

CONVENCIÓN SOBRE EL COMERCIO INTERNACIONAL DE ESPECIES
AMENAZADAS DE FAUNA Y FLORA SILVESTRES



Septuagésima reunión del Comité Permanente
Rosa Khutor, Sochi (Federación de Rusia), 1-5 de octubre de 2018

Cuestiones específicas sobre las especies

TORTUGAS TERRESTRES Y GALÁPAGOS (TESTUDINES SPP.):
INFORME DE LA SECRETARÍA

1. El presente documento ha sido preparado por la Secretaría.
2. En su 17ª reunión (CoP17, Johannesburgo, 2016), la Conferencia de las Partes adoptó *inter alia* las Decisiones 17.294 a 17.296 y 17.298, sobre Tortugas terrestres y galápagos (*Testudines spp.*), como sigue:

Dirigida a la Secretaría

17.294 *La Secretaría deberá hacer participar al Gobierno de Madagascar y otros interesados pertinentes a fin de prestar asistencia urgente para combatir la recolección y el comercio ilegales de la tortuga de Madagascar o angonoka (Astrochelys yniphora).*

17.295 *La Secretaría deberá:*

- a) *con la financiación atribuida, establecer y convocar un Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES (Equipo especial), que funcionará con arreglo a lo establecido en la Decisión 17.296. Entre los miembros del Equipo especial podrían incluirse la Asociación de Naciones del Asia Sudoriental (ASEAN), los miembros del ICCWC, Madagascar y las Partes de Asia más afectadas por el comercio ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos y sus partes y derivados, así como otras personas que, a juicio de la Secretaría, pueden contribuir a la labor del Equipo especial;*
- b) *conseguir financiación para apoyar la labor y reuniones adicionales del Equipo especial hasta la 18ª reunión de la Conferencia de las Partes;*
- c) *trabajar para establecer una plataforma segura de comunicaciones electrónicas para el Equipo especial [por ejemplo, CENComm Environet de la Organización Mundial de Aduanas (OMA)];*
- d) *transmitir las conclusiones y recomendaciones del Equipo especial, establecido con arreglo al párrafo c) de la Decisión 17.296, a la 69ª reunión del Comité Permanente para su consideración, y formular sus propias recomendaciones según proceda; y*
- e) *transmitir al Comité Permanente, para que lo considere en su 70ª reunión, un informe de los progresos realizados en la aplicación de las recomendaciones del Comité por las Partes, como se describe en el párrafo c) de la Decisión 17.298.*

Dirigida al Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos

17.296 *El Equipo especial deberá:*

- a) *según considere apropiado, intercambiar información de inteligencia y de otra índole acerca del comercio ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos;*
- b) *deliberar acerca de cuestiones de observancia y aplicación relacionadas con el comercio ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos como se describe en los Anexos 1 a 4 del documento CoP17 Doc. 73 y cualquier otro material que considere pertinente; y*
- c) *presentar sus conclusiones y recomendaciones, por conducto de la Secretaría, a la 69ª reunión del Comité Permanente, con miras a fortalecer la observancia y la aplicación de la Convención por las Partes en relación con estas especies.*

Dirigida al Comité Permanente

17.298 *El Comité Permanente deberá:*

- a) *en su 69ª reunión, examinar las conclusiones y recomendaciones de la Secretaría y el Equipo especial, con arreglo al párrafo d) de la Decisión 17.295 y el párrafo c) de la Decisión 17.296 y recomendar medidas de las Partes, según considere apropiado, para reforzar la observancia y la aplicación de la Convención para estas especies;*
- b) *en sus reuniones 70ª y 71ª, evaluar los informes presentados por las Partes con arreglo al párrafo b) de la Decisión 17.297, y determinar si se requieren otras recomendaciones o medidas, incluidas medidas de cumplimiento apropiadas de conformidad con la Resolución Conf. 14.3, sobre Procedimientos para el cumplimiento de la CITES; y*
- c) *presentar un informe sobre las medidas adoptadas y los progresos realizados por el Comité, el Equipo especial y las Partes en la 18ª reunión de la Conferencia de las Partes.*

Aplicación de la Decisión 17.294

3. La Secretaría recibió información de diferentes fuentes desde la 69ª reunión del Comité Permanente (SC69, Ginebra, noviembre de 2017), sugiriendo que se sigue realizando comercio ilegal de tortugas de Madagascar a gran escala. Esto queda reflejado con el decomiso realizado en abril de 2018 de cerca de 10.000 tortugas estrelladas vivas (*Astrochelys radiata*), en un solo incidente en Madagascar.¹
4. La Secretaría informó a la SC69 de que estaba examinando con el Gobierno de Madagascar e INTERPOL desplegar un Equipo de apoyo para incidentes relacionados con las especies silvestres (WIST) en Madagascar, para apoyar la aplicación de la Decisión 17.294. Se tomaron las medidas necesarias, pero a solicitud de Madagascar el despliegue del WIST se retrasó. En el momento de redactar este documento, se prevé que el despliegue del WIST tendrá lugar antes de finales de septiembre de 2018. La Secretaría presentará información actualizada verbalmente sobre esta cuestión en la presente reunión.

Aplicación del párrafo e) de la Decisión 17.295; de los párrafos a) y b) de la Decisión 17.297; del párrafo b) de la Decisión 17.298; y de las recomendaciones 1. a)-f), 2. a)-c), y 3. a)-d) de la reunión del Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES, como acordado por el Comité Permanente

5. En la SC69, el Comité Permanente acordó las recomendaciones formuladas por los participantes en la reunión del Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES, inclusive las enmiendas sugeridas por la Secretaría.² Para facilitar la consulta, la serie completa de recomendaciones de la reunión del Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES, tal como fueron acordadas en la SC69, se incluyen en el Anexo 1 al presente documento.

¹ <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2018/04/wildlife-watch-radiated-tortoises-poached-madagascar/>
<http://www.turtlesurvival.org/blog/1-blog/536-monumental-radiated-tortoise-seizure#.WTXWio9OLcu>

² <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/69/sum/E-SC69-Sum-09-R1.pdf>

6. Para facilitar la aplicación del párrafo e) de la Decisión 17.295, la Secretaría, en la Notificación a las Partes No. 2018/030, de 26 de marzo de 2018,³ invitó a las Partes a presentar informes de conformidad con lo dispuesto en el párrafo b) de la Decisión 17.297, sobre la aplicación de las recomendaciones 1. a) a f), 2. a) a c), y 3. a) a d), como se presentan en el Anexo 1 del presente documento, a la Secretaría, para que los someta a la consideración del Comité en la presente reunión, de conformidad con lo dispuesto en el párrafo b) de la Decisión 17.298. En respuesta a la notificación, la Secretaría recibió respuestas de China, Estados Unidos y Tailandia. Señalando la escasa respuesta a la Notificación, la Secretaría desea expresar su agradecimiento a esas tres Partes por las respuestas remitidas, que figuran en los Anexos 2-4 del presente documento (en el idioma original).
7. Las tres Partes informaron acerca de diversas actividades y medidas que están aplicando para abordar el comercio ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos, inclusive la identificación de especies, el intercambio de información e inteligencia, la lucha contra el comercio ilegal en Internet, y la sensibilización del público. China informa, entre otras cosas, que utiliza equipo de detección especializado para detectar el comercio ilegal de vida silvestre, inclusive el comercio ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos, y que en China se realizan cada año más de 30 talleres de fomento de capacidad para los oficiales de aplicación de la ley centrándose en el comercio ilegal de vida silvestre más ampliamente. China informa también de que las principales plataformas de redes sociales y de comercio electrónico en el país participan activamente en la lucha contra el comercio ilegal de vida silvestres (véase igualmente el documento SC70 Doc. 30.3.2 sobre *Lucha contra la ciberdelincuencia relacionada con la vida silvestre*).
8. Tailandia informa, entre otras cosas, de que lleva a cabo operaciones de aplicación de la ley mensualmente dirigidas a zonas de alto riesgo que se sabe que están relacionadas con el tráfico de tortugas terrestres y galápagos, que despliega prácticas de gestión de riesgos para abordar este comercio ilegal, y que se aplica un enfoque multidisciplinario en el que participan distintas agencias. La Parte informa de que ha habido 33 casos de confiscaciones y detenciones en el país durante los últimos cinco años, relacionados con el tráfico de tortugas terrestres y galápagos. Tailandia informa además de que ha publicado una guía sobre cómo identificar las especies que se comercializan frecuentemente en Asia sudoriental, inclusive las tortugas terrestres y galápagos.
9. Estados Unidos informa sobre una serie de operaciones exitosas de aplicación de la ley, inclusive la Operación 'Herpsaspetz', un esfuerzo multijurisdiccional internacional de dos años que conlleva investigaciones sobre el comercio ilegal de galápagos de bosque norteamericanos utilizando el Servicio Postal de Estados Unidos. La operación conllevó la ejecución de órdenes de registro, la incautación de dinero en efectivo, y una entrega controlada llevada a cabo con las autoridades de aduanas de la Región Administrativa Especial de Hong Kong (RAE) de China. La Operación 'Herpsaspetz' resultó en la detención y procesamiento de varios delincuentes, y se comunica que hasta la fecha, el total combinado de las sentencias impuestas asciende a 25 años de libertad provisional y 51.000 dólares de EE.UU. en multas. Estados Unidos informa también acerca de los éxitos cosechados en interceptar tortugas vivas por el Programa *Detector Dog* del Servicio de Pesca y Vida Silvestre de Estados Unidos. El informe destaca el apoyo a diferentes Partes mediante el programa agregado de la Oficina de Aplicación de la Ley del Servicio de Pesca y Vida Silvestre de Estados Unidos, que incluye prestar apoyo a las autoridades de aplicación de la ley en Madagascar, en relación con la investigación del decomiso a gran escala de tortugas estrelladas, mencionado en el párrafo 3 *supra*.
10. Las medidas y las actividades comunicadas por China, Estados Unidos y Tailandia son encomiables. Se alienta a las Partes afectadas por el comercio ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos a aprovechar el contenido de los informes recibidos, para identificar medidas y actividades que podrían desplegar a nivel nacional a fin de abordar este comercio ilegal, en el caso de que no se estén aplicando ya esas medidas. La Secretaría aprovecha esta oportunidad para recordar a las Partes que el Comité Permanente, en su 69ª reunión, tomó nota de los éxitos cosechados durante la 'Operation Save Kurma' iniciada por la India,⁴ y alentó a las Partes afectadas por niveles significativos de comercio ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos a considerar iniciar operaciones similares en el futuro.

³ <https://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2018-030.pdf>

⁴

https://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/Indian_law_enforcement_operation_seizes_16000_tortoises_turtles_arrests_55_CITES_SG_Certificate_Commendation_30112017

Aplicación del párrafo e) de la Decisión 17.295, y de las recomendaciones 4 a)-d), 5. a)-b) y 6. a)-e) de la reunión del Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES, como acordado por el Comité Permanente

11. En relación con las recomendaciones 4.a) y b), en el Anexo 1 del presente documento, el Comité tal vez desee considerar estas cuestiones en sus deliberaciones en la presente reunión.
12. En relación con la recomendación 4.c), en el Anexo 1 del presente documento, la Secretaría aprovecha esta oportunidad para señalar a la atención esta recomendación, alentando a los donantes a aumentar iniciativas de financiación para luchar contra el tráfico ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos.
13. El Comité Permanente, en su 69ª reunión, solicitó a la Secretaría que preparase un proyecto de revisión de la Resolución Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13), sobre *Conservación y comercio de tortugas terrestres y galápagos*, para someterlo a la consideración del Comité en la presente reunión, incorporando las revisiones propuestas en la recomendación 4.d) i. a v, presentadas en el Anexo 1 del presente documento. Además, el Comité solicitó a la Secretaría que tuviese en cuenta las otras recomendaciones formuladas por los participantes en la reunión del Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES, acordadas por el Comité en la SC69, y las deliberaciones en la SC69, como parte de esa revisión. La Secretaría preparó un proyecto de revisión de la Resolución Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13), para su consideración por el Comité, y ulterior presentación a la consideración de la 18ª reunión de la Conferencia de las Partes (CoP18, Colombo, 2019). El proyecto de revisión de la Resolución Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13), preparado por la Secretaría, figura en el Anexo 5 del presente documento.
14. En relación con la recomendación 5.a), bajo *Intercambio de información e inteligencia*, en el Anexo 1 del presente documento, el Comité solicitó a los miembros del Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES que trabajasen en el desarrollo de una alerta de observancia sobre las tortugas terrestres y galápagos. Singapur acordó amablemente dirigir el desarrollo de la primera alerta y, en el momento de redactar este documento, la Secretaría está colaborando con Singapur en el desarrollo de la alerta. La alerta tiene por finalidad ser un documento confidencial o de circulación restringida, para uso exclusivo de las autoridades responsables de la aplicación de la ley a la vida silvestre. Cuando se finalice, se distribuirá a los organismos gubernamentales de aplicación de la ley pertinentes, a través de los canales de comunicación previstos por los organismos asociados del ICCWC, y el grupo cerrado de usuarios para el Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES, recogidos en los párrafos 22 a 24 del presente documento.
15. En relación con la recomendación 5.b), bajo *Intercambio de información e inteligencia*, la Secretaría, en los párrafos 30 a 32 del documento CoP16 Doc. 29 (Rev. 1),⁵ señaló a la atención el Sistema de Notificaciones de INTERPOL.⁶ Esas notificaciones son solicitudes internacionales de cooperación o alertas que permiten a la policía en los países miembros de INTERPOL compartir información esencial relacionada con delitos. La Secretaría cree que hay aún cabida para un mayor uso por las Partes de este excelente instrumento disponible a través de INTERPOL. Sin embargo, es alentador observar que algunas Partes se basan cada vez más en las notificaciones de INTERPOL para abordar casos de tráfico ilegal de vida silvestre, y que esos esfuerzos han sido, en numerosas ocasiones, exitosos. La Secretaría se complace en observar, por ejemplo, que la India ha hecho recientemente uso exitoso de las notificaciones de INTERPOL para detener a un importante traficante internacional de tortugas con supuestos vínculos de comercio ilegal con China, inclusive la RAE de Hong Kong, India, Madagascar, Malasia, Singapur y Tailandia.⁷ La Secretaría opina que el uso de las notificaciones de INTERPOL puede contribuir considerablemente a abordar el comercio ilegal de especímenes de tortugas terrestres y galápagos, y alienta a todas las Partes afectadas por este comercio ilegal a que las utilicen cuando sea conveniente.
16. En relación con la recomendación 6.a), bajo *Lucha contra el comercio ilegal*, en el Anexo 1 del presente documento, la Secretaría solicitó a la Organización Mundial de Aduanas (OMA) que desarrollase una serie de perfiles de riesgo e indicadores centrados en el comercio ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos. En el momento de redactar este documento, la OMA está tomando las medidas necesarias, que incluyen contratar a expertos de aduanas en la gestión de riesgos⁸ para desarrollar, entre otras cosas, esos perfiles

⁵ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/16/doc/E-CoP16-29.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.interpol.int/INTERPOL-expertise/Notices>

⁷ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/bhopal/interpol-sends-intelligence-inputs-on-turtle-smuggler-s-crimes/story-j4L3zyBmW13X1K9tm5PN2J.html>

⁸ <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/about-us/vacancies.aspx>

de riesgo e indicadores. En relación con la recomendación 6.b), la Secretaría se pondrá en contacto con la Oficina de las Naciones Unidas contra la Droga y el Delito (ONUDD) tan pronto como la alerta de observancia sobre las tortugas terrestres y galápagos y los perfiles de riesgo e indicadores se hayan finalizado y estén disponibles.

17. En relación con la recomendación 6.c), bajo *Intercambio de información e inteligencia*, en el Anexo 1 del presente documento, la Secretaría, en la Notificación a las Partes No. 2018/030, de 26 de marzo de 2018, recordó a las Partes que el acceso a ENVIRONET de la OMA puede solicitarse como se destaca en la Notificación a las Partes No. 2015/039, de 25 de junio de 2015.⁹ En esa notificación, la Secretaría recordó a las Partes que consultasen el Foro de las Autoridades Administrativas, según sea necesario.
18. En relación con la recomendación 6.d), bajo *Decomisos y disposición*, en el Anexo 1 del presente documento, la Secretaría ha estado en contacto con el Grupo de Especialistas en Tortugas Terrestres y Galápagos de la Comisión de Supervivencia de Especies de la Unión Internacional para la Conservación de la Naturaleza (UICN-CSE), el cuál, en el momento de redactar este documento, está preparando una lista de centros de rescate para tortugas terrestres y galápagos. A fin de evitar el posible uso indebido de la información contenida en la lista, la Secretaría, cuando esté finalizada la lista, la descargará en el grupo cerrado de usuarios para el Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES, albergado en la plataforma CENComm de la OMA.¹⁰
19. En relación con la recomendación 6.e), bajo *Identificación de especies*, en el Anexo 1 de este documento, la Secretaría solicitó al Grupo de Especialistas en Tortugas Terrestres y Galápagos de la UICN-CSE que desarrollase orientación sobre cómo fotografiar especímenes de tortugas terrestres y galápagos para fines de identificación. El proyecto de orientación desarrollado por el Grupo de especialistas está disponible en el Anexo 6 del presente documento (únicamente en inglés). El Grupo de Especialistas invita a las Partes y observadores a hacer aportaciones sobre el proyecto de orientación. Esas aportaciones se utilizarán para mejorar y finalizar la orientación. La Secretaría aprovecha esta oportunidad para expresar su sincero agradecimiento al Grupo de Especialistas en Tortugas Terrestres y Galápagos de la UICN-CSE por su labor para apoyar la aplicación de las recomendaciones 6.d) y e) en el Anexo 1 del presente documento. La Secretaría no pudo obtener financiación para apoyar esta labor, y el Grupo de especialistas acordó llevar a cabo este trabajo sin remuneración.
20. La Secretaría seguirá informando, según proceda, a las Partes sobre la aplicación y finalización de las actividades enumeradas en los párrafos 14 a 19 *supra*.

Aplicación del párrafo b) de la Decisión 17.295

21. En la 69ª reunión del Comité Permanente, la Secretaría comunicó que las Reuniones Regionales sobre Investigación y Análisis de Casos (RIACM) dirigidas por INTERPOL proporcionarían una plataforma apropiada y operativa para aprovechar los resultados del Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES, iniciando investigaciones dirigidas y medidas de observancia. La Secretaría aprovecha esta oportunidad para dar las gracias a Estados Unidos por la generosa financiación aportada a la Secretaría, para apoyar la aplicación del párrafo b) de la Decisión 17.295. En el momento de redactar este documento, la Secretaría está examinando con INTERPOL tomar las medidas necesarias para convocar reuniones RIACM de seguimiento que se aprovecharán de la labor ya realizada por el Equipo especial. La Secretaría proporcionará información actualizada sobre esta labor en su informe sobre las tortugas terrestres y galápagos (*Testudines spp.*) para la CoP18.

Aplicación del párrafo c) de la Decisión 17.295, y del párrafo c) de la Decisión 17.291

22. En la 69ª reunión del Comité Permanente, la Secretaría comunicó que, en colaboración con la OMA, había establecido un grupo cerrado de usuarios para el Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES en la plataforma CENComm de la OMA. El grupo cerrado de usuarios incluye miembros del Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos (o sus representantes) que solicitaron acceso, inclusive organismos de aplicación de la ley, organizaciones intergubernamentales y organizaciones no gubernamentales. Todos los miembros del grupo cerrado de usuarios puede, a su discreción, enviar mensajes e información a los demás miembros del grupo cerrado de usuarios. Los miembros del grupo cerrado de usuarios tienen también acceso a la biblioteca digital de documentos que incluyen alertas y otros

⁹ <https://www.cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2015-039.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/enforcement-and-compliance/instruments-and-tools/cen-suite/cencomm.aspx>

materiales e información pertinentes. Esta biblioteca digital es, sin embargo, una plataforma de acceso restringido, y sólo tienen acceso a la misma los miembros del grupo de usuarios que representan a las aduanas, la policía y las autoridades forestales y de vida silvestre.

23. En el documento SC70 Doc. 30.1, la Secretaría señala que los diferentes grupos cerrados de usuarios establecidos a petición de las Partes no han propiciado un uso significativo, y parece que se han vuelto inactivos poco después de su creación. Esto parece también ser el caso para el grupo cerrado de usuarios para el Equipo especial sobre tortugas terrestres y galápagos de la CITES. Se alienta a las Partes afectadas por el comercio ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos a comunicar el establecimiento del grupo cerrado de usuarios a sus autoridades nacionales pertinentes, y a que alienten su utilización. Las solicitudes para acceder al grupo cerrado de usuarios deben comunicarse a la Secretaría.
24. A fin de apoyar la aplicación del párrafo c) de la Decisión 17.291, la Secretaría se encuentra, en el momento de redactar este documento, trabajando con el Grupo de Especialistas en Tortugas Terrestres y Galápagos de la UICN-CSE para establecer un grupo de contacto que pueda ayudar a identificar rápidamente las tortugas terrestres y galápagos, conectando los oficiales de inspección a una red de especialistas confirmados. El documento, que incluye una lista de expertos en la identificación de tortugas terrestres y galápagos, será un documento confidencial y de circulación restringida destinado a ser utilizado únicamente por las autoridades responsables de la aplicación de la ley a la vida silvestre, y se pondrá a disposición de las Partes en el grupo cerrado de usuarios para tortugas terrestres y galápagos. La Secretaría proporcionará una actualización sobre esta labor en su informe sobre las *Tortugas terrestres y galápagos (Testudines spp.)* para la CoP18.

Recomendaciones

25. Se invita al Comité Permanente a:

- a) al aplicar el párrafo b) de la Decisión 17.298:
 - i) tomar nota de los informes recibidos de China, Estados Unidos y Tailandia, dando las gracias a esas Partes por los informes remitidos; y
 - ii) tomar nota de la baja tasa de respuesta de las Partes y solicitar a otras Partes, en particular a las afectadas por el comercio ilegal de tortugas terrestres y galápagos, que remitan informes a la consideración del Comité Permanente, en su 71ª reunión;
- b) considerar las enmiendas propuestas a la Resolución Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13), sobre *Conservación y comercio de tortugas terrestres y galápagos*, presentadas en el Anexo 5 del presente documento, y presentar la resolución revisada propuesta a la consideración de la 18ª reunión de la Conferencia de las Partes; y
- c) alentar a las Partes y observadores a proporcionar aportaciones al Grupo de Especialista en Tortugas Terrestres y Galápagos de la UICN-CSE para redactar orientación sobre cómo fotografiar especímenes de tortugas terrestres y galápagos con fines de identificación, como se presenta en el Anexo 6 al presente documento, para que esas aportaciones se consideren en la preparación final de la orientación.

Recommendations of the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force as adopted by the Standing Committee at its 69th meeting (SC69, Geneva, November 2017)

1. All Parties affected by illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles should:

Targeting illegal trade

- a) Undertake risk profiling and provide capacity-building interventions and detection equipment to enforcement officers at ports to enable them to better target known modes of transport used for trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- b) Scale up activities to address illegal trade in tortoise and freshwater turtle specimens being shipped through postal and courier services, and to address illegal trade at identified key locations in domestic markets;

Information and intelligence sharing

- c) Where possible, use platforms such as INTERPOL's Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Management (RIACM) meetings, and the Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement (WIRE) meetings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for information sharing regarding trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- d) Encourage national agencies responsible for wildlife law enforcement to engage with their INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) to request that access to the INTERPOL I-24/7 global communications system and databases be extended to them;

Species identification

- e) Implement a three-step identification process for tortoises and freshwater turtles as follows:
 - i. Enforcement officers (including customs officers) use available identification materials to identify the most frequently traded tortoise and freshwater turtle species and their parts and products;
 - ii. Where doubt remains about identification after using available identification materials, enforcement officers should share photographs of traded animals with national identification experts, for specific identification or confirmation. National authorities are encouraged to designate a national facilitator for this purpose; and
 - iii. Where doubt continues to remain after consulting national identification experts, enforcement officers should share photographs and other information, through their national designated facilitator, with global identification experts, and draw upon forensic analysis, in particular molecular analysis, as may be needed; and
- f) Develop supplementary identification guidance containing basic information on the characteristics used for tortoise and freshwater turtle identification to support the accurate application of existing identification materials. This guidance should be tailored to the specific needs of each country.

2. All Parties should:

Illegal trade on the internet

- a) Engage online communities, e.g. auction platforms and closed discussion groups, to create awareness about all aspects of illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles;

Cooperation

- b) When possible make use of INTERPOL's National Environmental Security Seminars (NESS) ¹ to promote inter-agency coordination, pursuant to strengthening the implementation of paragraph 1 b) in Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*; and
- c) As appropriate, cooperate through regional wildlife enforcement networks for the better involvement of their member countries, pursuant to strengthening the implementation of paragraph 1 b) in Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*.

3. All Parties and organizations should:

Public awareness and empowerment

- a) As appropriate, create and implement awareness tools that can engage target audiences and cultures, in particular young adults, through social and other digital media, pursuant to strengthening the implementation of paragraph 1 f) and g) in Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*;
- b) As appropriate, highlight the plight of tortoises and freshwater turtles in their campaigns to address wildlife trafficking;
- c) Empower the general public by raising awareness about existing tools available to report illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles and other wildlife crimes, e.g. mobile phone applications, hotline numbers, toll-free phone numbers, social media, etc.; and
- d) Encourage the general public to act as the eyes and ears of law enforcement through awareness raising initiatives and materials targeting for example public transport, roadside stops and restaurants, airports and other transport hubs, with a particular focus on illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles.

4. The Standing Committee is invited to:

Targeting illegal trade

- a) Discuss the fact that in some countries non-native species of tortoises and freshwater turtles are not being covered in national legislation;

Illegal trade on the internet

- b) In its deliberations, consider the best way to fight the use of social media platforms as a form of e-commerce for illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles;

Funding opportunities

- c) Encourage donors to increase funding initiatives to combat illegal trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles;

Resolutions

- d) Propose to the Conference of the Parties revisions to Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev.CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*, as follows²:

¹<https://www.interpol.int/en/Media/Files/Crime-areas/Environmental-crime/Leaflets-brochures/National-Environmental-Security-Seminar-NESS/>.

² NB: Text proposed to be deleted is crossed out. Proposed new text is underlined.

- i. Removal of the word “Asian” in the Resolution unless specifically relevant for certain issues;
- ii. (Para 1a) “all Parties, especially range States and exporting and importing States of ~~Asian~~ tortoises and freshwater turtles, to enhance and increase enforcement and prosecution efforts with regard to existing legislation as a matter of urgency”;
- iii. (Para 1b) “all Parties, ~~especially range States and exporting and importing States of Asian tortoise and freshwater turtles,~~ to enhance cooperation amongst wildlife-law enforcement agencies at national and international levels concerning control of trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, and between enforcement agencies and national CITES authorities”;
- iv. (Para 1h) “all Parties, especially in the Asian region, to collaborate on all aspects of conservation and management of, trade in, and implementation of the Convention for, tortoises and freshwater turtles, ~~taking into consideration the recommendations formulated at the technical workshop on Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles held in Kunming, China, 25-28 March 2002~~”; and
- v. (Para 2): “DIRECTS the Secretariat to provide assistance with securing financial resources from Parties, United Nations specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, trade associations, industry and others as appropriate, for range States in need of and requesting financial support to develop and implement management and enforcement strategies and action plans concerning CITES-listed tortoises and freshwater turtles in accordance with this Resolution”.

5. Members of the CITES Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Task Force should:

Information and intelligence sharing

- a) Work towards the development of an enforcement alert on tortoises and freshwater turtles, including information on species trafficked, *modus operandi*, trafficking routes, concealment methods, and nationalities of offenders involved, to be updated on a rotational basis in accordance with a timeframe identified by Task Force members; and
- b) Each aim to, where possible, issue at least one INTERPOL Red Notice on known high priority offenders involved in illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, and consider the use of other INTERPOL Notices as appropriate.³

6. The CITES Secretariat should:

Targeting illegal trade

- a) Request the World Customs Organization (WCO) to develop a set of risk profiles and indicators focusing on illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- b) Request UNODC to use enforcement alerts on tortoises and freshwater turtles, and any risk indicators for these species developed by WCO, in its capacity-building activities on container profiling;

Information and intelligence sharing

- c) Encourage Parties to consult the CITES permit samples as available on the CITES Management Authorities Forum and in WCO’s ENVIRONET,⁴ if needed;

³ <https://www.interpol.int/INTERPOL-expertise/Notices>

⁴ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/notif/E-Notif-2015-039.pdf>

Seizures and disposal

- d) Post a list of tortoise and freshwater turtle rescue facilities on the CITES website;

Species identification

- e) Request the IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Specialist Group to develop guidance on how to photograph tortoise and freshwater turtle specimens for identification.

(English only / seulement en anglais / unicamente en inglés)

**The Endangered Species Import and Export
Management Office of the People's Republic of China**

Ref: 2018-AL-009

May 30th, 2018

To:
Mr. David Morgan
CITES Secretariat
Geneva, Switzerland
Fax: +41-(0)22-797-34-17
Email: info@cites.org

Subject: Implementation of Decision 17.297 on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles* (*Testudines spp.*)

Dear Mr. David Morgan,

First of all, I would like to extend my gratitude for your continuous support to the implementation of CITES in China.

In response to the notification (No. 2018/030) on implementation of Decision 17.297, I would like to provide you with the following information.

Targeting illegal trade

X-ray machines, container scanning and other specialized detection equipment are equipped by Chinese Customs, and more than 30 specialized capacity-building workshops about cracking down illegal trade in wildlife are organized by governments for enforcement officers each year. Specialized official documents are issued by government to empower the enforcement officers by raising attention about wildlife trade through postal and courier services.

Species identification

In China, customs officers at ports can identify initially the most frequently traded tortoise and freshwater turtle species and their parts and products after many specialized training courses/workshops. Many national universities and research institutions with judicial identification qualification can identify all tortoise and freshwater turtle species listed in CITES Appendix II. In addition, WeChat groups of enforcement officers and experts are established to identify species as needed in any time.

Illegal trade via internet

The major social network and e-commerce platforms in China are all actively engaged in cracking down on illegal trade, handling illegal trade accounts and reporting to public security agencies.

Add: State Forestry Administration, 18 Hepingli Dongjie, Beijing, 100714, P. R. China

Tel: +86-10-84239001

Fax: +86-10-84238897

E-mail: cites_rzp@163.com

web: <http://www.cites.gov.cn>

Page 1



**The Endangered Species Import and Export
Management Office of the People's Republic of China**

Public awareness and empowerment

Various public education activities such as public service ads and billboard in public places are carried out in the World Wildlife Day to encourage general public to engage in law enforcement.

If any further information is needed, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Mr. Meng Xianlin
Executive Director General,
CITES Management Authority of China
Tel: +86-10-8423 9003
Fax: +86-10-8423 8897

(English only / seulement en anglais / unicamente en inglés)



No. 0902.3/

2541

CITES Management Authority
Department of National Parks,
Wildlife and Plant Conservation
61 Paholyothin Rd., Chatuchak,
Bangkok 10900, THAILAND
Tel./Fax. (66)2 940 6449

31 May B.E. 2561 (2018)

Dear CITES Secretariat,

Subject : Implementation of Decision 17.297 on Tortoises and freshwater turtles (*Testudines* spp.)

Reference is made to Notification to the Parties no. 2018/030 dated 26 March 2018. Please find the attachment for the report in accordance with the provisions of Decision 17.297 on Tortoises and freshwater turtles (*Testudines* spp.).

Your continued assistance is, as always, highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

(Mr. Suraphong Chaweeapak)

Forestry Technical Officer, Senior Professional Level
Acting Director of CITES Management Authority of Thailand
Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation

CITES Secretariat
International Environment House
11 Chemin des Anémones
CH-1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: +41 (22) 917 81 39/40
Fax: +41 (22) 797 34 17

Report of the implementation of Decision 17.297 on Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles
(*Testudines* spp.)

Topic	Action Plans	Note
<p>1. Smuggling Targets</p>	<p><u>(NRECD)</u> Assigned risk groups/risk area for Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles trafficking with a placed emphasis on traders, both major and minor traders. Monthly enforcement sweep of the area for land turtle and freshwater turtle traders in accordance with the criteria set by the Natural Resources And Environmental Crime Division.</p> <p><u>(Customs)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Risk management, adjust and improve on risk conditions by creating risk profiles to regulate the import and export of products with risks and evaluate the risk management system while targeting subjects with risks of wrongdoings. The Customs Department will cooperate with other related departments in increasing the efficiency in establishing the usage of Local Profile for Customs Offices and Customs Checkpoints. 2. For marine enforcement operations, the Customs has assigned two Investigation and Suppression Bureaus in operating against trafficking via maritime border and areas of southern Thailand. The bureaus will also act as the focal point with the Thailand - Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center (Thai - MECC) which has the role of assisting maritime victims, safeguarding the interests of the nation within the Thailand's territorial 	<p>Monthly Enforcement Sweep Plan</p>

Topic	Action Plans	Note
	<p>waters, and lend assistances to the populace as per Customs' assignment. Customs assigns patrol boats of varying sizes in accordance to the suitability of the operation. Starting from 30 feet to 100 feet in length, the Customs department has gradually improved the specifications of the patrol boats over the past 10 years. The new additions are as followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customs Patrol Boat, Hull Length 80 feet, 3 boats. The boats are named "Customs Patrol Boat 804", "Customs Patrol Boat 805" and, "Customs Patrol Boat 806". - Customs Patrol Boat, Hull Length of 30 feet, 4 boats. The boats are named "Customs Patrol Boat 378", "Customs Patrol Boat 379", "Customs Patrol Boat 380", and "Customs Patrol Boat 381". <p>3. Improved technological implementation, with the implementation of the e-Lock system for products crossing borders. Customs has enacted action plans to find up-to-date technologies to assist in Customs in directing and tracking shipping containers passing areas of illegal activities. Presently the e-Lock system has been implemented for testing in the field. Currently numbering at 3 installations at 2 locations, the Laemchabang Port (Entrance and Exit) and the Mukdahan Customs Checkpoint, the Customs are ready to fully implement its Tracking System</p> <p>4. Cooperation on Border Security Project.</p>	

Topic	Action Plans	Note
<p>2. Information and Intelligence Sharing</p>	<p><u>(DNP)</u> In relation to law enforcements, there have been 33 cases of arrests and seizures of tortoises and freshwater turtles traffickers during the past 5 years. These operations have been done in cooperation with various departments concerning law enforcement, including Customs.</p> <p><u>(NRECD)</u> There has been mutual exchanges in information and intelligence in local areas between officials of NRECD, DNP, and Fisheries on the traders and area of trafficking risks (tortoises and freshwater turtles). Meanwhile, there have also been exchanges between the NRECD and Interpol for moving forward in analyzing the connections of international trafficking groups.</p> <p><u>(Customs)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thai Customs has come into cooperation with the Thailand - Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center (Thai - MECC) with the main task forces consisting of the Royal Thai Navy, the Marine police, Customs, the Marine Department, the Department of Fisheries, the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, and 17 more departments. Currently there have been constant efforts to improve on the Comprehensive Maritime Domain Awareness (CMDA) as well as the surveillance of information in and between departments in the Thai – MECC. 2. Cooperation on Information Exchange in Customs-related Projects. 	<p>Inter-agency conferences within the country and between other countries.</p>

Topic	Action Plans	Note
<p>3. Species Recognitions</p>	<p><u>(DNP)</u></p> <p>1. Published a guidebook on how to identify species that are popular to trade in the South Eastern Asia region while also including the species of tortoises and fresh water turtles that are being regularly trafficked inside the book. Distribute the book to enforcement officials to ensure that they will be able to identify the species of tortoises and fresh water turtles during their inspections and take further actions accordingly.</p> <p>2. In the case of officials being unsure on the species of the tortoises and fresh water turtle, there will be a forensic science official specializing in wildlife to identify and confirm the tortoises and fresh water turtle's species. On-site will also be a location for safekeeping confiscated animals and officials specializing in tortoises and fresh water turtles as caretaker.</p> <p><u>(NRECD)</u> In the case of a seizure of tortoises and freshwater turtles, there will be a representative to work with officials of the DNP and Fisheries to identify and confirm the species of the seized specimens.</p> <p><u>(Customs)</u> Examination of shipping containers and travelling suitcases with X-ray/CCTV machines. The X-ray/CCTV machine is used by the Customs for examination and sort passengers for the Advance Passenger Processing</p>	

Topic	Action Plans	Note
	System (APPS) in international airports.	
4. Online Trafficking	<p>(DNP) Assigned WILDHAWK wildlife Task force to provide surveillances for illegal actions on online social media such as the ‘Facebook’ application and the ‘Line’ application as well as receive call on illegal wildlife trafficking through the hotline 1362.</p> <p>(NRECD) Assigned undercover agents into tortoises and freshwater turtles trafficking groups in online social media such as the ‘Facebook’ application and the ‘Line’ application to investigate for news and arrest illegal traders.</p> <p>(DOF) Disseminated information via the Fish Inspector and Quarantine Group internet website (www4.fisheries.go.th/fishinspector) concerning the laws, regulations, and announcement on how officials operate with legal litigation and violators. This includes information on marine species such as how to identify the protected species for further legal actions against the violators.</p> <p>(www4.fisheries.go.th/fishinspector)</p> <p>(Customs) Projects concerning International Cyber Crimes</p>	
5. Cooperation and Public Awareness	<p>(DNP) Installation of public relation signs in various checkpoints as well as the distribution of documents and brochures enforcing against illegal wildlife trafficking, with information on the penalties for violators inside.</p> <p>(NRECD) Launched a campaign to oppose against the buying, hunting, trading, consuming, or supporting products made from wildlife</p>	Projects and other endorsements

Topic	Action Plans	Note
	<p data-bbox="507 259 1150 573">,carcasses and their derivatives which includes the tortoises and freshwater turtles. This to spread public awareness as well as increase channels in which the public are able to contribute in combating tortoises and freshwater turtles trafficking.</p> <p data-bbox="507 591 651 629"><u>(Customs)</u></p> <ol data-bbox="507 651 1150 2016" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="507 651 1150 1464">1. Disseminated the laws and Customs regulation to foreign entrepreneurs. The Customs department hosted a seminar to ensure the widespread acknowledgement of regulations, imports-exports, and the positive public of the Customs department. The seminar invited various executives, directors, officials from Customs departments in Bangkok as well as other officials from departments such as the Department of Trade Negotiations, Department of European Affairs, Department of American and South Pacific Affairs, and many foreign entrepreneurs to attend, inquire, and investigate the satisfaction level. <li data-bbox="507 1487 1150 2016">2. Customs has developed an information database management system for its department. They also increased their efficiency in providing for entrepreneurs and importer-exporters via the Thai Customs Electronic System (TCES). Lastly they also developed the information database for Customs officials to implement in their various operations such as the examination of cargoes, usage of tax privileges, post-clearance 	

Topic	Action Plans	Note
	<p>audit for enforcement data, and etc.</p> <p>3. Dedicated Help Desk and Call Center lines for government and businesses with relation to import-export for services in accommodating for potential problems or inquiries about the National Single Window (NSW) and ASEAN Single Window system.</p>	

(English only / seulement en anglais / unicamente en inglés)



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
International Affairs
5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: IA
Falls Church, VA 22041-3803

IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/DMA/TRE 1-12 d.

MAY 3 1 2018

CITES Secretariat
International Environment House
11 Chemin des Anémones
CH-1219 Châtelaine-Geneve
Switzerland

VIA EMAIL: info@cites.org

Dear Sir or Madam:

This letter provides the U.S. response to Notification to the Parties No. 2018/030 concerning *Implementation of Decision 17.297 on Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)*. This Notification directs Parties to report to the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee, through the Secretariat, on steps taken to implement the Committee's recommendations, under Decision 17.298 a) and b) to strengthen implementation and enforcement of the Convention for tortoises and freshwater and terrestrial turtles.

Targeting illegal trade

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) participated in a multi-agency, weeklong, inspection operation at the U.S. Postal Service's International Mail Facility at John F. Kennedy International Airport. This activity targeted exports destined for China and Hong Kong as well as shipments imported from China, Great Britain, and Thailand. In total, 30 wildlife shipments were seized, 48 additional shipments imported or exported in violation of the Endangered Species Act were identified, and over 300 shipments were referred to partner agencies for being imported in violation of U.S. laws and regulations. Seized wildlife products included live CITES-listed U.S. native turtles and Appendix-I listed exotic turtles. Officers from the following agencies participated in this operation: U.S. Food & Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, USFWS special agents, USFWS wildlife inspectors, and five USFWS K-9 teams.

The undercover Operation Herpsaspetz was based in the USFWS's Southeast Region and was a two-year, multi-jurisdictional, international effort that involved investigations into the illegal take, sale, and smuggling of North American wood turtles from the United States through the

U.S. Postal Service. USFWS special agents targeted a conspiracy to smuggle \$345,000 of illegally collected turtles from Pennsylvania, through Louisiana and California, to Hong Kong. Over the course of the investigation, special agents executed 10 search warrants, seized \$134,000 in cash, and indicted seven subjects. Two co-conspirators were arrested during a controlled delivery by Hong Kong customs. All subjects have been sentenced except for one who resides in Hong Kong. To date, total combined sentences include 25 years of probation and \$51,000 in fines.

A USFWS OLE investigation, with the United States Postal Inspection Service and Homeland Security Investigations, resulted in the sentencing of a Pennsylvania man to two years in prison for turtle smuggling. The subject admitted to the unlawful collection of North American wood turtles from their native protected habitat in Pennsylvania, shipped them to an intermediary in Louisiana, who then exported them to Hong Kong. The subject previously pleaded guilty to conspiracy to smuggle turtles from the U.S. as well as using a fictitious name and address in the mailing of turtles through the U.S. Postal Service.

A multi-year USFWS OLE investigation that focused on domestic reptile collection and trafficking in Pennsylvania and neighboring states, resulted in the conviction of 15 defendants on federal and state charges including both misdemeanor and felony violations of the Lacey Act. The defendants admitted to the unlawful collection, transportation, sale, and receipt of reptiles and amphibians collected from the wild in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and New Jersey for the commercial market. Species in this investigation included Eastern box turtles, North American wood turtles, Gulf Coast box turtles, three-toed box turtles, ornate box turtles, Florida box turtles, spotted turtles, mud turtles, musk turtles, a desert tortoise, copperhead snakes, tiger salamanders, and marbled salamanders. The total combined sentences include 30 days in prison, \$45,596 in fines, six years of probation, and 150 hours of community service.

An international investigation by USFWS OLE, with assistance from Environment and Climate Change Canada, apprehended a Canadian citizen smuggling turtles. He was carrying 51 turtles taped to his legs and groin area and another 1,000 turtles concealed in socks, boots, and cereal boxes hidden within checked luggage destined for China. He was sentenced to five years in prison and fined \$17,000 in restitution. This restitution will be used to reimburse the organizations that provided care for the seized turtles.

Since its inception in 2013, the USFWS Wildlife Detector Dog program has been very successful and produced multiple interceptions of live turtles. Currently, USFWS OLE has seven wildlife detector dog teams working in major cargo ports across the United States. These wildlife inspector and K-9 teams have successfully interdicted an array of CITES-listed wildlife products including live turtles. Examples include a K-9 alerting to 22 shipments that resulted in the seizure of over 200 live turtles, the seizure of 16 live spotted turtles (discovered in an export bin at the international mail facility) that were wrapped in socks, hidden inside cardboard ice tea containers, and labeled as "snack chips," and the seizure of 12 live turtles at the Los Angeles International Airport mail facility which were transported inside socks and concealed in a box labeled "toys."

USFWS OLE at the Miami, Florida International Airport refused the exportation of a shipment

containing 18 boxes of live reptiles (over 300 animals), including CITES Appendix-II listed species. CITES violations included non-compliance with the transport conditions required by the International Air Transport Association Live Animals Regulations.

A multi-year USFWS OLE investigation working with Homeland Security Investigations and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service resulted in two California women being sentenced for felony smuggling and misprision of a felony charge for their roles in smuggling illegally collected North American wood turtles in violation of the Lacey Act and Endangered Species Act. The investigation discovered that the two women poached turtles in Pennsylvania and shipped them to Louisiana. From Louisiana, the turtles were transported to California, where the women sold the turtles and then smuggled them to Hong Kong via the U.S. Postal Service. The turtles were shipped in parcels falsely declared as toys, clothes, and books. Both defendants received five years of probation. One defendant was fined \$5,000 for the smuggling offense and the other was fined \$2,000 for misprision of a felony.

Information and Intelligence Sharing

During the period of January 31 – February 19, 2017, the United States participated in a global wildlife enforcement operation called Operation Thunderbird, organized by the International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime (ICWC). This operation, facilitated by the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group (WCWG), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the CITES Secretariat provided a snapshot view of wildlife trafficking globally and established a platform for information sharing between CITES and WCWG partner nations. The operation involved participation of CITES law enforcement authorities from over 60 countries. Two significant tortoise seizures were produced by this operation: one large shipment was re-exported to the country of origin and the other resulted in prosecution of turtle dealer in New York. In the Federal District Court in Brooklyn, New York, a man pleaded guilty to trafficking protected turtles that included Indian roofed turtles, Chinese big-headed turtles, yellow-margined Chinese box turtles, and black-breasted turtles. Execution of a residential search warrant revealed an additional 135 protected turtles and shipping labels marked as “snacks” that were used to illegally transport these turtles.

Building upon the success of Operation Thunderbird, Operation Thunderstorm was executed during the period of May 1 – May 31, 2018. This global wildlife enforcement operation was again organized through the auspices of the ICWC and facilitated by the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group (WCWG), the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the CITES Secretariat. The aim was to counter wildlife trafficking and establish a platform for the sharing of information between CITES and WCWG partner nations to help initiate joint investigative efforts to combat transnational wildlife crime. The operation involved participation of CITES law enforcement authorities from over 60 countries. At the time of this report, it is too early to release results of the operation.

The USFWS OLE attaché assigned to the South African region assisted Madagascar law enforcement with an investigation that involved endangered radiated tortoises. Officers seized 10,000 radiated tortoises from a holding house. This incredible volume of animals had an approximate market value of \$15 million. As a result of this investigation, the owner of the house was arrested, in addition to two Chinese nationals.

The USFWS OLE attaché assigned to Thailand assisted the government of Nepal with several anti-trafficking issues including one counter wildlife trafficking outreach effort. This effort resulted in the seizure of 150 rare tortoises from Madagascar and highlighted the role of Nepal as an alternate transit point for illicit wildlife trade in India.

Public Awareness and Empowerment

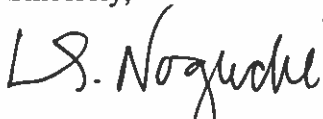
Since CITES CoP17, the USFWS has periodically posted content on social media channels across the agency to provide information about trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles. Many of these posts have focused on improving the American public's awareness of the threats to these animals posed by poaching and illegal trade. An analysis of our Headquarters and International Affairs Social Media accounts showed that following CoP17 we have published a total of 13 posts on Twitter and Facebook that present this issue and discuss how we are working to strengthen protection of these species through law enforcement, educational efforts, and recovery programs. These posts were shared or retweeted 1734 times and reached 424,399 people.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and WildAid launched a U.S. demand reduction campaign that targeted "live reptiles", including freshwater turtles and tortoises, as a priority for curbing illegal wildlife trade. The materials produced for this campaign, which are featured in partner zoos and aquariums, as well as a number of additional outlets, can be viewed at www.stopwildlifetrafficking.org.

An Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the USFWS OLE Southwest Region spoke about the plight of freshwater turtles at a press conference, which was held by the U.S. Attorney's Office. This press event highlighted Operation Snap that brought four alligator snapping turtle traffickers to prosecution.

If you have any questions concerning the information we have provided, please feel free to contact me at email: laura_noguchi@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Laura Noguchi, Acting Chief
Division of Management Authority

cc: Office of Law Enforcement

Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13¹⁸) Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*

AWARE that the global international trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles involves millions of specimens each year;

RECOGNIZING that ~~nearly all Asian~~ many tortoise and freshwater turtle species are found in trade, and that a number of species are already included in Appendix I or II;

OBSERVING that the collection of tortoises and freshwater turtles is carried out through an extensive informal network of trappers, hunters and middlemen, and that collection efforts and trade volumes are considerable, ~~especially in Asia~~;

CONSIDERING that, in addition, wild populations of tortoises and freshwater turtles are generally vulnerable to overexploitation, because of biological characteristics such as late maturity, limited annual reproductive output, and high juvenile mortality, as well as habitat degradation and loss;

NOTING that there are two significant types of trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles: a high-volume trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles and parts thereof for consumption both as food and in traditional medicine; and a species-focused trade for pets;

AWARE that certain species of tortoises and freshwater turtles are bred in high numbers in and outside range States, *inter alia* to supply the demand for food and medicines, and that the conservation risks and benefits of large-scale commercial breeding of tortoises and freshwater turtles are not well known;

NOTING that the shipment of live tortoises and freshwater turtles is often not conducted in accordance with the provisions of Articles III, IV and V of the Convention, and in particular that transport of live tortoises and freshwater turtles by air is often not conducted in accordance with IATA regulations;

ACKNOWLEDGING that unregulated or unsustainable trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles poses a significant threat to wild populations, and that international cooperation is needed to address these threats urgently;

RECALLING the recommendations developed by participants of the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force meeting in Singapore, in 2017, as adopted by the Standing Committee and made available through Notification to Parties No. 2018/030 of 26 March 2018;

~~RECALLING that a technical workshop on Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, held in Kunming, China, 25-28 March 2002, provided recommendations concerning conservation management, CITES implementation, enforcement and trade controls, and capacity building needs, as well as suggestions for amending Resolution Conf. 11.9, adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 11th meeting (Gigiri, 2000), which were reported by the Secretariat to the Animals Committee;~~

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION

1. URGES:

a) all Parties to:

- i) collaborate on all aspects of conservation and management of, trade in, and implementation of the Convention for, tortoises and freshwater turtles;
- ii) assess current efforts to manage native tortoise and freshwater turtle populations, and to improve those efforts as necessary, for example by establishing quotas that take into consideration the particular biology of tortoises and freshwater turtles; and
- iii) develop and implement research programmes to identify the species involved in trade, to monitor and assess the impact of trade on wild populations, and to evaluate the

* Amended at the 12th and 13th meetings of the Conference of the Parties, and corrected by the Secretariat following the 15th meeting.

conservation risks and benefits of large-scale commercial breeding of tortoises and freshwater turtles;

b) range States of tortoises and freshwater turtles to develop management strategies concerning CITES-listed tortoises and freshwater turtles, including regional action plans for the conservation of tortoises and freshwater turtles, in collaboration with the Secretariat, industry representatives, interested governmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders as appropriate;

c) all Parties:

i) whose national legislation is not sufficient to control effectively the unsustainable harvest of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, to enact legislation to protect and manage these species appropriately;

ii) all Parties, especially range States and exporting and importing States of Asian tortoises and freshwater turtles, to enhance and increase enforcement and prosecution efforts with regard to existing legislation as a matter of urgency; and

iii) all Parties, especially range States and exporting and importing States of Asian tortoise and freshwater turtles, to enhance cooperation concerning control of trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, amongst wildlife-law enforcement agencies at national and international levels, concerning control of trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, and between enforcement agencies and national CITES authorities, including by, when possible making use of INTERPOL's National Environmental Security Seminars (NESS) to promote inter-agency coordination and, as appropriate, cooperating through regional wildlife enforcement networks to facilitate collaborative action at international level;

~~e) all Parties, especially range States of Asian tortoises and freshwater turtles, to assess current efforts to manage native tortoise and freshwater turtle populations, and to improve those efforts as necessary, e.g. by establishing quotas that take into consideration the particular biology of tortoises and freshwater turtles;~~

~~d) all Parties to develop and implement research programmes to identify the species involved in trade, to monitor and assess the impact of trade on wild populations, and to evaluate the conservation risks and benefits of large-scale commercial breeding of tortoises and freshwater turtles;~~

~~e) all Parties whose national legislation is not sufficient to control effectively the unsustainable harvest of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles to enact legislation to protect and manage these species appropriately;~~

d) all Parties affected by illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles to:

i) undertake risk profiling, and to provide capacity-building interventions and detection equipment to enforcement officers at ports, to enable better targeting of known modes of transport used for trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles;

ii) scale up efforts to prevent, detect and address the illegal shipment of tortoises and freshwater turtles specimens through postal and courier services;

iii) where necessary facilitate the compilation, dissemination and translation into local languages, of information on tortoises and freshwater turtles, for use by enforcement officers, drawing on existing identification and enforcement guides, and focusing on identification, local names, distribution and illustrations;

iv) where necessary, develop supplementary identification guidance, tailored to the specific needs of the Party concerned, containing basic information on the characteristics used for tortoise and freshwater turtle identification, to support the accurate application of existing identification material; and

v) scale up efforts to address key locations in domestic markets associated with illegal international trade in these specimens;

e) all Parties to:

- ~~i) empower the general public by raising awareness about existing tools available to report illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles and other wildlife crimes, for example mobile phone applications, hotline numbers, toll-free phone numbers, social media, and others;~~
 - ~~ii) encourage the general public to act as the eyes and ears of law enforcement through awareness raising initiatives and materials targeting for example public transport, roadside stops and restaurants, airports and other transport hubs, with a particular focus on illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles;~~
 - ~~iiif) all Parties, especially in the Asian region, to increase public awareness of the threats posed to tortoises and freshwater turtles from unsustainable harvest and unregulated illegal trade, including by, engaging online communities such as auction platforms and closed discussion groups, and as appropriate creating and implementing awareness tools that can engage target audiences and cultures, in particular young adults, through social and other digital media; and~~
 - ~~iv) to encourage non-governmental organizations to develop, produce and distribute posters and other educational and informative materials on this subject, and to facilitate, where necessary, the compilation, dissemination and translation into local languages of information on tortoises and freshwater turtles for their use by enforcement officers, drawing on existing identification and enforcement guides, and focusing on identification, local names, distribution and illustrations;~~
 - fg) all Parties and organizations to explore ways to enhance the participation of collectors, traders, exporters, importers and consumers in the conservation of and sustainable trade in tortoises and freshwater turtle species;
 - ~~h) all Parties, especially in the Asian region, to collaborate on all aspects of conservation and management of, trade in, and implementation of the Convention for, tortoises and freshwater turtles, taking into consideration the recommendations formulated at the technical workshop on Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles held in Kunming, China, 25-28 March 2002;~~
 - gj) all Parties, ~~particularly those in the Asian region,~~ to develop plans of action, in compliance with Resolution Conf. 17.8¹, that can be executed without delay in the event that live specimens of tortoises and freshwater turtles are confiscated;
 - ~~j) range States of tortoises and freshwater turtles to develop management strategies concerning CITES-listed tortoises and freshwater turtles, including regional action plans for the conservation of Asian tortoises and freshwater turtles, in collaboration with the Secretariat, industry representatives, interested governmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders as appropriate;~~
 - hk) all Parties to ensure that all shipments of live tortoises and freshwater turtles are transported in compliance with relevant IATA guidelines;
 - il) all Parties to facilitate the development of partnerships between interested non-governmental organizations or other bodies to develop and operate rescue centres for seized or confiscated tortoises and freshwater turtles, in cooperation with range States and relevant government agencies; and
 - ~~m) range States of tortoises and freshwater turtles that authorize trade in these species to include in their periodic reporting under Article VIII, paragraph 7 (b), information on progress in implementing this Resolution; and~~
2. DIRECTS the Secretariat to provide assistance with securing financial resources from Parties, United Nations specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, trade associations, industry and others as appropriate, for range States in need of and requesting financial support to develop and implement management and enforcement strategies and action plans concerning CITES-listed tortoises and freshwater turtles in accordance with this Resolution.

¹ Corrected by the Secretariat following the 15th and 17th meetings of the Conference of the Parties: originally referred to Resolution Conf. 10.7, replaced by Resolution Conf. 17.8.

3. ENCOURAGES donors to increase funding initiatives to combat illegal trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles.

Guide To Photographing **Live Tortoises** and **Freshwater Turtles** for Identification

(English only / seulement en anglais / unicamente en inglés)

Tortoises and freshwater turtles are widely traded but the identification of specimens in trade can be challenging. When there is uncertainty about the species identity of specimens at the point of inspection, it is advisable to seek specialist assistance with identification. Most turtle species can be identified reliably from photographs, provided that the photographs are correctly focused, exposed, and show the critical features for identification. This guide aims to show how a turtle specimen should be pictures with just a few images taken with a cellphone, so that the images can be sent to specialists located elsewhere who can provide or confirm identification.

This guide demonstrates how to take useful pictures of a turtle specimen. For simplicity, and to match real-world conditions, and animal welfare considerations, most of the sample photos were taken of a plastic toy turtle using a standard cellphone camera.

For the great majority of tortoise and freshwater turtle species,
3 pictures of good quality are sufficient for reliable identification:



View of the whole animal
more or less from the side

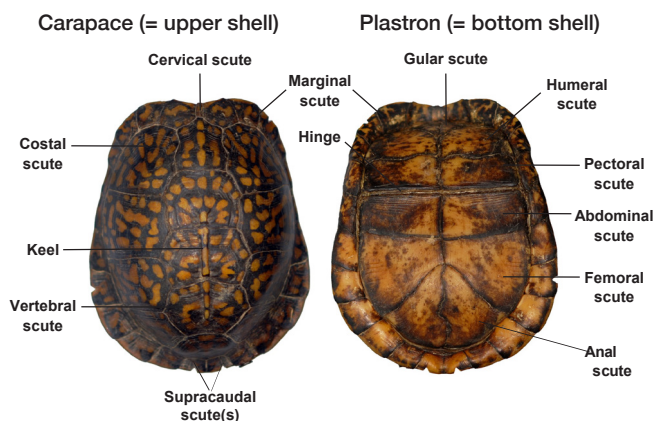


Close-up of the head



View of the plastron
(underside of the shell)

Diagram of the names for parts of a turtle shell:



Helpful hints when photographing turtles:

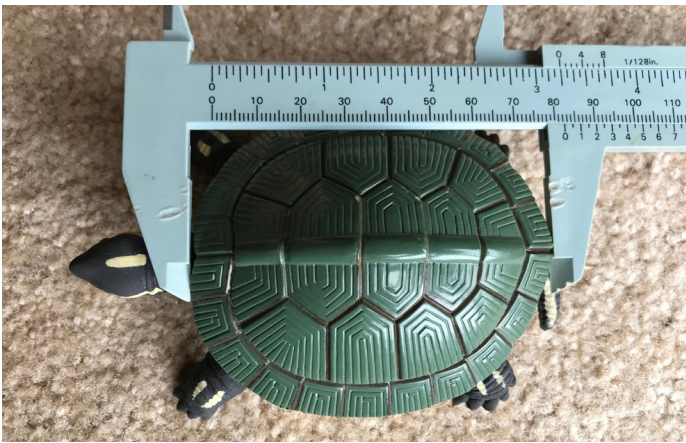
- Focus on the eye of the animal
- Place a ruler or other scale in the picture for reference
- Use a uniform, medium-brightness background; this reduces the chance that the turtle shows too dark (bright background) or washed-out (dark background) in the pictures
- Fill the picture with the subject

This guidance was prepared for CITES by the IUCN SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group (Peter Paul van Dijk, Ernie Cooper, Bruce Weissgold) with support from Global Wildlife Conservation, the Turtle Conservancy, and Cooper Consulting. Please report corrections and suggestions to the CITES Secretariat and/or ppvandijk@globalwildlife.org.

For a few groups of turtles, more photos of **specific details** may be needed:

- **Mud Turtles of the genus *Kinosternon*:** a picture of the marginal scutes above the hind legs, and a picture of the inside of the hind leg (to show presence or absence of rough scale patch in males) is desirable.
- **Tortoises (Family Testudinidae):** a picture of the cervical (or nuchal) scute (or its absence) at the front of the shell above the neck, and a picture of the suprapygal scute(s) above the tail, are helpful.
- **Soft-shelled Turtles (Family Trionychidae):** A clear picture of the front edge of the shell (where it connects to the soft skin of the neck) is very helpful.
- **Sea turtles (Family Cheloniidae):** include a clear picture of the whole carapace (upper shell) from straight above, to illustrate all carapace scutes, and a picture of the forehead to show the head scales between the eye and nose. A plastron picture is rarely necessary so don't turn the animal over unnecessarily.

How to measure the **size** of a turtle:



Tortoises and freshwater turtles are measured in a straight-line distance, normally the maximum front-to-back length of the carapace parallel to its midline. *Straight Carapace Length, SCL*

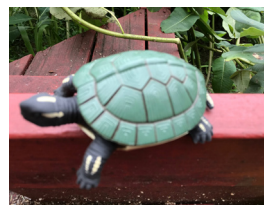


Sea Turtles are measured using a flexible tape across the curve of the carapace *Curved Carapace Length, CCL*

If possible, **avoid** the following common problems when photographing turtles for identification:



Turtle does not show head or legs
Possible solutions: Wait and be patient; gently tickle the back of the animal.



Turtle is badly out of focus
Possible solutions: On a smartphone screen, point at a part of the picture that you want to focus on; use the focus ring of a normal camera; increase the distance between turtle and camera.



Unusual objects used for scale
Possible solutions: find and include a measuring tape or ruler.



Picture under- or over- exposed
Possible solutions: Use the camera's flash; point at a part of the picture that you want the phone to use to determine exposure settings; use a different background.



Distracting reflections or shadows
Possible solutions: Dry the animal; change position relative to the light source; use (or don't use) the camera flash.



NOTE: If a turtle is active, it can be put on a mug, shotglass or other tall smooth stable object to raise its legs far enough off the ground to stop it from running away.