



This Gaucho Festival sponsored by the CITES Conference was held on May 1st — an Argentine national holiday. Those of you who know Jennings will notice him the background (seated directly in front of man standing at right in white shirt) dining with U.S. Fish and Wildlife personnel.

CITES— Fifth Conference Of The Parties

by Jerry Jennings
Woodland Hills, CA

EDITOR'S NOTE: The AFA was fortunate to have Jerry Jennings at the CITES Conference held this year in Argentina. Jennings' credentials suit him very well for meeting and mingling with such an international body. Jennings has a master's degree in business administration, has a degree in law and is a member of the California State Bar; he speaks German, Spanish and Portuguese, has military experience as a naval officer, was and still is a world traveller who is at home in many countries all over the world from Africa to Asia to Europe and South America. In addition, Jennings' leadership in the AFA and his own bird interests have enabled him to become personally acquainted with many of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife personnel and many of the leading ornithologists and zoo curators who are involved with CITES.

The fifth conference of the parties to the Convention on International Trade

in Endangered Species (CITES) was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina April 22 to May 3, 1985. Of the 87 nations party to the Convention, approximately 67 were on hand to decide the future course of CITES and the fate of numerous species of animals and plants.

During the course of deliberations, a number of issues important to aviculturists were examined. Perhaps those of the greatest immediate impact were the approval of proposals to move the scarlet macaw and the Buffon's macaw from Appendix II (threatened) to Appendix I (endangered). This change in status means that these species will no longer be allowed to be exported from the countries of origin and no longer allowed importation into the United States, except under CITES permits issued by both the exporting and importing countries. Under the CITES rules, permits for Appendix I species may not be issued for "primarily commercial purposes." Permits may be issued, however, for purposes such as training, education, conservation, cap-



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tive breeding, and research.

Other shifts in species included the transfer of the Jabiru stork from Appendix II to Appendix I and the addition of all species of cranes to Appendix II that were not previously listed on Appendix II or Appendix I.

Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of the changes in the Appendices is the requirement that species be listed on Appendix I (endangered) only if they meet the Bern criteria (regulations adopted in Bern, Switzerland), which require scientific data indicating that a species population has declined to the point that it is truly endangered. These data are often hard to acquire, since population studies have not previously been carried out and the difficulty and cost of doing so is prohibitive. With reference to the Buffon's macaw, the general scientific consensus is that the species is truly in trouble. However, the scarlet macaw is generally considered to be in trouble only in Central America. While no specific data concerning South American populations is available, other than the fact a significant level of trade exists in that species. There is concern that the populations are unlikely to continue to sustain such exports.

Without a census, export levels may be factors considered under the Bern criteria, making a case for including this species in Appendix I. Costa Rica, the proponent, in their opening statement on the issue admitted the scarlet fell short of the Bern criteria; however, since a previous proposal to list cranes on Appendix II passed without meeting those criteria, why shouldn't their proposal also pass? Who can argue with such logic.

Perhaps the events described above best illustrate the political nature of the decision-making process, which is overly infected with emotional rhetoric. This inevitably proves a disservice to the conservation movement, which must incorporate the wise and effective utilization of renewable wildlife resources to succeed with the long-term goals of preserving the world's natural heritage.

One of the potentially most significant events of the CITES Conference was the submission by Israel of a draft convention on the international humane treatment of wildlife. This convention would establish an international treaty calling on signatory parties to adopt rules prohibiting the "unnecessary capture or killing" of all wildlife. Unnecessary is defined as no capturing or killing except for the protection of property or human life or for closely regulated purposes. The proposed Articles of the Convention would carefully regulate shipping containers and holding facilities, amongst other things and would result in the end of the bird trade on an international level and probably on the national level, since treaty law, under the U.S. Constitution, is the law of the land.

Although the draft convention on humane treatment did not receive a hearing at CITES, its proponents are not about to throw in the towel. We can expect to see it appear on another front. It is quite apparent that A.F.A. supports and must support the concept of the proposed convention on humane treatment of animals. It is also extremely important that the A.F.A. has input in the process that ultimately determines the final content of such a treaty. Many of the supporters of this proposal are very much opposed to the keeping of birds by aviculturists and pet owners. What they don't understand is that birdkeeping is not inherently inhumane. We must, therefore, endeavor to ensure that they are educated to the concept that aviculture and the humane treatment of birds are consistent.

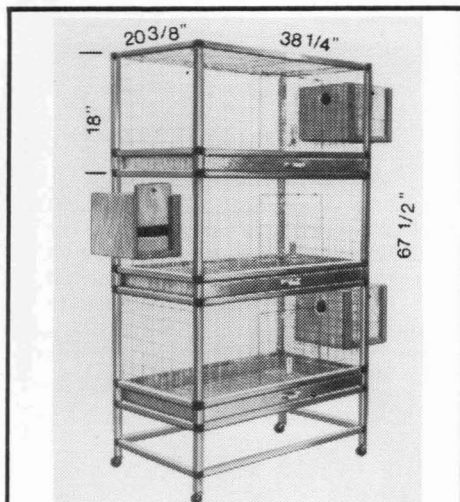
An interesting aspect of the CITES

process, and one I did not expect to encounter, was the tremendous lobbying effort conducted by numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These groups, primarily anti-user groups, put intense pressure on the governmental delegations to vote the "right way" on issues of concern to these NGOs. The hottest issues of the conference, perhaps, were the turtle ranching proposals, to wit: to downlist from App. I to II, captive reared endangered green sea turtles. Efforts on the part of the Center for Environmental Education and the Defenders of Wildlife included circulating numerous documents opposing the proposals, holding a cocktail party for delegates, and personally speaking to most of the delegations in a successful effort to defeat the proposals.

The U.S. delegation's position is published in the Federal Register long before the conference of the parties. The process calls for proposals on tentative positions, comments, and final position publication. The U.S. position on the scarlet macaw was published to be in opposition to its listing on Appendix I. However, when the issue was debated, the U.S. refrained from comment, and when the vote was taken, the U.S. abstained.

The obvious lessons to be learned is that one cannot rely on what one reads in the Federal Register, and that the proper pressure applied at the conferences can significantly alter the outcome. It is with that in mind that I strongly urge that the A.F.A. continue to participate in CITES not only by attending the conferences, but by engaging in the input process when proposals come up for comment in the Federal Register, by establishing a working relationship with the CITES Secretariat (as PIJAC has done), and by joining the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The greater the input aviculturists have, the more likely we shall see rational regulation of trade.

Footnote: As an indication of the great concern for the compliance with CITES and the effort to protect threatened and endangered species, Bolivia was strongly reprimanded by its Latin American neighbors for failure to adhere to CITES permit requirements and for its unwillingness to curtail the illegal trade in birds smuggled from Brazil into Bolivia for re-export. This reprimand was subscribed to by all the parties at the Conference — not only regarding birds but for illegal trade in caimans and other wildlife coming out of Brazil. ●



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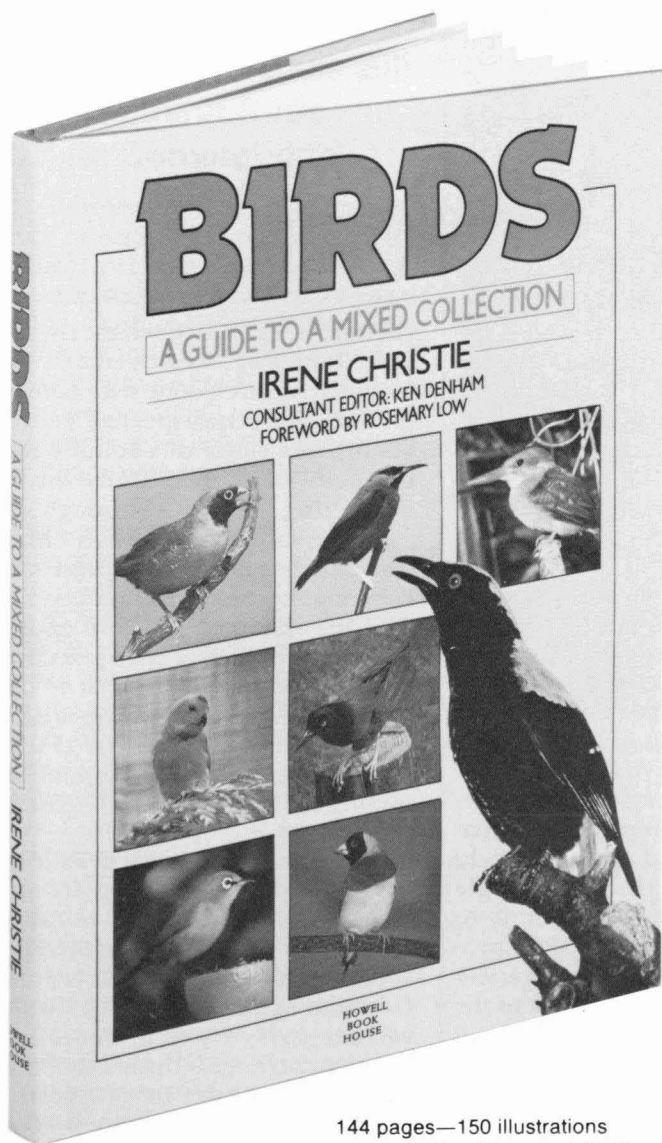
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