

CITES in a nutshell

CITES AROUND THE GLOBE...

>>CITES is an acronym for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. This international treaty entered into force in 1975 and aims to ensure that international trade of CITES-listed animal and plant species is not detrimental to the survival of wild populations. The international trade of many well-known plants and animals are regulated under CITES, such as orchids and elephants, as well as more esoteric species, such as tree ferns and emperor scorpions. Trade is regulated through a system of permits used by every signatory to CITES. The Secretariat of CITES is administered by the United Nations Environment Program. [Explore the international CITES website](#)

CITES currently includes 184 member countries and the European Union (called “Parties”). The United States was the first signatory to CITES in 1975, and Andorra is the latest country to join in 2022. [Full list of the Parties](#)

ABOUT CITES SPECIES:

>>Nearly 41,000 [CITES species](#) are protected by CITES, including more than 6,600 animals and 34,000 plants. Under CITES, species may be added to one of [3 Appendices](#), each conferring a different level of regulation, with the most stringent controls for Appendix I species. Species in Appendix I are threatened with extinction and trade is permitted only under strict circumstances. Species included on Appendix II are impacted by trade at a level that requires monitoring in order to avoid threats to extinction. Appendix III provides a monitoring system that allows countries to enlist assistance of international trading partners to better understand the level of trade in those species. Search the [Checklist of CITES Species](#) by scientific or common name, CITES Appendix, or country of distribution.

INTERNATIONAL CITES MEETINGS:

>>CITES convenes several international meetings to implement the treaty, including:

The Conference of the Parties (CoP) – These meetings are held every three years. Decisions, Resolutions and amendments to species lists are discussed and voted on at CoPs. *The next meeting, CoP20, to be held in 2025* (date and location are yet to be announced). [Click here to view CoP meeting information back to 1976](#) on the CITES website.

The Plants Committee (PC) - Held annually to discuss technical and scientific aspects of Resolutions and species listings pertaining to plants. *The next meeting, PC27, will be held in July 2024.* [Click here to view PC meeting information back to 1999](#) on the CITES website.

The Animals Committee (AC) - Held annually to discuss technical and scientific aspects of Resolutions and species listings pertaining to animals. *The next meeting, AC33, will be in July 2024.* [Click here to view AC meeting information back to 1995](#) on the CITES website.

The Standing Committee (SC) - Meetings are held as needed, usually once a year and before and after every CoP. *The most recent meeting, SC77, was held November 2023. [Click here to view the agenda for the next meeting and previous SC meetings back to 1992](#) on the CITES website.*

CITES implementation in the UNITED STATES...

>>CITES is administered by the International Affairs Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in coordination other agencies, such as the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. [More information on CITES in the United States](#)

CITES permits are required for international trade in species that are included on any of the three CITES appendices, as well as for international trade in species listed under the Endangered Species Act, Injurious Wildlife (Lacey Act), Maine Mammal Protection Act and the Wild Bird Conservation Act. [Find out whether you need a CITES permit and how to apply for it](#)

Currently, there are 649 plants and 1,184 animals in the CITES Appendices that are native or naturalized in the United States, including Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands. U.S.-native CITES species include the Venus flytrap, black coral, ruby-throated hummingbird, and humpback whale.

CITES Appendix	Animal taxa	Plant taxa
I	122	27
II	1027	622
III	35	0

Preparing for CoP20 – The [FWS CITES page](#) provides general information about CITES in the USA, including a [CoP20 fact sheet](#), and will continue to be updated to include information on preparations and U.S. priorities for CoP20. *Be sure to bookmark the [FWS CoP20 webpage](#) to stay up to date!*

>>The U.S. Delegations to CITES meetings includes people from several federal agencies as well as a representative of the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies. National and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may become observers to a CITES meeting. Observers at a CoP may attend all plenary and committee sessions, and comment in these sessions on any of the issues. However, they are not permitted to vote on proposals. For observers from the United States, the U.S. Government’s delegation provides daily briefings at each COP. U.S.-based NGOs may apply to FWS to become an observer. *FWS will publish a Federal Register notice closer to CoP20 to provide information on how international and U.S. NGOs become observers.*