

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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NATIONS MAKE CHANGES IN ENDANGERED SPECIES TREATY PROCEDURES AND LISTINGS

Delegates from 34 countries recently concluded a 2-week meeting in Costa Rica on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora at which they took several actions to strengthen the effectiveness of the treaty, including revisions in the list of species it covers. A preliminary list of the species changes will be published shortly in the Federal Register.

The head of the U.S. delegation, Dr. Robert S. Cook, Deputy Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, reported on the March 19-30 international conference at a public meeting held on April 4 at the Department of the Interior.

In addition to delegates from member countries, the Costa Rica conference also was attended by representatives from 16 other countries, including the People's Republic of China, and observers from 55 conservation and wildlife organizations.

The Convention, which was negotiated in 1973, has now been adopted by 51 countries, most recently by Togo, Jordan, Indonesia, and Kenya. It prohibits commercial imports and exports of the most threatened species in Appendix I and restricts trade in those in Appendix II that are potentially threatened. A scientific authority in each country must approve import and export permits for trade in listed species. A third

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appendix is reserved for nations to list wildlife and plants which they protect but for which international cooperation is needed to prevent illegal exportations.

In procedural changes, the official delegates voted to establish a program of voluntary contributions by member countries to fund the Convention's administrative body, the Secretariat; prepare an illustrated manual to assist import inspectors in identifying animals and plants that are in trade; and set up a special committee to work on implementation and enforcement problems.

Two procedural proposals were defeated. One, sponsored by the United Kingdom, Germany, and Switzerland, proposed that uniform trade controls be applied to a minimum list of animal parts (such as hides, oil, and meat) and to manufactured products, rather than to all such items. A similar list had been in effect for some time in the United Kingdom, which issued export documents only for items on its national list. This practice caused problems for U.S. tourists and business concerns who have exported items that are not controlled by the British, only to have them seized when they arrived in this country without proper documentation. Recently, the United Kingdom expanded its list to cover most products now in trade.

The second proposal, sponsored by the United States, asked that special criteria be used for deleting species listed in appendices to the Convention if those species had been added with little or no supporting data. Many of these species could not be placed on the list under present rules because there are no data available to show that they are threatened biologically or commercially. However, they also cannot be removed because the criteria for deletion require even more such data on population status and the impact of trade.

"Although the U.S. proposal on the criteria for deletion was defeated," Dr. Cook said, "the principle was advanced through two other measures agreed to by the delegates. One measure allows the adequacy of the data used in listing a species to be taken into account when it

