



# WILDLIFE TRADE MONITORING UNIT

# Traffic Bulletin

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<u>CONTENTS</u>	<u>Page</u>	
Belgium Joins CITES	25	Publication of the Traffic Bulletin is funded by the People's Trust for Endangered Species, 19 Quarry St., Guildford, Surrey, UK. Any opinions expressed in this Bulletin are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of IUCN or any other organisation connected with WTMU. Information may be quoted freely, but an acknowledgement to WTMU/IUCN should be made where appropriate. The Editor would appreciate a copy of any reprinted material.
Burmese Elephants Exported		
New Traffic Offices		
Cactus and Succulent Show		
S. American Countries Urged to Tighten CITES Controls		
<b>THE INDIAN BIRD TRADE</b>	<b>26-46</b>	
by Tim Inskipp		
Scent to the Orient	47	
EEC Seal Skin Ban		
Sierra Leone's Chimps Endangered by Commercial Exploitation	48	
Palm Cockatoos Seized	49	
Sale of Rhino Horn		
Parrot Shipments Seized		
Kangaroo Update	50	
Sudan Bans Unworked Ivory Exports		

VOL. V NOS. 3/4



THE INDIAN BIRD TRADE, our special feature in this issue, by Tim Inskipp, is based on a study carried out in India in 1977. Several summaries of the data have already been published, notably in "The Bird Business" by Greta Nilsson. All of the collected information is included here, together with updated figures on the export trade.

## Belgium Joins CITES

On 3 October 1983, Belgium ratified CITES, becoming the 82nd Party to the Convention. This will become effective from 1 January 1984 when the EEC Regulation to enforce CITES among all EEC Parties also comes into force.

## Burmese Elephants Exported

Wild Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) are being caught in Burma and illegally exported to Thailand and possibly Assam, for timber logging and transport. The elephant is a protected animal in Burma under the Wild Life Protection (Amendment) Act, 1956 which forbids elephant hunting as well as the possession, sale or purchase of live or dead elephants or their products without a licence. Furthermore, although Burma is not a Party to CITES, both Thailand and India are Parties.

This information, sent to us by John Blower and his colleagues at the Nature Conservation and National Parks Project of the Government of the Union of Burma, brings to light an additional problem in the implementation of CITES for an Appendix I species.

The elephants are evidently being moved into Thailand through remote areas controlled by insurgents, and this may also be true of ivory poached in Burma. It is reported that the only ivory legally exported from Burma comes from tusks sawn off elephants newly captured for logging, but that this is probably a very small quantity.

CITES annual reports include only four transactions in Asian elephant ivory from Burma over the period in 1975-82. These were: two US imports from the United Kingdom, origin Burma, one of two ivory carvings and the other of one tusk; and two Swiss imports from Hong Kong, origin Burma, one of two tusks and the other of 10 kg tusks.

## New Traffic Offices

Two new Traffic offices are about to be opened: Traffic (Australia) and Traffic (Netherlands).

Frank Antram, formerly at the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit, will be the Director of Traffic (Australia) which is to be launched in January 1984. This is due to the work of Mike Kennedy of the Fund for Animals, Australia. The funding for this office comes from the FFA of Manly, New South Wales, which made a direct appeal to its members for the money. The new office will be concentrating on Australian wildlife trade but, for the time being, will also include the rest of Australasia in its area of interest. The address of Traffic (Australia) will be: PO Box 371, Manly 2095, NSW, Australia.

Minouk van der Plas-Haarsma, the prime mover in establishing Traffic (Netherlands), is to be Secretary of the Traffic (Netherlands) Committee. Under the Chairmanship of Wim Bergmans, the other members are Kees Schouten, Jaap van Wingerde and Aat van Uyen. It is planned that operations will begin by December 1983. Financial support has been provided from a variety of sources but is unfortunately insufficient to pay for any full-time staff. The office will therefore be operated on a voluntary basis for the time being. It is hoped that accommodation will be found in the Zoological Museum of the University of Amsterdam. Meantime, the address of Traffic (Netherlands) will be: Muur 10, 1422 PJ Uithoorn, Netherlands.

## Cactus and Succulent Show

A thriving trade in cacti and succulents took place at the National Cactus and Succulent Show in Luton, Bedfordshire, UK, on 27 August. Most of the plants on sale were nursery-grown but wild-collected plants including rarities were also offered.

Many of the cacti species added to Appendix I of CITES earlier this year were available. One nursery offered *Backebergia militaris* offcuts for £35 and another specimens of *Mammillaria plumosa* for over £30. Wild-collected specimens were also available of *Ariocarpus trigonus*, *Strombocactus disciformis* and the range of *Turbinicarpus* spp. At least five nurseries were offering *Leuchtenbergia principis* but only on one stall were specimens offered as habitat-collected plants.

It was good to see propagated plants of other rarities also on sale, including seedlings of *Pachypodium namaquanum* and *Obregonia denegrii*. The International Organisation for the Study of Succulent Plants (IOS) was represented at the show with a stand discouraging the purchase of any plant unless nursery-grown. The conservation message has obviously not penetrated to all traders however. One nursery had specimens of *Pelecyphora strobiliformis* included in its habitat-collected plant section. This endangered species known only from a few areas in Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon in Mexico was transferred from Appendix II to Appendix I of CITES in 1981.

Sara Oldfield  
Threatened Plants Committee, Kew.

## S. American Countries Urged to Tighten CITES Controls

At the first seminar on CITES implementation in South and Central America and the Caribbean held in Washington, DC, USA from 1-12 August 1983, the representatives of the participating countries: urged the Government of Bolivia to "take appropriate measures leading to a reinforcement of control measures on trade that would prevent the illegal exit of specimens of species of fauna and flora" listed on the CITES Appendices; urged the governments of Venezuela and Bolivia to "properly implement the Convention" with regard to their relations with the CITES Secretariat and reminded Costa Rica and Colombia, "in their capacities as elected members of the Standing Committee and the Technical Committee respectively, of the necessity for co-ordination and consultation with the countries of the region they represent".

The CITES Secretariat was requested to take appropriate measures for the establishment of a Traffic office for the region. The Secretariat was also requested "to further its steps with respect to the major importing countries for the purpose of preventing the commercialization of products of wild animals originating in the region (of Central and South America) that have left the region without the documentation required by the Convention". The Secretariat was also recommended to encourage the Government of Mexico to adhere to the Convention "in consideration of the importance of the participation of [Mexico] in trade in species listed on the Appendices of the Convention and of the necessity of integrating the actions taken by the countries of the region of these matters".

CITES Secretariat

## Sierra Leone's Chimps Endangered by Commercial Exploitation

Two recent developments are giving rise to grave concern for the future of the already depleted population of chimpanzees *Pan troglodytes* in Sierra Leone. The most obvious threat is the capture and export to Japan of young chimps for biomedical research, but a plan by the Austrian company IMMUNO AG is adding to the problem. This company is negotiating an agreement with the Sierra Leone Government, to use chimps within the country. Thus they avoid the CITES Appendix I controls that would apply to importing chimps into Austria.

Sierra Leone's chimpanzee population was recently (1980) surveyed by Dr. Geza Teleki, who estimated that no more than 2,000 survive there. Superficially, the Government of Sierra Leone appears to be taking chimp conservation seriously and the species has been used very recently as a symbol of endangered species conservation in a special issue of postage stamps. However, with less than 2,000 wild chimps remaining there, the Government's approval of continued commercial exploitation of wild-caught animals both for exports to Japan and for setting up a biomedical research centre seems rather lackadaisical.

It is noteworthy that chimpanzees taken from the wild are almost invariably infants whose capture requires the killing of the mother. If the infant then dies, the hunter must kill another nursing female; and so the breeding population is reduced.

### Exports to Japan

In April 1983, the CITES Secretariat was informed by the French CITES Management Authority that an application had been made to ship 50 chimps in transit through France. The animals were to be exported from Sierra Leone to the KASHO company in Japan, and the French authorities were unable to refuse permission for transshipment through France since CITES does not prohibit transit through a party state, even when the transaction is in apparent violation of the provisions of the Convention.

The CITES Secretariat immediately raised the matter with the Japanese Government but, at the time of going to press, has received no reply.

However, the official Japanese Government customs statistics show that 30 of the chimps have already been imported into Japan, 6 of them in April and a further 24 in May. For these Appendix I imports to be legal under CITES, the Japanese Scientific Authority is required to advise that "the import will be for purposes which are not detrimental to the survival of the species" and the Japanese Management Authority must be satisfied that the animals are "not to be used for primarily commercial purposes". It is hard to imagine how any Authority could meet the CITES requirements in the circumstances applying to this trade. We now know that the animals are to be kept at the Suzuken research facility of a pharmaceutical company, Sanwa Kagaku Kenkyu Jyo, in Kyushu.

In addition, for the export to be legal under CITES, even though Sierra Leone is not a Party to the Convention, the competent authorities in Sierra Leone must certify that the export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species and that the specimens were not obtained in contravention of Sierra Leone's laws for the protection of fauna. Such certification would also seem to be implausible in view of the precarious status of chimp populations in that country and the fact that export of chimps is totally prohibited under the 1972 Wildlife Conservation Act, to say nothing of the Presidential ban imposed in 1981 on all exports of wildlife. Thus, the Japanese imports seem to be clearly in violation of CITES.

WTMU has been informed that a further 20 chimps were exported from Sierra Leone in April/May of this

year, but cannot trace their importation elsewhere. It is suspected that these animals may be in a holding facility, perhaps in a non-CITES country (such as Belgium - see below), awaiting a purchaser in a country that still permits chimp imports.

### The Austrian Connection

Within a few days of the date on which Austria became a Party to CITES (27 April 1982) the authorities there confiscated twelve chimpanzees being imported at Vienna airport. More recently, an application by the pharmaceutical company IMMUNO AG to import 40 chimpanzees from Belgium was refused. These actions appear to confirm that the Austrian Government is determined to ensure proper implementation of the Convention. However, developments in Sierra Leone contradict this assumption since it appears that the Austrian Consul in Freetown, Sierra Leone, is instrumental in the negotiations to set up a biomedical facility, near Freetown, which will use wild-caught chimps to test hepatitis B vaccine.

The Austrian Consul, Klaus Bieber, was, until 1974, a business partner of Franz Sitter, the Austrian wildlife trader operating from Freetown, whose name has appeared twice before in the *Traffic Bulletin* in connection with chimpanzee exports from Sierra Leone (see I(1):2 and II(8):78). It seems significant that IMMUNO plans to build its facility on the land which Sitter uses as a holding facility for live chimpanzees and other wildlife destined for export, and that Sitter would be the sole supplier of the 50-60 young chimps required each year for the IMMUNO project. The purpose of the project, stated in a letter from Bieber to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry for Sierra Leone, Abass Bundu, is "to overcome problems in connection with the importation of live chimpanzees" into Austria. It would also be established in contravention of the conservation principles of the World Health Organisation, which is responsible for the control of hepatitis B vaccine. The WHO/ECG Policy Statement on the Use of Primates for biomedical purposes recommends that:

"Endangered, vulnerable and rare species be considered for use in biomedical research projects only if they are obtained from existing self-sustaining captive breeding colonies".

The proposed IMMUNO project is clearly in violation of this recommendation and has been condemned by both conservationists and biomedical laboratories.



Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*)

*CITES Secretariat, International Primate Protection League, Japanese Customs Statistics, New Scientist, Sierra Leone Environment and Nature Conservation Association, Traffic (Japan), World Wildlife Fund (Austria), World Wildlife Fund (USA)*

## Palm Cockatoos Seized in Singapore . . .

One hundred and twenty-four rare and endangered birds, worth SG\$112,350 were seized by Singapore's Primary Production Department in a house raid on 13 September. 100 Palm cockatoos (*Probosciger aterrimus*), 21 Moluccan cockatoos (*Cacatua moluccensis*), 2 Brahminy kites (*Haliastur indus*) and a Blue-crowned pigeon (*Goura cristata*) were found in wire-mesh cages covered with gunny sacks.

According to Singapore Straits Times (16.9.83), the Palm cockatoos are valued at SG\$1,070 each, the kites at SG\$110 and the pigeon SG\$640 on the black market.

The birds are said to have been smuggled from Indonesia by a businessman at the Barter Trade Centre at Pandan River, Singapore. Our Singapore correspondent, Lee Toh Ming, comments that the Pandan Barter Trade Zone "has always been a problem". The Zone is a free port. It is closed to the public, but Indonesians and other foreign nationals are allowed into the port without a passport or ships' papers and are granted the right to trade, providing they remain within the confines of the port.

However, importation of the birds is an offence under the Wild Animals and Birds Act, and the offender faces a fine of SG\$1000 for each bird.

The seized birds were taken to Jurong Bird Park but the Straits Times of 13 October reports that only three of the birds are still alive: the Brahminy kites and the Blue-crowned pigeon. The zoo vet, Dr Phiru Chelvan claims that all the cockatoos died from Newcastle disease.

## . . . and the U.S.

At least two shipments of Palm cockatoos totalling approximately 100 birds were recently seized by law enforcement officials of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The cockatoos, valued at between US\$500,000 and US\$1,000,000 were apparently shipped from Singapore.

One shipment was seized at the port of Miami on the



Palm cockatoo  
(*Probosciger aterrimus*)

grounds that the birds originated in Indonesia, where they are fully protected. The shipment had apparently travelled to Malaysia and then to Singapore before arriving in the USA. The smaller shipment arrived at Los Angeles with a certificate declaring that the birds had been captive-bred in the Philippines. However, Palm cockatoos are very difficult to breed in captivity, and it is extremely doubtful that these birds were in fact captive-bred.

## Sale of Rhino Horn

During 1978 and 1979, 150 kg of rhino horn and 138 kg of rhino hide were sold by Natal Parks Board, Natal's provincial wildlife department, to a dealer involved in export trade to the Far East.

South Africa is a Party to CITES and, as such, prohibits the commercial export of rhino horn. These sales did not contravene the Convention which does not cover internal trade. Of the 5 consignments sold, 3 of the receipts issued to the trader were labelled "Not for Export". The Board had not supplied the trader with export permits.

The Director of the Board, John Geddes Page, in an interview with the Sunday Tribune, admitted that, "The Board did trade in rhino horn and with the wisdom of hindsight I'm sorry we did."

Natal Parks Board reportedly has 600 rhino horns in stock now. A dealer in Cape Town, Frans Hartman has recently offered to buy them all; estimating that the average weight is 4 kg per horn, he is prepared to pay R1.2 million. The Board, however, has already rejected the offer.

South Africa's booming White rhino population poses several problems. Since 1962, Natal Parks Board has sold over 3000 animals to stabilize the population in their reserves. Originally, these went to zoos and other reserves but now most are sold to private land owners, often for the purpose of trophy hunting.

Export permits are issued for the export of trophy horns but the problem arises with the horns

and skins of rhinos which die from natural causes or during translocation. These may not be exported for primarily commercial purposes under the terms of CITES and recent internal legislation controls their sale within South Africa. Most Parks and private individuals, when faced with the problem of disposing of this material are unwilling to destroy it, and rather than risk prosecution by selling it, tend to stockpile it in the hopes that some day there may be a relaxation in the regulations. Storage is not an ideal solution and thefts of some stockpiled horns have been reported.

*The Argus (South Africa), 7.11.83*

*L.A. Carter, PTES, South Africa.*

*Sunday Tribune (South Africa) - 21.8.83*

## Parrot Shipments Seized

A correspondent recently informed WTMU of two consignments of parrots at Santa Cruz Airport, Bolivia, waiting to be transported to Paris and Amsterdam via Argentina and Madrid. The shipments, probably mostly of *Amazona aestiva* (Blue-fronted amazon), weighed 102 kg. The CITES Secretariat was notified and immediately contacted the Bolivian authorities who verified that no CITES permits had been authorised for these shipments, and consequently they were seized.