

Resource and Research Centre on CITES (RRCC)

One of the ongoing projects of PEACE has been the setting up of Resource and Research Centre on CITES (RRCC) Capacity enhancement and International Conventions, etc. from September 2005 till date.

There was a need for this work, and particularly the very practical and informational newsletter of CITES developments and related news particularly of interest to South Asian conservationists. CITES is known to just about all who are interested in species conservation and the impact of wildlife trade upon it but CITES is complicated and many busy conservation minded people do not have time to plumb its depths. The newsletter, which comes out very regularly every months, is a great help in this regard. Reading through the last five years of CITES newsletters would certainly qualify a former dummy in CITES to qualify as "reasonably well-informed", at least of recent developments in South Asia!

CITES stands for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) put into action from 1st July 1975. Thus it is one of the first international agreements specifically for wildlife. It has, after some time, become accepted by 172 countries as Parties, its purpose to protect wildlife (both plants and animals) from the vagaries of commerce. In order to achieve this, both importer and exporter nations have to work together to achieve the goal of wildlife protection, whether they are consumer or producer countries. It is this cooperation & the common good that makes CITES work.

South Asia has been an important region in CITES, having been some of the very early parties or members. According to Sri. Samar Singh in his introduction to a hard copy compendium of CITES Newsletter brought out in ZOO ZEN, of the South Asian countries Nepal joined first and India second. India in 1975 and 1976 respectively and at present all but Maldives are Parties to CITES. Again according to the highly experienced Sri Samar Singh who is Advisor, RRCC and Former, Chairman, CITES Standing Committee, India proposed and design the logo of CITES for the Third Conference of Parties which was held in India. Also, he says, India had the unique distinction of chairing the CITES Standing Committee for four consecutive terms, which makes the diminution of South Asia's role in recent years even more unfortunate. Singh believes this to be a matter of concern and it was with the idea to confront this situation and provide assistance, that the RRCC was established at PEACE with the monthly e-publication CITES Update.

CITES Update is in its 5th year running. The next issue will be September, Vol. 4. Issue 9. Zoo Outreach Organisation, ever concerned that people without easy access to the internet are missing out has brought out two compendiums of monthly issues, ZOO ZEN July-September 2006 and ZOO ZEN October-January 2007.

Sri Samar Singh was kind to write an Introduction to the next issue of ZOO ZEN (August - October 2008) which will be a compilation of RRCC issue July 2007 - June 2008.

The response to this unique and practical creation of PEACE has been very gratifying as evidenced by the emails PEACE gets from all over the region and even in other parts of the world. A sampling of them is included here. It is another success of PEACE.



Words of encouragement for CITES Update

30.8.2005. ...what you are doing is providing an important service. Despite the many sources of information on CITES, little gets through to many front-line officers. ... the more efforts & information vehicles that exist, the better chance that useful information will reach those that need it, e.g. articles that explain basic principles, little known or poorly understood aspects of CITES, and updates and news. You may wish to use the CITES trade database and determine the most traded species in your region, and give advice on identification, safe handling of specimens. Practical guidance is always useful. *Stephen V. Nash, Chief, Capacity Building Unit, CITES Secretariat, Geneva, Switzerland*

31.8.2005 ... Congrats for such a wonderful first issue of the 'CITES Update'! I shall be forwarding the issues to the NACEN (Customs and Excise/DRI) as also to NYKS (Youth Affairs) and would mark a copy to you so that you may include them in your mailing list. I shall also be sending the feedback as desired in due course so that we can give this excellent initiative of yours an impetus. *Dr Anoop Swarup, Commissioner of Customs, India*

31.8.2005 ... the effort is very useful and timely. My only suggestion is that it should move from being informative to analytical reporting. This can either be done in house or by invited resource persons. We at ELDF would like to circulate this to our own network of lawyers who are interested in CITES and other related International Instruments. *Sanjay Upadhyay, Managing Partner Enviro Legal Defence Firm (ELDF), NOIDA, UP, India*

It is very informative and excellent work. It is useful for all the concerned and especially to those who implement the CITES. *Diwakar Chapagain, CITES Cell, DNPWC, Nepal*

... Thank for sending quite good information, our purposes. I am waiting for the next CITES UPDATES. *H.D.Ratnayake, Deputy Director, Research, Dept. of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.*