

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



Seventieth meeting of the Standing Committee  
Rosa Khutor, Sochi (Russian Federation), 1-5 October 2018

Species specific matters

TORTOISES AND FRESHWATER TURTLES (TESTUDINES SPP.):  
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties adopted *inter alia* Decisions 17.294 to 17.298 on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)*, as follows:

***Directed to the Secretariat***

17.294 *The Secretariat shall engage the government of Madagascar and other relevant stakeholders to provide urgent assistance to combat illegal collection and trade in the Ploughshare tortoise (Astrochelys yniphora) or Angonoka.*

17.295 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *with funding already provided, establish and convene a CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force (Task Force) to operate, as described in Decision 17.296. The members of the Task Force could include the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the members of the ICCWC, Madagascar and those Parties in Asia that are most affected by the illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles and their parts and derivatives and other individuals who the Secretariat determines may contribute to the work of the Task Force;*
- b) *seek funding to support the work and additional meetings of the Task Force through the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties;*
- c) *work to establish a secure electronic communications platform for the Task Force (i.e. the CENComm Environet of the World Customs Organization);*
- d) *transmit the findings and recommendations of the Task Force, under Decision 17.296 c), to the 69th meeting of the Standing Committee for its consideration, and make its own recommendations as appropriate; and,*
- e) *transmit to the Standing Committee, for consideration at its 70th meeting, a progress report on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations by the Parties, as described in Decision 17.298 c).*

### **Directed to the Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Task Force**

17.296 The Task Force shall:

- a) as it deems appropriate, exchange intelligence and other information on the illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater and terrestrial turtles;
- b) discuss enforcement and implementation issues related to the illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater and terrestrial turtles as outlined in document CoP17 Doc. 73 Annexes 1 – 4 and any other materials it deems relevant; and,
- c) deliver findings and recommendations, through the Secretariat, to the 69th meeting of Standing Committee to strengthen the enforcement and implementation of the Convention for these species by the Parties.

### **Directed to the Parties**

17.297 The Parties shall:

- a) take steps to strengthen implementation and enforcement of the Convention for tortoises and freshwater and terrestrial turtles, especially the recommendations of the Standing Committee under Decision 17.298 a) and b); and
- b) report to 70th and 71st meetings of the Standing Committee, through the Secretariat, on steps taken to implement the Committee's recommendations, under Decision 17.298 a) and b).

### **Directed to the Standing Committee**

17.298 The Standing Committee shall:

- a) at its 69th meeting, consider the findings and recommendations of the Secretariat and the Task Force, under Decisions 17.295 d) and 17.296 c) and recommend actions by the Parties, as it deems appropriate, to strengthen enforcement and implementation of the Convention for these species;
- b) at its 70th and 71st meetings, evaluate the reports of the Parties under Decision 17.297 b) and determine whether additional recommendations or measures are needed, including appropriate compliance measures in accordance with Resolution Conf. 14.3 on CITES compliance procedures; and
- c) report on actions and progress achieved by the Committee, Task Force and the Parties at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

### **Implementation of Decision 17.294**

3. The Secretariat received information from different sources since the 69th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC69, Geneva, November 2017) suggesting that illegal trade in tortoises from Madagascar continues to take place at a significant scale. This is exemplified by the April 2018 seizure of nearly 10,000 live radiated tortoises (*Astrochelys radiata*), during a single incident in Madagascar.<sup>1</sup>
4. The Secretariat reported at SC69 that it was in discussions with the Government of Madagascar and INTERPOL to deploy a Wildlife Incident Support Team (WIST) to Madagascar, in support of the implementation of Decision 17.294. Arrangements were put in place, but at the request of Madagascar the deployment of the WIST had to be delayed. At the time of writing, it is anticipated that the deployment of the WIST will take place before the end of September 2018. The Secretariat will provide a further oral update on this matter at the present meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> <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>

Implementation of Decisions 17.295, paragraph e), 17.297, paragraphs a) and b), 17.298, paragraph b), and CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force meeting recommendations 1. a)-f), 2. a)-c), and 3. a)-d), as agreed by the Standing Committee

5. At SC69, the Standing Committee agreed to the recommendations developed by participants to the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force meeting, including amendments suggested by the Secretariat.<sup>2</sup> For ease of reference, the full set of recommendations from the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force meeting, as agreed at SC69, are included in Annex 1 to the present document.
6. To facilitate the implementation of Decision 17.295, paragraph e), the Secretariat in Notification to the Parties No. 2018/030 of 26 March 2018,<sup>3</sup> invited Parties to submit their reports in accordance with the provisions of Decision 17.297, paragraph b), on the implementation of recommendations 1. a) to f), 2. a) to c), and 3. a) to d), as presented in Annex 1 to the present document, to the Secretariat, to be made available for consideration by the Committee at the present meeting in accordance with the provisions of Decision 17.298, paragraph b). In response to the Notification, the Secretariat received replies from China, Thailand and the United States of America. Noting the low response rate to the Notification, the Secretariat would like to thank these three Parties for the reports they submitted, which are available as Annexes 2-4 to the present document (in the original language).
7. The three Parties reported on a diverse range of activities and measures they are implementing to address illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, including species identification, information and intelligence sharing, combating illegal trade on the internet, and raising public awareness. China reports *inter alia* that it uses specialized detection equipment to target illegal trade in wildlife, including illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, and that more than 30 capacity-building workshops for law enforcement officers are conducted in China every year on targeting illegal wildlife trade more broadly. China also reports that the major social network and e-commerce platforms in the country are actively engaged in combating illegal wildlife trade (see also document SC70 Doc. 30.3.2 on *Combating wildlife cybercrime*).
8. Thailand reports *inter alia* that it carries out monthly law enforcement operations targeting high-risk areas known to be associated with tortoise and freshwater turtle trafficking, that it deploys risk management practices to address this illegal trade, and that a multidisciplinary approach involving different agencies is deployed. The Party reports that there have been 33 cases of seizures and arrests in the country over the past five years, related to tortoise and freshwater turtle trafficking. Thailand also reports that it published a guidebook on how to identify species that are frequently traded in Southeast Asia, including tortoises and freshwater turtles.
9. The United States of America reports on a number of successful law enforcement operations, including Operation 'Herpsaspetz', a two-year multi-jurisdictional international effort that involved investigations into the illegal trade of North American wood turtles using the United States Postal Service. The operation involved the execution of search warrants, the seizure of cash, and a controlled delivery conducted in collaboration with customs authorities in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. Operation 'Herpsaspetz' resulted in the arrest and prosecution of a number of offenders, and it is reported that to date, the total combined sentences imposed amount to 25 years of probation and USD 51,000 in fines. The United States also reports on the successes achieved in intercepting live turtles, by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Detector Dog programme. The report highlights support provided to different Parties through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement Attaché programme, which includes support provided to law enforcement authorities in Madagascar, in relation to the investigation of the large-scale seizure of radiated tortoises, mentioned in paragraph 3 above.
10. The measures and activities reported upon by China, Thailand and the United States of America are commendable. Parties affected by illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles are encouraged to draw upon the contents of the reports received, to identify measures and activities they could consider to deploy at national level to address this illegal trade, where such measures are not yet in place. The Secretariat also takes this opportunity to remind Parties that the Standing Committee at SC69 noted the success achieved

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

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

during 'Operation Save Kurma' initiated by India,<sup>4</sup> and encouraged Parties affected by significant levels of illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles to consider undertaking similar operations in the future.

Implementation of Decisions 17.295, paragraph e), and CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force meeting recommendations 4 a)-d), 5. a)-b) and 6. a)-e), as agreed by the Standing Committee

11. Regarding recommendations 4.a) and b), in Annex 1 to the present document, the Committee may wish to consider these matters in its deliberations at the present meeting.
12. Regarding recommendation 4.c), in Annex 1 to the present document, the Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to draw attention to this recommendation, encouraging donors to increase funding initiatives to combat illegal trafficking in tortoises and freshwater turtles.
13. The Standing Committee at SC69, requested the Secretariat to prepare for consideration by the Committee at the present meeting, a draft revised version of Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*, incorporating the revisions proposed in recommendation 4.d) i. to v, presented in in Annex 1 to the present document. The Committee further requested that the Secretariat take into consideration the other recommendations developed by participants to the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force meeting, agreed by the Committee at SC69, and the discussions at SC69, as part of this revision. The Secretariat prepared a draft revised version of Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13), for consideration by the Committee, and subsequent submission to the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18, Colombo, 2019), for consideration. The revised draft version of Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) prepared by the Secretariat, is available as Annex 5 to the present document.
14. Regarding recommendation 5.a) under *Information and intelligence sharing*, in Annex 1 to the present document, the Committee requested the members of the CITES Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Task Force to work towards the development of an enforcement alert on tortoises and freshwater turtles. Singapore kindly agreed to lead on the development of the first alert, and at the time of writing the Secretariat is working with Singapore on the development of the alert. The alert is intended to be a confidential and restricted circulation document, for use by authorities responsible for wildlife law enforcement only. When finalized it will be disseminated to relevant governmental law enforcement agencies through the communication channels provided by ICCWC partner agencies, and the Closed User Group for the CITES Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Task Force, reported upon in paragraphs 22 to 24 of the present document.
15. Regarding recommendation 5.b) under *Information and intelligence sharing*, the Secretariat in paragraphs 30 to 32 of document CoP16 Doc. 29 (Rev. 1),<sup>5</sup> drew attention to the INTERPOL Notice system.<sup>6</sup> These notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in INTERPOL member countries to share critical crime-related information. The Secretariat believes that there is still much room for increased use by Parties of this excellent tool available through INTERPOL. It is however encouraging to note that some Parties are increasingly drawing upon INTERPOL notices to address cases of illegal trafficking in wildlife, and that these efforts have, on a number of occasions, resulted in successes. The Secretariat was pleased to note, for example, that India recently made successful use of INTERPOL notices in the arrest of an important international turtle trafficker with alleged illegal trade links to China, including Hong Kong SAR, India, Madagascar, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.<sup>7</sup> The Secretariat is of the opinion that the use of INTERPOL notices can significantly contribute to addressing illegal trade in tortoise and freshwater turtle specimens, and encourages all Parties affected by this illegal trade to use them when appropriate.
16. Regarding recommendation 6.a) under *Targeting illegal trade*, in Annex 1 to the present document, the Secretariat requested the World Customs Organization (WCO) to develop a set of risk profiles and indicators focusing on illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles. At the time of writing, the WCO is putting in place arrangements, which includes contracting of customs risk management experts<sup>8</sup> to develop *inter alia* such risk profiles and indicators. Regarding recommendation 6.b), the Secretariat will approach the United Nations

<sup>4</sup>

[https://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/Indian\\_law\\_enforcement\\_operation\\_seizes\\_16000\\_tortoises\\_turtles\\_arrests\\_55\\_CITES\\_SG\\_Certificate\\_Commendation\\_30112017](https://www.cites.org/eng/news/pr/Indian_law_enforcement_operation_seizes_16000_tortoises_turtles_arrests_55_CITES_SG_Certificate_Commendation_30112017)

<sup>5</sup>

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

<sup>6</sup>

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

<sup>7</sup>

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

<sup>8</sup>

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

Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as soon as the enforcement alert on tortoises and freshwater turtles and the risk profiles and indicators are finalized and available.

17. Regarding recommendation 6.c) under *Information and intelligence sharing*, in Annex 1 to the present document, the Secretariat in Notification to the Parties No. 2018/030 of 26 March 2018, reminded Parties that access to the WCO's ENVIRONET can be requested as outlined in Notification to the Parties No. 2015/039 of 25 June 2015.<sup>9</sup> In that Notification, the Secretariat reminded Parties to consult the CITES Management Authorities Forum as may be needed.
18. Regarding recommendation 6.d) under *Seizures and disposal*, in Annex 1 to the present document, the Secretariat has been in contact with the International Union for Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission (IUCN-SSC) Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Specialist Group, which at the time of writing is preparing a list of tortoise and freshwater turtle rescue facilities. To avoid potential misuse of the information contained in the list, the Secretariat will, when the list is finalized, post it in the Closed User Group for the CITES Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force, hosted on the CENComm platform of the WCO.<sup>10</sup>
19. Regarding recommendation 6.e) under *Species identification*, in Annex 1 to this document, the Secretariat requested the IUCN-SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Specialist Group to develop guidance on how to photograph tortoise and freshwater turtle specimens for identification. Draft guidance developed by the Specialist Group is available as Annex 6 to the present document (English only). The Specialist Group invites feedback on the draft guidance from Parties and observers. Such feedback will be used to improve and finalize the guidance. The Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the IUCN-SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Specialist Group for the work it is undertaking to support the implementation of recommendations 6.d) and e) in Annex 1 to the present document. The Secretariat was not able to secure any funding to support this work, and the Specialist Group agreed to undertake this work on a *pro bono* basis.
20. The Secretariat will continue to, as appropriate, update Parties on the implementation and completion of the activities outlined in paragraphs 14 to 19 above.

#### Implementation of Decision 17.295, paragraph b)

21. The Secretariat at SC69 reported that INTERPOL-led Regional Investigative and Analytical and Case (RIACM) meetings would provide an appropriate and operational platform to build upon the outcomes of the CITES Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Task Force, by initiating targeted investigations and enforcement action. The Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to thank the United States of America for the generous funding it made available to the Secretariat, to support the implementation of Decision 17.295, paragraph b). The Secretariat is at the time of writing in discussion with INTERPOL to put in place arrangements for the convening of follow-up RIACM meetings that will build upon the work already done by the Task Force. The Secretariat will provide a further update on this work in its report on Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.) to CoP18.

#### Implementation of Decisions 17.295, paragraph c), and 17.291, paragraph c)

22. At SC69, the Secretariat reported that it, in collaboration with the WCO, established a Closed User Group for the CITES Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Task Force on the WCO CENComm platform. The Closed User Group includes members of the Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles Task Force (or their representatives) that requested access, including law enforcement agencies, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. All members of the Closed User Group are able to, at their discretion, send messages and information to any other members of the Closed User Group. Closed User Group members also have access to a digital library of documents which includes alerts and other relevant materials and information. This digital library is however a restricted-access platform, and only members of the User Group representing customs, police and wildlife and forest authorities have full access.
23. In document SC70 Doc. 30.1, the Secretariat notes that the different closed user groups established at the request of Parties have not attracted significant use, and they seem to become dormant shortly after being established. This also seems to be the case for the Closed User Group for the CITES Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Task Force. Parties affected by illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles are encouraged to communicate the establishment of the Closed User Group to their relevant national

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

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

authorities, and to encourage its use. Requests for access to the Closed User Group should be communicated to the Secretariat.

24. To support the implementation of Decision 17.291, paragraph c), the Secretariat is at the time of writing working with the IUCN-SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group, to establish a contact group that could assist with the rapid identification of tortoises and freshwater turtles, by connecting inspecting officials to a network of verified specialists. The document, including the list of tortoises and freshwater turtles identification experts, will be a confidential and restricted circulation document intended for use by authorities responsible for wildlife law enforcement only, and will be made available to Parties in the Closed User Group for Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles. The Secretariat will provide a further update on this work in its report on *Tortoises and freshwater turtles (Testudines spp.)* to CoP18.

#### Recommendations

25. The Standing Committee is invited to:

- a) in implementing Decision 17.298, paragraph b):
  - i) note the reports received from China, Thailand and the United States of America, thanking these Parties for the reports submitted; and
  - ii) note the low response rate from Parties and request other Parties, in particular those affected by illegal trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles, to provide reports for consideration by the Committee at its 71st meeting;
- b) consider the proposed amendments to Resolution Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13) on *Conservation of and trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles*, presented in Annex 5 to the present document, and to forward the proposed revised Resolution to the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties for consideration;
- c) encourage Parties and observers to provide feedback to the IUCN-SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Specialist Group on the draft guidance on how to photograph tortoise and freshwater turtle specimens for identification purposes, as presented in Annex 6 to the present document, for such feedback to be considered in the finalization of the guidance.

**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) <sup>1</sup> 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 follows<sup>2</sup>:

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

## **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,<sup>4</sup> if needed;

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

<sup>4</sup> <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 30<sup>th</sup>, 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

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**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/

2591

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

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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

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

Topic	Action Plans	Note
1. Smuggling Targets	<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"> <li>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.</li> <li>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</li> </ol>	Monthly Enforcement Sweep Plan

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"> <li>- 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".</li> <li>- 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".</li> </ul> <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
2. Information and Intelligence Sharing	<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"> <li>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.</li> <li>2. Cooperation on Information Exchange in Customs-related Projects.</li> </ol>	Inter-agency conferences within the country and between other countries.

Topic	Action Plans	Note
3. Species Recognitions	<p><u>(DNP)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol> <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><u>(DNP)</u> 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><u>(NRECD)</u> 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><u>(DOF)</u> Disseminated information via the Fish Inspector and Quarantine Group internet website (<a href="http://www4.fisheries.go.th/fishinspector">www4.fisheries.go.th/fishinspector</a>) 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>(<a href="http://www4.fisheries.go.th/fishinspector">www4.fisheries.go.th/fishinspector</a>)</p> <p><u>(Customs)</u> Projects concerning International Cyber Crimes</p>	
5. Cooperation and Public Awareness	<p><u>(DNP)</u> 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><u>(NRECD)</u> 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="507 647 1150 2016" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="507 647 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> <li data-bbox="507 1482 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</li> </ol>	

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](mailto: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 (ICCWC). 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 ICCWC 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**

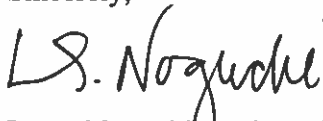
Since CITES CoP17, the USFWS has periodically posted content on social media channels across the agency to provide information about trade in tortoises and freshwater turtles. Many of these posts have focused on improving the American public's awareness of the threats to these animals posed by poaching 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](http://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](mailto:laura_noguchi@fws.gov).

Sincerely,



Laura Noguchi, Acting Chief  
Division of Management Authority

cc: Office of Law Enforcement

# *Conf. 11.9 (Rev. CoP13<sup>18</sup>)\* 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;~~
  - gi) all Parties, ~~particularly those in the Asian region,~~ to develop plans of action, in compliance with Resolution Conf. 17.8<sup>1</sup>, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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

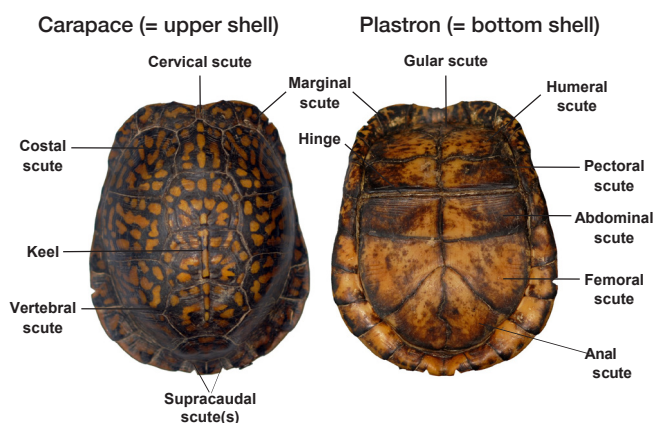


Close-up of the head



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

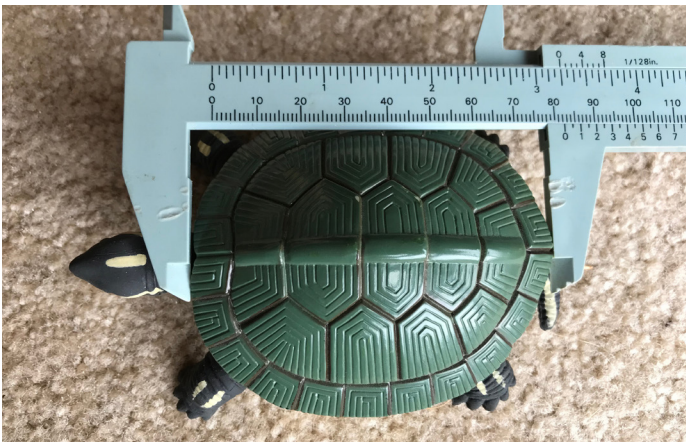
This guidance was prepared for CITES by the IUCN SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group (Peter Paul van Dijk, Ernie Cooper, Bruce Weissgold) with support from Global Wildlife Conservation, the Turtle Conservancy, and Cooper Consulting. Please report corrections and suggestions to the CITES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