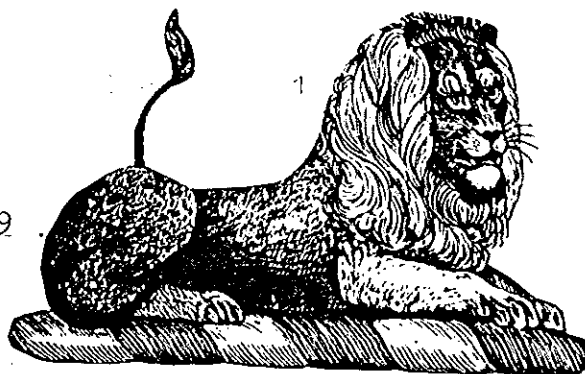
BULLETIN

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Cites Conference in Costa Rica

The second conference of the parties to the Washington Convention was held in San Jose, capital of Costa Rica, in March. Delegates representing 39 CITES parties attended, and a further 15 states were present as observers. Also the European Community, 3 UN agencies and 55 NGOs were represented. At least 35 of the NGOs were US or US-based.

Two documents which provoked considerable discussion were Doc. 2.6 Annex 2, based on data from TRAFFIC (which revealed that substantial numbers of cat skins were being imported to the UK and West Germany) and Doc. 2.5 Annex 8 (which described the wildlife traffic between Bangkok and Brussels, and the correspondence which the CITES secretariat has had concerning it).

The UK, Switzerland and West Germany proposed that CITES should adopt a 'minimum list' of parts and derivatives of listed species, on the grounds that there was wide disagreement among member states on just what parts and derivatives were 'readily recognisable'. This proposal was opposed by other countries, plus many of the conservationist NGOs, on the grounds that it would soon become a 'maximum list'. The minimum list was rejected by a narrow majority.

Australia suggested that the increase in trade in non-CITES wildlife was a negative result of the convention. Other countries - notably Botswana and

Brazil - disagreed strongly. They wanted to encourage trade in commoner species as the rational exploitation of a natural resource. India, on the other hand, anticipated that before long it might ban all wildlife exports, of any species. This discussion relates to a fundamental difference in conception of the convention. Is CITES (as its preamble suggests) a means of gradually reducing all trade in wildlife, because this commerce is undesirable? Or is it, on the contrary, a means of regulating trade in a natural renewable resource, with a view to maximising its utilisation in the long run, as many wildlife-rich Third World nations believe. The vicuna debate (see below) also reflected this dilemma.

There was some discussion of the desirability of trading in hunting trophies of Appendix I species. It was agreed that culling of Appendix I species might sometimes be necessary for effective management, and that it was not incompatible with CITES for tourists and sportsmen to pay to shoot the surplus animals, or to sell the trophies. Botswana and Zambia argued this case particularly strongly.

The conference called on party states to produce regular, prompt and detailed reports on the wildlife trade in their countries. It also called for greater uniformity of permits and certificates issued under CITES.

The conference decided that confiscated specimens of Appendix I species should never be allowed to re-enter the commercial trade, but that physical destruction of them should be considered a last resort. The CITES secretariat was asked to establish a clearing house for the international exchange of confiscated specimens for scientific or educational use, or to help customs officials in identification.

It was agreed by the parties that UNEP should be asked to provide funds for the continuation of the work in preparing an international loose-leaf identification manual for CITES countries. The US tabled some sample sheets of an identification manual relating to crocodiles, and Switzerland demonstrated its own different system.

A proposal to abandon the use of subspecies in the CITES appendices was modified; only valid and readily recognisable subspecies should now be included. Alternatively, a species could be included for only one or two countries within its geographic range.

FINANCE

Since its inception, the CITES secretariat has been financed by the UN Environment Programme. UNEP has sub-contracted this task to IUCN, but continued to supply the money. It has been argued that it would not be sensible for CITES to develop its own system of collecting funds.

The UNEP Governing Council decided in 1978 that the CITES party states ought themselves to finance CITES, and determined to phase out UNEP funding completely by the end of 1983. The 1979 CITES conference had therefore to make some moves towards this, but was restricted in what it could do because any contributions from parties would require an amendment to the convention.

CITES decided to call an extraordinary meeting of the parties, to be held in June 1979 in Bonn, West Germany, specifically to do this. It is likely that the parties will then agree to establish a trust fund, to be collected and administered by UNEP (which will deduct the UN's standard 14 per cent handling charge), with each state contributing according to the recognised UN proportions.

In the meantime, the conference approved a two-year 1980-81 budget of \$ 1 023 000. Of this, \$ 350 000 will come from UNEP and \$ 673 000 will be contributed voluntarily by the CITES parties, according to the recognised UN scale. This will involve the US paying 25 per cent (\$ 246 000) and Cyprus, Guyana, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, Paraguay and twelve other small states paying \$ 98.48 each. The United States indicated that it would in addition make a further voluntary contribution in 1980 of \$ 100 000.

CHANGES TO THE APPENDICES

Although a large number of proposals were submitted, a high proportion of them were withdrawn, usually because insufficient data was presented by the proposers.

Some of the most drastic changes were with the whales and dolphins. Most of the river dolphins were added to Appendix I.

The conference asked all CITES parties not to import any whales or whale products which came from any species or stock protected from commercial whaling by the International Whaling Commission; encouraged all CITES parties to adhere to the International Whaling Convention; and placed all whale and dolphin species not already on the appendices on its CITES Appendix II.

Three species of South American fox (heavily traded in) were added to Appendix II, and a fur seal was transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II. A number of proposals to remove cat species were either withdrawn or defeated.

Grevy's zebra was added to Appendix I, and Hartmann's zebra was added to Appendix II. the lechwe was dropped from Appendix I to Appendix II, as there is evidence that there are now substantial numbers.

Chile proposed to downgrade all vicuna from Appendix I to Appendix II; this was heavily defeated, because in most countries vicuna are still rare. Peru proposed to shift only the Pampa Galeras populations of vicuna to Appendix II - a much more acceptable proposal, since this reserve has been carefully managed for over ten years, and numbers have increased from under 5 000 to almost 40 000. Brazil called the Pampa Galeras vicuna "the best managed natural resource in Latin America", and Peru now wants to crop the vicuna and sell the wool. However, some protectionist groups lobbied and spoke strongly in favour of its retention on Appendix I, and the proposal was rejected. It was argued that the La Paz treaty on the conservation of the vicuna (Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina) was being re-negotiated in September 1979, and that any CITES changes should wait until after that date. In fact, Peru had stated that she did not intend to start trading in vicuna wool until 1980 at the earliest.

A certain sense of having been manoeuvred by the US-based protectionist NGOs (the US government had supported Peru) led 21 delegations to call for the issue to be reopened. A vote was taken, which was two short of the two-thirds majority needed to reconsider it. Peru may now take the issue to a postal ballot within CITES

The two most significant changes in the birds were the addition of all birds of prey, both nocturnal and diurnal (except New World vultures) to Appendix II. This will enable close monitoring of owls, hawks, eagles and other species, which are often highly vulnerable to threats from trade, especially falconry.

The major reptile changes were the addition of yet two more crocodiles to Appendix I - Crocodylus acutus (USA population) and C. porosus. In the latter case the population of Papua New Guinea (which is being effectively managed) was excluded. The Mississippi alligator was downgraded from Appendix I to II, as this species, at least in Florida and Louisiana, is now locally abundant and can sustain a harvest; in addition there are a number of alligator farms.

The biggest changes to the appendices were also those that provoked the least discussion - the plants. The CITES parties readily agreed to the addition of nearly twenty genera, including Banksia and many other Australian species. The Chilean population of the monkey puzzle tree was added to Appendix I.