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Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Section Winter 2009 Newsletter

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Recent Section Events

Trafficking in Wildlife

On October 7, 2008, the animal law committee sponsored a fascinating program entitled Trafficking, Trade and Transport of Wildlife, which attracted significant interest even though it competed with the start of the second presidential debate!

Lisa Ann Tekancic, member of the animal law committee and president of the WildCat Conservation Legal Aid Society, organized and moderated the program, putting the issues in context and discussing some recent cases involving illegal trafficking in wildlife.

Alejandra Goyenechea, international counsel at Defenders of Wildlife, then discussed the applicable international convention on wildlife trade, CITES, its relative strengths and weaknesses, and the trade in tigers and hunting of lions, which are largely responsible for the decimation of both species.

Kevin Garlick, special agent branch investigation, Office of Law Enforcement at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, followed with a discussion of federal laws used to combat illegal trade and ensure humane and safe captive programs, and how his agency enforces those laws.

Adam Roberts, senior vice president of Born Free USA, added his perspectives on the limits of the Animal Welfare Act and Captive Wildlife Safety Act to ensure the "compassionate conservation" of captive wildlife, the struggle to get Congress to strengthen these laws, and efforts to ensure animal sanctuaries meet appropriate standards.

Finally, Jim Plowman, Commonwealth's attorney for Loudon County, Virginia described the legal tools available for prosecuting animal cruelty and the keeping of unpermitted exotic pets in his region. We are grateful to all the speakers, as well as a spirited audience, for providing insight into such an important issue.