

**ENDANGERED**

*Species*  
**BULLETIN**

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*“The law doth punish man or woman/That steals the goose from off the Common/But lets the greater felon loose/That steals the Common from the goose.” These words, written anonymously in 1764, suggest our responsibility to the species we share as well as to their habitats. For species that migrate across our borders, the importance of international cooperation is obvious. However, Americans also care about species not native to our land. This edition of the Bulletin will explore some examples of how the U.S. is working with other countries to ensure the future of the world’s plant and animal resources. Ultimately, our international conservation programs are a collection of people, who through funding, energy, and focus, attempt to make a difference for wildlife.*

Marshall Jones, Assistant Director for International Affairs

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# ENDANGERED Species BULLETIN

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## On the Cover

African elephant populations remain vulnerable to the human demand for their ivory. As expected, proposals to allow trade in stockpiled ivory generated considerable controversy at COP10, the 1997 CITES conference.

**Corel Corp. photo**

## Opposite page

Demand for the large teeth of the hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibus*) as a substitute for ivory led CITES to regulate trade in this species in 1995.

**Photo by David Yeargin**



The Endangered Species Bulletin welcomes manuscripts on a wide range of topics related to endangered species. We are particularly interested in news about recovery, habitat conservation plans, and cooperative ventures. Please contact the Editor before preparing a manuscript. We cannot guarantee publication.

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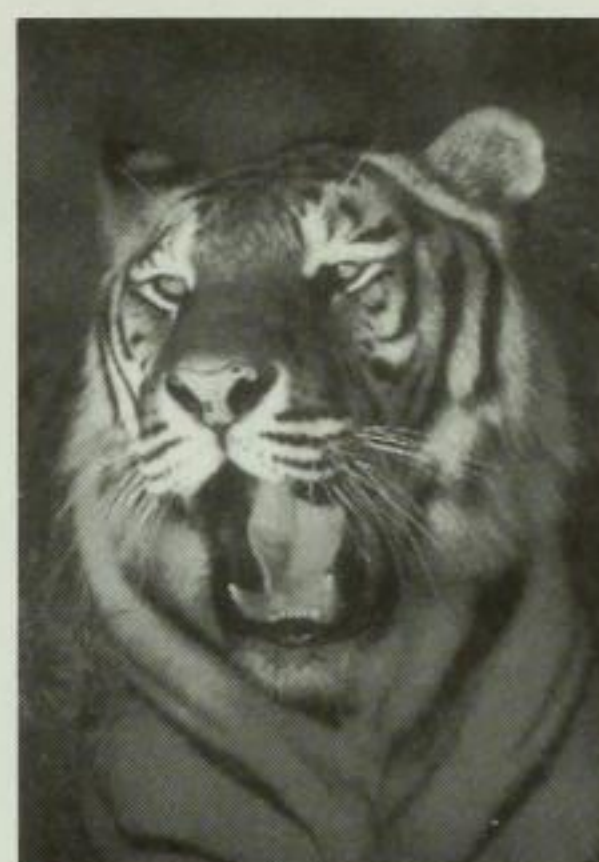
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# The Ups and Downs of COP10



**The most controversial issue debated at COP10 involved the proposed relaxing of some trade controls that are in place to protect the African elephant from over-exploitation for ivory and other products.**

*Corel Corp. photo*

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international treaty designed to control international trade in certain animal and plant species that are, or may become, threatened with extinction. The CITES treaty requires a meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) at least every 2 years. "COP10," or the tenth meeting of CITES' 142 member nations, was held this past June in Zimbabwe.

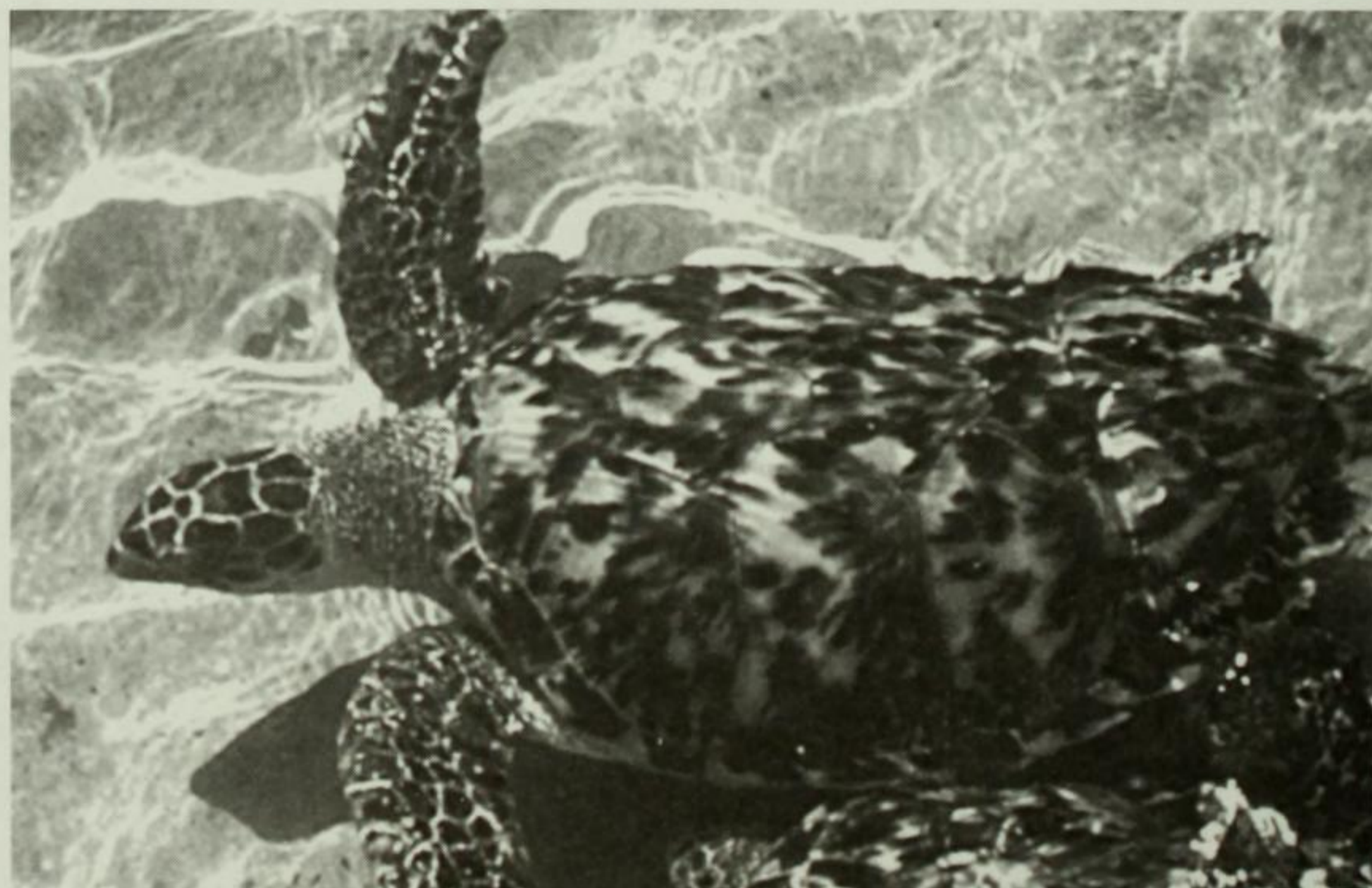
Implementation of CITES is a vital part of global efforts to conserve the world's fauna and flora, both by halting trade in species threatened with extinction and by fostering sustainable trade in other potentially vulnerable species. The lead responsibility for CITES implementation in the United States is assigned by the Endangered Species Act to the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), which works with other Federal and State agencies.

U.S. positions on many issues raised at COP10 prevailed, including such high-profile examples as the relationship between CITES and the International Whaling Commission and rejection of the proposed reopening of commercial trade in whales and sea turtles. Several U.S. initiatives dealing with alien invasive species, sturgeon conservation, and other issues were adopted. Some U.S. initiatives, however, were not as successful.

In the past, one of the strengths of CITES has been active participation by

**A proposed reopening of commercial trade in the hawksbill sea turtle was rejected at COP10.**

*Photo by Peter Pritchard*



non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, due to the number of proposals under consideration at COP10, time for debate was limited, and the discussion of some issues suffered from lack of broad NGO participation. One priority for the future will be to work to ensure that adequate time and opportunities are available for NGO participation. Also at COP10, more decisions than ever before were made by secret ballot, which allows the Parties to escape public accountability for their votes. Secret ballots were used to vote on proposals for transfer to Appendix II of whales, African elephants, white rhinoceros, sea turtles, and bigleaf mahogany, as well as on resolutions to establish a marine fish working group and Japan's attempt to repeal a long-standing CITES resolution supporting the International Whaling Commission. These secret votes reduced the transparency of the process. Regardless of the secret ballot format, the U.S. delegation publicly announced its vote on all issues, as has been its practice.

The following is a summary of the key results of COP10, both for species proposals and for issues pertaining to CITES implementation and enforcement:

## **RESOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS**

### **Invasive Species**

One important U.S. initiative concerned ways CITES can draw attention to the threats posed by invasive alien (non-native) species. The Parties concurred that live specimens of commercially traded plants and animals can become introduced into new habitats by international trade, with potentially disastrous consequences. The Parties agreed unanimously to adopt a U.S. document (co-sponsored by Argentina and New Zealand) that included: consideration of the threats posed by invasive alien species when developing and implementing sustainable use management plans for internationally traded species; cooperation and collaboration between CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity and related organizations; work with the IUCN Invasive Species Specialist

Group to identify traded species with the biological potential for invasiveness; and heightening international awareness of the risks posed by invasive alien species.

### **Illegal Trade in Bear Specimens**

In response to the serious threats to bear populations caused by the illegal trade in parts and products of Appendix I bear species, the U.S. placed this issue of the agendas of the Animals and Standing Committees in 1996, which led to a decision to refer the issue to the COP. COP10 adopted a resolution co-sponsored by China, Japan, Korea, Russia, and the U.S. that we hope will benefit global bear conservation. Key elements include: urging countries to adopt, confirm, or improve national legislation controlling trade in bear parts and products; increased efforts to identify, target, and eliminate illegal markets; international wildlife law enforcement training; documenting of domestic demand for parts and derivatives; work with traditional medicine communities that use bear parts; and a call for an international workshop on law enforcement and forensics techniques.

### **ENFORCEMENT ISSUES**

A large number of enforcement issues were discussed at COP10, including a Secretariat-prepared Report on Infractions of the Convention. Due to the high priority the U.S. places on the rigorous enforcement of CITES, the U.S. submitted resolutions dealing specifically with this issues. One was a resolution to establish an Illegal Trade Working Group to provide technical enforcement assistance (such as training in wildlife identification, smuggling detection techniques, and document fraud) by professional enforcement officers. Unfortunately, this resolution was defeated, with several Parties and the Secretariat feeling that any cooperative enforcement efforts should remain the responsibility of the Secretariat. Many developing countries were in favor of the formation of the group, in order to receive assistance with their illegal trade problems, while many



***Bear species around the world, including the black bear (*Ursus americanus*) in the United States, are threatened by the trade in their parts for use in traditional medicines.***

*Corel Corp. photo*

developed countries deemed the group unnecessary. The U.S. will continue to provide bilateral assistance in enforcement training, within available resources. In support of a resolution adopted at the World Conservation Congress (IUCN) in Canada in 1996, the U.S. submitted a resolution to COP10 (which was adopted after some amendments) in support of inspection of wildlife shipments to help curtail the illegal trade.

#### **Rhinoceros and Tiger Trade**

The Parties discussed efforts for rhinoceros conservation, and information on the status of rhinoceros populations in Africa and Asia. The discussion was productive, and seven recommendations were adopted involving conservation priorities. After discussion of the dire situation facing tiger populations from poaching and illegal trade, a strengthened version of an earlier resolution was adopted. The U.S. is also involved in bilateral discussions with importing and range countries in an effort to increase CITES enforcement and halt the illegal international trade in rhinoceros and tiger parts and products. Through the grant program under the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act of 1992, the FWS provides critical assistance to range states in Asia and Africa for the protection of their rhinoceros and tiger populations.

#### **CHANGESTO CITES APPENDICES**

The Parties considered 77 proposals to amend the CITES Appendices. Amendments that may be of particular interest include the following:

#### **African Elephants**

As anticipated, the most visible and controversial issue at COP10 was that of the proposals by three countries (Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe) to downlist their African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) populations from Appendix I to Appendix II, in order to allow trade in stockpiled ivory to Japan, exports of sport hunting trophies, exports of live elephants and export (for Zimbabwe) of hides, leather goods, and ivory carvings for non-commercial purposes. The U.S. opposed these proposals because of the risks posed from resumption of the ivory trade.

Just prior to COP10, the African elephant range states held a meeting (with financial assistance provided by the FWS) to discuss the proposals. African countries also met frequently during the COP, where it became clear that many West, Central, and East African countries had concerns about the potentially harmful effects on their elephants from trade resumption. The U.S. decided it could not support downlisting because of serious concerns about the potential for renewed poaching in other countries if ivory trade is resumed. Over several days, the proponent countries and a working group of representatives from Africa, Europe, and Canada negotiated changes to the original proposals, which were put to a secret vote. Unfortunately, debate was not allowed on this revised proposal. With the European Union (EU) abstaining, all three proposals obtained the necessary majority for adoption. The approved amendment involves an annotation to the Appendix II listing, whereby only certain activities may be conducted. In addition to authorizing the exports of trophies, live animals, and (from Zimbabwe only) hides, as well as noncommercial exports of worked leather goods and worked ivory, the



**Other animals in danger from poaching and illegal trade for traditional Asian medicines are tigers and various African and Asian rhinoceros species.**

Corel Corp. photo

#### **Black rhinoceros**

Corel Corp. photo



annotation also will allow resumption of limited trade in ivory 18 months after the downlisting takes effect—but only to Japan and only if certain conditions are met and approved in advance by the CITES Standing Committee.

The U.S. explained at COP10 that it had voted against the amended proposals because of its continuing enforcement-related concerns. Nevertheless, the U.S. respects the decision of the COP and will work cooperatively with the Standing Committee, the proponent countries, and other elephant range countries to help minimize the risk to elephants throughout their range. We plan to take an active role in developing the required international monitoring system for illegal trade and in supporting regional law enforcement efforts.

### **Bigleaf Mahogany**

The U.S. and Bolivia cosponsored a proposal to list bigleaf mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*), a highly traded tropical timber species, on CITES Appendix II. This species has been over-exploited in parts of its original range in Mexico and Central and South America. During the mahogany debate, Brazil used its influence to raise many objections to the listing. After the vote was taken—but before results were announced—Brazil made a calculated announcement that it had abstained from voting, stating that it has already taken internal steps to address the issue. The Appendix II proposal was then rejected by the Committee, with 67 votes for and 45 against, missing the required majority by only eight votes.

However, because of the relatively close vote and the potential reaction to Brazil's surprise abstention, the U.S. and Bolivia made it clear that they were strongly considering calling for another vote in the final plenary session. However, in the last hours of the COP, the U.S., Brazil, and Bolivia forged an agreement to work with all mahogany range states, and with key importing nations, to improve and ensure the sustainability of mahogany management

and trade. The agreement envisions a working group to produce, over 18 months, a report (with recommendations) on the status, management, and trade in mahogany. Brazil, Bolivia, and Mexico also committed to list their populations of bigleaf mahogany on Appendix III and asked other range states to do the same. We hope that this working group will be able to produce an effective result for mahogany conservation.

### **Sawfish**

The U.S. submitted a proposal to list all seven species of sawfish (order Pristiformes) on Appendix I, noting that several of the species are endangered, that international trade exists, and that they qualify for inclusion under the CITES listing criteria. The proposal was defeated, however, with several countries claiming that the scientific and trade data in the proposal were not sufficiently convincing. The U.S. will continue to closely monitor the status of sawfish and other marine species to evaluate threats from international trade and determine whether or not they qualify for inclusion on one of the CITES Appendices.

### **Reptiles**

The U.S. submitted three proposals to include the following native reptile species on Appendix II: 9 of the 12 species of map turtles in the genus *Graptemys*; the alligator snapping turtle (*Macrolemys temminckii*); and the timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*). None of these proposals was adopted. The proposals on the alligator snapping



**A proposal to conserve the bigleaf mahogany, a tropical species widely used in the furniture trade, by listing it on Appendix II of CITES narrowly missed passage by the required two-thirds majority.**

**Photo by Scott Landis**

**CITES regulates international trade in plants and animals to varying degrees, depending on the species' biological status and vulnerability to commercial exploitation. Three appendices to CITES identify how much protection is provided to each species:**

**Appendix I lists plants and animals threatened with extinction that are, or may be, affected by commercial trade. Commercial trade in Appendix I species is prohibited.**

**Appendix II includes species that may become threatened if their trade is not brought under control. Commercial trade in Appendix II species is allowed but is subject to regulation. Exports must be accompanied by a valid permit from the CITES Management Authority in the exporting country. Such export permits may be issued only after the Management Authority makes a scientific determination that the export will not be detrimental to the species.**

**Appendix III lists species that individual CITES Parties identify as subject to domestic regulations for the purpose of restricting or preventing exploitation. Permits or certificates of origin are required for trade in Appendix III species.**

**Some species covered by other U.S. laws may require additional permits, and trade allowed by CITES may be prohibited. Such laws include the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and Wild Bird Conservation Act.**



**Alligator snapping turtle**

*Photo by C. Kenneth Dodd, Jr.*

turtle and the timber rattlesnake were withdrawn after several Parties indicated their view that international trade is minimal and conservation problems for the species should be dealt with domestically. The map turtle proposal missed the 2/3 approval majority by only one vote. The FWS intends to work closely with the States and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to monitor the burgeoning international trade in our native reptile species to determine the best conservation solutions.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

In the only vote actually required to be by secret ballot, the Parties chose Indonesia as the site of the 1999 COP11. Indonesia supports tremendous biodiversity, but it is also among the largest exporters of protected species, and it has problems implementing and enforcing CITES. Those of us involved with CITES breathe a sigh of relief that the work leading up to COP10 is behind us. We look forward to COP11 as we rededicate ourselves to the important goals embodied by the CITES treaty, which states that "... wild fauna and flora in their many beautiful and varied forms are an irreplaceable part of the natural systems

of the earth which must be protected for this and the generations to come."

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*Dr. Lieberman, Chief of the Branch of Operations in the FWS Office of Management Authority, was a member of the U.S. delegation to COP10.*

*A number of significant proposals, resolutions, and decisions were completed at COP10. Due to space limitations, some of the important CITES actions could not be detailed in this article. See the FWS International Affairs homepage at <http://www.fws.gov/~r9dia/index.html> for more information. Click on the CITES/COP10 listing.*

**Opposite page:  
Scenes like this will continue to be possible if CITES is successful in preventing the over-exploitation of vulnerable wildlife.**

*Corel Corp. photo*

