

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR ROGERS C. B. MORTON PRAISES SIGNING OF CONVENTION TO REGULATE TRADE IN ENDANGERED WILDLIFE

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton today praised the efforts of the 80 nations, including the United States, who negotiated a worldwide convention to regulate international trade in endangered species of wild animals and plants.

"I'm very pleased that 21 nations with plenipotentiary power signed the treaty formally on March 3," Morton said, "thus pledging their heads of state to seek ratification. We are sending the convention to the Senate for U.S. ratification and hope they will act swiftly on it."

The convention enters into force 90 days after 10 nations have deposited their formal ratifications with the Depository Government, Switzerland. It remains open for signature by the other 59 nations until Dec. 31, 1974.

The three appendices to the convention list those animals in imminent danger of extinction; those considered likely to disappear if not subject to international trade controls; and those that are protected within national boundaries.

Trade is prohibited in 178 species of mammals, 113 birds, 44 reptiles, 26 mollusks, 8 fishes, 6 amphibians listed on Appendix I. Among those species on Appendix I are five of the great whales and most of the world's spotted cats.

On Appendix II, another 239 species of animals can be traded only if accompanied by a valid export permit. Chimpanzees, grizzly bears, bighorn sheep and the rest of the spotted cats are on Appendix II.

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Plants are also listed, with most of the world's orchids and cactuses being on either Appendix I or II.

The third appendix binds ratifiers of the convention not to import an animal from a country that considers it to be endangered.

In addition to prohibiting trade in certain animals, the convention bans commerce in any of their parts or products. "This was an issue of special priority to the United States," Morton said.

"The success of the conference was due to the exemplary work of the many delegates," said Morton. "They came to Washington, D.C., convinced of the dire need for a worldwide convention and they produced a good, workable document."

"What I find most amazing," Morton continued, "is that 80 different nations with highly divergent views reached all their conclusions by consensus. There were some 150 amendments to the basic working paper, yet accord was reached on this complex document without a single clause being put to a vote. The questions were either worked out in committee or in the corridors," he said. "The conference chairman, Christian A. Herter, Jr., Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Environmental Affairs, deserves the highest praise for his work."

The effectiveness of the convention will depend on the speed with which it is ratified and enters into force, and on the precautions taken by concerned nations during the period before the convention becomes law to prevent stockpiling of hides, furs and pelts.

"But the depth of concern shown by all involved in concluding this convention," said Morton, "gives me great hope for the future of the world's endangered wildlife."