

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

Continued on page 15 »

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.

Continued on page 16 »



Talbot interview, continued from page 13

In 1963, I brought the proposal to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) General Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya, where it was presented as a resolution and passed unanimously. Subsequently, it went through three or four iterations as the result of review by IUCN member governments and non-government organizations.

By 1969 the IUCN had a pretty good draft of an international wildlife trade convention. At that time I was with the Smithsonian but was also an adviser to the Joint Senate/House Environment Committee. One of the issues that came up was the redrafting of the Endangered Species Act, and we actually got a line in the 1969 version of the ESA authorizing the government to hold an international conference to develop an international convention to control trade.

In 1970, I went to work for the newly created President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) as Assistant to Chairman Russell Train. One of the things I had on my agenda was to try to get the convention enacted, and Russ was strongly supportive. Shortly after that, we began preparations for the 1972 U.N. Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. We developed the draft a bit further and also got agreement from the State Department and the Department of the Interior for the U.S. to host a plenipotentiary conference to negotiate it. As co-chairs of a U.N. preparatory committee for the Stockholm conference, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nat Reed and I prepared the conservation

Talbot says CITES cut trade in rhino horn until recently.



Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika (now part of Tanzania), Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (now



In 2007, Lee Talbot with his wife, Martha Walcott Hayne, journeyed to a previously unexplored part of the Annamite Mountains of Laos and are shown holding the Explorers Club flag. The Explorers Club flag is given to outstandingly significant expeditions.

components of the Stockholm agenda and, of course, we included the official U.S. proposal on the agenda. I also traveled on behalf of the White House to Africa, Europe and other regions to explain the convention and seek support for it. The U.S. proposal as well as a proposal for a plenipotentiary conference was presented at Stockholm and accepted with nearly unanimous support.

Early in 1973, we held the plenipotentiary conference in the State Department in Washington D.C. with some 80 countries represented. IUCN served as staff for the conference, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora was negotiated, signed and since ratified, well and truly.

What countries were particularly active in promoting the convention?

Kenya wanted a stronger convention than the one that was agreed to. From my point of view, that was fine. England was supportive, but somewhat hesitant due to concerns about the difficulty in using untrained customs officials to identify the difference, for example, between an African spotted cat and a leopard. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was starting to develop identification manuals. These were helpful in terms of implementing the convention, but were also helpful at the time of negotiating it.

Zimbabwe), Malawi, South Africa, Egypt, Sudan and Iran were among the developing countries that helped promote the convention. Germany, France, England and the United States were among the developed countries.

As you look back over its implementation, what are CITES' major successes?

CITES' successes are a kind of roller coaster. Elephants were a major success, particularly in southern Africa, when CITES first closed the door on legal trade. Trade of rhino horn was another southern Africa success story until this year. Other major successes include trade in leopard hide and other skins intended for clothing or trophies and some plants, such as desert plants and even orchids.

Where the end result is display, CITES has been exceedingly effective. There is a direct relationship between the objective for the poaching and the success of CITES. Where demand is driven by the desire for display, the controls have been good. But, when demand is driven by less visible uses, such as traditional home remedies, then control is less successful.

CITES has also been successful in raising consciousness in Africa, Asia and Latin America as well as other regions of the world about the consequences of illegal wildlife trade.

What are CITES' major challenges?

We need stronger enforcement of the laws that are in place in member countries. For example, some major consumer countries in Asia have reasonable laws but don't enforce their laws. We also need education as well as more surveillance within the supply countries.

What does the future CITES look like?

We need to find more and better ways to get at the demand side of illegal wildlife trade. We also need more funding to build capacity to do research for better ways to identify the products and interdict the trade. Some of the non-government organizations are doing this work now, namely DNA identification of ivory and whale meat. □