

# SPECIES MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS

## PRESS RELEASE

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## BANGKOK CRITICAL FOR INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE TREATY

The Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) could become unworkable in the future if the unwarranted addition of non-threatened species to the growing list of fauna and flora onto the Convention's appendices is continued, a leading conservation organisation warned today.

All eyes will be on Bangkok, Thailand, from 2 – 14 October this year when CITES holds its 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Member nations, numbering more than 160, will propose strict international trade controls as a means of conserving some of the world's wildlife populations. Currently more than 30,000 species of animals and plants are listed in the CITES appendices and the world's nations are to vote whether to add to that growing list.

The President of Species Management Specialists, Hank Jenkins, said that just by adding a species to the CITES appendices will not necessarily contribute to its conservation. "Some nations and environmental NGOs mistakenly believe that simply adding a species to CITES appendices will save it, when in fact such an action may actually work against conservation."

"Member nations must take appropriate, practical and sensible action regarding management of commercially valuable species to ensure their survival in a changing world. If non-threatened species are continually added to Appendix I, the Convention could very quickly become unworkable, especially in developing nations, and result in serious implementation problems that put species further at risk."

Mr Jenkins cited as an example when environmental NGOs pushed countries to list the sub-Saharan population of the leopard in Appendix I in the mistaken belief that it would protect the species. "This resulted in a complete turnaround, taking the species from one that had value and could be managed as an asset to one where it had no value in terms of trade and was consequently treated as a pest by land-owners and local communities. All opportunities for sensible management techniques were thrown out the window to the detriment of the population." As a consequence, rather than return the species to Appendix II, Parties to the Convention opted to introduce the concept of national quotas that allowed range States to manage their leopard population for non-commercial hunting.

Inappropriately including a species in Appendix I may also contribute to increased illegal poaching activities, thereby replacing the application of practical management with activities focused on enforcement, he said. "Poaching will not be stopped just by listing a species in the CITES appendices. All that will cease is legitimate, sustainable, managed wildlife use in developing countries, thereby allowing illegal practices to fill the market demand. Poaching is a law enforcement problem – not a conservation one."

Nations must look at ways they can implement better management, enforcement and export controls rather than stopping all international trade. When consumer countries adopt stricter unilateral measures, the drivers for proper management were also removed.

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Mr Jenkins, who has had more than 25 years CITES' experience, serving as chairman of the CITES Animals Committee from 1992 to 2000, said Species Management Specialists supports the listing of animals and plants on the appendices where it's "warranted and scientifically justified". The listing of crocodilians in the 1970s was entirely appropriate because there was a need for global control of the species and to allow time for the adoption of practical management systems. As a result, wild crocodiles are now not only farmed but also hunted sustainably.

"Most species of crocodilians are now abundant, they are farmed in a number of countries and their skins, teeth, meat, eggs and other products sold to benefit local communities," Mr Jenkins said. The Northern Territory in Australia was a perfect example, he said. In the past, crocodiles were unprotected and not subject to any management with the result that populations of the species became seriously depleted. Now, as a result of pragmatic management and enforcement, conservation of the species is assured because it is perceived as a valuable renewable resource that benefits local communities both directly and indirectly.

"Failure to recognise that some species of wildlife are demonstrably abundant, such as some populations of elephants, turtles, crocodiles and even some stocks of great whales, and to continually push for the very strict Appendix-I listing to prevent all trade, can be more detrimental than beneficial to a species, especially in the face of continued international market demand."

"Some populations of commercially valuable species have increased to the point where controlled international commerce is not only viable but needed to help communities implement proper management plans to conserve and protect those species and their habitats, and this can only be achieved by transferring such species to Appendix II or deleting them from the appendices entirely," Mr Jenkins said.

He added that a number of environmental NGOs use "icon" species as a means of self-promotion and fund-raising without considering the affect that trade bans have on conservation or the well-being of local communities. "Most environmental NGOs' fund-raising activities depend on maintaining the illusion that adding more animals and plants to the growing list of protected species will benefit conservation. This is very often a fallacy and little is achieved in terms of conservation."

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Species Management Specialists (SMS) is an international non-governmental organisation with offices in all continents. Its members include scientists and policy managers from around the world with expertise in the practical management of wildlife.

For a copy of the Species Management Specialists "**Guide to CITES**" go to:

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