

Combating Illegal Wildlife Trafficking in Central America

Humane Society International

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Who is Humane Society International?

- Humane Society International (HSI) is the international arm of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), a nonprofit organization founded in 1954 with a constituency of more than eleven million people.
- Our mission is the protection of all animals worldwide.
- HSI's headquarters are in Washington, DC, and we have offices in Australia, Canada, Europe, India and Latin America.





HSI in Latin America

- Latin American based policy and programs:
 - Wildlife and habitat protection,
 - Marine mammal protection,
 - Domestic animal welfare,
 - Public outreach campaigns on animal welfare and the illegal wildlife trade,
 - CITES implementation and animal handling trainings,
 - Wildlife rescue center technical and infrastructure support,
 - Sustainable agriculture, and
 - Humane handling, transport and slaughter of farm animals.



History of HSI's CITES Implementation Program

- HSI has been working on improving CITES implementation in the region since 2003 under the Central America-Dominican Republic-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR)
- Since 2006, HSI, along with the Department of the Interior (DOI) and TRAFFIC have been collaborating with the U.S. State Department in the CAFTA-DR countries
- HSI also coordinates directly with governmental CITES Authorities, local NGOs, and wildlife rescue centers



Countries



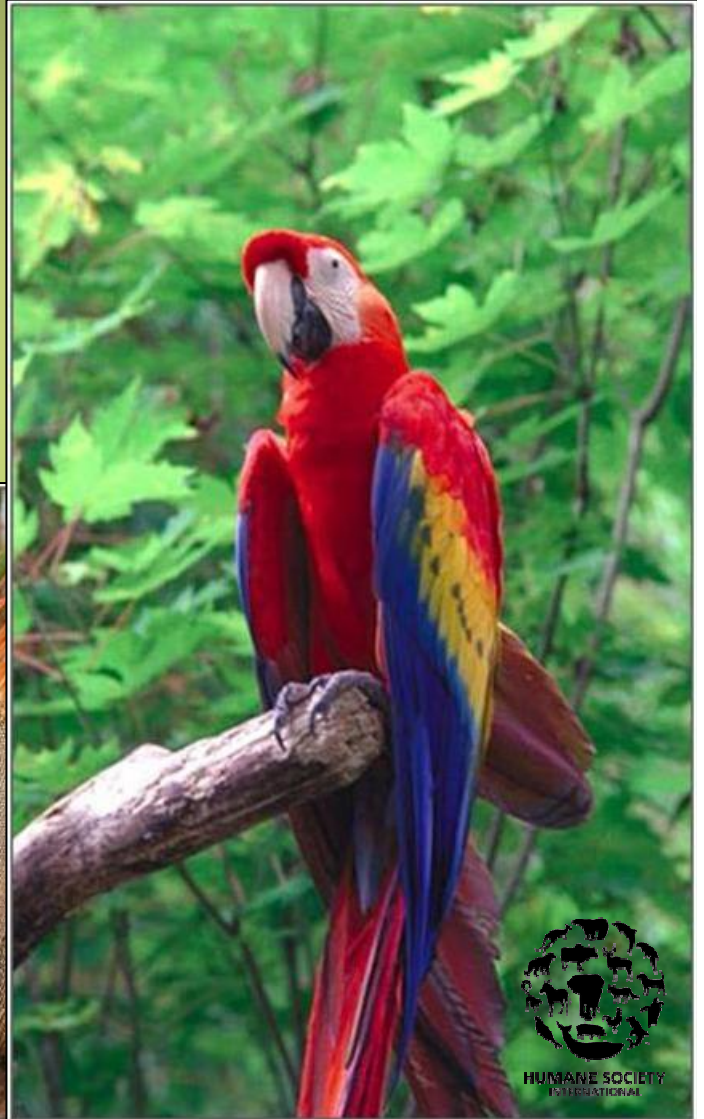
Source: USDA

Illegal Wildlife Trafficking



- High demand for wildlife, such as parrots, macaws and spider monkeys, to serve as pets at the domestic level
- High demand in certain areas for reptile meat (iguanas, garrobo)
- International market in the United States, Europe and increasingly in the Caribbean islands
- Drug and wildlife trafficking often using same smuggling routes (i.e. Guatemala and Honduras)

Commonly Trafficked Wildlife in Central America



Current Gaps in Combating Wildlife Trafficking

- Lack of training for inspection personnel
- Failure to enforce wildlife protection laws and penalties at national level
- Insufficient wildlife rescue centers to take custody of confiscated animals
- High demand for tropical wildlife as pets in homes
- High instances of poverty and lack of alternative sources of income





HSI CITES PROGRAM: Four Pronged Approach

1. Trainings for government officials on CITES and basic animal handling techniques
2. Wildlife rescue center support through infrastructural development and capacity building
3. Public outreach campaigns to reduce domestic and regional demand for wildlife products
4. Ecotourism as economic alternative to poaching

Capacity Building Trainings

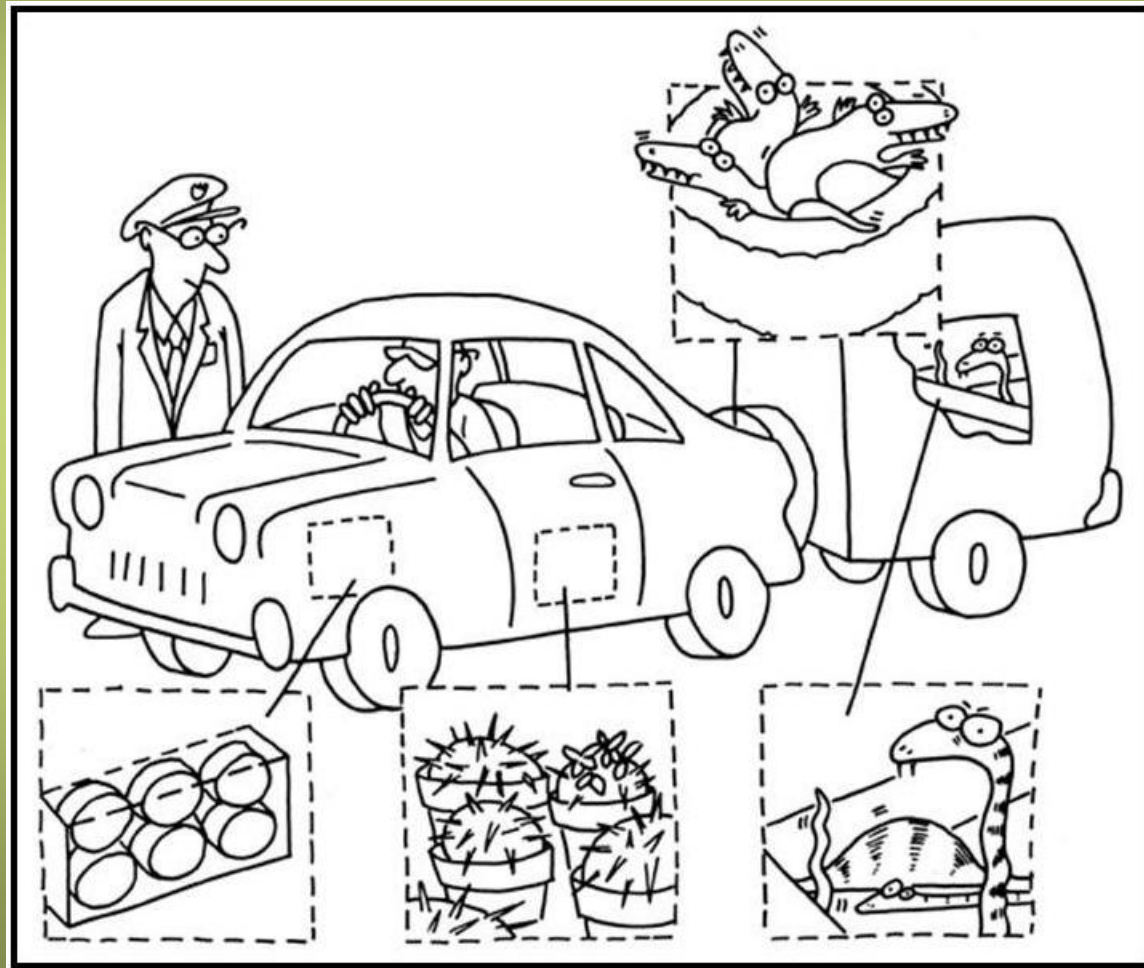
- Regional training courses in order to improve CITES implementation between CAFTA-DR countries and capacity building (*IATA Animal Transport Workshop*)
- Bi-National Workshops
 - Introduction to CITES and National implementation
 - Humane animal handling techniques for use during the animal seizure process



Workshops

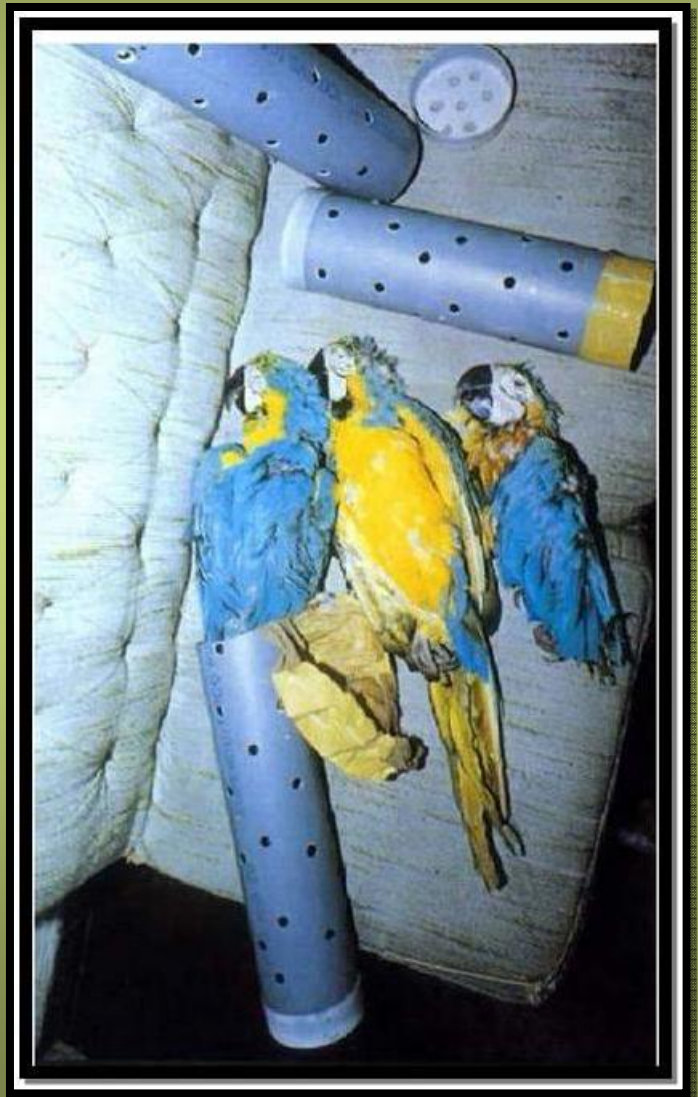


Confiscation... Then what??



Smuggling Methods

- Horrific transport conditions with the majority of animals dying in transit *(90% mortality with parrots)*
- Common methods:
 - Concealed in luggage
 - Drugged and sedated
 - Concealed under garments
 - Stowed under car seat cushions
 - Hidden in shipment containers



CITES and Confiscated Animals

- All signatory countries must adopt appropriate laws to allow wildlife confiscation
- Resolution Conf.10.7 regulates the disposition of confiscated live wildlife listed under the Appendices
- Governments are tasked with final disposition of the animals, whether it be to maintain them in captivity, reintegrate them into the wild or perform euthanasia
- When these animals are confiscated by local authorities, or abandoned by their captors, they then need to undergo a rigorous process of rescue and ultimate disposition



Wildlife Rescue Centers

- **Small grants:** Enclosures for quarantine, rehabilitation, soft release assimilation and release
- **Technical assistance:**
 - Protocols for animal reception and treatment/final disposition of the animal
 - Management and sustainability plans
 - Fundraising and volunteer programs
- **Regional Rescue Center Sustainability Study**



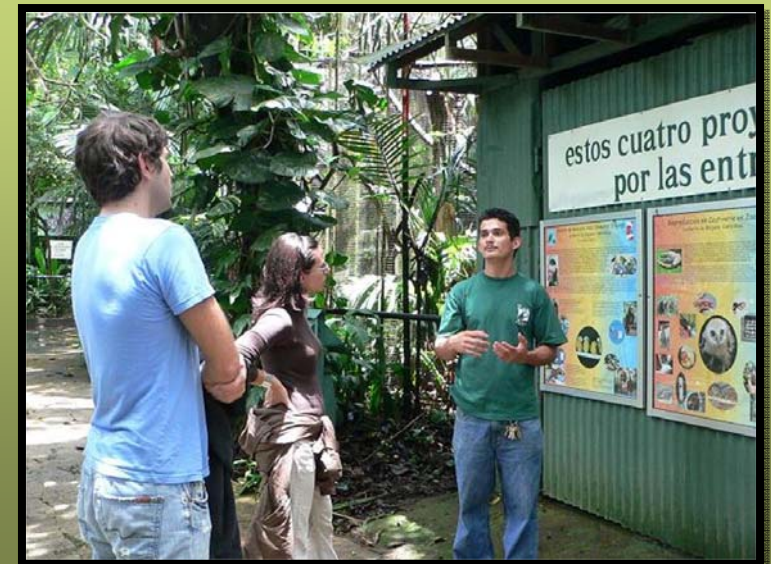
Wildlife Rescue Centers



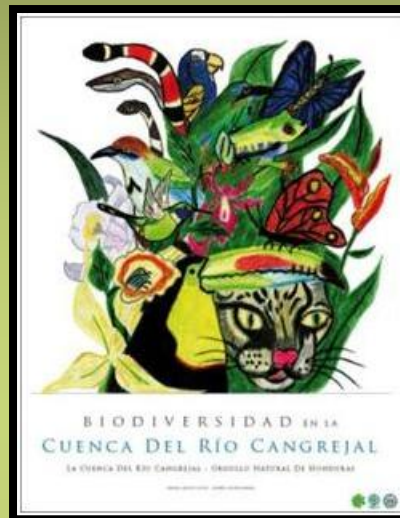


Public Outreach and Education Initiatives

- Promote environmental awareness, empathy for the plight of animals poached and smuggled
- Generate interest among school children through classes and games
- Highlight the criminal nature of the activity and the economic and environmental repercussions
- Collaborate with other NGOs and government organizations to achieve maximum impact for public outreach initiatives
- Endangered species protection and penalties for smugglers



Educational Campaigns to Reduce Demand for Wildlife



Ecotourism as an Economic Alternative



- Ecotourism provides rural communities a profitable means to benefit from local wildlife without illegally extracting fauna
- Communities involved in ecotourism can earn two to three times as much income from wildlife viewing than animal poaching
- Financial benefits from ecotourism encourage community members to self-police and the wildlife extraction rate to drop dramatically

Ecotourism Programs



Recommendations

- Improved coordination between governments; amongst government agencies; and between governments and non-governmental organizations
- Sustainability in training given the high rotation of government personnel in the region
- Increased funding for CITES Authorities and Enforcement Personnel
- Government funds contribute to rescue center expenses
- Continued campaigns to reduce demand for illegally trafficked wildlife



HSI: Looking Toward the Future

- Institutionalize training – development of CITES and Animal Handling CD-Rom for government personnel
- Encouragement of sustainability of wildlife rescue centers
- Continued campaigns to reduce demand for illegally trafficked wildlife
- Continued promotion of ecotourism as an economic alternative to poaching





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INTERNATIONAL**

Thank you!