

News and Notes

Continued from page 17

to obtain permits to import wildlife parts, and failing to report the imports. Mr. Beckley, who brought in four elephant tusks, two lion skins, a leopard skin, and two python skins, may be sentenced to as many as five years in prison.

Trial Held for Fur Smuggler

On 13 August 1985, the defendant in *U.S. v. Salazon* agreed to plead guilty to two misdemeanor counts of smuggling and currency violations. He is the seventh to plead in this prosecution of illegal trafficking in furs of various species of cat and fox.

Settlement of Fine International Footwear Case

On 30 September 1985, the U.S. agreed to an out-of-court settlement with the Fine International Footwear Company, charged in 1983 with CITES violations for its purchase of over \$50,000 worth of Appendix II hides in the United States—which it had then shipped to Korea—and for reexport of the hides from Korea in the form of 752 pairs of shoes. The company agreed to a \$15,000 civil penalty and forfeiture of one of four shoe shipments. The total shoe shipment included 166 pairs of caiman crocodile, 478 pairs of tegu lizard, and 108 pairs of monitor lizard shoes.

Gall Bladder Capers

Black bear poachers reportedly work year-round in northern California to meet the active demand for bear gall bladders and other parts in Oriental medicinal markets of Los Angeles and the Far East. According to an article in *The Los Angeles Times* (16 October 1985), dried and processed bear gall bladders can be sold for as much as \$330 per ounce.

The *Times*, however, also reported the recent conviction of a Los Angeles businessman arrested for possession of 19 black bear gall bladders (worth an estimated \$16,000), 20 black bear paws, and fresh deer meat. James Han Song pleaded guilty to six counts of illegal possession of the parts, and received a six-month jail term and a \$7,800 fine. Charges against his co-defendant, Tanya Sum Kim, were dismissed.

Peccary Skins Seized in Uruguay

On 22 October 1985, Uruguayan customs officials seized a major shipment of peccary skins (4,700 kg) in transshipment from Paraguay to Hamburg, Federal Republic of Germany. This represents the first such wildlife product seizure by Uruguayan customs authorities, who have since issued specific directives to customs inspectors to look out for in-transit wildlife articles. The shipment may contain the skins of up to 6,000 peccaries.

The peccary, like other Paraguayan wildlife, is protected from exploitation under Decree 18.796. The Uruguayan Customs Department is investigating documentation of the shipment prior to possible legal proceedings and forfeiture of the skins.

ASEAN Nations Unite to Protect Their Environment

The six member countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are working together to implement a comprehensive plan designed to protect the region's environment. At the Eighteenth ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Meeting held in Malaysia on 8 and 9 July 1985, the foreign ministers of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand signed the ASEAN Agree-

ment on the Conservation of Natural Resources.

Working from the foundation laid by the Manila Declaration in 1981, the six nations have created 11 new heritage sites and reserves. Among other goals of the plan, the members have agreed to set up a regional management structure for the reserves, strengthen the use of environmental impact assessment procedures for industry, and develop new approaches for preserving forests, wildlife, and ecosystems in the midst of a growing human population.

Taiwan Acts to Curb Rhino Horn Trade

Conservationists were elated by the decision of the government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) this past August to ban the importation of all rhino horn. With this decision, Taiwan joins the worldwide effort to arrest the shocking decline of all five rhinoceros species. Despite this welcome news, rhinos in both Africa and Asia continue to lose their lives to poachers.

The rhino's nemesis is its horn, highly prized in traditional Oriental medicine as a fever-reducing drug, and equally in demand in certain Arab countries, especially the Yemeni Arab Republic (North Yemen), for dagger handles. Taiwan's announcement followed a campaign that has included the cooperation of WWF-International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), TRAFFIC(Japan), and Dr. Esmond Bradley Martin. HRH Prince Philip, President of World Wildlife Fund and Vice President of IUCN, personally intervened and urged the Taiwan officials to implement a complete ban.

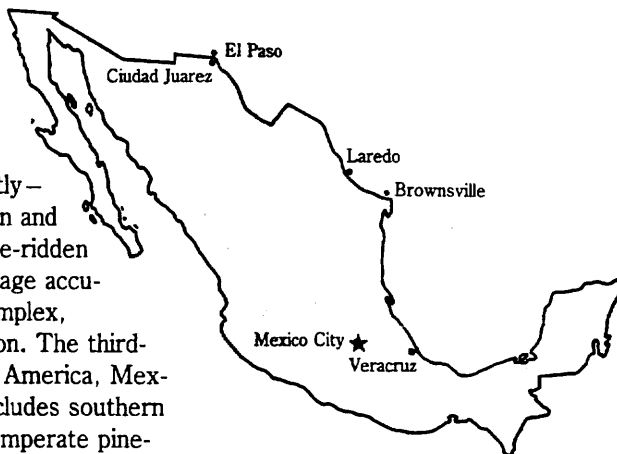
Afghanistan and Somalia Make It 90 and 91

Afghanistan acceded to CITES on 30 October 1985 and effective 28 January

Special Report on: Mexico

Wildlife Trade Strains a Weakening Environment

While Mexico is perhaps best known for its desert regions, populated by thorny trees, cacti, and lizards, or—most recently—for the urban destruction and human suffering in quake-ridden Mexico City, neither image accurately describes this complex, biologically-diverse nation. The third-largest country in Latin America, Mexico's natural heritage includes southern tropical regions, high temperate pine-oak forests, and arid deserts stretching north to the U.S. border.



These regions are home to over 20,000 plant species, of which 17 percent are endemic and 15 percent are listed as endangered (Rzedowski, 1982). Mexico's natural diversity is reflected, too, in its native fauna, which ranges from tarantulas, Bolson desert tortoises, and coon-tailed rattlesnakes of the Chihuahuan Desert to jaguars, tapirs, and crocodiles of the Chiapas tropical forest.

Despite efforts to conserve living resources within 126 protected areas, many of Mexico's wild plants and animals are disappearing. Rapid human population growth, widespread use of "slash and burn" agricultural methods, large-scale lumbering operations, and livestock grazing encroach upon native wildlife habitats. Mexico's thriving wildlife trade, spurred largely by demand from its northern neighbor and facilitated by an ineffective bureaucracy and political corruption, also creates a tremendous drain on native flora and fauna. Parrots, sea turtles, cacti, iguanas, and caimans are among the most favored—and endangered—items, despite strict prohibitions or restrictions on their trade.

The reputed volume, complexity, and diversity of this trade prompted TRAFFIC's decision to focus on Mexico in this issue. As is our practice, we turned to CITES and customs statistics for a better understanding of the trade. Because Mexico is not a CITES party, much of the data we found are sketchy and often misleading. Nowhere, for example, do the data disclose the thriving trade from Mexico to Europe of iguana and sharkskin described to us by an exotic leather dealer. Nor do recent numbers show much domestic and international trade in live birds. But Don Carr, Chief of the Justice Department's Wildlife and Marine Resources Section, remarks that the volume of illegal bird imports from Mexico is "probably 100 times more than you would guess" and visitors to Mexico City comment on the lively markets in birds from both Mexico and abroad. Statistics on cat skin trade are similarly scarce. Cat skins exported from Mexico turn up infrequently in the data, yet TRAFFIC receives reports that Mexico is the

Continued on page 3

**Volume 6, Number 4
February 1986**

Inside...

Guest Authors and TRAFFIC Staff
Report on Mexico's Wildlife Trade

Also inside...

News and Notes.....17
New From TRAFFIC(U.S.A.)20

