

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, or CITES. This international treaty on wildlife trade helps ensure that trade does not threaten species' survival in the wild. The 177 member nations of CITES (called Parties) work together to protect almost 35,000 species of plants and animals. To help celebrate, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Claire Cassel spoke to two figures immersed in CITES history. The following are excerpts from the interviews with Marshall Jones and Lee Talbot.



MARSHALL JONES: A WORLD WITHOUT CITES IS INCONCEIVABLE

Marshall Jones is a Senior Conservation Adviser at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI), a 3,200-acre conservation and research facility in Front Royal, Virginia. Before going to SCBI, Jones worked for 32 years for the Fish and Wildlife Service, starting in 1975 as a wildlife biologist and technical writer with the Office of Endangered Species. During his career, Jones served on the U.S. delegation to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP1) to CITES. He served as a member of U.S. delegations to 10 CoPs, holding several leadership positions. Jones also served as the first Assistant Director of the Service's International Affairs programs and Deputy Director and Acting Director for the Service.

CoP1: Setting the stage

I started working for the Service in April 1975 as the editor of the *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin* (now known as the *Endangered Species Bulletin*). After less than a year, I was asked to serve as a consultant for zoological issues to the U.S. delegation for CoP1. At that time, the Fish and Wildlife Service did not have a Scientific Authority office.

As the depositary government for the Convention, Switzerland paid for and hosted CoP1 in November 1976 in Bern, Switzerland. Bern was a good choice; it was a small city without the distractions of a tourist destination such as Geneva.

CoP1 set a pattern of English, French and Spanish as the working languages for the Convention. That meant that simultaneous

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LEE TALBOT: FOUNDING FATHER OF CITES

Lee Merriam Talbot Ph.D. is an ecologist and geographer; specialist in international environmental affairs, ecology, environmental policies and institutions, conservation biology and natural resource management, with more than 60 years of professional experience, approximately half spent working on environmental issues in 134 countries outside the United States. Talbot is currently senior professor of environmental science, international affairs and public policy, Department of Environmental Science and Policy at George Mason University. Past positions include Assistant to the Chairman for the President's Council on Environmental Quality; Director General, World Conservation Union—IUCN; and Visiting Fellow, World Resources Institute.

What was your involvement in the drafting of CITES?

While attending a conference in Arusha in northern Tanzania in 1961, I pulled together wildlife officials from a number of African countries to discuss the issue of endangered species and poaching and what could be done about it. Poaching was a big problem—things like zebra hides, elephant ivory, rhino horn, crocodile and leopard skins. Of course, poaching is still a big issue today.

The consensus from that meeting was that the problem stemmed from the demand end of things, specifically Europe and the United States. The supply countries lacked the dollars and the manpower to protect the species from highly organized poaching operations. In response, I proposed a convention on trade to get at the issue of demand.

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interpreters were provided for these three languages, and those countries speaking other languages were required to provide and pay for their own translators.

What were the main goals of CoP1?

The first and biggest goal of CoP1 was to fix some oversight in the list of species that were adopted in 1973. For example, the African elephant was not included in the initial list of species, in either Appendix I or II, while the Asian elephant was in Appendix I. To rectify this, the United Kingdom submitted a proposal to put the African elephant in Appendix I. Switzerland proposed placement in Appendix II. The U.S. supported the Swiss proposal; the terrible poaching of elephants, which led to the U.S. support of the 1989 Appendix-I listing, had not yet commenced.

The second major goal was to establish ground rules for operating the Convention. The U.S. went into the Convention with the notion of a precautionary principle. That is, if there's doubt then lean toward protection of a species.

What were the successes of CoP1?

Rules, regulations and procedures were the biggest successes of CoP1. The most critical of these was a rule—advocated by the U.S. and adopted by the Parties—that required the same documents and permits of non-Parties as from Parties. The message was clear: you need a permit, and you need a process to meet CITES requirements. This requirement put pressure on countries to join the treaty.

Another success was the adoption of requirements for Parties that take reservations to species listings in Appendix I or II. Although a Party can decide not to recognize a species listing, it still must issue a permit that meets CITES requirements before it can export the species. There are no free passes, and taking a reservation actually puts a country at a disadvantage. For example, South African Parties took reservations to



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(Right): A Service wildlife inspector checks out and identifies an iguana. (Above): The Service's Wildlife Without Borders program has a multi-year cooperative agreement with the Garoua Wildlife College in Cameroon aimed at enhancing wildlife conservation in Central and West Africa.

the 1989 Appendix I listing of the African elephant. Later, they realized that it was not to their advantage to be treated as non-Parties and removed the reservations.

These two principles are so important and contributed greatly to the success of CITES.

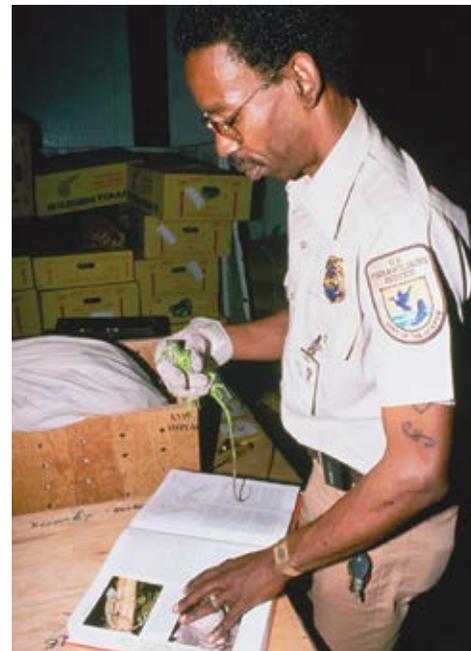
What are the challenges in implementing CITES?

CITES is only as strong as the Party countries' own enforcement. There are lots of developing and developed countries who don't care—or who don't have the resources to implement their laws. There's corruption and huge money involved that's fueling the poaching.

What does the future of CITES look like?

We need to address supply as well as demand. We need to put more money toward supporting rangers on the ground so that we can prevent animals from dying and keep them out of trade. Illegal wildlife trade has become the training ground for organized crime. To be effective in fighting it, we need to enforce laws and use the best techniques available. We need to bring strong sanctions against countries that are issuing corrupt and bad permits.

We need to modernize CITES, make it known among people who care about wildlife and constantly improve its profile. We need to engage electronic media and



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No CITES, no ESA?

"Those who were involved in negotiating CITES in 1973 were also involved in developing the Endangered Species Act. The law that was in effect at the time—the Endangered Species Conservation Act—was very weak with minimal regulatory effect. A new ESA was needed to both implement CITES and address domestic issues. John Dingle in the House of Representatives was key to that effort. He pushed for CITES, the ESA—and funding. There were people in Congress, government and academia all thinking about how to develop a treaty and a U.S. law to put teeth into the treaty and address domestic issues.

I'm convinced that without the U.S. we would not have CITES. And without CITES there would not be an ESA—or at the very least there would be a weakened ESA."

develop apps so that government officials can identify wildlife parts or products on the fly. We need social media to get people to take action. We need to get non-government organizations more involved.

A world without CITES is inconceivable. □