



**Panthera Recommendations for
CITES Standing Committee 77th Meeting
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[About Panthera](#)

Panthera, founded in 2006, is devoted exclusively to preserving wild cats and their critical role in the world's ecosystems. Panthera's team of leading biologists, counter-wildlife crime experts, and wild cat advocates develop innovative strategies based on the best available science to protect cheetahs, jaguars, leopards, lions, pumas, snow leopards, tigers, and the 33 small cat species and their vast landscapes. In 39 countries, Panthera works with a wide variety of stakeholders to reduce or eliminate the most pressing threats to wild cats—securing their future and ours.

Panthera at CITES SC77

Panthera works with CITES Parties around the world as partners in wild cat conservation. We combine science, technology, and counter wildlife crime expertise to help develop collaborative, evidence-based approaches that benefit wild cats and people, so both can thrive.

Poaching and the illegal wildlife trade threaten all big cats, which are sought after for their body parts, including skins, teeth, claws, bones, and organs. Body parts are used as trinkets and amulets, luxury items, cultural-religious purposes, including ceremonial attire, and traditional medicines. Cheetahs, tigers, African lions, leopards, and many small wild cat species are illegally trafficked live for the pet trade and private zoos. The factors driving the illegal trade in wild cats are nuanced and vary by species and geography. Thus, the solutions recommended under CITES to deter illegal killing and trade should reflect these differences, as should Parties' implementation and enforcement of them.

Commercial captive breeding of all the big cat species raises concerns for its potential to contribute to illegal trade and drive demand, with unknown impacts on wild populations. The missions conducted to facilities of concern in 2023 provided some important learnings, as do the relevant Parties' national reports. While ending commercial captive breeding of tigers and other Asian Big Cats is mandated under Resolution 14.69, tiger farms continue to proliferate in many countries. On the road to a phase-out of these operations, we urge continued transparency and uptake of the outcomes from the Big Cats Task Force meeting to reduce the threat to Asian Big Cats from poorly regulated, managed and enforced commercial captive breeding.



Our recommendations on specific documents below are offered to assist with your decision-making, and we are available for additional information and discussion.

Enforcement Matters

[Doc. 39.3 CITES Big Cats Task Force](#)

Panthera was pleased to participate in the first meeting of the CITES Big Cats Task Force in Entebbe, Uganda, in April 2023. The meeting provided an important forum for Parties affected by illegal trade in big cats to exchange information with relevant experts, discuss common challenges, and agree upon strategies and tactics to strengthen the effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention.

Panthera does not support creating a single resolution on illegal trade in all big cats, as discussed in Section 10.a) under Recommendations. While some strategies are common to all big cats and can and should be enacted across the board, many factors driving illegal trade in wild cats are nuanced and vary by species and geography. Accordingly, the recommendations under CITES should address these differences explicitly, particularly regarding African big cats and jaguars, which could benefit from species-specific resolutions. A resolution broad enough to encompass all big cat species risks leaving gaps in implementation, measurement, and reporting of results, complicating enforcement, and diluting the resolution's intent and effectiveness overall. Technically, a resolution of that scope would be extremely dense and difficult for Parties to interpret and implement. We recommend that the Standing Committee reject the proposal at this meeting and allow time for the benefits and drawbacks of a single resolution to be assessed from a conservation perspective as well as an administrative one.

With respect to the Outcome Document, Panthera commends the Task Force for producing detailed and actionable strategies, measures and activities on numerous key issues facing big cats. We're pleased that robust demand reduction measures are recommended to complement the recommendations focused on law enforcement. We highlight the importance of evidence-based behavior change initiatives and knowledge sharing to combat illegal trade in big cat specimens.

We support recommendation 10.b) encouraging affected Parties to implement the strategies, measures, and activities in the Outcome Document as a matter of priority and urge the Standing Committee to go a step further and recommend formal adoption of them. As an alternative to embedding them in a single resolution on big cats, this could be done by integrating them into Resolution 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) on Asian Big Cats and later into any new resolutions that may be created on African big cats and jaguars as proposed above. We further urge an additional recommendation that the Big Cats Task Force continue to meet to support the adoption of the outcomes and make additional recommendations as needed in a dynamic environment.



Recommendations:

10.a) Panthera recommends that the Standing Committee reject the proposal at this meeting and allow time for the benefits and drawbacks of a single resolution to be assessed from a conservation perspective as well as an administrative one.

10.b) Panthera recommends that the Standing Committee adopt this recommendation and additionally:

- urge formal adoption of the measures detailed in the Outcome Document
- recommend that the Big Cats Task Force continue to meet

Additionally, we have several recommendations to clarify and strengthen some of the measures in the Outcome Document (Annex):

1.2 d) In addition to seizures, add arrests and prosecutions to the information to be included in Annual Illegal Trade Reports. Seizures alone provide an incomplete picture of the impact of enforcement actions.

2. This section should seek to equally strengthen regulation of facilities keeping and breeding big cats in captivity, as facilities keeping big cats are implicated in the trade alongside those breeding them. This can be clarified by adding “keeping” after “breeding” in lines 2 and 2.1 and removing line 2.2, which only “encourages” facilities keeping big cats to apply the measures.

5. To strengthen regional and international collaboration to address illegal trade in big cats, this section should reference the need for cooperation with authorities at the provincial level to improve the amount and quality of intelligence flowing up to the regional and international levels. Specifically, we suggest the following addition:

5.3 b) INTERPOL and the WCO to explore opportunities for cooperation at the provincial level and to coordinate targeted regional or international operations focusing on combating illegal trade in big cat species; and

[Document 41.1 Asian Big Cats](#)

Panthera appreciates the Report of the Secretariat on Asian Big Cats and the responses from Parties to Notification No. 2023/091, reporting on their implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) and associated Decisions. We welcome the progress made on multiple fronts to combat illegal trade in Asian Big Cat parts and derivatives reported by several Parties, with notable advances in enforcement, wildlife forensics, transboundary collaboration, and Asian Big Cats in captivity.



Despite welcome news from the 2022 IUCN Red List Assessment on Tigers that indicated global tiger populations had stabilized or increased since 2015, tigers and all Asian Big Cats continue to face extreme threats from poaching and illegal trade. Local extinctions of tigers in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam have occurred in just the past 20 years, and both Malay and Indochinese subspecies are on the brink of extinction with likely less than 250 individuals left in the wild. A Panthera study released in July 2023 showed that Indochinese leopards are functionally extinct in Cambodia and potentially in Lao PDR and Viet Nam as well. These are grim reminders that efforts to implement CITES with respect to Asian Big Cats are falling short.

We note with concern that only four current range States of Asian Big Cats responded to Notification No. 2023/091. Moreover, we noted inconsistencies within several submitted reports with our evidence and/or publicly available data. Without representative, accurate, and timely reporting from range States, it isn't possible for the Standing Committee or CITES Parties at large to ascertain the effectiveness of Resolution 12.5 (Rev. CoP19) and its associated Decisions, or assess where and what kinds of additional support might be needed to implement and enforce them fully.

Recommendations

Panthera recommends that the Standing Committee adopt the recommendations.

To improve information available to Parties on Asian Big Cats, we recommend that the Standing Committee additionally:

- Instruct the Secretariat to re-issue the Notification seeking responses on implementation of Decisions 18.100, 18.101, 18.105 and 18.106 and report on their implementation for consideration by SC78, including on whether any time-bound, country-specific measures are required; and
- Direct the Secretariat, prior to each CoP and subject to external funding, to commission a report on the implementation of Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev CoP19) and associated Decisions for consideration by the CoP like what is currently done for Rhinoceroses.
- To support implementation of Decision 18.105, and strengthen recommendations 91.c)
 - i) A. and B. on reporting on illegal trade in Asian leopards, additionally urge Parties to collect and analyze samples from leopard specimens seized within their territories to distinguish between African and Asian leopards. Use of forensic analytical techniques is urged in Res. Conf. 12.5 (Rev.CoP19) and collection of samples from seized rhinos specifically called for in Res. Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19). Measures to facilitate identification of big cat specimens in trade are detailed in the Big Cats Task Force Outcome Document, SC77 Doc. 39.3.



[Document 41.2 Asian Big Cats in Captivity](#)

Panthera is pleased that missions have been conducted to five of the seven countries identified as having captive tiger facilities of concern. These missions provided critical information for the Secretariat to develop its recommendations and emphasized the need going forward for frequent and unannounced inspections of facilities keeping Asian Big Cats in captivity for continued compliance monitoring and enforcement.

We would welcome an update from the Secretariat and the United States on the timing of the mission to the U.S., tentatively planned for the last quarter of 2023, and urge China to initiate a mission to conclude this review.

Please note that, in Panthera's leadership role as the future Global Secretariat for the IUCN SSC Conservation Translocation Specialist Group (CTSG), we encourage the integration of big cats that are suitable in terms of health, genetics, and behavior into internationally accredited *ex situ* programs for educational or conservation translocation purposes. In alignment with the CTSG's draft "IUCN Guidelines on the responsible translocation of displaced organisms," which has been shared with the Species Survival Commission Steering Committee for future approval, the CTSG and Panthera offer to collaborate with CITES in the development of protocols and processes to prevent the irresponsible release of Asian Big Cats into the wild.

Recommendations

Panthera recommends that the Standing Committee adopt the Secretariat's recommendations, which, taken together by Parties, will improve management and oversight of these facilities and help reduce their involvement in illegal trade. To ensure that the recommendations are implemented and monitored, we urge the Standing Committee to call upon Parties to incorporate these recommendations into draft Decisions and/or amendments to Res. Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP19).

[Document 43: Jaguars](#)

Panthera welcomed the opportunity to participate in the meeting of jaguar range States in Brazil in September as organizers with the Jaguar 2030 Coordination Committee, jaguar scientists, and specialists in counter-wildlife crime and law enforcement. We thank ACTO for its gracious handling of the logistics in Cuiabá and commend the CITES Secretariat and Brazil for skillfully managing a robust agenda and leading inclusive discussions to arrive at the recommendations in this document. We were deeply honored by Secretary Higuero's tribute to Dr. Howard Quigley, Panthera's Jaguar Program Director, who passed away in August 2022.



Panthera strongly supports the Secretariat's recommendations. In particular, we welcome 31 c), d) and e), which advance steps to develop an intergovernmental platform/cooperation mechanism and a joint program of work to synergize Parties' international commitments related to jaguars under CITES, CMS and CBD. As wide-ranging apex carnivores that live primarily in tropical forests, jaguars are effective umbrellas and indicators of biodiversity. Their conservation can help Parties deliver on the CMS-CITES Joint Work Program, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and Sustainable Development Goals. We recommend that the program of work align with national Jaguar action plans and the Jaguar 2030 Roadmap, which aims to secure 30 priority jaguar landscapes by 2030. Work began at the range State meeting to define common criteria for priority landscapes and identify a subset of around 30 that meet those criteria. Panthera continues that work with a few remaining Parties and will provide an update to the Secretariat for consideration as the next steps on the program of work are defined.

We also support the development of a system to monitor the illegal killing of jaguars, illegal trade in their parts and derivatives, and other aspects of their conservation in line with Parties' priorities. Panthera works with government, law enforcement, and communities in Jaguar range to build capacity to deter poaching and disrupt illegal trade in jaguars through tactical coordination and cooperation at the provincial level. Panthera stands ready to assist the Secretariat and Parties in conceptualizing an effective modular system that meets their needs.

We note the importance of sustainable financing to fund the ambitious agenda that will be embodied in the joint program of work. In support of Parties' efforts to implement the Jaguar 2030 Roadmap, the Jaguar 2030 Coordination Committee works on developing these funding opportunities through its sustainable finance sub-committee. Currently chaired by UNDP, this committee will coordinate with any sub-group of the Standing Committee Jaguar working group formed to focus on financial opportunities, as described in 31. e).

Recommendations:

Panthera recommends that the Standing Committee adopt the Secretariat's recommendations.

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