

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

CITES

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

People are fascinated by the zebra skin. It's a prop I use when I talk to school groups about endangered species, though when I bring it out sometimes complete strangers come over for a closer look. The skin was confiscated by Fish & Wildlife Service inspectors at the Atlanta airport as it was being unlawfully imported.

International trade in rare plants and animals, including that zebra skin, is governed by a treaty called the Convention on International Trade in Endangered species, or CITES. Under CITES, 175 countries have come together and literally made a list of animals and plants that face threats from international trade and spelled out how trade in these species will be governed so it doesn't put them in further jeopardy. CITES isn't meant as a ban on trade in animal and plants, but rather is a way to regulate international trade to help protect at-risk species. It's through CITES that there is currently a moratorium on international trade in elephant ivory. CITES also serves to protect some of our natural heritage here in the Southern Appalachians.

Although black bears are relatively common here, bear parts are the subject of great demand in China for use in traditional Chinese medicine. CITES helps regulate the export of black bears and black bear parts to ensure that Chinese demand doesn't put our bears at risk.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.