

Cats at CITES CoP 14

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The 14th Conference of the Parties to CITES met 3-15 June 2007 in The Hague, The Netherlands, and several cat issues were taken up.

CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) is the UN convention governing wildlife trade between nations. Most of the world's countries are signatory Parties (=168). All felid species are listed on either Appendices I or II of the Convention, meaning that trade is controlled by permits. Trade for commercial purposes is generally prohibited for Appendix I species (with some exceptions, notable for felids the allowance of limited trade in leopard trophies). Implementation of the Convention is guided by Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the Parties. Every three years, CITES convenes with both State Parties (government delegations which can propose and vote on changes and actions) and NGOs (which can't, but can wield considerable influence).

Tiger and Asian Big Cats

Concern over India's lower tiger numbers (Cat News reference) and China's recent consideration of legalizing domestic (national) trade in farmed tiger products (Nowell and Xu, 2007) put the tiger in the spotlight at COP14. Procedurally, discussions centered around a CITES resolution dating back to the early 1990s, Resolution Conf. 12.5, which says that domestic medicinal markets for Asian big cat parts should be eliminated. Chinese government officials said that China was seeking international input on their domestic policy review (see Box). There was considerable concern among the tiger conservation community over the extent to which countries, particularly tiger Range States, would be willing to stand behind Resolution Conf. 12.5 and voice opposition to tiger farming and re-opening domestic trade in China.

As it happened, leadership by the Range States led to the adoption of a



Introduction to the side event on the regional African lion conservation strategies. From left to right: Hans Bauer, Morris Mtsambiwa, Holly Dublin, Francis Tarla and Kristin Nowell (Photo U. Breitenmoser).

strong new Decision against tiger farming. China joined with India, Nepal and Russia to submit a draft Decision that called for a number of actions including strengthened enforcement measures. When the floor was opened for discussion of it, other countries proposed various changes to the text and inclusion of additional language, and the United States proposed this text to specifically address tiger farming. "Parties with intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale shall implement measures to restrict the captive population to a level supportive only of conserving wild tigers; tigers should not be bred for trade in their parts and derivatives."

China argued that CITES, as an international treaty, has no jurisdiction over national trade policy. This is true, CITES can only recommend, but not prescribe, domestic measures for nations to undertake. However, CITES Resolutions and Decisions do carry weight, and there has been a history of strong CITES recommendations on stopping domestic tiger trade, recognizing that domestic markets stimulate illegal international trade.

The US-proposed text was voted into the new CITES Decision, which can be read at http://www.cites.org/eng/dec/valid14/14_65-72.shtml. Decisions are generally regarded as requiring urgent action, and at COP15 there will no doubt be a review of what action has been taken on them. CITES can recommend that members observe trade sanctions against countries which show non-compliance with the Convention.

The Decision also mandates IUCN to facilitate a tiger conservation strategy workshop. This picks up on a similar recommendation a month previously by the Global Tiger Forum (Breitenmoser and Nowell, 2006). Planning and organization are underway by the Cat Specialist Group, working within IUCN and with other partners.

A separate issue almost resulted in the consolidation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (upon which the new Decision is based) with others dealing with other Appendix I species. IUCN made an intervention in favor of retaining individual Resolutions, which have served as important tools for focusing on species conservation. Although this idea had originally been put forward by the

Parties themselves, in an effort to reduce document numbers, they abandoned this approach at COP14 and consolidation was rejected by consensus.

Bobcat

The United States submitted a proposal to de-list the bobcat from CITES (it is currently on Appendix II), arguing that trade in the species is well-managed and not a threat, and that bobcats do not meet the biological criteria for inclusion on the CITES Appendices. De-listing would result in the bobcat being the only felid not requiring CITES permits for international trade, and concern was expressed by both Parties and NGOs (including IUCN in its analysis of the proposal) over potential for resulting in illegal international trade in parts and products of other “look-alike” felids. The US requested a vote, and the proposal was rejected with 69% of countries voting against it.

Felidae Periodic Trade Review

On behalf of the CITES Animals Committee, the US is coordinating the first part of a periodic trade review for the family. Such reviews are undertaken periodically to assess whether species are appropriately listed in the Appendices. The genus *Lynx* is first up for review, and the US government undertook a range State questionnaire survey, with an emphasis on the “look-alike” issue. Although additional results from this survey were submitted (COP14 Inf 30) by the US, CITES decided that the lynx review was not yet complete and should be continued.

Leopard Quotas

A proposal to double its annual leopard trophy export quota from 60 to 120 by Mozambique was accepted. Uganda also won approval to establish an annual export quota of 30 leopards. Concern was expressed by the Cat SG and others that the determination of quotas was non-scientific, but the consensus view was that the quota levels were unlikely to be detrimental to the leopard populations.

Side Events

Side events put on by both governments and NGOs are becoming increasingly popular at CITES. The two rela-

ting to cats were very well attended. The International Tiger Coalition, comprising over 30 wildlife conservation and animal protection organizations, held a side event featuring a talk by longtime tiger conservationist Valmik Thapar.

The IUCN Cat Specialist Group organized a side event on the regional African lion conservation strategies (Nowell et al., 2006). SSC Chair Holly Dublin chaired the event, and Hans Bauer presented the lion status assessments led by WCS. The two regional strategies (West and Central Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa) were presented by Range State government officials (Cameroon’s Francis Tarla, and Zimbabwe’s Morris Mtsambiwa), who each gave examples of measures in their countries to implement the regional strategies. For Cameroon, for example, this included designation of a national Focal Point officer for lion conservation, and for Zimbabwe a workshop to develop a national action plan for lions around the regional strategy framework. After the presentations, several government officials in the audience discussed lion conservation problems and actions in their countries in reference to the strategies (Burkina Faso, Kenya and Uganda). The Cat SG also put together a handout (http://www.rocal-lion.org/documents/cites_lion_handout.pdf) based on a survey carried out at COP14 on implementation of the strategy by African lion range States, showing that efforts are underway in a number of range States to census lion habitats and develop national action plans. More examples of the lion conservation strategies being put into action will be presented in the next issue of *Cat News*.

CAT’s website maintains a comprehensive resource for cat documents at CITES, including official documents as well as transcripts, NGO briefing documents, and materials from the lion side event: <http://www.felidae.org/CITES12/citescats.htm>.

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Morris Mtsambiwa, Zimbabwe, presenting examples of measures implement the strategy in his country (Photo U. Breitenmoser).

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On 2-8 July 2007, China’s State Forestry Administration organized an *International Workshop on Strategy for Tiger Conservation*. The participants visited a Traditional Chinese Medicine factory in Beijing, tiger breeding facilities in Guilin and Harbin, and attended a workshop in Harbin, where various views regarding the use of captive bred tigers for TCM and its possible impact on wild tiger populations were presented. The SFA intends to make the presentations and the conclusions from the workshop available. We will report more in-depth about the Harbin workshop on our website www.catsg.org.