

# CITES UPDATE

Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora & Fauna

## Report of the CITES 23<sup>rd</sup> Animals Committee Meeting April 19-23, 2008, Geneva, Switzerland

**TO:** Directors- Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Directors- Northeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Directors- Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Directors- Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

**FROM:** Carolyn Caldwell- MAFWA CITES Representative  
Jack Buckley- NEAFWRA CITES Representative  
Buddy Baker- SEAFWA CITES Representative  
Dale Toweill- WAFWA CITES Representative  
Don MacLauchlan- Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
Mike Berger- U.S. CITES Delegate for State Fish & Wildlife Agencies

**Introduction:** Jack Buckley (Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife), Buddy Baker (South Carolina Department of Natural Resources), Dale Toweill (Idaho Fish and Game), and Don MacLauchlan (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) represented the state fish and wildlife agencies at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Animals Committee held in Geneva, Switzerland from April 19-23, 2008. Carolyn Caldwell (Ohio Division of Wildlife) and Donald MacLauchlan (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) attended the preceding 17<sup>th</sup> Plants Committee and the one-day joint session with the Animals Committee.

**Summary Overview:** The 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Animals Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) met from April 19-23, 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland. On April 19<sup>th</sup> a joint session was held with the 17<sup>th</sup> Plants Committee.

The joint session addressed issues of interest to both committees, including: the revision of the terms of reference of the Plants and Animals Committees; cooperation with advisory bodies of other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements; review of significant trade in specimens of Appendix II species; an international expert workshop on non-detriment findings; and transport of live animals and plants.

The Animals Committee discussed 21 agenda items, including: the review of significant trade in Appendix II species; production systems for specimens of CITES-listed species; conservation and management of sharks; the periodic review of animal species included in the Convention's appendices; and a proposal to transfer the Mexican population of *Crocodylus moreletii* from Appendix I to Appendix II.

The following items were discussed in detail at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Animals Committee Meeting. Several working groups formed to further discuss matters related to over arching topics. In cases where these working groups discussed issues of importance to the state agencies more details have been provided:

- Review of Significant Trade in Specimens of Appendix-II Species

Review of Significant Trade Working Group: This working group went through a list of 45 individual species and genera to determine which need taxon and country-specific status assessments or evaluation of threats relative to the Scientific Authorities' non-detriment findings. Such a review would be used to determine if non-detriment findings remain appropriate, and might result in a change in CITES status. Three North American game species were identified from the preliminary list of taxa:

The Humane Society of the United States recommended that North American **black bears** be considered for a significant trade review. Black bears are listed on Appendix II. This was unexpected with the potential to result in a huge amount of work for states involved in black bear harvest and management, including the potential for either CITES tagging requirements (as are presently in place for bobcats and river otters) or consideration for listing in Appendix I (and prohibition of international trade). Responses by delegates from the United States and Canada relative to international trade issues and an intervention from the AFWA CITES Technical Work Group representative addressing population distribution, status, harvest, and population monitoring resulted in dismissal of this species from further discussion.

In addition, Humane Society International proposed that **river otters** be considered for worldwide trade review, based on old harvest data (1995) and increases in international trade. River otters are currently listed on Appendix II as a "look-alike" species. Coincidentally the USFWS is considering a proposal by the state agencies to develop a nationwide non-detriment finding reevaluated on a five year basis as opposed to annual non-detriment findings completed by each individual state agency. The trade review, if accepted, could have de-railed this process, potentially requiring annual documentation by the state agencies. Again, information provided by delegates from the United States and Canada relative to international trade issues and an intervention from the AFWA CITES Technical Work Group representative addressed river otter distribution, population status, harvest, and population monitoring resulted in having this species dropped.

The Humane Society of the United States requested that **sandhill cranes** be considered for significant trade review, based on harvest and international transport (largely hunter-killed birds entering the United States from Canada). Following discussion of the merits of this proposal, it was dropped from consideration.

State agencies should note that the Chief of the U.S. CITES Scientific Authority feels the removal of these species from significant trade review consideration at the international level will likely prompt information requests from the Humane Society relative to harvest and management of black bears and river otters. State agencies should be prepared to deal with these issues.

- Periodic Review of Animal Species Included in the Cites Appendices

Periodic Review of the Felidae Working Group: This Working Group was charged with determining which of the world's cat species needed a biological and significant trade review to determine appropriate listing under CITES. This review has critical importance to state agencies, since bobcat Appendix II listing has resulted in a significant tracking and monitoring system for bobcat harvests nationwide. To date, only the review of the *Lynx* species (including bobcats) has been completed. This review, done by the US delegation, was conducted in order to advance a proposal to remove bobcats from the Appendix II listing. The working group was further tasked with addressing the review of all cats and need to address worldwide "look-alike" issues. As a result of the Working Group, the mountain lion was assigned to the lowest level of concern for future significant trade review. While Mexico agreed to undertake a trade review for the jaguar.

All range country members for bobcats (United States, Canada, and Mexico) were directed to meet with range countries for European lynx and Iberian lynx within the year to address “look-alike” issues as they pertain to illegal international trade. This is a significant and fortuitous outcome, as it provides opportunity for the US to meet directly with counterparts in the European Union to specifically address the greatest hurdle to bobcat Appendix II de-listing, the issue of threats to endangered species associated with smuggled European species entering illegal trade by being masqueraded as bobcats. European representatives blocked a de-listing proposal at the 2007 14<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties, based primarily on those concerns. A meeting with all range countries where these concerns can be addressed in a scientific (as opposed to an emotional) context, with actual data and evidence would be beneficial. The Working Group also proposed updating the CITES Identification Manual for all Felids worldwide, to capture recent improvements in identification.

- Selection of a Representative For The Standing Committee Working Group Reviewing The Implementation And Effectiveness of the Universal Tagging System and the Trade in Small Crocodylian Leather Goods
- Sturgeon and Paddlefish

Sturgeon and Paddlefish Working Group met to consider the impacts of worldwide harvest of sturgeons and paddlefish to meet a growing international market for caviar, with adverse impacts to many of the world’s populations of these species. The Working Group concluded with a recommendation that the CITES Secretariat hold a population assessment workshop with a affected range countries and associated experts. The focus of the meeting will be on Caspian Sea stock assessment methodologies and needed changes and improvements. The outcome of this meeting has potential to result in new stock assessment methodologies that may be relevant to management of sturgeon and paddlefish throughout the United States.

- Nomenclatural Matters
- Conservation and Management of Sharks
- Transport of Live Animals
- Proposal to Transfer the Mexican Population of *Crocodylus Moreletii* from Appendix I to Appendix II

Mexico submitted a draft proposal to downlist Mexican populations of Morelet’s crocodile. The proposal was reviewed and it was suggested that Mexico consider downlisting all populations of this species in both affected range countries. A proposal to exempt pieces of skin in trade was rejected.

- Regional Reports
- Progress Report on the Identification Material

An in-depth summary of the meeting, work group recommendations, and actions taken by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Animals Committee is available at:

<http://www.iisd.ca/download/pdf/enb2162e.pdf>      <http://www.iisd.ca/cites/ac23pc17/>

To learn more about the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, visit the CITES website at: <http://www.cites.org/>