

ENDANGERED Species BULLETIN

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International trade in wild animals and plants is a multi-million dollar business. While the Fish and Wildlife Service supports sustainable trade in wildlife, many species throughout the world are being traded at levels their populations cannot support.

Concern about unsustainable trade in wildlife is not new. In 1973, a conference convened in Washington, D.C., to draft the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES—a treaty that regulates international trade in wildlife. Recently, representatives of 118 countries met in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of this treaty.

This edition of the Bulletin features news of the November 1994 CITES conference and several law enforcement actions that make the treaty more effective.

ENDANGERED Species BULLETIN

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The Endangered Species Bulletin welcomes manuscripts on a wide range of topics relating to endangered species, and may be semi-technical or popular in nature. We are particularly interested in news about recovery, interagency consultation, habitat conservation plans, cooperative ventures, changes in species' status, and significant new threats.

Contact the Editor before preparing a manuscript to determine the proper length, focus, and timing of proposed articles. We cannot guarantee publication.

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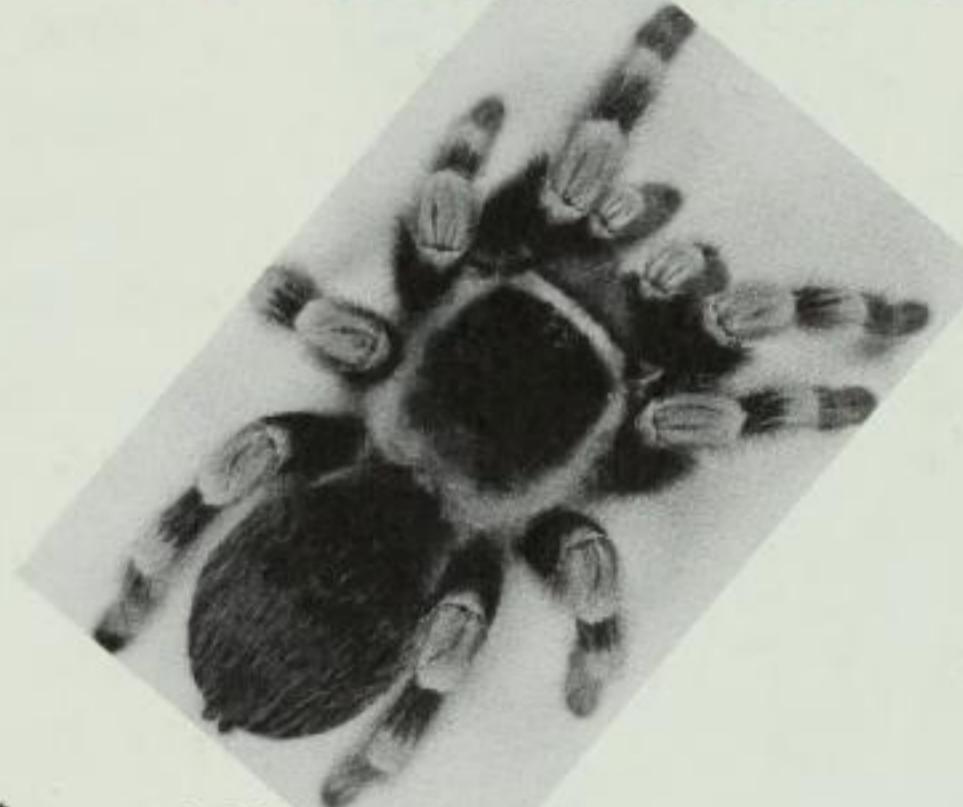
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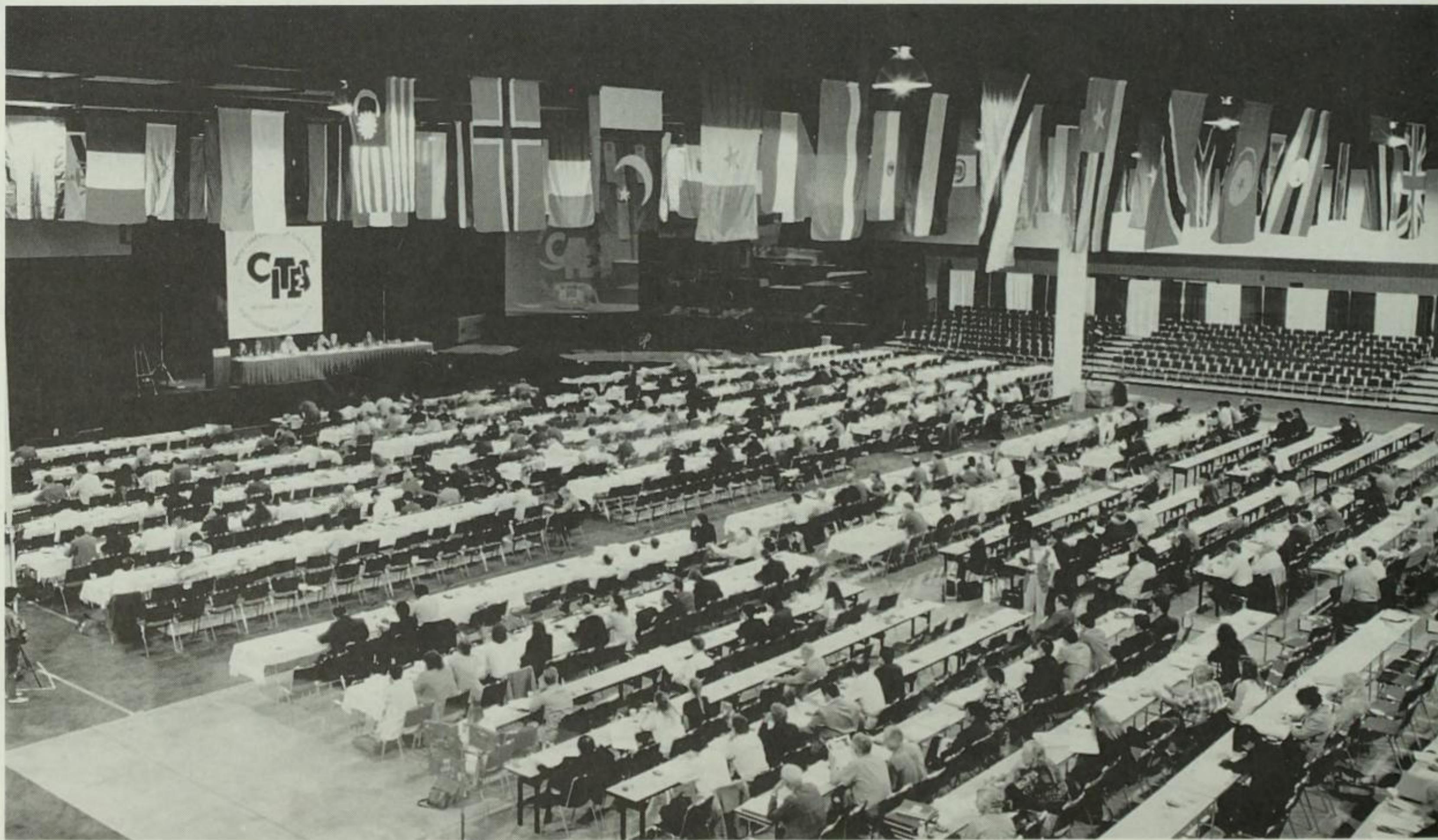
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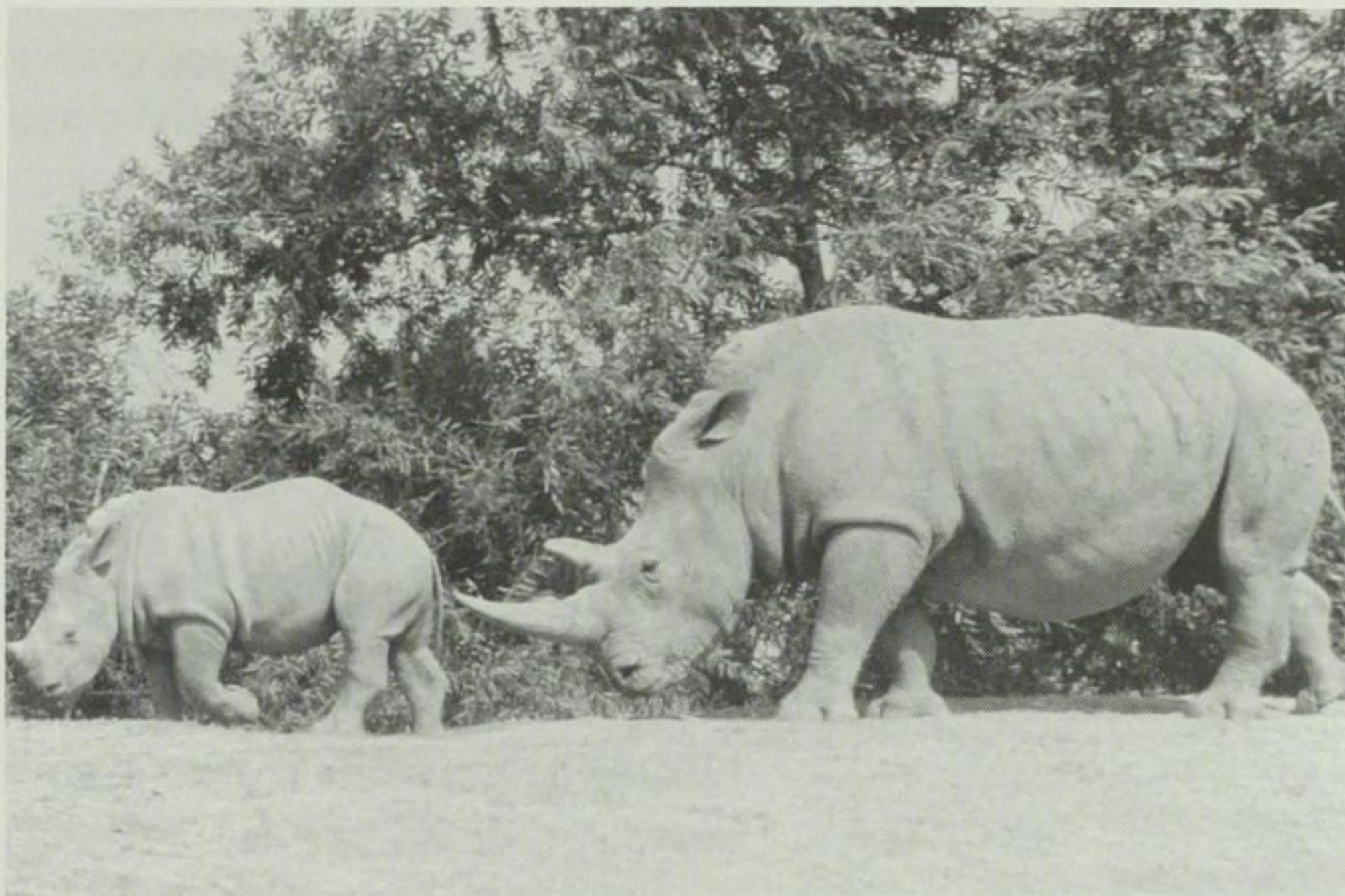
The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international treaty designed to control trade in certain animal and plant species that are, or may become, threatened with extinction. In recognition of the twentieth anniversary of CITES and our nation's commitment to endangered species conservation, the United States hosted the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP9) to CITES November 7-18, 1994, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.



Participation at COP9 set records. Among the attendees were delegates of 119 Party countries, 221 non-governmental observers, and representatives from several non-party governments. Delegates from around the world also were able to visit the many national parks and wildlife refuges in South Florida, and gained useful first-hand knowledge of endangered species conservation in the U.S. Despite the distractions of a major tropical storm and the national elections, the sessions were extremely productive.

After spirited discussion, the Parties adopted 25 resolutions and made 8 formal decisions on a broad range of CITES implementation and enforcement issues. The important, interesting, or controversial issues addressed at COP9 included:

♦ **Trade in rhinoceros specimens** Most rhinoceros populations in Asia and Africa are imperiled by the continuing trade in rhino horn and other parts for use in traditional Asian medicines. After discussing the implementation of trade controls in China, Korea, and elsewhere, the Parties adopted a resolution on this critical issue. Among several provisions, the resolution: urges all Parties to adopt and enforce effective laws to reduce the illegal rhino trade; asks for greater international cooperation in law enforcement; appeals for donations to fund range states' rhino conservation plans; and advocates educational outreach programs to eliminate the demand for rhino parts and derivatives in traditional medicines.



♦ **Trade in tiger specimens** Tigers also face extinction due to poaching and illegal trade in parts for use in traditional Asian medicines. (See features in *Bulletin* Vol. XIX, No. 3.) Continuing problems with the enforcement of existing trade restrictions led the Parties to adopt another resolution that advocates stronger law enforcement, promotes educational outreach to reduce demand for tiger parts, and urges all range states to join international conservation programs (including the Global Tiger Forum).

In support of CITES efforts, the U.S. is involved in bilateral discussions with importing countries, particularly in Asia, in an effort to improve CITES enforcement and halt the illegal international trade in tiger and rhino parts. The passage of the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1994 also will allow the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to assist range states in Asia and Africa for the protection of their rhinoceros and tiger populations.

♦ **Illegal trade in whale meat** International trade in whale meat is prohibited under the International Whaling Commission (IWC) as well as CITES, although some trafficking still occurs. The U.S. submitted a discussion paper on this issue, leading to a resolution that recognizes the work of the IWC, urges CITES Parties to investigate illegal trade in whale meat, and encourages the sharing of trade information between the IWC and CITES.

CITES Appendices

CITES regulates international trade in plants and animals to varying degrees, depending on the species' biological status and vulnerability to commercial exploitation. **Three appendices to the Convention identify how much protection is provided to each species. Appendix I lists plants and animals threatened with extinction that are, or may be, affected by International trade.**

Commercial trade in these species is prohibited. **Appendix II includes species that may become threatened if their trade is not brought under control.** **Commercial trade in Appendix II species is subject to regulation; export permits are based on a number of findings, including scientific determinations that trade will not be detrimental to the species.** **Appendix III lists species that individual CITES Parties identify as subject to domestic regulations for the purpose of restricting or preventing exploitation.** **Permits or certificates or origin are required for trade in Appendix III species.**

Above
White rhinoceros
photo by Ron Singer

Opposite page
CITES Convention,
November 1994
photo by Terry Adams, NPS

❖ **Shark products trade** Concern is growing that international trade in shark products may be detrimental to shark populations, which are not listed in the CITES Appendices. Because of insufficient data on the effects of this trade, the U.S. submitted another discussion paper. As a result, the Parties adopted a resolution directing the CITES Animals Committee to prepare a report on the status of sharks and the effects on their populations from international trade. This report will be considered in 2 years at COP10. The resolution also requests the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to submit information to CITES on impacts of the shark trade.

❖ **Timber Trade** The parties decided to establish a working group to address CITES implementation issues for conservation of heavily traded, commercially valuable timber species, such as mahogany. Members of the working group will include representatives of both consuming and range states. They will examine not only issues relating to tropical forests, but boreal and temperate forests as well.

❖ **CITES Enforcement** The effectiveness of CITES is only as good as its enforcement, which requires a commitment to continuing international cooperation. The U.S. strongly supported the establishment of a Law Enforcement Working Group to provide a venue for information sharing and training in enforcement, critical elements so lacking in many countries. Unfortunately, the COP did not establish such a group, due in part to issues of confidentiality and sovereignty. The enforcement resolution the Parties adopted does contain recommendations to strengthen the law international enforcement effort at the CITES Secretariat level.

❖ **New Criteria for Amending Appendices** At the 1992 CITES Conference in Japan, the Parties voted to strengthen CITES by undertaking a revision of the 1976 criteria for listing species on Appendices I and II. Several different approaches were prepared for consideration at COP9. After extensive discussion, in which the U.S. took a leadership role, the Parties adopted new listing criteria. They decided against rigid numerical thresholds applicable to all taxa, and instead adopted criteria that are scientifically-based, yet flexible.

Changes to the CITES Appendices

The Parties considered more than 110 proposals to amend the CITES Appendices, many of which passed and became effective February 16, 1995. Some changes of particular interest include:

❖ **Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*)** Although the hippopotamus is not endangered, populations have been declining in recent decades. Trade in its large teeth as an ivory substitute increased sharply after the ban on international trade in African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) ivory. In order to monitor and control the trade in hippo teeth, the Parties voted to add this animal to Appendix II.

❖ **Box Turtles (*Terrapene* spp.)** The U.S. and the Netherlands proposed adding all box turtles to Appendix II (except *T. coahuila*, which is already on Appendix I)

**photo by Jessie Cohen, National Zoo
Park, Smithsonian Institution**

because of increasing trade in these species and information on declines in box turtle populations. (See feature in *Bulletin* Vol. XIX, No. 5.) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service data show that at least 20,000 box turtles per year were exported in 1992 and 1993, leading to serious concern as to whether the species can sustain this level of trade. The proposal to add box turtles to Appendix II was adopted by consensus.

A listing in CITES Appendix II will allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to assess the impacts of trade on box turtles, and will facilitate coordination of enforcement efforts between the States and the Service. In order to export box turtles from the U.S., a permit must be issued by OMA. Before such a permit can be issued, the Service is required to determine that the export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species and that the specimens were obtained legally.

❖ **White Rhinoceros** (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) South Africa's proposal to transfer its population of this species from Appendix I to Appendix II was amended to allow only trade in live animals and sport hunted trophies. The trade in live animals will be to "appropriate and acceptable destinations." The amended proposal, with the additional provision that the downlisting would be reviewed at COP10, was approved by a vote of 66 to 2.

❖ **Tarantulas** (*Brachypelma* spp.) The U.S. proposal to place this genus of Mexican and Central American tarantulas, known for its species with distinctive reddish markings, on Appendix II was supported by Mexico and Central American countries. One species, the red-kneed tarantula, already was on Appendix II. These tarantulas are extremely popular in the pet trade, especially in the U.S., and law enforcement agents have seized smuggled shipments numbering in the hundreds of specimens. (See related article in this edition of the *Bulletin*.)

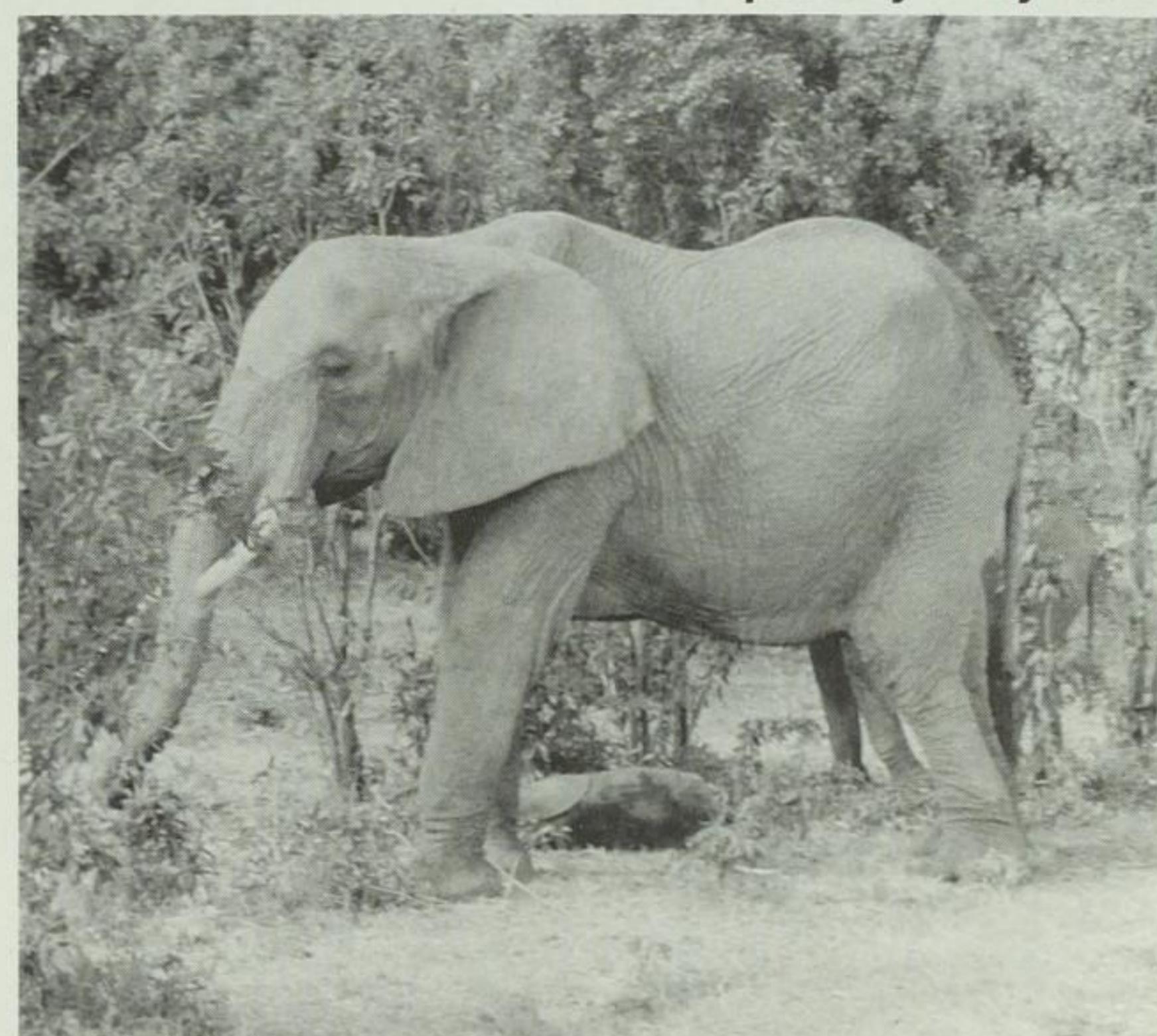
A complete list of the plants and animals transferred onto, within, or off the CITES appendices is available from the Office of Management Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Room 420C, Arlington, Virginia 22203. In addition to these changes, several nomenclatural changes were adopted. The Service is republishing the entire appendices with new names and previously used species synonyms.

Proposals Not Adopted

Many proposed changes in the CITES appendices were not adopted but generated valuable and often lively discussion. Some notable examples include:

❖ **African Elephant** (*Loxodonta africana*) Two proposals were submitted to transfer African elephants from Appendix I to II. All African elephant populations were placed on Appendix I at the 1989 CITES meeting in Switzerland (see *Bulletin* Vol. XV, No. 5) due to the threat posed by poaching to supply the uncontrolled international trade in elephant ivory. South Africa submitted a proposal to transfer its elephant population to Appendix II and allow trade in non-ivory parts (e.g., hides). After most elephant range states opposed the proposal, it was withdrawn by South Africa. Although the U.S. believed the South African proposal was biologically sound and would not stimulate poaching, the U.S. indicated it would have abstained if the issue had come to a vote, in deference to most elephant range states.

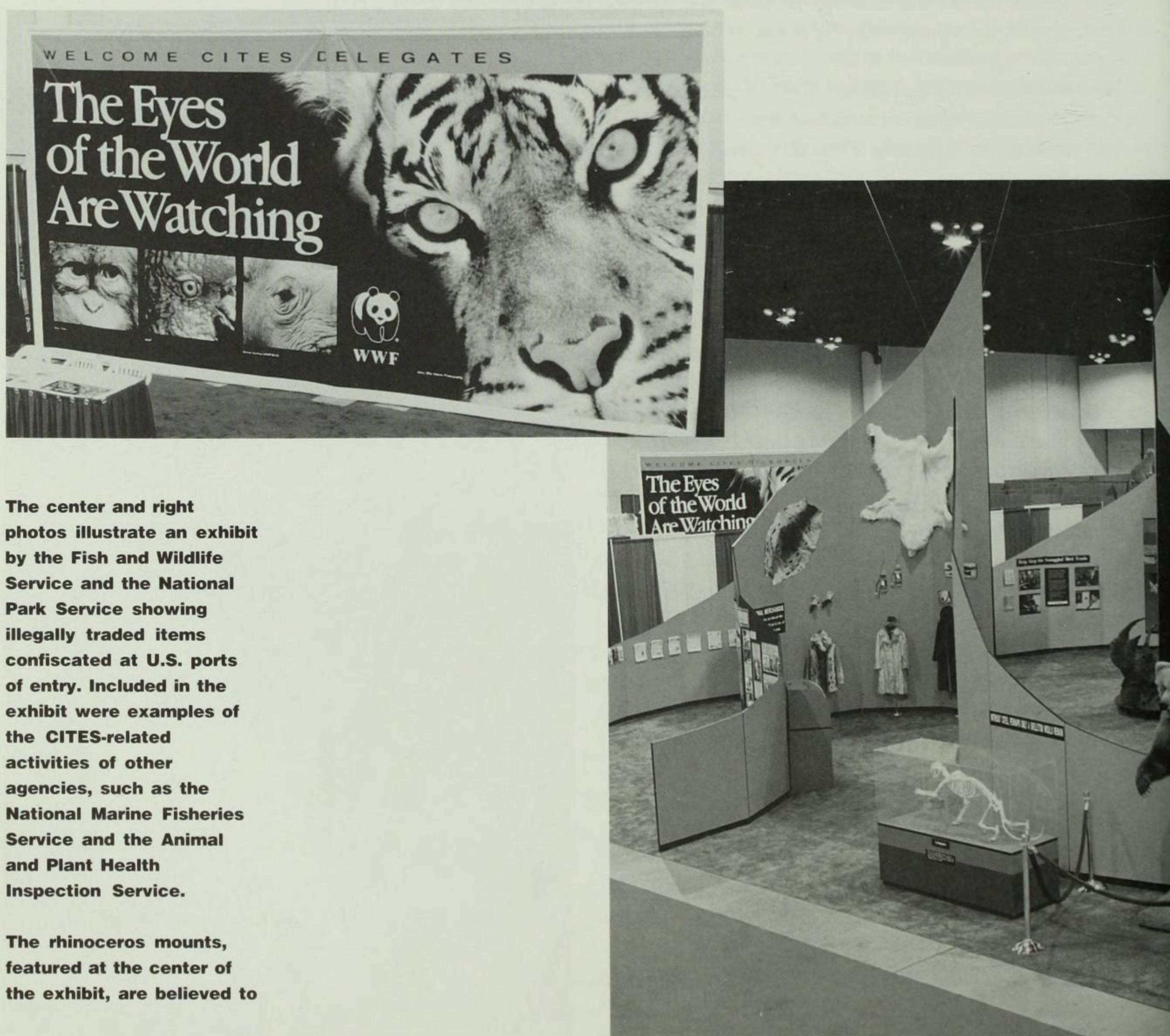
photo by Henry Short



"The eyes of the world" were watching last November as delegates from 119 countries met in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to evaluate international trade in vulnerable animals and plants. Also attending the ninth biennial CITES conference were 221 observers from non-governmental organizations, including the World Wildlife Fund, which produced the poster illustrated below.

Appendix II to allow the sale of stockpiled ivory. This proposal was withdrawn after Sudan acknowledged that its proposal was not comprehensive enough to meet the biological and trade criteria already specified by CITES. The range states instead decided to review the issue of ivory stockpiles throughout Africa, with the cooperation of the IUCN African Elephant Specialist Group, prior to COP10. All African elephant populations remain on Appendix I.

❖ **Minke Whale** (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) A proposal by Norway to downlist the northeastern and central north Atlantic stocks of this species from Appendix I to Appendix II stimulated considerable debate. The Parties raised concern about the credibility of current population estimates and renewed the longstanding CITES support for the whaling moratorium imposed by the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Norway then revised its proposal to postpone downlisting until evidence suggests that the whale's populations are at harvestable levels, but the revision was rejected by a vote of 48 to 16.



The center and right photos illustrate an exhibit by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service showing illegally traded items confiscated at U.S. ports of entry. Included in the exhibit were examples of the CITES-related activities of other agencies, such as the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

The rhinoceros mounts, featured at the center of the exhibit, are believed to

❖ **Edible-nest Swiftlets** (*Collocalia* spp.) Italy proposed listing this group of swifts, whose unusual nests--made largely from the birds' saliva--are edible and in great demand as a delicacy in eastern Asia and some Pacific islands. The proposal was withdrawn in favor of a resolution to hold a workshop on sustainable use of edible-nest swiftlets.

❖ **Bigleaf Mahogany** (*Swietenia macrophylla*) Although a proposal by the Netherlands to list this species in Appendix II was supported by a vote of 50 to 33, the margin was 6 votes short of the two-thirds necessary for adoption by the COP.

Those of us in the Fish and Wildlife Service involved with CITES are committed to the full implementation and enforcement of this important treaty. We also are breathing a sigh of relief that the hard work of preparing to host a CITES conference is behind us. As we look forward to COP10 in 2 years, we remember the important goals embodied by the CITES treaty, which states that "... wild fauna and flora in their many beautiful and varied forms are an irreplaceable part of the natural systems of the earth which must be protected for this and the generations to come."

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have been legally hunted and imported into the U.S. prior to the animal's listing on CITES Appendix I. However, the price of rhino horn subsequently increased so much that, in 1990, the owner of the mounts offered them for sale at about \$20,000 per pound of horn. A prospective buyer wanted to inspect the horns before he made an offer. When the owner delivered a horn for inspection, he was assaulted and locked in the trunk of his car. The prospective buyer then attempted to steal all eight rhino mounts, but the owner was able to escape and report the incident to the authorities. The rhino mounts were abandoned to the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1991.

photos by Terry Adams/ National Park Service

