



# THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA & FLORA (CITES)

## CITES VISION STATEMENT

Conserve biodiversity and contribute to its sustainable use by ensuring that no species of wild fauna or flora becomes or remains subject to unsustainable exploitation through international trade, thereby contributing to the significant reduction of the rate of biodiversity loss.

## BACKGROUND



Endangered animals and plants can be threatened by exploitation driven by market demand. Species whose numbers are decreasing for other reasons, such as habitat degradation, can become increasingly valuable commodities with rarity. In both cases, unregulated commercial international trade will contribute to species extinction.

CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, regulates trade in species deemed by its Parties to be, or soon to become, adversely affected by international trade. CITES does not affect trade within national boundaries and does not

address conservation issues beyond those linked to international trade.

CITES regulates international trade in listed species only, whether traded as live specimens, or as parts or products. About 34,000 species of animals and plants are currently listed in the three CITES appendices. The vast majority of species (>95%) are on Appendix II, which allows regulated trade.

Successful management of the pressure that international trade puts on plants and animals requires the cooperation of both the countries where the biodiversity resides (producers) and the countries that are driving the demand for the species or its products (consumers). Given that international trade in wildlife is worth billions of dollars annually, the challenge to ensure that trade is legal and sustainable can only be met by the cooperation of both producers and consumers.



**Hawksbill Turtle, a CITES Appendix I species (photo courtesy U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA))**

## ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE CONVENTION

### The Secretariat

The CITES Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, is responsible for administration of the Convention. CITES is the single largest repository of information on plant and animal species in trade, much of it available at the CITES website.

### Management and Scientific Authorities

CITES requires Parties to designation Management and Scientific Authorities with responsibility for ensuring scientifically-based decision making, transparency and legitimacy in the issuing of permits for trade in listed species. The Management Authority is also tasked with maintaining trade records and periodic reporting to the Secretariat.

### Expert Committees

The CITES Standing Committee and the Animals and Plants Committees were established to provide specialized knowledge regarding species of animals and plants that are (or might become) subject to CITES trade controls. These Committees include membership from each of the six major geographical regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Central and South America and the Caribbean, and Oceania). Members are elected at every regular meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES. During the period 2010-2013, Caribbean countries represented on the Standing, Animals and Plants Committees were The Bahamas, Cuba, Dominica and Suriname.

### Conferences of the Parties (COPs)

At two year intervals, the Parties gather at COPs. Financial assistance to ensure that at least two delegates from each developing state are able to attend is usually available. Some Party governments bring many additional experts. The primary work of these meetings consists of voting on the proposals to amend the appendices and on decisions and resolutions for improving the effectiveness of the Convention.

### Regional Meetings

The Caribbean participates with Central and South American Parties at regional meetings between COPs. The first, in 2000, resulted in the Quito Declaration which emphasized the need to enhance cooperation amongst neighbouring countries in order to co-ordinate efforts against illegal trade in CITES-listed species.

Although the interests of the Caribbean Parties overlap with those of Central and South America as developing nations, the insular Caribbean often has more in common with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in other regions, particularly with regard to the difficulties with implementing the Convention and with listing of marine species.

## OBLIGATIONS OF PARTIES TO THE CITES CONVENTION

When countries join CITES, they agree to enact national legislation to implement and enforce the treaty, and to appoint a Management Authority to issue permits and make policy decisions and a Scientific Authority to evaluate scientific issues.

Legal trade of any listed species under CITES is based on the agreement that exporters will verify that the trade is sustainable.

### The CITES Appendices

**Appendix I: List of endangered species threatened by trade.** Commercial trade is not allowed, but export for scientific research or conservation may be permitted. An import permit issued by the Management Authority of the importing state is required. An export permit can be issued only if the specimen was legally obtained, the export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species, and an import permit has already been issued by the importing country.

**Appendix II: List of species that are not currently threatened, but may become so if trade is not regulated.** An export permit issued by the Management Authority of the state of export is required. An export permit can be issued only if the specimen was legally



obtained and the export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species. This so-called non-detriment finding means that the Party has undertaken to ensure that export does not reduce species numbers to a level where its role in the ecosystems in which it occurs is threatened.

**Appendix III: List of species that are subject to regulation within the jurisdiction of a CITES Party and for which the cooperation of other Parties is needed to prevent or restrict trade.**

Importing countries must request an export permit from the Management Authority of the exporting state, thereby making illegal trade more difficult.

**Introduction from the Sea**

Introduction from the sea means taking specimens of Appendix I or II species from marine areas beyond the sovereignty of a state (as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) and transporting these to a Party state.

The text of the Convention with regard to introduction from the sea has attracted more attention, as proposals for listing marine species has increased. High seas fishing often involves fleets registered under flags of States that differ from the States at which catches are landed, leading to difficulties in interpreting which State should be responsible for making the non-detriment finding necessary before issuing a permit. Making non-detriment findings for marine species is especially challenging, and often requires regional or international cooperation. It is a legitimate concern of the Caribbean region that implementation of CITES could become increasingly burdensome as more marine species are added to the lists.



**Queen Conch, a CITES Appendix II species (photo courtesy Dr. Hazel Oxenford)**

**TRADE IN CAPTIVE BRED OR ARTIFICIALLY PROPAGATED SPECIES**

Some species on Appendix I have been successfully bred in captivity or artificially propagated. CITES provides clear definitions on what constitutes captive bred/artificially propagated specimens. Any institution that is breeding Appendix I species for the purposes of trade must be registered by the Secretariat. If trade is permitted, species are treated as though they are listed on Appendix II. Permitting trade in captive-bred Appendix I species is controversial as it opens up opportunities for illegal trade in wild-caught specimens

**TRANSPORTATION OF LIVE SPECIMENS**

In all situations where live animals on the Appendices are transported, they must be shipped in a way that minimizes risk of injury, damage to health or cruel treatment.

**PROCEDURES FOR AMENDING THE APPENDICES**

Prior to each meeting of the COP, Parties can submit proposals to the Secretariat to amend species listed on Appendices I and II. Proponents may be single countries or several



countries. For example, Cuba and Dominica sponsored the proposal to downlist a sub-population of the hawksbill turtle from Appendix I to Appendix II at the 11th COP. The amendment procedure allows Parties to propose initial or additional protection to some species, and lessen protection for others. Amendment proposals must be based on a set of biological and trade criteria (Conf.9.24 Rev. COP15) and must reach the Secretariat 150 days before the COP. Proposals are then circulated to the range states of the species involved for their inputs, and to the IUCN (World Conservation Union) for their opinion on the scientific merit of the proposal. The Secretariat also provides an opinion.

At the COP, each proposal is discussed and then put to the vote. As most Parties have carefully reviewed the proposals for up-listing and down-listing with the information provided via the Secretariat and with the assistance of their own national Scientific Authorities, delegates usually have an official position on each proposal. Each Party has one vote. A proposal is carried if  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Parties present and voting are in favour.

At the 16<sup>th</sup> CITES COP in 2013, Belize will be sponsoring several proposals for listing rosewoods on Appendix II. The Belizean government has already declared a national moratorium on the harvesting and export of rosewood.

A Party can request a Reservation on a species listed in Appendix I or II if they do so within 90 days of listing, or at any time for species on Appendix III. A reservation means that the Party is not bound by the provisions of the Convention in relation to trade in that species, although it is

recommended that Parties with reservations on species in Appendix I treat those species as if they are on Appendix II. St. Vincent and the Grenadines has reservations on Hawksbill turtles and Humpback whales, Cuba has reservations on Hawksbill and Green turtles and Suriname on Leatherback and Green turtles. Parties can withdraw Reservations at any time.

## **PARTICIPATION BY THE CARIBBEAN REGION IN CITES**

### **Representation on Committees**

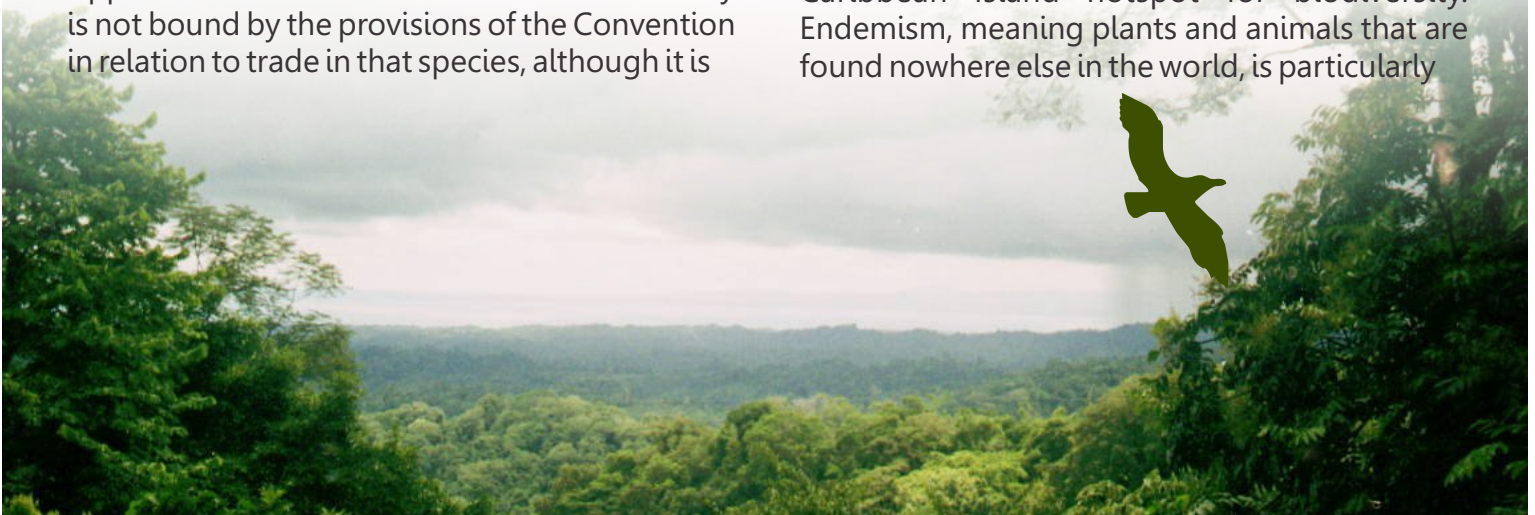
Although Latin America has been well-represented on the Plants and Animals Committees, the participation of the English-speaking Caribbean has not been as strong. Increased representation by Caribbean experts on these Committees is important to improve the value of the Convention in this region.

### **Submission /support of proposals to list marine species on Appendix II**

As a region that depends heavily on a productive and balanced marine environment, support of well-substantiated proposals to list important marine species affected by trade on Appendix II may become increasingly important.

## **INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN CARIBBEAN BIODIVERSITY**

The CARICOM region is one of extremely high biodiversity. It includes Belize which lies within the Mesoamerica hotspot for biodiversity; Guyana and Suriname, countries with globally significant tropical forest biodiversity; and many of the island nations that constitute the Caribbean Island hotspot for biodiversity. Endemism, meaning plants and animals that are found nowhere else in the world, is particularly





high for the Caribbean islands. Although the insular Caribbean makes up only 0.15% of the Earth's land surface area, it contains 3% (180 species) of amphibians and over 6% (520 species) of reptiles. There are also an estimated 7,800 endemic plants, and more than 170 endemic birds. Some species exist at extremely small population sizes. Since endemic species are found nowhere else, they are often in demand by collectors, making them in particular need of protection from illegal international trade. The rare island endemic Amazona parrots of the region have benefitted from the protection of Appendix I listings for many years.

Wildlife trade is valuable to the economies of the Caribbean region

Guyana and Suriname have export quotas for large numbers of wild-caught birds, reptiles and mammals. Marine species are of particular value to the insular Caribbean. Some of the species traded most heavily, e.g., queen conch, are already listed on Appendix II.

Much of the trade in listed species originating in the Caribbean is destined for USA markets. For this reason, the USA has developed several informational sheets and web pages, including "Buyer Beware Caribbean" and "Importing Queen Conch: what you need to know". Several Caribbean Parties and NGOs have similar information provided in the form of leaflets and on government web sites.

## Caribbean species in trade

### Corals

Many coral reefs in the Wider Caribbean are under pressure from coastal development, fishing, and tourism. Exploitation of corals for the aquarium, ornament and jewellery trade is an additional burden on the health of the region's reefs. Corals are protected by national laws in many Caribbean countries.

### Conch

Queen conch *Strombus (Lobatus) gigas* is harvested primarily for its meat, but shells and pearls are also traded internationally, the latter



St. Vincent Parrot (*Amazona guildingii*), a CITES Appendix I species

being rare and fetching very high prices. Concerns over the large quantities in trade resulted in two **Reviews of Significant Trade** in this species by CITES (1995 and 2001). A Review allows a comprehensive analysis of the species in trade and may result in the implementation of trade bans for non-compliance with requested actions. A submission for listing conch under the US Endangered Species Act was made recently. If successful, this would lead to a total ban on imports by the United States, the main importer in the region (the US has banned conch harvest in its own waters for years). In response to these concerns, the region prepared the Declaration of Panama City (Panama City, 23-25 October 2012) which highlights improved stock protection, understanding of conch ecology and management needs, and the improvements in enforcement to combat illegal catch and trade that have occurred.

### Birds

Suriname and Guyana have CITES export quotas for a range of wild caught birds, including parrots, macaws, and toucans.

### Mammals

New World monkeys including capuchin, squirrel and tamarin monkeys are exported from Guyana and Suriname, and Old World green monkeys from Barbados and St Kitts.

# WATCH LIST

## Prohibited Imports Include



**ALL SEA TURTLE PRODUCTS**



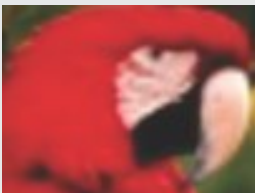
**LIVE MONKEYS**



**CERTAIN LEATHER PRODUCTS, INCLUDING SOME MADE FROM REPTILE SKINS**



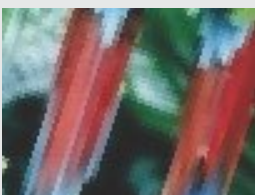
**SPOTTED CAT SKIN PRODUCTS**



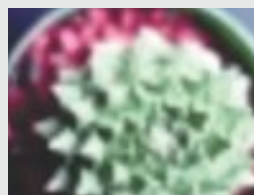
**CERTAIN LIVE BIRDS, INCLUDING MANY PARROTS, MACAWS, COCKATOOS, AND FINCHES**



**SOME CORALS AND CORAL PRODUCTS**



**SOME WILD BIRD FEATHERS, MOUNTED BIRDS, SKINS, AND SOME SKIN PRODUCTS**



**CERTAIN ORCHIDS, CACTI, AND CYCADS**

**Excerpt from the Buyer Beware Caribbean leaflet produced by the US Fish and Wildlife Service**

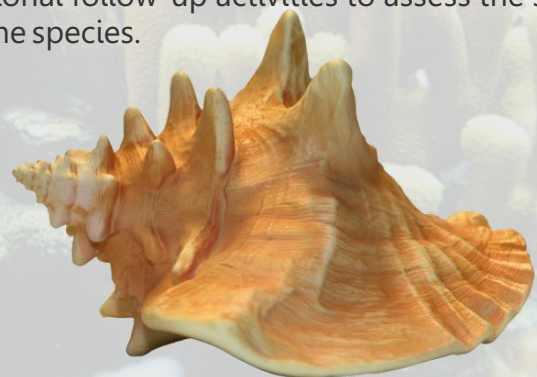
### Conch

Queen conch *Strombus (Lobatus) gigas* is harvested primarily for its meat, but shells and pearls are also traded internationally, the latter being rare and fetching very high prices. Concerns over the large quantities in trade resulted in two **Reviews of Significant Trade** in this species by CITES (1995 and 2001). A Review allows a comprehensive analysis of the species in trade and may result in the implementation of trade bans for non-compliance with requested actions. A submission for listing conch under the US Endangered Species Act was made recently. If successful, this would lead to a total ban on imports by the United States, the main importer in the region (the US has banned conch harvest in its own waters for years). In response to these concerns, the region prepared the Declaration of Panama City (Panama City, 23-25 October 2012) which highlights improved stock protection, understanding of conch ecology and management needs, and the improvements in

enforcement to combat illegal catch and trade that have occurred.

### Reptiles

All sea turtle species, several of which were formerly heavily traded on international markets for their meat, skins and/or shell, are listed in Appendix I. The proposals led by some countries in the Caribbean region to resume trade in hawksbill shell failed to provide sufficient scientific data for Parties to support the lifting of the trade ban on this species. The proposals have however stimulated important regional follow-up activities to assess the status of the species.





## Plants

Caribbean mahogany and lignum vitae have been exploited heavily throughout the region for timber. Appendix II listing may be helping to protect remaining stands.



Hawksbill Turtle shell  
(photo courtesy Dr. Julia Horrocks)

Cacti and orchids are in particular demand. Export of all Caribbean cacti, orchids and cycads is either regulated through Appendix II listing or prohibited by Appendix I listing. The impacts of trade on orchid populations can be particularly difficult to monitor as species can often only be identified when they are flowering. Belize has a voluntary ban on export of the orchid *Myrmecophila tibicinis* following a Review of Significant Trade that highlighted it as a species of possible concern. This will allow time for the CITES authorities in Belize to confirm the status of this species in the wild and therefore the sustainability of trade.

Trade in plants can also be difficult to regulate because they can be easily stowed in luggage, or transported as seeds or cuttings.



*Myrmecophila tibicinis*, a CITES Appendix II species

## EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Effective CITES implementation and enforcement requires appropriate national legislation, transparent processes for permitting, capacity-building to make non-detriment findings, training of staff to recognize listed species and look-alike species at ports of entry, development of ID guides and enhanced public awareness. The **CITES Virtual College** is contributing greatly to capacity building, with presentations covering many areas of implementing the Convention, training opportunities, databases, and ID guides.

The screenshot shows the front page of the CITES Virtual College website. At the top, it features the CITES logo and the text "Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora". Below this, there is a navigation bar with "You are not logged in. (Login)" and a language dropdown set to "English (en)".

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- REFERENCE MATERIALS:** Includes a thumbnail for "The CITES Virtual College".
- TRAINING CENTRE:** Features a thumbnail for "Introduction to CITES".
- CALENDAR:** Shows a calendar for March 2013.
- CITES-LISTED SPECIES:** Includes a thumbnail for "Short-horned Chameleon".

On the right side, there are two "WELCOMING ADDRESS" sections:

- The first is by Mr. John E. Scanlon, Secretary-General, CITES, with a photo of him. The text mentions the development of the CITES Virtual College as a collaborative initiative with the European Union and the International University of Andalusia.
- The second is by Dr. Juan Manuel Suárez Japón, Rector of the International University of Andalusia, with a photo of him. The text expresses pleasure in welcoming visitors to the CITES Virtual College.

Below these, there is a section for "Available Courses" with a list of courses:

- Introduction to CITES and Non-Detriment Findings:** Described as an introduction to what is usually called a non-detriment finding (NDF).
- Training course for enforcement officers and information module for prosecutors and the judiciary:** Aims to introduce the Convention and enforcement-related issues to officers and custom officials.
- Introduction to CITES for Customs:** Welcome to the Introduction to CITES course for Customs Officers.

At the bottom of the page, there is a green banner with the text "Front page of the CITES Virtual College".

## USEFUL LINKS

### CITES

Website: <http://www.cites.org>

E-mail: [info@cites.org](mailto:info@cites.org)

### CITES Appendices -

<http://www.cites.org/eng/app/appendices.php>

### CITES Virtual College -

<https://eva.unia.es/cites/>

### CITES Wiki Species Identification Manual -

[http://www.cites.org/eng/resources/wiki\\_id.shtml](http://www.cites.org/eng/resources/wiki_id.shtml)

### TRAFFIC (The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network)

Website: [www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)

E-mail: [traffic@traffic.org](mailto:traffic@traffic.org)

**Contact information for national CITES authorities can be found on the CITES website at**

<http://www.cites.org/cms/index.php/lang-en/component/cp/>

### Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat

Turkeyen, Georgetown, Guyana

+592 222 0001

[www.caricom.org](http://www.caricom.org)



This document has been produced by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat as part of a joint EU-UNEP-CARICOM project, with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme, or the CITES Secretariat.