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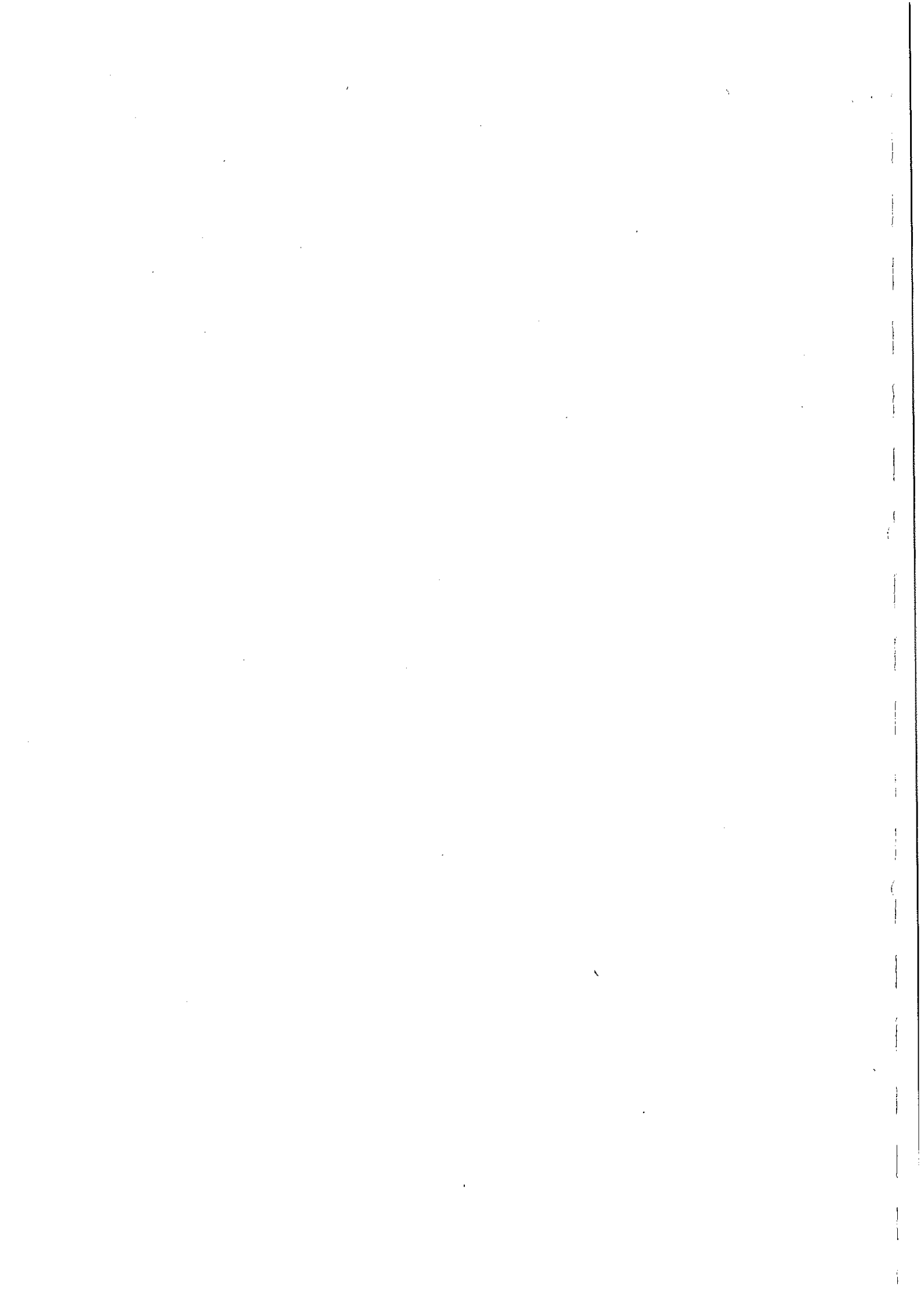
Trends in Wildlife Trade from India to the United States

by

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Abstract

Trends in Wildlife Trade from India to the United States

India, once one of the largest exporters of wildlife and wildlife products to the United States, has taken many measures to protect its species from possibly excessive trade, including the implementation of protective legislation and conservation programs. In this report I analyze wildlife trade statistics to the U.S. from India and discuss how legislation has reduced trade in most wildlife categories.

An analysis of wildlife trade trends shows that exports to the U.S. from India have fallen dramatically over past decades. U.S. imports of rhesus monkeys (Macaca mulatta), after reaching a peak of 200,000 in the late 1950's, declined until 1978 when India banned primate exports. In the early 1970's, India was the second largest exporter of live mammals to the U.S., with primates composing the majority of exports.

The number of wild birds imported into the U.S. from India dropped from an average of over 200,000 per year in the early 1970's to an annual average of only a few thousand in the early 1980's.

India has traditionally maintained a large trade in reptile skins. Conscious of the possibly deleterious effect of this trade on native reptile populations, Indian officials imposed bans on reptile skin exports. Despite these bans, however, it appears that trade, particularly in snakeskins, still flourishes. The U.S. continues to import annually several hundred thousand whipsnake skins (Ptyas mucosus) originating in India.

In 1981 and 1982, India exported several other wildlife items to the U.S., including several million shells, nearly one million mammal bone and skin products (from water buffaloes, Bubalus bubalis and dromedary camels, Camelus dromedarius), and thousands of manufactured African elephant ivory products.

Wildlife trade from India to the United States has undergone many changes over past decades, including changes in the types and numbers of species traded. Live primates once traded extensively for research purposes are no longer exported. The number of birds exported for the pet trade has decreased, but the percent composition of psittacines has increased. Products and skins from Indian reptiles, traditionally heavily traded, continue to be imported by the U.S. in large numbers despite legislative protection in India.

Indian legislation has been an important factor in the overall decline in wildlife trade. Some laws and regulations have been enforced effectively, thereby protecting the species concerned. However, others appear to be violated, resulting in a continuation of trade at levels possibly detrimental to wild populations. India ratified the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in July 1976, thereby agreeing to regulate trade in some species that were not covered under domestic legislation and were not subject to prior export control.

Primate Trade.

In the early 1970's, India was the second largest exporter of live mammals to the United States. Between 1970 and 1972, the U.S. imported 66,178 mammals from India, almost all of which were rhesus monkeys (*Macaca mulatta*) (Clapp, 1974; Clapp & Paradiso, 1973; Paradiso & Fisher, 1972). In 1955, the U.S. and India entered into an agreement permitting rhesus monkey exports from India to the U.S. for use in the development and testing of the polio vaccine and in other biomedical research. U.S. imports of rhesus monkeys from India averaged 120,000 animals annually between 1956 and 1960 (Conway, 1966), and as a result, populations of the monkeys began to decline drastically. In the province of Uttar Pradesh (northern India), intensive trapping for export had caused a pronounced change in the age structure of rhesus populations. The population, once thought to be between 10-20 million, was estimated at only one million in 1961 (Southwick et al., 1975).

In an attempt to regulate the trade, India established several export quotas: the first at 50,000 rhesus monkeys per year, then 30,000 per year in 1973, and finally 20,000 per year in 1974. Between 1964 and 1978, the U.S. imported 332,000 primates from India, most of which were probably rhesus monkeys (Mack & Eudey, in press). Conscious of their seriously depleted monkey populations and also of U.S. research violations of the initial 1955 agreement, Indian officials banned all exports of rhesus monkeys effective April 1978. Since that date, no primates have been imported into the United States from India (Figure 1).

Despite the unavailability of rhesus monkeys from India, research programs in the U.S. continue. Captive-breeding programs in the U.S. have produced over 20,000 rhesus monkeys between 1978 and 1981 (Mack, 1982). In addition, researchers have begun substituting long-tailed macaques (Macaca fascicularis) for rhesus monkeys in many studies (Mack & Eudey, in press).

Live Bird Trade.

Between 1970 and 1976, India exported nearly 13 million birds worldwide, an average of 1.85 million annually (Inskipp, 1981a). Over 60 countries imported these birds, with the U.S. being the fifth-largest importer after Japan, Italy, France, and Belgium. The U.S. imported more live birds from India between 1970 and 1972 than from any other single nation, averaging over 210,000 birds annually and representing more than one quarter of all live birds imported by the U.S. during that period (Clapp, 1975; Clapp & Banks, 1973a and b).

Since 1972, U.S. imports of live birds originating in India have decreased greatly. Annual U.S. imports averaged 3,212 birds in 1981 and 1982 (Table 1). The decline is due in part to the temporary U.S. ban on all bird imports in August 1972 and to U.S. quarantine restrictions implemented to help eliminate outbreaks of exotic Newcastle disease (Inskipp, 1981a). The U.S. resumed importing live birds in 1974 but imports from India have yet to reach the levels attained in the early 1970's. It also appears that U.S. imports of birds from India may have decreased due to the availability of less expensive birds from other countries, such as small seedeaters from Senegal (ibid).

The export of birds from India is controlled by the Exports (Control) Order (made under the Imports and Exports [Control] Act, 1947). The Order consists of two parts and is revised each year. The Indian government does not generally allow exports of species listed on Part A. Species listed on Part B may be exported if certain conditions are met. The number of species added to both lists has increased annually, although changes to the lists in 1979 decreased the number of birds on Part B by half.

In the early 1970's, species of the family Estrildidae composed almost 90 percent of India's bird exports to the United States. Red avadavat or munia (Amandava amandava), black-headed (or chestnut) mannikin (Lonchura malacca), spotted (or nutmeg) mannikin (L. punctulata), and Indian silverbill (Euodice malabarica) were among the most frequently traded species (ibid). Today, the numbers of these species found in trade are greatly reduced.

The percentage of psittacines out of the total number of birds imported by the U.S. from India increased from an annual average of 3 percent between 1970 and 1972 to an average of 46 percent for 1981 and 1982 combined. However, due to lack of data for the intermediate years, it is difficult to determine if the percent increase has been a continuous one. Psittacines

imported from India totalled 1,986 in 1970, 13,200 in 1971, and 3,665 in 1972 (Clapp, 1970, 1971, 1972), with ringneck parakeets (Psittacula krameri) and blossom-headed parakeets (P. roseata) being the most commonly-traded species. In 1981 and 1982, the U.S. imported 2,956 psittacines out of a total of 6,427 birds (Table 1). More than half of the psittacines originated in India and were re-exported to the U.S. through Belgium. The vast majority of birds were ringneck parakeets, one of the three psittacine species not covered by the general parrot listing under CITES.

Reptile Skin Trade.

Historically, reptile skins and products from India have been an important trade (Inskipp, 1981b). The Indian snakeskin trade peaked in the 1950's, with an estimated 12 million skins exported each year (Inskipp & Wells, 1979). Although the quantity of skins exported from India has declined considerably since that time, the number still in trade appears high when one considers that India has enacted a total ban on the export of reptile skins (Export [Control] Order 1979). By 1973, India had banned the export of the Indian python (Python molurus molurus) and all poisonous snakes and had placed quotas on all other reptiles (Inskipp, 1981b). In 1976, exports of raw snakeskin were banned in India and, in 1979, all commercial exports of other reptile skins were prohibited.

Despite this legislation, large quantities of reptile skins originating in India continue to enter the U.S. each year. Indian snakeskins compose the vast majority of these reptile items, with oriental rat snake (Ptyas mucosus), called "whipsnake" in trade, being the most commonly-traded species.

Some of the Indian reptile skins currently in trade may be from stockpiles. At the time of the ban, these stockpiles were declared to the government and dealers were allowed to continue trade within the country with only these legally acquired skins (ibid). There may also have been stockpiles in several European countries (ibid). The large quantity of snakeskins still in trade, however, possibly indicates the illegal smuggling of these skins out of the country. In 1979 for example, 150,000 snakeskins were seized by Indian Customs authorities at the Calcutta airport, with part of the shipment destined for West Germany (CITES Secretariat, pers. comm.). The three main species involved in this seizure were whipsnake, Asiatic cobra (Naja naja), and Indian python.

In 1981 and 1982, 632,219 raw reptile skins originating in India arrived in the U.S., most of which were re-exported through West Germany and the United Kingdom (Table 1). Of these skins, 4,663 came from CITES-listed reptile species. Whipsnake skins composed the vast majority of the non-CITES listed imports. Only 1,705 snakeskins were directly exported from India to the United States.

In addition, the U.S. imported 900,838 manufactured Indian reptile products in 1981 and 1982; Italy and Spain were the primary re-exporting countries of manufactured Indian reptile leather. Less than 3 percent of

the manufactured items imported involved CITES-listed species (totalling 23,942 manufactured products). According to the U.S. 1981 CITES Annual Report, the U.S. imported over 16,000 manufactured products from India made from Pacific monitor skins (Varanus indicus). Water monitors (V. salvator), reticulated pythons (Python reticulatus), and Burmese pythons (P. molurus bivittatus) were the other CITES-listed reptile species most often found in trade, and declared as originating in India. However, Pacific monitor lizards and Burmese pythons do not occur in India, water monitor lizards are found on Andaman Islands, and reticulated pythons are native to the Nicobar Islands only (Groombridge, 1981).

Shell Trade.

India exports millions of shells to the United States each year, the vast majority (over 95 percent) of which are directly exported from India. Imports for 1981 and 1982 totalled 5,536,342 raw shells and 2,132,183 manufactured products such as jewelry pieces, lamp shades, and plant hangers (Table 1). Among the most commonly-imported shells were cowries (Cypraea spp., particularly C. tigris), turbans (Turbo spp.) and window-pane oysters (Placuna placenta).

Mammal Products Trade.

In 1981 and 1982, hundreds of thousands of mammal skins and manufactured products were in trade from India to the United States. The vast majority of these imports were products made from water buffalo (Bubalus bubalis) skins and bones. The U.S. imported 309,895 raw skins and 311,900 manufactured skins from India in 1981 and 1982 (Table 1).

In addition to the water buffalo skin trade, the U.S. imported large quantities of bones from water buffaloes and dromedary camels (Camelus dromedarius) to carve into beads, necklaces, and bracelets. Over 322,000 raw bones and nearly 1.4 million manufactured bone products made from these two mammals were imported in 1981 and 1982. Almost all U.S. imports of water buffalo and dromedary camel products came directly from India.

Although it is likely that most of the water buffalo and camel products in trade came from domestic stock, the information is included since these imports compose a significant part of current U.S. trade in animal products from India.

Elephant Ivory Trade.

Historically, India had been one of the principal carving centers for ivory from the Asian elephant. Habitat destruction and commercial exploitation severely reduced populations of the Asian elephant. Although the supply of Asian elephants decreased, the demand for ivory by consuming nations did not.

In 1975, the Asian elephant was listed on CITES Appendix I; this action prohibited any legal commercial trade in its products. However, African elephants, listed on CITES Appendix II in 1977, still could be traded legally, provided certain requirements were met. Because India's carving centers were already established, India converted from carving Asian elephant ivory to that of the African elephant.

According to India's 1981 CITES Annual Report, the U.S. was the third largest consumer of Indian ivory, importing 13 percent of India's total ivory re-exports in 1981. The U.S. 1981 CITES Annual Report shows that only Hong Kong and Japan re-exported more ivory to the U.S. than did India. In 1981 and 1982 combined, the U.S. imported 128,240 items and 56,061 kg of worked ivory products from India (Table 2).

Conclusion.

India was once one of the largest exporters of live wildlife and wildlife products to the United States and other consuming nations. As a result of laws and regulations passed over the last two decades, trade in many wildlife categories has declined dramatically. Although legislation and enforcement have appeared to control possibly excessive trade in Indian rhesus monkeys, birds, and Asian elephant ivory, it is unclear whether these measures have also been effective for trade in reptile products, particularly snakeskins.

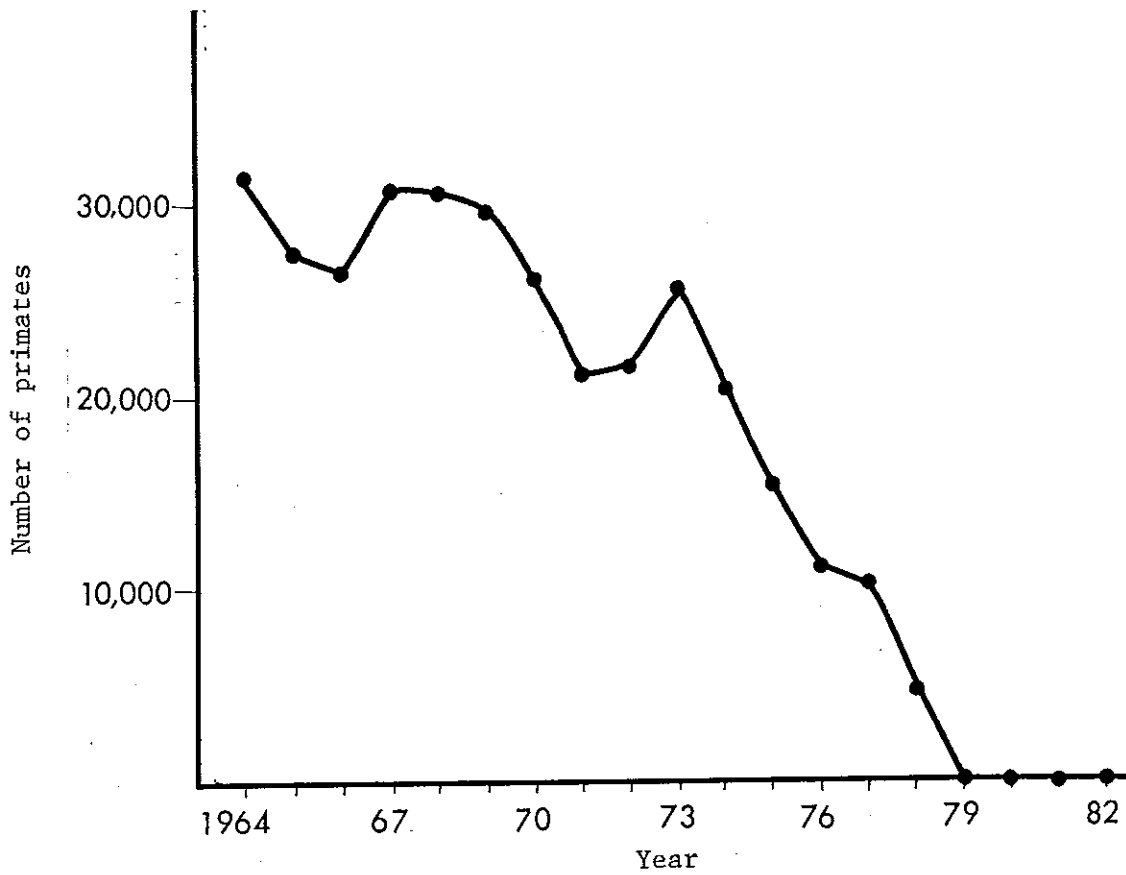


Figure 1. Primates imported into the United States from India.

SOURCE: U.S. Imports for Consumption, compiled by Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Table 1. U.S. wildlife imports originating in India.

Wildlife category	Quantity		
	1981	1982	
birds	psittacines	2,952	4
	non-psittacines	2,978	493
	TOTAL BIRDS	5,930	497
reptile skins	raw	455,695	176,524
	manufactured products	440,666	460,172
shells	raw	2,247,809	3,288,533
	manufactured products	847,784	1,284,399
*water buffalo	raw skins	171,899	137,996
	manufactured skins	97,299	214,601
*water buffalo & *dromedary camel	raw bones	272,977	49,673
	manufactured bones	651,109	728,278

* Probably from domestic stock.

SOURCE: Compiled from 3-177 declaration of importation forms, Law Enforcement Division, Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Table 2. Manufactured elephant ivory products re-exported from India to the U.S.

Declared country of origin	1981		1982	
	Quantity	Declared US\$ Value	Quantity ¹	Declared US\$ Value
Commercial imports				
Africa	2	539	-	-
Botswana	2,000	ND	1,648	13,522
			12 kg	3,451
Kenya	41,936	211,585	318	9,605
South Africa	-	-	71	1,081
Tanzania	37,776	190,738	28,818	207,144
			& 56,022 kg	132,219
Thailand*	-	-	741	5,462
Zimbabwe	-	-	8,622	49,689
			27 kg	7,624
Unknown	1	100	6,154	92,102
Subtotal	81,715	402,962	46,372 & 56,061 kg	521,899
Non-commercial imports				
Africa	5	615	1	52
India*	31	1,234	5	315
Kenya	2	770	3	950
Tanzania	1	407	32	ND
Unknown	65	2,523	8	346
Subtotal	104	5,549	49	1,663

¹ Number of items, unless otherwise specified.

* This ivory may have been from Asian elephants (antique or pre-Convention ivory) or the reported information may have been miscoded.

SOURCE: Compiled from 3-177 declaration of importation forms, Law Enforcement Division, Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

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