



Briefing for the 14th meeting of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

3-15 June, The Hague, The Netherlands

Over-exploitation, including trade, is the second most important threat to the world's birds after habitat destruction.

Domestic and international trade is a contributory factor in the threat status of 194 globally threatened and near-threatened bird species.

BirdLife welcomes the important role that CITES plays in combating the significant threat posed by the wild bird trade, but believes that, in order for CITES to remain fit for purpose for birds, a more robust precautionary approach must be applied.

Despite considerable threats no bird proposals have been tabled

It is regrettable that despite continued, and in some cases worsening, threats to bird species from trade not a single bird proposal has been tabled at CoP14 by contracting Parties. Since 1988, the international wild bird trade has been the primary driver in the worsening status (i.e. an uplisting to a more threatened IUCN Red List category) of 15 bird species. Without robust and visible scrutiny of the trade in this major animal group, CITES risks losing credibility.

Radically improved commitment to science needed

Nearly 4,000 wild bird species have been recorded in the trade. It is clear that much of this trade continues with little or no knowledge of its impacts. It is particularly concerning that the most basic scientific evidence necessary to make non-detriment findings is either poor or non-existent for many CITES-listed bird species. A radically improved approach to the scientific assessment of the impacts of trade on wild bird populations is needed. This should start with the c.200 threatened and near-threatened species where trade has already been identified as a contributory factor through the IUCN Red List process. For these species, before CoP15 we need to:

- develop proposals for species not listed on CITES Appendices
- review the basis for quotas and adjust these appropriately for species listed on CITES Appendix II, or consider Appendix I listing.

Where adequate information for non-detriment findings does not exist, trade should only be allowed following rigorous scientific study, and restricted to levels that are known to be safe.

Greater financial and political investment in enforcement needed

The illegal trade in wildlife remains one of the biggest sources of unlawful income globally. National and international enforcement of wildlife trade rules requires much greater priority. Greater international cooperation in the implementation of CITES is needed. Contracting Parties should develop effective implementation strategies, providing additional incentives and financial support where needed, particularly for training and technical assistance in species identification and enforcement measures.

The enforcement of CITES processes appears to be regularly neglected at present. Export quotas are often exceeded, as in the case of the now near-threatened African Grey Parrot. It is time for quotas to be routinely curtailed in order to compensate for levels exceeded in previous years. Further effort must be put into reporting the use of "fraudulent" documents, followed up by measures that will act as a significant deterrent

Wild bird import restrictions in the European Union are welcomed

As well as supporting the work of CITES, BirdLife also welcomes the use of stricter approaches in parts of the world where these provide good potential for conservation success. We welcome the January 2007 EU decision to replace most imports of wild caught birds with captive bred birds. We hope that this will help limit unnecessary levels of mortality and will stimulate the captive bred bird market. Parties should be free to make decisions that go beyond CITES requirements, based on their own determination of threats to wild species or to the health of humans and domestic animals.

For more information

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BirdLife International is a Partnership of people for birds and the environment.

Together we are the leading authority on the status of birds and their habitats. Over ten million people support the BirdLife Partnership of national non-governmental conservation organisations and local networks.

Partners work together on shared priorities, programmes and policies, learning from each other to achieve real conservation results.

BirdLife (as the official Listing Authority for birds for the IUCN Red List) offers expertise in assisting governments to develop priority bird proposals and also in undertaking Animals Committee recommendations. We believe that the unique resource offered by BirdLife is currently under utilized, to the detriment of a convention that should deliver much more for birds.