

# Potential CITES trade ban for rare salamander underscores wildlife e-commerce

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A little-known Iranian salamander is poised to become the first example of a species requiring international government protection because of e-commerce - a major threat to endangered wildlife that authorities are struggling to address.

The Kaiser's spotted newt, found only in Iran, is considered Critically Endangered and is believed to number fewer than 1,000 mature wild individuals. The [amphibian](#) is being proposed for an Appendix I listing during a meeting of the Convention on International Trade in [Endangered Species](#) of Endangered Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Appendix I is the highest level of protection under the CITES appendices system and bans all commercial international trade in the species.

The Kaiser's spotted newt is emblematic of the availability of the internet as an additional way to sell products made from endangered wildlife. It is the first species to be up for protection mostly because of e-commerce sales.

The newt is sought as a pet by collectors and wildlife enthusiasts and numbers have declined by more than 80 percent in recent years.

Meanwhile, CITES governments will consider in the coming days whether to take a more proactive approach to regulating the online trade in endangered species. This would include the creation of an

international database of the trade, scientific research to gauge the correlation between wildlife loss and online trade, and closer collaboration with INTERPOL, the international law enforcement agency.

In 2006, an investigation by TRAFFIC into the sale of Kaiser's spotted newts revealed 10 websites claiming to stock the species. One Ukrainian company claimed to have sold more than 200 wild-caught specimens in a single year.

"The Internet itself isn't the threat, but it's another way to market the product," said Ernie Cooper, of TRAFFIC Canada. "The Kaiser's spotted newt, for example, is expensive and most people are not willing to pay USD300 for a salamander. But through the power of the internet, tapping into global market, you can find buyers".

WWF and TRAFFIC are concerned by other items sold and bought online, including elephant ivory, and precious corals, including red and pink coral, which currently are overharvested to make jewellery and collectables. Red and pink corals have been proposed for listing in Appendix II of CITES, a measure that would regulate their international trade

"It's a growing issue mainly because the internet and marketing on the internet is growing," Cooper said.

In addition, e-commerce will continue to be a growing issue for CITES governments.

"This is going to be an ever-growing enforcement issue for CITES," said Colman O'Criodain, WWF International Wildlife Trade Policy Analyst.

Provided by World Wildlife Fund

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