



WORLD WILDLIFE FUND-U.S.

New Efforts to Halt Illegal Wildlife Trade Announced

WASHINGTON, D.C.—As part of a new “get tough” stance on illegal wildlife trade, the World Wildlife Fund-U.S. announced today new efforts being taken to help curb the increasing numbers of endangered wildlife products being brought into the United States. Products made from sea turtle shell, crocodile leather, and skins of spotted cats such as jaguars are still coming into the country illegally in considerable quantities in spite of U.S. legislation prohibiting such imports.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will increase by 50 percent the number of inspectors at designated ports of entry to help intercept illegal shipments of wild animals and plants and their parts and products. Commenting on the hiring of additional inspectors, Clark Bavin, Chief of Fish and Wildlife’s Law Enforcement Division, said, “In 1982 alone, there were over 55,000 shipments of wildlife imported into and exported from the United States with a declared value of over \$760 million. Our investigations have determined that many shipments have been imported with fraudulent documents, and we are concerned that others may have cleared without detection. Smuggled wildlife continues to be a problem. By increasing the number of inspectors, the Service is enhancing its ability to inspect wildlife shipments. This added impetus will benefit our enforcement efforts and provide a deterrent that will serve to protect many species.”

Increased appropriations by Congress which led to the hiring were supported by World Wildlife Fund-U.S., the largest international conservation group committed to the preservation of endangered species and habitats. Said Russell Train, President of World Wildlife Fund-U.S., “As the world’s largest consumer of wildlife, the U.S. has recognized its responsibility to

have strong wildlife import laws. We have both a legal and moral obligation to help curb international illegal wildlife trade. As the recognized international leader in conservation, our efforts can favorably influence activities by other nations and, thus, have enormous significance around the world.”

In another “get tough” move, World Wildlife Fund, whose TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce) network monitors trade in threatened and endangered wildlife all over the world, announced the opening of TRAFFIC(South America) to be based in Montevideo, Uruguay and the only other office in this hemisphere outside of TRAFFIC(U.S.A.). The newly created office in Latin America joins a network of TRAFFIC offices in Japan, Germany, Australia, Belgium, the U.K., and the Netherlands.

According to Kathryn Fuller, head of TRAFFIC(U.S.A.), “The South American initiative has special significance because an estimated 35 percent of world trade in endangered wildlife and wildlife products originates in South America—over 33 percent of it illegally. TRAFFIC(South America) should be of considerable help to countries like Brazil who have seen their wildlife resources steadily diminish due to rampant poaching.”

The measures taken by the World Wildlife Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service follow in the wake of heated discussions on the global illegal trade problem at the recent meeting in Argentina of 88 countries party to CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Both TRAFFIC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had the opportunity to express their shared concern about the problem at that meeting. ●

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