

# Leopards, Cheetahs, Bobcats, Geoffroy's Cat and a Tiger Farm

A proposal to downgrade the leopard in sub-Saharan Africa from Appendix I to II was deferred for further consultation at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) meeting in Japan in March 1992.

Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe made the proposal, which involved continuing the quota system for export of trophies and skins which exists under Appendix I.

Committee Chairman Martin Holdgate (Director General of the World Conservation Union) decided to recommend deferring the proposal.

Richard Leakey, representing Kenya, which has a quota, spoke against the proposal, declaring that there was a spate of leopard poaching in the country. Downgrading to Appendix II would send a message to poachers which would fuel illegal trade, he declared.

Kristin Nowell, who represented the Cat Group at the meeting, said the Parties clearly demonstrated that they were against downgrading on principle rather than on any criteria.

During plenary, Peter Dollinger of Switzerland suggested that, in view of reported outbreaks of leopard poaching in Kenya, Tanzania and the Central African Republic, their Appendix I quotas should temporarily be reduced to zero. Since the debate could not be re-opened, Dollinger suggested that Management Authorities of importing countries should consider restricting imports of leopard skins from these countries. Tanzania then intervened to argue that its leopard population was "very healthy".

Quotas for leopard exports, limited to sport hunting trophies and problem animals, are: Botswana 100, Central African Republic 40, Ethiopia 500, Kenya 80, Malawi 50, Mozambique 60, Namibia 100, South Africa 50, Tanzania 250, Zambia 300 and Zimbabwe 500.

Namibia withdrew a proposal to downgrade cheetah to Appendix II, and a resolution drafted by Nowell to establish an Appendix I quota system for exports of live animals and cheetah hunting trophies and skins was accepted by the Conference. The quotas are: Namibia 150, Zimbabwe 50 and Botswana 5.

The Mexican bobcat *Felis rufa esquinapae*, the only subspecies on Appendix I, was downgraded following a propo-

sal by USA for it to join the species on Appendix II on the grounds that its subspecific status is questionable and Mexico said it was "widespread and common"

Geoffroy's cat was moved from Appendix II to I, as proposed by Brazil, which recognized the paucity of status data and its similarity to *Felis tigrina*, *F. pardina* and *F. weidii*, while all evidence pointed to heavy exploitation combined with declining population.

A Chinese request for registration of its Felid breeding Center in Heilongjiang was withdrawn. It was agreed that Chinese specialists would confer with the Cat Specialist Group concerning providing more information on export data for tiger bone, medicines, registration data for "pre-Convention stocks" of Amur tiger bone; details of proposed marking system; detail on bloodline of founder stock; and evidence of consultation with importing states on mutual trade controls.

The Chinese proposal referred to the cost of raising and keeping large cats in captivity. Derivatives and parts from culled and dead individuals would accumulate. Income from sales would be invested in the captive population. It argued that the market was limited to some countries in Asia, and since the demand was relatively small, no substantial threat would be caused to survival of the species "since the wild population is very small, thus poaching becomes very difficult". It claimed that limited legal trade might reduce or even stop smuggling.

(For information about the Chinese farm see article in CAT NEWS 15. Ed.)

The Kyoto conference approved a new resolution setting definitive guidelines for the first registration of breeding operations for Appendix I animals for commercial purposes.

It also agreed that new criteria should be developed for listing or removing animals or plants on the two CITES appendices. A resolution said the appendices included a very large number of species, many of which might not be threatened by commercial trade. Certain species might not be appropriately listed. The governments agreed that appropriate criteria were lacking to define the term "threatened with extinction".