

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Thirtieth meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 16-21 July 2018

Interpretation and implementation matters

General compliance and enforcement

Captive-bred and ranched specimens

PUBLICATION OF A RANCHING PROTOCOL FOR
MORELET'S CROCODILE (*CROCODYLUS MORELETII*) IN MEXICO

1. This document has been submitted by the Scientific Authority of Mexico (CONABIO).*

Background

2. The 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP17, Johannesburg 2016) adopted by consensus the amendment proposal submitted by Mexico (CoP17 Prop. 22) to delete the “zero quota for wild specimens traded for commercial purposes” from the Appendix II listing of the population in Mexico of *Crocodylus moreletii*.
3. The Morelet's crocodile monitoring programme indicates that the wild populations of the species are stable, and that adequate conservation and management plans are in place to ensure sustainable harvesting and legal, traceable international trade.
4. In May 2016, CONABIO started coordinating a Ranching Protocol for *Crocodylus moreletii* in México, to be compiled by biologists Gabriel Barrios and Juan Carlos Cremieux. The protocol takes into account the experience of programmes in other countries, feedback from some 50 national and international experts, representatives from academia, the government, the private sector, civil organizations, and independent researchers, including the Crocodile Specialist Group (IUCN-SSC), and Mexico's Crocodile Specialist Group (GEC-MX).

Objectives and overview of the Ranching Protocol for *C. moreletii*

5. This collective work provides precise guidelines on nest management in the wild and sustainable harvesting of eggs, which are subsequently hatched in incubators—with a hatchling survival rate of 90% compared to 1% in the wild—and kept in captivity in order to obtain high quality skins for export and, where necessary, to return up to 10% of individuals to the wild. The system includes fair distribution of benefits among the different actors in the production chain, especially rural communities, in accordance with national laws and CITES provisions.

* The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

6. The main objectives of the Protocol are:
 - a) To provide a tool to support CITES authorities in Mexico in the application of CITES provisions such as Non-detriment findings (NDFs).
 - b) To foster sustainable harvesting of the populations of Morelet's crocodile (*Crocodylus moreletii*) in Mexico through ranching, integrating local communities so that they obtain benefits from a fair value chain, while conserving the species and its habitat.
 - c) Standardization of ranching procedures and data collection throughout the country.
 - d) To provide a model that can be replicated by other countries in the species' range, and for other species in different regions.
7. The Ranching Protocol comprises nine chapters:
 - a) Chapters I and II provide a synopsis of previous efforts relating to *Crocodylus moreletii* at a national and international level, and ranching experiences in other countries;
 - b) Chapters III and IV describe the importance of population monitoring, as well as methods for identifying sites and seasons for nest sampling;
 - c) Chapter V describes habitat characteristics and management, for the purpose of assessing conservation status and determining the location of ranching sites;
 - d) Chapter VI describes ranching of Morelet's crocodile nests and estimations of sustainable harvesting rates;
 - e) Chapters VII and VIII include guidance on nest management, collection and transfer of eggs, structural and morphological characteristics of eggs, and incubation methods; and
 - f) Chapter IX refers to the care of young specimens, from hatching to sale, including precise details on the harvesting of a precautionary number of nests from the wild, incubation of eggs and development in captivity.

Progress achieved

8. The digital version of the Protocol, in PDF format, is available as an information document for this meeting, and on the website of the CITES Scientific Authority of Mexico (CONABIO): http://www.biodiversidad.gob.mx/planeta/cites/Pdf/Prot_Ranch_v4_Web.pdf.
9. The Ranching Protocol for Morelet's crocodile (*Crocodylus moreletii*) in Mexico was presented by Mexico at the 25th meeting of the Crocodile Specialist Group (IUCN-SSC) on 10th May 2018 in Santa Fe, Argentina.

Recommendations to the Animals Committee

10. The members of the Animals Committee are invited to:
 - a) Note the Ranching Protocol for Morelet's crocodile (*Crocodylus moreletii*) in Mexico;
 - b) Request the Secretariat to publish the Ranching Protocol in the section on NDFs on the CITES website;
 - c) Invite the Parties and other relevant players to review the Ranching Protocol (information document);
 - d) Provide feedback to the Mexican Scientific Authority: ac-cites@conabio.gob.mx; and
 - e) Encourage other countries to discuss whether it would be relevant to apply the Ranching Protocol to other crocodile species in order to improve conservation of the species concerned and its habitat, and to benefit rural communities.