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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Letter: Legal Bat Trade

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Source: Norris, A., Tydeman, C., McMahan, L. & Caldwell, J. R. (1983). Letter: Legal Bat Trade. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter*, Vol 3 No 6, 325 - 326.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1387>

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Dear Steve

21st January, 1983

You may be interested in the following account, either for your reference or to be included in the BCG Newsletter. I feel myself that this is something that perhaps ought to be brought to people's notice, and perhaps the BCG, through the appropriate authorities, should try to have something done to prevent this type of trade, even though, as you will see, it is not illegal, I consider it to be extremely immoral. The story is as follows:-

In the second week of August, 1982, I happened to pass one of the more respected china shops in the centre of Leeds, and my attention was attracted to a window display, which included various preserved animals, set in plastics. In particular I was concerned at the presence of two species of bat. The bats both proved to be American species, the Brown Cave Bat and the Vampire Bat. I was concerned over this, due to the new Wildlife & the Countryside regulations, which prevent any disturbance of British bats, and thought that the importation of this type of souvenir reflected very badly on a very good aspect of the new Wildlife & the Countryside Act.

I therefore contacted the local agent for the World Wildlife Fund, and visited the shop, asking for further details on the import of the material, with the result that the shop immediately withdrew the items from sale and have no longer done business with the importers regarding this type of material.

I wrote an official letter to the World Wildlife Fund, asking about these rather bizarre animal souvenirs, and they acknowledged my letter and forwarded it on to the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit at Cambridge, who stated that the bats would have needed an import licence under the Endangered Species Act of 1976. The Customs Office in central London, however, informed me that there would have been no problems in acquiring an import licence, as the importation of bats comes under Rabies Control, and therefore as long as the animals were dead a licence would be easily and readily available.

The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit at Cambridge forwarded my letter on to the Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC), U.S.A., who checked the bats out, and in their reply stated that the trade in these two species of bats is legal in America, and they have not been able to stop this trade.

I have enclosed copies of the three letters from the World Wildlife Fund, the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit, and TRAFFIC for your interest, but I think the letter from TRAFFIC is perhaps the most telling, if rather condoning. I feel that it would be far more useful if the BCG used its influence to prevent the importation of this rather obnoxious souvenir trade.

Yours sincerely



ADRIAN NORRIS

Dear Mr. Norris,

17th September, 1982.

Thank you for your letter of 24th August about the rather bizarre animal 'souvenirs' in Leeds.

As the company involved is an American one I am sending a copy of your letter to our office in Washington to ask them to look into the matter. I am also passing a copy of your letter to the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit at Cambridge.

Thank you for drawing this matter to our attention.

Dr. Chris Tydeman,
Staff Ecologist.



Dear Mr. Norris,

January 6, 1983

Mr. Russell E. Train, President of the World Wildlife Fund-U.S. forwarded your letter to our office. Please accept our apologies for the delay in answering your letter.

TRAFFIC(U.S.A.), an acronym for Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce, is the program of WWF which monitors the trade in animals, plants, and their products. We are concerned primarily with those species whose survival is threatened by trade and/or habitat destruction.

Trade in the two bat species you mentioned in your letter is legal. Little can be done on our end to curtail this trade. However, there are steps that you as a concerned consumer can take. The only way the sale of animal products will diminish is if the demand, and therefore the market, decreases. Being an informed consumer and educating friends and family are critical steps in stopping the sale of wildlife products.

I suggest you write the company involved, Nature Gems, yourself and express your concern regarding their use of these magnificent creatures.

Thank you very much for your concern.

Linda McMahan, Ph.D.
Director



INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNION INTERNATIONALE POUR LA CONSERVATION DE LA NATURE ET DE SES RESSOURCES
Conservation Monitoring Centre - Centre de surveillance continue de la conservation de la nature

Dear Mr. Norris,

Your letter regarding animal specimens in plastic has been passed to me by Dr. Tydeman of World Wildlife Fund.

If the bats were whole, preserved specimens, fixed in plastic they would certainly require an import licence (Endangered Species Act 1976) and I am therefore sending a copy of your letter to the Department of the Environment, which is the body responsible for issuing import and export licences. They may wish to pursue the matter further.

Many thanks for the information - if you have any further news on the matter we would be very glad to hear from you.

5/10/82.

J.R.Caldwell
Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit+Cambridge