

# News Release

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## **U.S. to Support Greater Protections for Pangolins, African Grey Parrots, Chambered Nautilus at World’s Largest International Wildlife Trade Forum**

(Johannesburg, South Africa) – Many of the planet’s most well-known and cherished wildlife species, and many that are less familiar, take center stage in South Africa Sept. 24-Oct. 5, when nations around the globe convene for the world’s most important meeting on wildlife trade. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe today said the United States will support increased protections for pangolins, African grey parrots and chambered nautilus, among other species, at the upcoming meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Calling for the closure of domestic ivory markets and advocating against the legalization of rhino horn trade also will be priorities for the United States delegation at the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CITES Conference of Parties (CoP17).

“Elephants, rhinos and lions are likely to headline the agenda of this meeting, which is shaping up to be the most important gathering to date that focuses on wildlife trade and conservation,” said Ashe, who is heading the U.S. delegation to the CoP17. “Although protections for these species are among the priorities for the United States, we also will fight hard to protect lesser-known species that are threatened by illegal and unsustainable trade, including the chambered nautilus, devil rays, African pygmy chameleons, fishhook cacti and African softshell turtles.”

CITES is an international agreement initiated in 1973 and since joined by 182 countries and the European Union to protect certain wild animals and plants against over-exploitation as a result of international trade. More than 35,000 species of animals and plants benefit from CITES protection, which regulates legal trade and in doing so, helps enforcement efforts aimed at halting wildlife trafficking. Every two to three years, a session of the CoP is held to review, discuss and decide on changes in the implementation of CITES, including changes in protections for certain species.

“The CITES treaty provides a critical framework for global cooperation on wildlife trade and a powerful opportunity to combat wildlife trafficking. The Conference of Parties offers a forum for the United States to demonstrate global leadership and collaboration in efforts to protect wild animals and plants from over-exploitation,” said Ashe.

Ashe said the conservation of pangolins is a high priority for the United States, and the delegation will be co-sponsoring proposals to list the eight pangolin species in Appendix I, the highest level of protection afforded by the treaty. Current protections have not been adequate to control unceasing demand in Asia for pangolin scales, used in traditional medicines, and meat. More than a million pangolins are estimated to have been poached from the wild in the past decade, earning the scaly animals the unfortunate designation of the world's most trafficked mammals.

Ashe called a proposal that has been submitted to the conference to legalize the rhino horn trade "...a dangerous experiment with the future of this magnificent species. The concept that limited legal trade would provide a conservation benefit to the rhino or that it could be sustainable within the context of rampant poaching and illegal trade is not supported."

Ashe said the United States will call on other countries to close their domestic elephant ivory markets. Given the unprecedented levels of elephant poaching and illegal ivory trade, with one elephant killed every fifteen minutes for its tusks, the United States believes the domestic markets that fuel this trade need to be closed. "The United States has taken strong actions to impose a near-total ban on elephant ivory import, export and domestic sale. Our goal is to ensure that CITES Parties take whatever actions are necessary to ensure that their domestic markets are not contributing to ongoing poaching and illegal ivory trade," said Ashe.

Other U.S. positions highlighted by Ashe include proposals to increase protections for African grey parrots, African and Middle Eastern softshell turtles, and the entire family of chambered nautilus—colorful mollusks that are prized by collectors for their intricate shells. Grey parrots have been popularized as pets because of their remarkable ability to mimic sounds. An Appendix-I listing would prohibit commercial trade in this parrot species. If the African and Middle Eastern softshell turtle proposal is adopted at CoP17, the majority of the world's softshell turtles will have CITES protection, a critical step in regulating the unsustainable trade in the species. The United States also announced its tentative support to increase protections for African lions, pending consultation with range countries.

To learn more about the Service's involvement in CITES CoP17, visit:

<http://www.fws.gov/international/cites/cop17>.

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