

## THE 8<sup>TH</sup> ICPS CONFERENCE IN LEIDEN

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Judging from the comments of those who visited and those who organized it, the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference was a big success.

First of all there were the great lectures from a big line up of speakers. I will not single out any of them because basically all lectures were great in their context. They provided an interesting mixture of species, cultivation, research, regulations, and fieldwork for the people attending.

Second, from an education and commercial point of view, 8500 people visited the accompanying exhibition in the botanical garden. The special kids items like giant carnivorous plants to play with, a kids lecture, and a special kiddy tour with nice prizes if you filled in the questionnaire also got lots of attention. This left the botanical garden a satisfied host to the event.

Most importantly, a good time was had by all.

An important part of the Conference was to have a discussion on a specific issue with a panel and the audience. The issue chosen was *ex-situ* conservation, which led to a refinement of the discussion to rules and regulations. While the discussion did not reach a nice rounded-out conclusion, there were some interesting points made and some openings offered. I'll try to summarize them.

While the discussion started out on CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild fauna and flora, it was soon clear that the problems run much wider.

First of all, CITES deals only with trade. It came from an IUCN resolution in 1975 and put in place a basic set of rules for international trade. This brings us to the first two problems. First, it deals with trade and it is not "invented" as a conservation tool. Second, it establishes a basic set of rules. On this basis, permits and certificates can be given. However, every signatory state is free to add its own extra rules to the CITES set of rules. Consequently, the set of rules are no longer the same in every country.

The next problem turns out to be not CITES at all, but the CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity). In 1993, CBD was set up as guidelines to protect all biological diversity. Main terms are sustainability and share of the benefits by the original owners of said biodiversity. The problems here come from the fact that it gives guidelines and not set rules so there is much difference in every country. Go to the core of the problem and basically the country where the plant material originally came from has to agree that you are allowed to have it. Cross to CITES: No permit if you can't prove the original stock is legal.

A final problem that came to the table is the information needed to update the lists of protected species CITES uses. The problem lies in the fieldworkers. Are they willing to provide the necessary data to update the lists? The problem here is that most fieldwork is at least partly funded by commercial interests. Nothing new about that, it goes back to Victorian times and before. Just ask for instance the Veitch family. However, while most commercial nurseries are very willing to protect the plants they truly love, there is some understandable reluctance to provide data that can make a species much more difficult to trade.

So, no solutions at all? Not quite. There is for instance a genuine opening in the CITES process. The IUCN Species Survival Commission that makes the CITES rules works with specialists groups for advice. There used to be such a group for carnivorous plants and there is a very real option offered to reactivate this group.

On the closing of the discussion, the offer was made to create a small discussion group to consider options like reactivating the carnivorous plants specialist group or at least prepare points of discussion to continue efforts to improve on the problems people are having with the mostly unintended effects of CITES and CBD. This might be a basis for instance to have a continued discussion on the next ICPS Conference.

As I offered to bring those who are interested in taking part in this discussion in contact with each other, you can contact me at marcel@carnivorousplants.org.