

## ***Broken Screens: The Comprehensive Report on Live Animal Imports in the United States***

Peter T. Jenkins

Executive Director, Center for Invasive Species Prevention

The United States is the world's largest importer of live, wild animals, receiving hundreds of millions each year, most destined for the pet and aquarium trade, some for zoos, research labs and specialty food and bait markets. The declared wholesale value of these imports from 2000 to 2004 was more than a half billion dollars. But this lucrative industry is risky. Inevitably, some of the animals escape or, no longer wanted, are let go. And unchecked by the Federal agencies with regulatory authority over this trade, potentially risky species continually enter the United States. None of these agencies does comprehensive risk screening of these species before they are allowed into the country. Absent major policy reforms, some of the risky creatures imported to this country will escape or be released and form invasive wild populations and/or cause disease outbreaks. The presenter, when at Defenders of Wildlife, conducted an unprecedented analysis to: a) describe the scope of the trade (what non-native species are being imported and in what quantities); b) assess the risks (the impacts these animals are having on U.S. species, lands and waters, and on human health); c) examine the broken Federal system for regulating the trade; and d) offer policy recommendations based on the findings. The analysis is detailed in the 56-page report *Broken Screens: The Regulation of Live Animal Imports in the United States* (online at: [http://www.defenders.org/publications/broken\\_screens\\_report.pdf](http://www.defenders.org/publications/broken_screens_report.pdf) ).