Illegal Trade Still Putting Gorillas At Risk

The Africa Regional Bureau of the Species Survival Network (SSN) welcomes you to this issue of CITES Afrique. In this issue, we call on the CITES community to support gorilla range States in their efforts to strengthen the enforcement of gorilla conservation measures, and we report on the outcome of a gorilla conservation meeting organized by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. We also report on a series of seizures and raids led by the government of Thailand to crack down on illegal ivory trade.

Finally, we congratulate the governments of Liberia and Nigeria for the activities they have led to strengthen the enforcement of CITES in their countries.

Thank you again for your wildlife conservation efforts, and please don’t hesitate to contact us if we can assist you.

Warm wishes,
Will Travers, Shelley Waterland and Alice Stroud, SSN Africa Regional Bureau

Latest CITES Postings and Notifications

♦ The Secretariat transmitted to the Parties details of two job openings, for the posts of Chief of Enforcement Support and Enforcement Support Officer within the Secretariat. Applications for these posts should be made through the United Nations on-line INSPIRA system (http://careers.un.org/) before 17 April and 23 April 2011, respectively. (CITES Notification 2011/020)

♦ The Secretariat informed CITES Parties that CBD Parties are requested to develop national targets, and to update their national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) to implement the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Activities identified in the NBSAPs of developing countries will attract financial resources, especially from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the financial mechanism of the CBD. When revising and updating their NBSAPs, Parties are invited to consider integrating national and regional CITES activities into their CBD Action Plans. The CBD Secretariat will organize workshops to help Parties update their NBSAPs. CITES Management Authorities are encouraged to engage directly with their national CBD focal point to prepare for these regional workshops. (CITES Notification 2011/021)

♦ The Secretariat informed Parties that the GEF provides financial resources to Parties for activities that are included in the National Portfolio Formulation Exercises (NPFEs). The NPFEs are currently ongoing for the fifth replenishment period of the GEF (2010-2014), and activities related to CITES could be included in these NPFEs so that they may be funded. CITES Parties are invited to link with their GEF focal points to provide input. (CITES Notification 2011/022)

♦ The CITES Secretariat reminded Parties that, under Decision 15.59, they are invited to provide the Secretariat with: a) any available legislation, guidelines, codes of conduct or other information on transport standards related to non-air transport; and b) contact information for any identified experts on non-air transport of specimens of CITES-listed species. (CITES Notification 2011/023)

♦ The Secretariat informed Parties that it has been requested to include in the Register of operations that breed Appendix-I animal species in captivity for commercial purposes a captive-breeding operation for saltwater crocodiles (Crocodylus porosus) in Malaysia. The operation will be included in the Secretariat’s Register on 12 June 2011 unless the Secretariat receives an objection from a Party and such objection is not withdrawn before this date. (CITES Notification 2011/024)

Important CITES Dates

• 18-21 April 2011: 19th meeting of the CITES Plants Committee, Geneva, Switzerland
• 19 May 2011: Deadline for the submission of documents for consideration at the 25th meeting of the CITES Animals Committee
• 16 June 2011: Deadline for the submission of documents for consideration at the 61st meeting of the CITES Standing Committee
• 18-22 July 2011: 25th meeting of the CITES Animals Committee, Geneva, Switzerland

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A meeting at the end of March, organized by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) under the United Nations Environment Programme, called for stronger enforcement efforts in gorilla range States to fight against commercial poaching for bushmeat and live trade in gorillas. The meeting gathered officials from gorilla range States as well as representatives from the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP), Interpol, CITES and various non-governmental organizations and international experts. A review of the threats affecting gorillas concluded that trans-boundary collaboration and coordination with UN peace-building missions and law enforcement agencies must be strengthened in the region, and that more resources and training needs to be directed towards law enforcement personnel and rangers.

The CMS is protecting gorillas through the Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and their Habitats. This Agreement, which came into force in 2008, is intended to restore gorilla populations and their habitats to a favorable conservation status, primarily by establishing or reinforcing coordinated transboundary projects. The Agreement provides that Parties should inter alia “coordinate their efforts to eradicate activities related to poaching, and to take concerted, energetic measures to control and monitor them, particularly in transboundary habitats.” Six out of the ten gorilla range States have signed the Agreement to date, namely the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Nigeria and Rwanda.

SSN is strongly supportive of the initiatives undertaken by range States for the conservation of gorillas and encourages the CITES community to support gorilla range States in the enforcement of the activities identified in the CMS gorilla agreement.

Crackdown on Illegal Ivory Trade in Thailand

Thailand is a major destination for smuggled African elephant ivory, with more than 7 metric tons of illegal ivory (which could represent a total of 1065 elephants) reportedly trafficked into Thailand from Africa in the last 15 months alone. According to Thai NGO Freeland, criminals are using a variety of different routes to bring the ivory into Thailand, including through the Middle East.

Thai customs made an unprecedented seizure of elephant ivory on March 30, after two metric tons of ivory comprising a total of 247 elephant tusks were discovered at Bangkok seaport in a shipping container labeled “frozen Mackerel.” The seizure was the first boat shipment of illegal ivory ever discovered in Thailand, and represents the ninth major joint enforcement action by authorities in Kenya and Thailand since November 2010, when both countries agreed to cooperate in investigations of transcontinental ivory trafficking.

News of the seaport ivory seizure came shortly after Thai authorities cracked down on illegal ivory trade by raiding two illegal ivory carving factories. Large pieces of African elephant tusks were recovered, along with hippo teeth and animal bone. Several people were also arrested and are facing numerous charges. The Thai Nature Crime Police are reported to have tracked down the location of these factories using information recovered from a series of recent seizures.

Missakawan Buara, Commander of the Thai Nature Crime Police, observed that, "The pattern of smuggling has changed. Now we are seeing not only shipping but also passengers carrying ivory into Thailand too. This shows that police need to work together with Customs and DNP [Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation] to stop illegal ivory smuggling into Thailand.”

SSN congratulates Thai authorities for their enforcement efforts against these criminal syndicates, and encourages the Thai Government to continue taking a strong stance against illegal trade in ivory. SSN also congratulates the governments of Kenya and Thailand for their successful cooperation.

The 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES will take place in Bangkok, Thailand, 3rd - 15th March 2013.
Collaboration Between CITES Secretariat and Nigeria for Stronger CITES Enforcement

Nigerian authorities continued to work towards the strengthening of CITES enforcement by collaborating with the CITES Secretariat on targeted capacity-building activities early March 2011. A team from the CITES Secretariat participated in a two-day workshop with 70 representatives of the various national authorities involved in CITES enforcement in the country. The workshop allowed participants to be trained on methods for the identification of CITES specimens and the detection of fraudulent CITES documents. Participants also went into the field to inspect markets in Kano and Lagos. This cooperation between the CITES Secretariat and the Nigerian authorities is part of the activities implemented by Nigeria to reinforce its implementation of CITES in the country and to encourage the CITES Standing Committee to lift the recommendation to suspend all trade in CITES-listed species with Nigeria. These activities include, inter alia, creating a national inter-agency committee on CITES enforcement, preparing new CITES regulations, planning coordinated inspections of markets and shops in order to detect illegal domestic trade in wildlife products, and producing CITES awareness material to educate the public about CITES and wildlife crime (for more information see Nigeria’s report to the CoP (CITES CoP15 Inf. 27) at http://http://cites.org/common/cop15/inf/E15i-27.pdf).

SSN warmly congratulates Nigeria for its continued efforts towards stronger CITES implementation.

Reconstitution of the CITES Scientific Authority in Liberia

Liberia became a signatory of CITES in 1981, but the eruption of civil war in 1989 dismantled its CITES Scientific Authority, preventing full implementation of CITES requirements. In January 2011, the government of Liberia held a two-day workshop with funding from the CITES Secretariat to reconstitute its CITES Scientific Authority and build up the capacity of its Management Authority. The workshop was attended by more than 70 participants from government institutions, the private sector and civil society, and included representatives from the Kenya Wildlife Service who participated as technical advisors. Participants received information about applicable standards protecting CITES species in Liberia and the role of respective government authorities (Customs, and Management and Scientific Authorities) in the implementation of CITES. The workshop concluded with the re-designation of the University of Liberia as the country’s CITES Scientific Authority. SSN member The Born Free Foundation donated a set of office equipment (desktop computer, printer and related accessories) to Liberia to allow the newly appointed Scientific Authority to function effectively. Workshop participants also agreed on a list of recommendations to strengthen CITES enforcement in the country including through, inter alia, establishing a database indexing Liberia’s fauna and flora and compiling information relevant to the issuance of non-detrimenfindings, organizing training for the CITES Management and Scientific Authorities, creating a herbarium, and carrying out species assessments.

SSN warmly congratulates the government of Liberia on this considerable step towards stronger CITES enforcement in the country, and invites the CITES community to support Liberia further by providing funding to implement the activities workshop participants identified as necessary.

CITES Scientific Authorities must advise the Management Authority on, inter alia:

♦ The result of non-detriement findings required before permits and certificates are issued
♦ The ability of recipient to house and care for a live Appendix I specimen
♦ Remedial measures that may be needed to limit exports of Appendix II species in order to maintain the species throughout its range at a level consistent with its role in the ecosystem and well above the level at which the species might become eligible for Appendix I
♦ Whether scientific institutions seeking registration for the purpose of being issued labels for scientific exchanges meet the required criteria
♦ Whether operations seeking Article VII exemptions for captive breeding and artificial propagation meet CITES criteria and national requirements
♦ The preparation of proposals to amend the CITES Appendices

CITES Resolution Conf. 10.3., Designation and role of the Scientific Authorities available at <http://www.cites.org/eng/res/10/10-03C15.shtml>

Capacity-building corner

Useful publications:

Useful websites:
♦ <http://www.cms.int/species/gorillas/gor.ta1_documents/inf1_agreement_e.pdf> CMS Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and their Habitat.

Please contact the SSN Africa Regional Bureau if you need help with translation.
SSN Member of the Month: Conservation Justice

Organization Profile:
- President: Luc Mathot
- Date of Creation: 2010
- Mission Statement: Working towards strengthening the implementation of the law protecting fauna in Central Africa with a special focus on Gabon
- Offices Located in: Libreville, Gabon
- Website: http://www.conservation-justice.org/wordpress/

Project of Regional Interest: Appui à l’Application de la Loi sur la Faune (AALF)
Conservation Justice follows the model developed by the NGO The Last Great Ape Organization based in Cameroon, which has successfully fought against illegal trade in protected species and their products since 2003. Conservation Justice was created to replicate this model in Central Africa and leads efforts in Gabon, the Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. Conservation Justice’s projects aim to identify traffickers, facilitate their arrest and imprisonment, contribute to their prosecution, publicize the results in the press. Conservation Justice also supports training of government authorities in order to strengthen the implementation of the laws protecting fauna and flora. The initial results obtained in Gabon have been positive thanks to a good relationship with the government. Efforts in its first few months of operation have led to the arrest of numerous traffickers of animal products in Libreville and the organization of training sessions for the police, the judiciary and customs.

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Species Survival Network’s Africa Regional Bureau

Working within CITES to facilitate the participation of African countries

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Call for local representation
The Species Survival Network’s Africa Regional Bureau is engaged in a capacity building effort which involves local non-governmental organizations and the Press. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need help with CITES issues, if you wish to submit article ideas for the newsletter or if you wish to apply for SSN membership.

CITES Protected Species of the Month

♦ Name: Aloe buettneri
♦ CITES listing: Appendix II
♦ CITES export quotas: No export quotas reported for 2011 (see <http://cites.org/common/quotas/2011/ExportQuotas2011.pdf>)
♦ CITES trade levels (WCMC Trade Database 2011): Trade data not available at the time of writing
♦ IUCN category: Not assessed
♦ Threats: Aloe species are threatened by international trade (sap has medicinal and cosmetic applications), local exploitation for medicinal use and habitat destruction, grazing
♦ Range States: Ghana; Mali; Nigeria; Togo

♦ Useful resources: IUCN Medicinal Plant Specialist Group <http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/species/about_ssc/specialist_groups/directory_specialist_groups/directory_sg_plants/ssc_medicinalplant_home/>

♦ Name: Dama gazelle; gazelle dama (Nanger dama)
♦ CITES listing: Appendix I
♦ CITES export quotas: No export quotas reported for 2011 (See: http://cites.org/common/quotas/2011/ExportQuotas2011.pdf)
♦ CITES trade levels (WCMC Trade Database 2011): No trade reported. All legal commercial trade must be in captive-bred specimens from approved facilities, as the species is listed on Appendix I
♦ IUCN category: Critically Endangered
♦ Threats: Habitat loss; unmanaged, large-scale hunting
♦ Range States: Algeria; Burkina Faso; Chad; Egypt; Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (extinct (ex)); Mali; Mauritania (ex); Morocco (ex); Niger; Nigeria (ex)?; Senegal (ex, reintroduced); Sudan; Tunisia (ex); Western Sahara (query over status)
♦ Useful resources: IUCN/SSC Antelope Specialist Group <http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/species/about_ssc/specialist_groups/directory_specialist_groups/directory_sg_mammals/asmhome/> ; Fact sheet on dama gazelles <http://www.ultimateungulate.com/Artiodactyla/Nanger_dama.html> ; African antelopes database <http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/species/about_ssc/specialist_groups/directory_specialist_groups/directory_sg_mammals/asmhome/asmpublications/>