Report of Thailand on significant trade in specimens of appendix-II species (*Naja naja* spp.)

1. Three species of cobra occur in Thailand i.e. *Naja kaouthia, Naja siamensis* and *Naja sumatrana*. They are found in all parts of the country. *Naja kaouthia* is the only one species that is most harvested for trade in Thailand because of it's good skin quality. It is frequently found in low-lying, humid areas including rice fields.
2. None of these species are listed in the "protected species list" under the Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act (WARPA) since it is poisonous to man and it's populations are considered abundant.
3. Since 1992, there is a regulation that prohibits the export of all live snakes, including *Naja* spp. The regulation is still effective.
4. The export record of *Naja* spp.products from Thailand during 2001-2003 is shown below:

Year	Nos. of permit	Products	Quantities	
2001	21	Shoes	480	pairs
		Stuffed body	3	pieces
		Tanned skin	1,670	pieces
		Small item i.e. wallet, belt, key-chain etc.	2,470	pieces
			Total approximately 20,000 individuals	
2002	15	Shoes	30	pairs
		Stuffed body	234	pieces
		Tanned skin	2,328	pieces
		Small item i.e. wallet, belt, key-chain etc.	385	pieces
			Total approximately 20,000 individuals	
2003	19	Shoes	108	pairs
		Tanned skin	2,148	pieces
		Small item i.e. wallet, belt, key-chain etc.	3,747	pieces
			Total approximately 20,000 individuals	

5. Even they are not included in the protected species list, the export and import of *Naja* spp is still regulated, under the CITES Convention, by Thai wildlife checkpoints situated at international airports, sea ports and land border controls around the country.

6. Thailand sent representatives to the 2 capacity building workshops, held by the Secretariat, in Southeast Asia in 2003 as a first step in determining methods for quota setting and non-detriment findings.
7. There is a lack of scientific data to support the Appendix II stipulation that export will not be detrimental to the survival of *Naja* spp. in Thailand.
8. Thailand has therefore developed, and is implementing, a research project into field assessment of cobra populations. It is noted that there is no accepted methodology for population survey of species like these and Thailand would welcome advice from the Secretariat on such methods and names of relevant experts who could advise on such methods.
9. In light of these efforts to acquire scientific data on its cobra populations, Thailand requests that it be given 12 months in which to report back to the Secretariat on these efforts and to suggest non-detriment quotas for these species.
10. Given that traders have some stocks of *naja* product, it is requested that continuing trade be permitted but this trade to be at or below that of the year 2003, i.e. 20,000 individuals.

THANK YOU

Title of Project: Field Assessment of the population of Cobra (*Naja* spp.) in Thailand

Geographic Scope: Thailand

Implementation: CITES Management and Scientific Authority of Thailand

Duration of the project: 12 months (1 April 2004 – 31 March 2005)

Cost of project: USD 20,000

Project summary:

The Cobras *Naja* spp. were raised from Appendix III to Appendix II of CITES in 1990. Following the Significant Trade Review under the provision of Res.Conf. 12.8, trade of Appendix II species must be limited to ensure that survival of the species is not detrimentally affected and that the population is maintained at a level consistent with the role of the species in its ecosystem.

There are 3 members of the genus *Naja* in Thailand : Monocled Cobra (*Naja kaouthia*), Black and White Spitting Cobra (*Naja siamensis*) and Golden Spitting Cobra (*Naja sumatrana*). The ecology of all cobra species, is very poorly understood, with no estimates of population density being ascertained.

The Cobras are exploited for their skin, meat and gall bladders. For skin, mainly *kaouthia* is used because *siamensis* and *sumatrana* does not produce good quality leather. Export data of 2001 – 2003 available to CITES Management of Thailand indicates that approximately 2,000 skins per year, excluding skin products such as shoes, handbags, wallets, key chains and other items made from cobras, was exported.

The project seeks to address the concerns of the CITES Animal Committee by investigating the population status and extent of capture of Cobras in the wild.

Background:

Most Thai wild animal species are included in the Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act 1992 (WARPA), one group that is not included is Cobras (*Naja* spp.) and thus they not protected under domestic legislation. Taking from the wild of cobras is legal except from within protected areas. Nevertheless the export of the live snakes is prohibited by Ministerial Regulation, and export of cobra goods is limited to finished skins and skin products.

The distinguishing feature of *Naja* genus is the ability to flatten their necks to form a hood and to raise about one third of the anterior body portion from off the ground into a defensive position with a loud hiss. The Thai Cobras are divided into three species:

- Monocled Cobra (*Naja kaouthia*), the most common of the cobras found in Thailand. It is frequently found throughout Thailand in low lying, humid areas including ricefields;
- Black and White Spitting Cobra (*Naja siamensis*) is found in all parts of the country except the peninsular provinces. It survives well in the upland areas;
- Golden Spitting Cobra (*Naja sumatrana*) occurs in the extreme South of Thailand. Sympatric with *kaouthai* where it occurs.

In Thailand, most of the trade is regulated at the species level i.e *Naja naja*, rather than the subspecies level. However, most export of cobras is as skins, and *kaouthia* is prefered for this purpose. The skin of *kaouthia* is sold at a price three times greater than that for the *siamensis* because of the skin quality. The skin of *kaouthia* is manufactured into luxury products; the skin of the *siamensis* is inferior quality and can not be used for the same purposes (e.g. M.J.Cox, 1991).

The Cobras are also used for domestic consumption, but the small quantities utilized in this way are not considered to threaten wild populations.

There is almost a complete lack of scientific data to support the Appendix II stipulation that export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species

Needs:

There is an urgent need to obtain data in order to arrive at scientifically based harvest and export quotas for the sustainable exploitation of *Naja* species.

The project responds to the Res.Conf. 12.8 review of significant trade in specimens of Appendix II species.

Results:

This project will result in recommendations for non-detriment export quotas for Cobra species in Thailand.

Output:

A report in Thai and English to the Department of National park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation and the CITES Secretariat regarding population of *Naja* spp. in Thailand.

Activities:

Field activities will take place at the Ang-runai Wildlife Sanctuary, Beungboraphet and Beungchawak. Data will be collected on the status of species in the wild with the following objectives:

To assess the present status of *Naja* spp., and to estimate maximum and minimum population size based on population densities and evaluation of the extent of different habitat types within the species'range;

To collect biological and ecological data on the species, particularly with regard to reproduction and survival.

To assess current levels of harvest and gather data on domestic and international trade in the species.

To provide recommendations for the sustainable management of harvest of *Naja* spp. population, including export quotas.

Methodology

1. Survey method

   - sampling methods;

   - estimating cobras population density;

   - estimating cobras range and national population sizes.

   It is noted that there is no uniform, consistent methodology for population survey of cobras in Thailand. An important part of this project will be researching appropiate survey methods and then field testing under Thai conditions. Acceptable methodologies will then be applied across the study sites for consistent data collection.

2. Use of X-ray photography for live snakes which are captured from the field, will provide data on basic biology and characteristics (sex and reproductive status). Data collection consists of examination, measuring and weighing of snakes, to obtain data on reproduction.

3. Interviews and observation with collectors, traders and exporters will provide the basis for an analysis of the impact and level of present and past trade, including method of harvesting, harvesting period, sizes of snakes brought in to be killed and skinned.

4. Collection of data on trade history, annual quantities of whole snakes, skins and other products including other aspects from the CITES Office.