

Suitcase for Survival: A Partnership Program

Abstract:

The Suitcase for Survival program is designed to address the need for an environmental education program focused on wildlife trade and biodiversity. Since 1991, the program has raised awareness about the devastation caused by illegal wildlife trade worldwide. It has also helped consumers understand why biodiversity is so important and how their buying habits can contribute to biodiversity conservation. This briefing paper will introduce the main components of the program and provide information on training opportunities.

Keywords: Wildlife Trade, Wildlife Smuggling, Biodiversity, Endangered Species, Tourism, Eco-tourism, Environmental Education, Interpretation, Law Enforcement.

Suitcase for Survival is an environmental education program designed to raise awareness about wildlife trade and biodiversity. It is a partnership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement (OLE) with additional assistance from TRAFFIC North America (the WWF wildlife trade monitoring program) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Uncontrolled and illegal trade threatens many species of wildlife (both plants and animals) and is a significant factor in the loss of biological diversity throughout the world. The United States is the world's largest importer of wildlife, most of which enters the country legally. Unfortunately, some does not. Thousands of shipments of live wildlife and wildlife products enter the United States in violation of the U.S. Endangered Species Act, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the Lacey Act. FWS and NOAA Fisheries OLE are charged with making sure wildlife shipments enter the United States legally. Each year FWS and NOAA Fisheries OLE agents, working in conjunction with the U.S. Customs Service and Department of Agriculture, seize thousands of illegal items.

To put the seized products to a worthwhile use and educate people about wildlife trade, WWF, FWS, AZA, and NOAA have collaborated to produce *Suitcase for Survival*, a wildlife trade program that teaches students and adults how they can help solve the problem of illegal and unregulated wildlife trade by becoming educated consumers. The FWS and NOAA Fisheries OLE provide wildlife trade artifacts that have been seized at ports of entry and from various illegal-trading activities within the United States. These artifacts are assembled into suitcases, which are disseminated to zoos, aquariums, FWS offices, school systems, and other educational institutions throughout the United States. These institutions use the suitcases to conduct wildlife trade programs with educators, students, and the general public.

In addition to artifacts, the program also includes *Wildlife for Sale: A Wildlife Trade Education Module* produced by the WWF and FWS. The module is designed to educate

about legal and illegal wildlife trade and explores how wildlife trade is linked to broader biodiversity issues. It includes background information about wildlife trade issues, 15 activities, a conceptual framework, unit plans, fact sheets (which complement the artifacts), an overview of wildlife trade-related legislation, a glossary, a list of additional resources, and a slide show with accompanying script. *Wildlife for Sale* is the latest curriculum module produced as part of World Wildlife Fund's *Windows on the Wild* environmental education program. The artifacts, *Wildlife for Sale*, and other informational brochures, are the main components of the suitcase.

Since 1991, hundreds of suitcases have been distributed throughout the United States, helping to educate thousands of people about critical wildlife trade-related issues. *Suitcase for Survival* provides a hands-on way to teach about the problems associated with illegal wildlife trade and how an individual's buying habits can contribute to biodiversity conservation.

Components of the Suitcase

Suitcase for Survival is an education program that includes a variety of wildlife artifacts, the *Wildlife for Sale* curriculum module, and other educational materials related to wildlife trade. The "suitcase" is a signature of the program, symbolizing how illegal artifacts are most often transported.

Wildlife Trade Artifacts: Products seized by FWS and NOAA Fisheries OLE, such as sea turtle skin leather products like boots, shoes, handbags, and wallets; hawksbill sea turtle shell jewelry or small curios; boxes of Asian medicinals like rhino horn pills and bear gallbladder pills; crocodile skins and products; monitor lizard skins and products; python skins and products; African elephant ivory carvings and ivory jewelry; mounted butterflies and insects; shell and coral products and raw specimens; seal skin products; bird feather products; and cactus rain sticks. An identification tag is attached to each artifact and describes the species from which the item was derived. (Each suitcase contains different artifacts, depending on supply.)

Wildlife for Sale: A Wildlife Trade Education Module: A 3-ring binder that includes background information about wildlife trade issues, 15 hands-on activities, a conceptual framework, unit plans, fact sheets (which often complement the artifacts), an overview of wildlife trade-related legislation, a glossary, a list of additional resources, and a slide show.

Buyer Beware: A brochure from TRAFFIC North America/World Wildlife Fund that provides tips on which wildlife products to avoid when traveling abroad.

Facts About Federal Wildlife Laws: A FWS guide to federal laws that apply to the import, export, trade, and sale of wildlife, including live and dead animals, as well as animal parts and products.

Wildlife Inspector: A brochure from the FWS that describes the work of (and career opportunities for) U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service wildlife inspectors.

Special Agent: A brochure from the FWS that describes the work of (and career opportunities for) U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service special agents.

Careers, Conserving the Nature of America: A brochure from the FWS that describes a variety of career opportunities available with USFWS.

Protecting Our Nation's Living Marine Resources: A NOAA brochure that details NOAA's mission, as well as the scope of NOAA Fisheries Office for Law Enforcement in providing protection and conservation efforts to the nation's living marine resources.

World Wildlife Fund Educational Materials: A brochure describing materials produced by WWF, including the *Wildlife for Sale* module— with ordering information.

For further information, please visit these partner web sites.

World Wildlife Fund

http://worldwildlife.org/windows/education_guides.cfm#2

<http://worldwildlife.org/buyer beware/>

<http://worldwildlife.org/trade/index.cfm>

<http://worldwildlife.org/trade/traffic.cfm>

<http://worldwildlife.org/trade/cites/index.cfm>

<http://worldwildlife.org/trade/faqs.cfm>

American Zoo and Aquarium Association

<http://www.aza.org/AboutAZA/summary/>

<http://www.aza.org/ConEd/#sui>

<http://www.aza.org/GovAffairs/FedPartnerESP/>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

<http://www.fws.gov/>

<http://international.fws.gov/>

<http://www.fws.gov/le/>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA

<http://www.noaa.gov>

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/>

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/>

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation:

<http://www.nfwf.org/>

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***Suitcase for Survival Program* Frequently Asked Questions**

Primary audiences that request information

State DNRs
NGOs
School Teachers
Boy and Girl Scout Leaders
Environmental Educators
Nature Centers
Zoos and Wildlife Parks
National Wildlife Refuges staff and volunteers
National Parks staff and volunteers

1. How can I obtain a Suitcase for Survival?

You can borrow a Suitcase from a host institution (a local zoo, refuge or nature center). To become a host institution, you or your staff must attend a training workshop.

**To obtain a list of host institutions, or to get training information, please contact:
Eric Reinhard, AZA Education Programs
Ereinhard@aza.org**

2. How can I obtain the Educator's Guide?

The wildlife trade education module, produced by World Wildlife Fund is called *Wildlife for Sale: An Educator's Guide to Exploring Wildlife Trade*. Host institutions usually receive the Educator's Guide as part of the training course. It is available for purchase through Acorn Naturalists (\$49.95 plus tax).

**http://www.acornnaturalists.com/store/product1.asp?SID=2&Product_ID=132
800-422-8886**

3. How can I get training in the Suitcase for Survival program?

A one day training course is held in conjunction with the **American Zoo and Aquarium Association's annual Educator's Conference**. This is a "train the trainer" course. Participants will receive the Suitcase for Survival and Educator's Guide after the training. Trainers are expected to share the suitcase and train local educators on proper use of the suitcase materials.

**For the annual training date and location, please contact:
Eric Reinhard, AZA Education Programs
Ereinhard@aza.org
301-562-0777 x250**