

Guilty nations named in report

SMUGGLERS, trappers and illegal traders in rare animals are easily exploiting the laws of countries that have signed the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species to legitimise their wildlife trading business.

An unpublished report of the World Wide Fund for Nature details Thailand, Indonesia, Argentina and Spain as the four countries with the worst record, allowing 'massive smuggling of Cites specimens'.

■ **Thailand:** Singled out as the worst offender for its virtually non-existent legislation against massive wildlife trade, it is one of the world centres for trade in protected species, attracting animals from neighbouring countries in Australasia, Indochina, Africa and South America. The report accuses Thailand of allowing itself to be used to 'launder' illegally collected plants, animals and animal products. Among the animals known to have been illicitly exported from Thailand are several species of birds of prey, spotted cats, gibbons, pangolins and pythons as well as orchids, ivory and reptile skins.

■ **Indonesia:** Criticised for an 'enormous amount of illegal trade', including exports of sea turtles, parrots and orchids, it is blamed for lack of proper administrative procedures which have resulted in documents being given for animals that have been illegally obtained, and a lack of expertise among officers responsible for inspecting wildlife shipments.

■ **Argentina:** Singled out for its lack of adequate national legislation, in 1988 a monitoring group identified almost 100 shipments with no kind of documentation, including animals destined for Mexico, Europe and Asia. These included caimans, boas, peccaries, blue and yellow macaws and hyacinth macaws. Also criticised for the poor conditions it allows live animals to be exported in, resulting in high mortality rates.

Although Spain is named as the EC's worst offender, experts are also concerned over illegal trade being routed through Italy, Portugal and Greece.

The sales pitch



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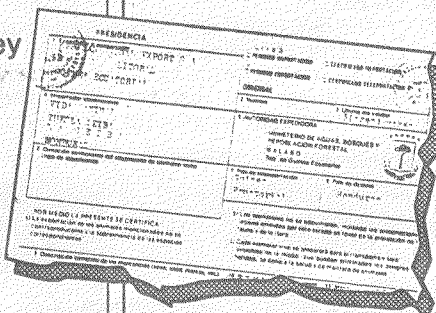
African Imports, which gives a West German contact number, lists species banned from trade by international convention and by European law. Its stock list includes:

Grevys zebra, gorilla, chimpanzee, mandrill, crocodiles, cattle egret, great white egret, greater flamingo,

white-backed vulture, white-headed vulture, Ruppel's vulture, hooded vulture, Egyptian vulture, Nubian vulture, secretary bird, African fish eagle, tawny eagle, Bateleur eagle, martial eagle, crowned eagle, African hawk eagle, Wahlberg's eagle, osprey, owls and owlets, Hartlaub's turaco, Livingstone's turaco, Fisher's turaco, violet crested turaco, palm nut vulture pangolin.

Exports

Once the animals have been accepted they can be shipped into Europe or trans-shipped to other countries



show one of the routes being used by trappers, smugglers and traders to flout international agreements to halt the traffic in wild animals.

The trail starts in Equatorial Guinea in West Africa with African Exports, a company run by the well-known German trader, Walter Sensen. A copy of the company's stock list, recently sent to several British zoos, makes for shocking reading.

It offers a large selection of species protected under Appendix I of Cites, for shipment 'direct from stock' and includes gorillas, croco-

diles, chimpanzees and mandrills. The stock list claims: 'All protected animals (sic) we ship with export documents on the Washington convention.'

Two Cites certificates which accompanied shipments from African Exports to Spain look genuine enough except in one crucial detail: Equatorial Guinea, a former Spanish colony, is not a signatory to the Cites convention and has no right to issue the certificates. Indeed, the Cites secretariat was so concerned over the trade in Equatorial Guinea that in 1988 it sent out a circular urging member states to embargo trade with it.

Despite this, both certificates show the Spanish customs stamp accepting them for shipment to Honduras.

The testimony of British conservationists who have recently visited the Iberian peninsula supports documented evidence of the abuse of protected animals in Spain. Jim Cronin, director of the Dorset-based Chimpanzee Rescue Centre, says some animals arriving there had been repeatedly drugged by beach photographers to pacify them.

Last week he told us: 'We have one chimpanzee that is an ex-junkie. It is familiar with how to use a needle and syringe. A colleague of mine has recently returned from Spain and he found 20 chimpanzees that had been taken from West Africa with no trouble.'

Mr Cronin added that he has twice offered to take as many chimpanzees as Spanish police and customs can seize, after rescuing 11 animals from Spain, an offer that has been refused.

Chimpanzees are also easily available from the Spanish pet trade. Peter Knights of the EIA told us that on a recent visit to Spain a Madrid pet shop offered to sell him a variety of protected species, including a chimpanzee, and proffered advice on how to smuggle them to Britain.

The list on offer included hyacinth macaws and Australian palm cockatoos, banned from export in their country of origin. Mr Knights claims he was also offered a three-year-old chimpanzee with eight teeth for £2,500 and told he could smuggle it through in his rucksack.

The European Environment Commission's legal service said last week that a 'reasoned opinion' outlining the case against Spain, would be sent out within the next fortnight and the country would have two months to respond. Failure to stop the trade would result in prosecution, he warned.

A spokesman for the Spanish Government said last week that part of the problem was due to decentralisation of authority to the 17 regions. He said: 'It is a matter for concern. We are conscious of the problem and it gives us a bad image.'

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JT.