

CITES UPDATE

Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora & Fauna

Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

July 15-18, 2007
Minocqua, Wisconsin

Issues of Importance to the MAFWA

Bobcat Delisting from Appendix II of CITES at CoP14

A significant issue for the United States was a proposal promoted by the CITES Technical Work Group on behalf of the state wildlife agencies to delist the bobcat from CITES Appendix II during the 14th Conference of the Parties (CoP14). The 1977 Appendix II listing originated because bobcat pelts in trade are similar in appearance to other members of the *Lynx* family that are endangered in Europe. Delisting of bobcats has been routinely discussed with the U.S.F.W.S. since last proposed for delisting at the 13th Conference of the Parties (CoP13) in 2004.

On June 8th at CoP14, the U.S. introduced the proposal deleting *Lynx rufus* from Appendix II and to voluntarily list it in Appendix III (CoP14 Proposal 2), stating that the species is thriving and that look-alike issues are no longer a concern due to improved identification techniques.

Delisting the bobcat was supported by Canada but Mexico opposed the proposal due to lack of information, noting that the agreed-upon review of *Lynx* species has not yet been presented to the Animals Committee. While there was general consensus that North American bobcat populations are not endangered, several governments including the European Union (27 countries), Serbia, Norway, and India, as well as Humane Society International vocally opposed the delisting. They noted population estimates were dated and ongoing concerns persist that portions of pelts from endangered *Lynx* species cannot be easily differentiated from bobcats. Although the U.S. and Canada offered to voluntarily list bobcats on Appendix III, assuring that all pelts in international trade would be accompanied by documents attesting to origin, the delisting proposal was rejected 28 to 63 when brought to a vote.

Nathan Roberts Represents the USA in Mexico on Bobcat Study

We invited doctoral candidate Nathan Roberts from Cornell University to serve as our *field ambassador* in Mexico to assist in the bobcat population research currently underway. Nathan was in Mexico from October 20-27, 2006. He initially met with graduate student Horacio Barcenas from the Institute of Ecology, University of Mexico. Mr. Barcenas is conducting the bobcat field study under the supervision of Dr. Rodrigo Medellín. They discussed the objectives of the Mexican research which include 1) documenting the distribution of bobcat in Mexico and 2) inferring relative abundance of bobcats with respect to habitat types.

The study consists of using motion-activated cameras to record the presence of bobcats at four study sites including Aguascalientes, Chihuahua, Distrito Federal, and Sonora. Cameras are placed in a grid at each of the study locations and located using GPS. Once a site has been located in the field, the camera is placed on well-used game trails. No bait, lure, or other attractants are used. Mr. Barcenas explained that they hoped to identify individual bobcats from photographs to estimate minimum number of individuals at each study site. Preliminary reports have found bobcats at nearly every study area and Mexico believes they will have a more finalized study by January, 2008.

50 CFR 23 Being Revised After 30 Years

In 2006 the USFWS initiated revisions to the federal regulations (50 CFR 23) that implements CITES, representing the first substantive update of the U.S. CITES implementing regulations in nearly 30 years. Over the past year, the CITES Technical Work Group and other interested folks have thoroughly reviewed the document and drafted comments on behalf of the AFWA, Regional Associations, and individual state fish and wildlife agencies. In May 2007, we reviewed the final rule language prior to it being approved by the Department of Interior and submitted to the Office of Management and Budget. The CITES program will be greatly enhanced with the addition of our recommendations to those proposed by the USFWS providing protection for rare species that could be adversely impacted by international trade while establishing sensible management and reporting regimes that state fish and wildlife agencies can comply with and endorse.

Testimony Presented Before the Subcommittee On Fisheries, Wildlife, & Oceans Committee On Natural Resources, U.S. House Of Representatives

On May 2, 2007 Buddy Baker, CITES Technical Work Group member from the SEAFWA, presented testimony for the advancement of the bobcat delisting proposal by the United States at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Representing the 50 state fish and wildlife agencies Mr. Baker articulated the importance of the bobcat delisting proposal to the states. Below are some excerpts from Buddy's testimony:

While the CITES framework for ensuring sustainability is commendable, the ability of a country to successfully remove one of their native species from Appendix II or down-list it from Appendix I has proven to be difficult to impossible.

The states fully support the CITES process and have been diligent in our participation in guiding and enforcing the decisions of CITES. While the United States federal government ensures compliance with the terms of the treaty, they rely on expertise of the thousands of state wildlife biologists across the country who manage the wildlife resource on a daily basis. It is the 50 individual state fish and wildlife agencies that have the legal jurisdiction over and responsibility for the management of most species of wildlife. In addition, the state fish and wildlife agencies share important responsibility with the federal government for the management of federal trust species such as migratory birds. In the instance of the bobcat, it is the individual state wildlife agencies who professionally and capably manage this species.

Ongoing wild bobcat population monitoring and management programs continue to demonstrate that this species is not threatened but flourishing, and harvest and trade are well regulated. Our management programs are ensuring the long-term sustainable use of the species and support its conservation. It is important to understand that effective management and regulatory processes by state wildlife agencies were in place for bobcats long before their CITES listing and these programs will not be discontinued if the species is delisted.

Removing the bobcat from CITES Appendix II is a significant, priority issue for state fish and wildlife agencies in the U.S. We firmly believe that a fair and objective review of the available data strongly supports this delisting action. The removal of the bobcat from Appendix II will not compromise the conservation and legal trade of other listed Lynx species nor will it jeopardize the responsible conservation of bobcat populations.

Glen Salmon State Delegate at CoP14

Glen Salmon, Director Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife, served as the state delegate for the United States at the 14th Conference of the Parties (CoP14), June 3-15, 2007, in the Netherlands. While this was Glen's first exposure to CITES he took to it like a fish to water. Glen represented the states admirably and was warmly received by the U.S. delegation. Glen spoke on behalf of the states participating in the bobcat delisting proposal introduction and subsequent interventions. Glen said, "Chairman, on behalf of the 50 individual state wildlife agencies in the U.S. that have statutory authority over resident wildlife including the bobcat, we commit to facilitating the development of identification techniques to differentiate Lynx species. Furthermore, we will conduct workshops on use of these tools and techniques and the U.S. wishes to carry this proposal forward to a vote."

Work Group: Roles & Responsibilities

- Ensuring States' Authority is Maintained
- Keeping State Wildlife Directors Informed
- Serving as Liaison Between the States & USFWS
- Providing Objective Input on CITES Issues
- Identifying & Recommending Ways to Improve CITES and its Implementation

Meetings Attended on Behalf of the MAFWA

- * 96th AFWA Annual Meeting, September 2006; Snowmass, Colorado
- * 54th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, October 2006; Geneva, Switzerland
- * 72nd North American Wildlife & Natural Resource Conference, March 2007; Portland Oregon
- * 12th Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and ecosystem Conservation and Management, May 2007: Quebec, Canada
- * 14th Meeting of the CITES Conference of the Parties, June 2007; The Hague, Netherlands

It is an honor and a privilege to represent the MAFWA on CITES matters. Thanks goes to the Ohio Division of Wildlife for allowing me to dedicate the time necessary for this endeavor.

Respectfully submitted,

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