

Endangered Species Advisory Committee

Summary Progress Report of CITES Work

1/10/2024 – 31/8/2025

Purpose

This paper provides a summary of progress on the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) for the period from 1 October 2024 to 31 August 2025 for the information of members.

Enforcement

2. The table below shows the number of inspections conducted and enforcement actions taken during the reporting period:

Comparison with the previous reporting period

	1/10/2023 – 31/8/2024	1/10/2024 – 31/8/2025	Variation
Consignment inspection (import, export, transit)	20 261	19 259	– 4.9%
Local inspection	1 148	1 477	+28.7%
No. of investigation	554	519	– 6.3%
No. of seizure	505	468	– 7.3%
No. of prosecution	38	45	+18.4%

3. Apart from our routine inspections and investigations, we also assisted the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) in inspecting high-risk consignments suspected of involving scheduled species. During the period from 1 October 2024 to 31 August 2025, 86 inspections were carried out.

4. The majority of cases involved illegal import of endangered species. The major cases are summarised below:

Case No.	Description	CITES document available	Date of Incident	Results/Remarks
272/2025	Suspected illegal import of dried sea cucumber (<i>Holothuria nobilis</i> , Appendix II) from Yemen	Yes	08/03/2025	A shipment of 705.5 kg of dried sea cucumber, declared as <i>Holothuria nobilis</i> , arrived by air with a CITES export permit from Yemen. The Yemen CITES Management Authority confirmed that the permit was fraudulent. The shipment was subsequently seized and the case is currently under investigation.
320/2025	Suspected illegal export of 200 live specimens of <i>Testudo hermanni</i> (Appendix II)	No	30/05/2025	An outbound private car with one driver and one passenger was selected for inspection by C&ED at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge port. In the storage compartment of the vehicle, 200 live Hermann's tortoises (<i>Testudo hermanni</i>) packed in seven mesh bags were found. The two suspects were arrested and released on bail pending further investigation.
429/2025	Suspected illegal import of 1 574 pieces of live stony corals (Scleractinia species; Appendix II) from the Philippines	No	01/08/2025	A shipment of 1 574 pieces of live scheduled stony corals mingled with non-scheduled fish arrived from the Philippines by air without a valid CITES permit. The consignee was arrested by C&ED and was subsequently released on bail pending further investigation.

Case No.	Description	CITES document available	Date of Incident	Results/Remarks
331–336/2025; 393–418/2025; 420/2025; 430/2025; 432/2025 (Total 35 cases)	Suspected illegal import of 669 live <i>Terrapene</i> turtles (Appendix II) and 9 live <i>Kinosternon flavescens</i> (Appendix II) from the USA	No	26/5/2025 – 11/8/2025	Parcels containing live turtles were seized at the Hong Kong International Airport and C&ED conducted controlled delivery operations and recovered more parcels. In total, 100 parcels were seized containing 678 live turtles. The cases are now under investigation by C&ED with assistance from AFCD for suspected illegal import of Appendix II species and cruelty to animals.
454/2025	Suspected illegal export of 2 139 Appendix II live turtles, including 2 099 <i>Sternotherus</i> species and 40 <i>Cuora flavomarginata</i>	No	30/08/2025	An outbound goods vehicle was selected for inspection by C&ED at the Shenzhen Bay control point. Inside the chassis frame beneath the cargo compartment of the vehicle, 2 139 live turtles were concealed. The driver was arrested and currently under investigation by C&ED for illegal export of Appendix II species and cruelty to animals.

5. In addition, some cases effected in previous reporting periods were concluded during the current reporting period. Notable sentencing includes the followings:

Case No.	Description	Date of Incident	Date of adjudication	Results/Remarks
28/2024	Illegal import of dried shark fins and fish gills (Appendix II) and unmanifested cargoes	20/01/2024	12/12/2024	<p>During a joint anti-smuggling operation by the C&ED and Marine Police, a fishing vessel entering southern water boundary of Hong Kong was intercepted. A total of 6 343 kg of dried shark fins and fish gills of scheduled species was found on the vessel.</p> <p>The offender pleaded guilty at the District Court and was sentenced to 32 months' imprisonment.</p>
35/2024	Illegal import of 72 parrot eggs (Appendix I & Appendix II) from South Africa	25/01/2024	17/01/2025	<p>An incoming Thai male passenger from Johannesburg, South Africa was intercepted by the C&ED at the Hong Kong International Airport. He was found carrying 43 and 29 eggs of Appendix I and II parrots respectively.</p> <p>The offender pleaded guilty at the District Court and was sentenced to 39 months' imprisonment.</p>
234/2024	Illegal import of 63 live turtles (Appendix I & Appendix II) from Malaysia and cruelty to animals	31/03/2024	28/03/2025	<p>A Filipino male passenger transiting through the Hong Kong International Airport from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to Manila, the Philippines was intercepted by the C&ED. A total of 49 heads of Appendix I and 14 heads of Appendix II live turtles were found in his check-in baggage.</p> <p>The offender pleaded guilty at the District Court and was sentenced to a total of 30 months' imprisonment.</p>

Case No.	Description	Date of Incident	Date of adjudication	Results/Remarks
269/2023	Illegal possession of 26 live turtles of scheduled species (Appendix I & Appendix II), and possession of protected wild animals	19/07/2023	9/7/2025	<p>AFCD, in collaboration with the police, mounted a joint operation targeting an alleged poacher and wildlife trader. The offender was prosecuted on three charges under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) and the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) in connection with 26 scheduled turtles.</p> <p>The offender pleaded guilty at the District Court. AFCD applied for an enhanced sentence under the Organized and Serious Crime Ordinance (Cap. 455) and was accepted by the Court. The offender was sentenced to 20 months' imprisonment.</p>

Licensing

6. The number of licences and certificates issued during the reporting period is tabulated below:

Comparison with the last reporting period

	1/10/2023 – 31/8/2024	1/10/2024 – 31/8/2025	Variation
Import Licence	192	173	-9.9%
Export/Re-export Licence	11 836	11 390	-3.8%
Possession Licence	40	26	-35.0%
Re-export Certificate	384	209	-45.6%
Special Export/Import Licence	9	2	-77.8%

Disposal of Seized Specimens

7. The Department endeavours to maximise the use of seized specimens for conservation, education or scientific purposes according to the guidelines of CITES. The following items were disposed of during the reporting period following the above principle:

(a) Local schools

A total of 10 local schools have received specimens confiscated from enforcement operations, including 3 pieces of blue coral necklace, 1 pair of stony coral skeleton, 1 piece of agarwood, 6 pieces of python skin or product, 1 piece of lizard skin, 2 pieces of sea turtle stuffed specimens, 1 piece of sea turtle carapace, 2 pieces of sea turtle shell, 2 pieces of sea turtle product, 1 piece of alligator head, 6 pieces of crocodilian skin or product, 4 pieces of Malagasy rosewood, 1 piece of ivory cut piece, 7 pieces of worked ivory, 1 piece of tiger paw, 2 pieces of feline fur, 19.11 kg of dried seahorses, 4 pieces of hippopotamus teeth, 16 pieces of Indian peafowl feather, 0.029 kg pangolin scale, 0.255 kg of American ginseng, 0.289 kg of orchid stem, 1 piece of red sandalwood, 22 pieces of helmeted hornbill beak, 4 pieces of saiga horn, 3 pairs of giant clam shell and 1 head of live African spurred tortoise.

(b) Other local organisations and government departments

Live specimens donated to other local organisations and government departments included 3 heads of African spurred tortoise, 15 heads of Chinese three striped box turtle, 4 heads of Chinese stripe-necked turtle, 1 head of leopard tortoise, 9 heads of yellow pond turtle, 1 head of Alexandrine parakeet, 1 head of Bali myna, 1 head of barred parakeet, 3 heads of celestial parrotlet, 1 head of chattering lory, 1 head of eelectus parrot, 1 head of Fischer's lovebird, 1 head of greater sulphur-crested cockatoo, 1 head of Hwamei, 1 head of umbrella cockatoo, 3 heads of green-cheeked conure, 9 heads of monk parakeet, 1 head of moustached parakeet, 5 heads of rainbow lorikeet and 1 head of yellow-crowned amazon.

(c) Overseas organisations

The live specimen donated to overseas organisations included 1 head of Bengal slow loris. The dead specimens donated to overseas organisations included 67.9 kg of rhinoceros skin, 2 pieces of crafted rhinoceros horn and 2 pieces of raw rhinoceros horn.

Publicity and Education

8. As the number of travellers between Hong Kong and the Mainland remained high, we carried out promotion campaigns to enhance travellers' awareness on the relevant control of popular items (e.g. American ginseng, dendrobium, dried seahorse, gastrodia and fins of endangered shark species) through leaflet distribution at boundary control points before Lunar New Year; public announcement, short video and poster advertisement at control points; bus-body advertisement and Facebook posts.

9. The Endangered Species Resource Centre (ESRC) received 8 210 visitors in 39 tours and 44 Open Days from October 2024 to August 2025. We delivered 46 education talks on endangered species protection for students, elderly citizens and local organisations. This year, we also collaborated with the Travel Industry Authority to provide seminars on protection of endangered species to tour escorts and tourist guides as one of the recognised courses under the Continuing Professional Development Scheme for tourist guides. A total of 9 exhibitions were held at schools and public venues.

10. To enhance the awareness and vigilance of the public about the licensing control over the import, export, re-export and possession of endangered species, we continued to make use of the Department's Facebook page and mass media to provide updates on recent cases, remind the public of relevant issues and our legislative control, and encourage the public to report suspected illegal trade in endangered species. A total of 14 Facebook posts and 7 press releases were issued during the reporting period.

11. To demonstrate the Government's continuous adoption of technology in enhancing public services, we showcased the shark species rapid DNA identification technology at the Smart Hong Kong Pavilion at InnoEx 2025 in April 2025. This new technology is a polymerase chain reaction-based method that allows rapid species identification by recognising the fluorescent signature unique to different species. This method forgoes the procedure of DNA sequencing and can produce results within hours.

International and Local Liaison and Meeting

12. We endeavour to maintain close contact with other CITES Parties and international organisations. During the reporting period, we participated in the 78th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee.

13. To convey our commitment in combatting illegal wildlife trade, and to maintain and extend our network with other enforcement agencies for information exchange and potential collaboration, we participated in regular international enforcement meetings including the 8th Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement meeting led by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the 35th Wildlife Crime Working Group Meeting and a subsequent inter-sessional meeting led by INTERPOL. Through these connections, we hosted an ad-hoc case coordination meeting led by the UNODC.

Training

14. The Department places great emphasis on providing adequate training to frontline enforcement staff to ensure that the legislative control is duly implemented. We organised a 2-days plant identification training course in Fairy Lake Botanical Garden, Shenzhen in December 2024 and arranged a training workshop on shark species rapid DNA identification in March 2025 for frontline staff.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
October 2025