

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



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

Species specific matters

Aquatic species

Sturgeons and paddlefish (Acipenseriformes spp.)

IDENTIFICATION OF STURGEONS AND PADDLEFISH SPECIMENS IN TRADE

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties extended three Decisions on *Sturgeons and paddlefish (Acipenseriformes spp.)* that had originally been adopted at its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), as follows:

***Directed to the Secretariat***

**16.136 (Rev. CoP17)**

*The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *subject to external funding and in consultation with the Animals Committee, organize a study to:*
  - i) *provide an overview of molecular, DNA-based and other forensic methods that could assist in identifying the species and populations of Acipenseriformes specimens in trade, determining the origin or age of specimens, and differentiating wild from captive-bred or aquacultured specimens;*
  - ii) *review relevant developments in this area, including the availability and reliability of uniform identification systems;*
  - iii) *evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the different methods (including practicality, costs, time-efficiency, reliability, technical requirements, etc.); and*
  - iv) *formulate relevant guidance for CITES Parties, enforcement agencies, the private sector and other stakeholders;*
- b) *ensure consultation with Parties that authorize trade in specimens of sturgeons and paddlefish, appropriate experts, institutions and organizations, and the private sector in the conduct of the study;*
- c) *make the results of the study available to the Animals Committee for its consideration; and*

- d) disseminate the recommendations formulated by the Standing Committee pursuant to Decision 16.138 (Rev.CoP17) in a Notification to the Parties.

**Directed to the Animals Committee**

**16.137 (Rev. CoP17)**

*The Animals Committee shall assist the Secretariat in determining the specifications for the study referred to in Decision 16.136 (Rev.CoP17) and monitoring its conduct. It shall review the report of the study, and make recommendations as appropriate for consideration by the Standing Committee.*

**Directed to the Standing Committee**

**16.138 (Rev. CoP17)**

*The Standing Committee shall review the study undertaken in accordance with Decision 16.136 (Rev.CoP17) and the recommendations that the Animals Committee formulated in compliance with Decision 16.137 (Rev.CoP17), and make its own recommendations, as appropriate, for communication to Parties concerned or for consideration at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

3. The Secretariat recalls that prior to the 28th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC28, Tel Aviv, August 2015), the Secretariat had obtained the views from Dr. Arne Ludwig on possible elements to be included in the study, as summarised in information document [AC28 Inf. 18](#).
4. At that meeting, the Animals Committee noted document [AC28 Doc. 16.3](#) submitted by the Russian Federation. The document recommended that the Animals Committee make use of the work conducted in its centres of molecular genetic studies through the Scientific Authority of the Russian Federation responsible for sturgeons (the Russian Federal Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography).
5. At the 29th meeting of the Animals Committee (AC29, Geneva, July 2017), the Secretariat reported in document [AC29 Doc. 20.2](#) that no funding had become available to organize the study called for in Decision 16.136 (Rev. CoP17). It also informed the Committee that some preliminary in-house research on the topic had been initiated<sup>1</sup>.

Discussion

6. At the time of writing of this document (May 2018), no external funding for implementing Decision 16.136 (Rev. CoP17) had been obtained. The Secretariat is therefore not able to provide the Animals Committee with the study called for in Decision 16.136 (Rev.CoP17), paragraph a).
7. The Secretariat identified a number of publications that have become available since the release in 2008 of the study "Identification of Acipenseriformes species in trade"<sup>2</sup>, co-authored by Dr. Arne Ludwig, and that describe recent developments in the field of identification of species and populations of Acipenseriformes specimens in trade. These are presented in the Annex to the present document. The list incorporates inputs that were kindly provided by the Sturgeon Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN/SSC).
8. While the list in the Annex is not intended to be exhaustive, it can serve as a useful basis for further work concerning molecular, DNA-based and other forensic methods that could assist in identifying the species and populations of Acipenseriformes specimens in trade, determining the origin or age of specimens, or differentiating wild from captive-bred or aquacultured specimens.
9. The Secretariat observes that Decisions 16.136 (Rev. CoP17) to 16.138 (Rev. CoP17) could not be implemented, and that only limited progress was accomplished since they were initially adopted at CoP16 in 2013. Regarding the implementation of Decision 16.137 (Rev. CoP17), the Animals Committee could either recommend to the Standing Committee that the Decisions be deleted at the 18th meeting of the

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<sup>1</sup> See [AC29 summary record](#).

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/common/prog/sturgeon/id\\_sturgeon\\_iucn.pdf](https://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/common/prog/sturgeon/id_sturgeon_iucn.pdf)

Conference of the Parties (CoP18), or propose updated decisions on the identification of specimens of *Acipenseriformes* spp. in trade for consideration at CoP18. In case of the latter, the Secretariat suggests that the Animals Committee considers in particular actions requiring minimal or no external funding.

#### Recommendations

10. The Animals Committee is invited to:

- a) provide any comments on the list of references presented in the Annex to this document; and
- b) in compliance with Decision 16.137 (Rev. CoP17), make recommendations for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 70th meeting, taking into consideration the observations of the Secretariat in paragraph 9 of the present document.

**Publications relating to the identification of species and  
populations of Acipenseriformes  
(published since 2008)**

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