

# INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION

## NEWSLETTER

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## Taiwan Regulates CITES Plants

On 16 July 1998, Taiwan's Board of Foreign Trade (BOFT), Ministry of Economic Affairs, announced the addition of all CITES Appendix I and II-listed plant species to its published 'Notes' of the "Consolidated List of Commodities Subject to Import and Export Restriction & Commodities Entrusted to Customs for Import and Export Examination" (Document No. Trade (87)-07691). The Announcement contains regulations governing the importation and export of CITES Appendix I/II flora species.

While Taiwan cannot be party to CITES in its own right owing to its non-recognition as a sovereign state by the United Nations, Taiwan has regulated the importation and exportation of most CITES-listed fauna since passage of its Wildlife Conservation Law in 1989. However, prior to the recent BOFT announcement, trade in CITES-listed plant species was largely unregulated.

In addition, the Council of Agriculture (COA) announced guidelines regulating application for permission to export and import wild-collected and artificially propagated specimens of CITES Appendix I-listed flora (Document No. (87) Nung-Lin-Tze 87030331). These guidelines will provide the basis for creation of an orchid nursery registration system which, initially, will apply to *Paphiopedilum* spp. and *Phragmipedium* spp. only. The two announcements represent significant progress in Taiwan's efforts to implement CITES.

(Cited from TRAFFIC Bulletin 17(3))

## IUCN Red List of Threatened Plants

More than one out of eight plant species worldwide is at risk of extinction, according to the most comprehensive scientific assessment ever assembled on the status of the world's plants. This announcement was made on April 8 at a press conference at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History as the

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1997 IUCN Red List of Threatened Plants was released. Similar news conferences were held in England, Australia and South Africa. The IUCN Red List reveals that 12.5%, or 34,000, of the world's vascular plant species are threatened with extinction.

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The Red List is the result of a 20-year effort by a unique coalition of scientists, conservation organizations, botanical gardens and museums. The Red List was published by IUCN-The World Conservation Union and compiled by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC). Conservation assessments were provided by numerous scientists and conservationists with major input from the Smithsonian's Department of Botany, The Nature Conservancy, Environment Australia and CSIRO, the National Botanical Institute (South Africa), Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and Edinburgh, and the New York Botanical Garden.

Of the estimated 270,000 known species of vascular plants, which include ferns, fern allies, gymnosperms (including conifers and cycads), and flowering plants, 33,798 were found to be at risk of extinction. These plants are found in 369 families and are scattered throughout 200 countries. Of the plant species named in the Red List, 91% are found only in a single country. A limited geographic distribution can make a species much more vulnerable and may reduce options for its protection. In addition, islands or island groups, which also have high rates of endemism, face high levels of threat to their flora. Seven of the top ten areas listed according to percentage of threatened floras were islands : St. Helena, Mauritius, Seychelles, Jamaica, French Polynesia, Pitcairn, and Reunion. A great number of plant species known to have medicinal value are at risk of disappearing, leaving their healing potential

unfulfilled. For instance, 75% of the species from the yew family, a source of important cancer-fighting compounds, are threatened. The willow family, from which aspirin is derived, has 12% of its species threatened. Numerous other species whose medicinal value has not yet been studied also are at risk.

The Red List shows that 380 species have become extinct in the wild, with an additional 371 species listed as Extinct/Endangered. Over 6,500 species are categorized as Endangered, indicating their numbers have been so drastically reduced to a critical level that they are deemed to be in immediate danger of extinction. Threat assessments are according to the pre-1994 IUCN threat categories. The introduction to the book details the purpose and history of the project, an explanation of the information and an analysis of the list, including valuable tables on threatened plants in each country by IUCN category and by major taxa and families. Publication of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Plants marks a turning point for conservation. The book, an important new conservation tool, provides baseline information to measure conservation progress and serves as a primary source of data on plant species. Most importantly, it provides the building blocks on which to base worldwide efforts to conserve plant species and the ecosystems they inhabit.

(Press release of IUCN)

\* The publication of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Plants was funded by the Council of Agriculture.

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## International Trade in Reptiles Booms

International trade in live reptiles has increased dramatically in the last decade, with the USA as the central player. The trade supplies a number of markets, from food to aquariums and zoos, but by far the most significant market is for live reptiles as pets.

In the USA, imports significantly declined after the passage of laws such as the US Endangered Species Act in the 1970s. However, in the last 10 years, the USA has seen an enormous increase in live reptile imports and has become a major supplier as well. Today, the USA accounts for 82 per cent of the reported international trade in live reptiles covered under CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, according to a new study by TRAFFIC North America. The study, published in the report "The US Role in the International Live Reptile Trade: Amazon Tree Boas to Zululand Dwarf Chameleons" by Craig Hoover, analyzed global trade data and reviewed trade in approximately 100 species, many covered under CITES.

The findings indicate that the USA is now the world's largest consumer of live reptiles for the pet industry, importing 2.5 million reptiles annually in recent years. A single species, the Green Iguana from Central and South America, accounted for 45 % of the imports in 1995. US exports are also dominated by one species, the

US native Red-eared Slider Turtle. This turtle continually makes up more than 80 % of the eight to 10 million reptiles exported annually. The majority of Red-eared Slider Turtles are produced on farms, but it is unclear how much wild stock is needed to sustain these farms and therefore what impact they may have upon wild populations.

Red-eared Slider Turtle exports have also caused great concern because of the turtle's potential threat as an invasive species that may out-compete native turtle populations. Imports to the European Union have since been banned.

Although the USA has long monitored and regulated wildlife trade, it has focused its efforts largely on the import of foreign species rather than the export of native species.

While legal international trade in live reptiles is on the rise, the study found illegal trade increasing as well. The report recommends a variety of actions, including an examination of international trade in North American turtles and turtle farming operations to assess their potential effects on wild populations, and review of legislation to assess effectiveness of implementation and enforcement in identified "hot spots" where reptile species continue to be threatened by trade.

(Cited from TRAFFIC Bulletin 17(3))

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## Continue Monitoring the Migratory Path of Green Turtles

Female green turtle, Wang-An No. 2, returned to Wang-An Island in Penghu to lay eggs four years after she had been first fitted with a satellite telemetry. Now, she is refitted with a new satellite telemetry tracking equipment and is back to the ocean again. National Taiwan Ocean University professor Yi-jun Cheng said that Taiwan's first female turtle to be fitted with satellite telemetry equipment, Wang-An No. 1, returned to Penghu last year, after three years of migration. Wang-An No. 2's return suggests that the migratory cycle of Taiwan's green turtles is between three and four years, which is shorter than the migration cycles, some of which last up to nine years, of green turtles elsewhere.

Professor Cheng said that Wang-An No. 2 was fitted with satellite telemetry equipment on the beach on the southern side of Mt. Tiantai four years ago. Her return to the same place four years later demonstrated the green turtle's loyalty to their original egg laying area. Cheng said that the linear length of the Wang-An No. 2's shell had grown from the original 88cm to 95cm, while the curved length of the shell had grown from the original 94cm to 102cm. During her migration, Wang-An No. 2 was detected in waters off Tamsui in northern Taiwan. Therefore, Professor Cheng recommended that, a recent proposal on the development of Tamsui

and its surrounding area should be re-evaluate to avoid the destruction of potential green turtle habitats.



## Taiwan's Coral Reefs in Imminent Danger

According to statistics from United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO), if the destruction of Taiwan's coral reefs is allowed to continue, less than half of Taiwan's coral reefs will remain in 20 years' time.

Currently, Taiwan has between 300 and 350 different types of coral reef distributed mainly on Orchid Island, Green Island, Penghu, and Hsiao Liuchiu. Coral reefs also exist in north Taiwan, however, their distribution is relatively small. At present, all of Taiwan's coral reefs face serious destruction. For instance, the relatively early development of tourism on Hsiao Liuchiu without considering measures to conserve the island's coral reefs has resulted in the destruction of between 50% and 80% of coral reefs there. The rate of destruction in other areas is as follows : Keelung and Yehliu : 30% to 50%, Penghu Island and surrounding areas : 30% to 40%, Kenting : 20% to 30%, Penghu's outlying islands : 10% to 20%, Orchid Island and Green Island : 10% to 15%, the Hualien-Taitung coastline : 15% to 20%, and the Northeast Coast : 10% to 30%.

Every year, the Kenting National Park Headquarters conducts a regular survey of the coral reef within the park. This year the park asked National Taiwan University Graduate Institute of Oceanography Professor Chang-feng Tai to conduct the inspection. The results of the survey revealed the sorry state of coral located at Tiaoshih at South Bay and beside the outlet for effluent from the Third Nuclear Power Plant. Within a depth of three meters, the coral had bleached due to the effect of high water temperatures, while coral at a depth of more than 10 meters faced the threat of being covered over by silt and other debris. Other areas where serious silt and other deposits are a serious problem include the coastal area at Chialeshui and Hungchaikeng. Professor Tai said that if the already serious situation was allowed to deteriorate further, the coral reefs at Kenting might totally disappear within just three to four years.



## Conservation News

### Foreign Nationals Caught Smuggling Wildlife into Taiwan

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On the evening of October 10, 1998, the Wildlife Protection Unit(WPC) of the Council of Agriculture (COA) cracked a major wildlife smuggling case. During the raid, the team seized

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303 animals including chameleons and other reptiles. The case has been sent to the Taoyuan Prosecutors Office for further investigation. As a number of other wildlife smuggling cases have also recently come to light, the chairman of the COA, Tso-kwei Peng, has called on all members of society not to take a chance with the law.

The COA said that the WPC had received information that a foreign group had already carried endangered species into Taiwan several times in order to trade them for a profit. This action has seriously damaged Taiwan's wildlife conservation work and reputation. Therefore, the WPC asked the Bureau of Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior to help apprehend known parties.

On October 10, 1998, two passengers on China Airline flight CI696 from Bangkok, Canadian national Francois Le Berre and Dutch national Janantoinie Van Willegen, were arrested at Chiang Kai-shek International Airport when airport police found 303 wild animals, including chameleons, salamanders, geckos, frogs and other species (all CITES App. II species), worth approximately NT\$5 million in total within their hand luggage. During interrogation, the two men confessed that they had planned to sell the smuggled animals for a profit in Taiwan.

Airport police said that Francois Le Berre was caught smuggling endangered species into Taiwan in a similar fashion earlier on January 15, 1998. He was fined NT\$50,000 for his first

offence. On his second arrest, Le Berre will most likely to be barred from future entry to Taiwan. The case against Janantoinie Van Willegen is pending.

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## Upward Trend in Live Reptile Smuggling

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The Wildlife Protection Unit (WPC) of the Council of Agriculture (COA) has in recent months noted a rising trend in the number of cases involving illegal groups smuggling live reptiles from abroad into Taiwan. This increase deserves the attention of the relevant authorities.

On June 27, 1998, the COA's Wildlife Protection Unit uncovered 89 live reptiles, including pythons, tortoises, and iguanas (all CITES App. II species), which had been smuggled from Japan by a resident of Taipei City. On September 4, 1998, the WPC discovered 87 more live reptiles, including iguanas, turtles, and tortoises, in Taipei City and Taipei County.

The Director of the Forestry Department of the COA, Chen Shi-Chou, said that since the Wildlife Conservation Law (WCL) was revised in 1994, the penalties for breaking the WCL had been greatly increased. Taking the import and export of species as an example, the WCL strictly prohibits the import and export of endangered species for purposes other than academic or scientific research or by zoos or

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circuses. The regulations in the WCL are considerably more strict than those in CITES. Anyone found guilty of smuggling protected wildlife species shall be imprisoned for between six months and five years and/or fined between NT\$300,000 and NT\$1.5 million.



## Saving Habitat for the Pheasant-tailed Jacana

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In September, 1994, a high-speed railway (HSR) project was approved for development in Taiwan. Because the proposed railway is designed to pass through one of the few remaining breeding grounds of the pheasant-tailed jacana in Tainan County, environmentalists, particularly members of the wild bird societies, have since worked hard in gathering relevant information and finding solutions to help save the habitat for jacana.

After years of work, the Jacana Rescue Foundation, together with the wild bird societies drafted a "HSR Jacana Conservation Plan" and proposed that the HSR Bureau and Tainan County Government rent and secure a 15 ha jacana habitat for future management. The Foundation is now working on finalizing the plan, continuing research on management strategies, and raising funds for future management and conservation work.



## Conservation Society : The Jane Goodall Institute Taiwan

The Jane Goodall Institute Taiwan (JGI-Taiwan) was officially established in May 1998. The Institute is committed to promoting wildlife research, conservation of natural habitats, environmental education and humanistic awareness. One of the most important programs of JGI-Taiwan is Dr. Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots Program. It is an environmental and humanitarian program for youth (preschool to university). The mission of this program is:

- 1) To foster respect and compassion for all living things.
- 2) To promote understanding of all cultures and beliefs.
- 3) To inspire each individual to take action to make the world a better place for animals, the environment and the human community.

After joining the Roots and Shoots program, each Roots & Shoots group is asked to meet regularly and select an activity which will help improve either the environment, the community, or the animals. Through hands-on, constructive activities, the Roots & Shoots Program aims to give young people the opportunity to develop the ability to observe and understand the world and become more aware of how their actions can affect the local community and the environment as a whole in a

