

Rescued from a life of drugs

appropriate documentation by one EC country, they are powerless to question it. The legal moves are being seen as a key test of Spain's poor record in implementing regulations of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) which are enshrined in EC law.

They coincide with growing concern about the British Government's poor record on monitoring the trade in endangered species entering this country. *The Observer* last week reported conservationists' claims that Britain is failing to uphold documents showing how

shipments of wild animals illegally trapped in West Africa are 'laundered' for the EC market by being sent through Spain.

Investigators working for the EIA and the International Primate Protection League have obtained bogus copies of the certificates issued by Cites, which are required by European law for any protected species imported or shipped through an EC country. Other material reveals the way in which chimpanzees and other species pass illegally through Spain.

The documents clearly

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.'

countries in Australasia, India, China, 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 cats, man, 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.

Birthday message to captive 'ist

