

Gemma Alexander

CITES Protects Endangered Species | Earth911.com

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Selling products made from endangered species is one of few things that seem to be illegal worldwide. That's thanks to an international treaty spearheaded by the U.S. in the 1970s. The multilateral CITES — Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora — established a global framework for wildlife protection.

What is CITES?

CITES is an international agreement to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. The sale of wildlife specimens for food, pets, souvenirs, and medicine generates billions of dollars each year, involves thousands of species, and is driving some species toward extinction. Because the wildlife trade is international, any effort to regulate it requires international cooperation.

In January 1974, the U.S. became the first nation to ratify CITES. There are now 183 parties to the convention, providing near-global protection to more than 35,000 species of animals and plants.



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How Does It Work?

CITES is a binding international agreement nations enter into voluntarily. The agreement requires each participant country to adopt its own domestic legislation to comply with the established protection framework. That framework subjects international trade in selected species to a licensing system. Each party to the Convention must establish a management authority in charge of the licensing system and establish a scientific authority to advise them on how trade affects the status of protected species.