SP 24 PARASITES AS BENEFICIARIES OF SPECIES PROTECTION LEGISLATION AND CONSERVATION MEDICINE & BIOLOGY IMPACT ASSESSMENT EFFORTS

Andreas R. Hassl

Institute of Specific Prophylaxis and Tropical Medicine, Center for Pathophysiology, Infectiology and Immunology, Medical University of Vienna

Within the more than 3.000 endangered animal species itemized in the Appendices of the Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) two native, free-living, obligatory parasites of vertebrates including man can be located: the medical leeches *Hirudo medicinalis* and *H. verbana*. Based on their listing in appendix II these species are ascertained not to be endangered by imminent extinction, but the transnational trade in specimens is only allowed with national authorization. Transformation of the CITES agreements into supranational law is done by the Council Regulation (EC) No. 338/97 governing the import, export and sale of species that are found on special European lists (A–D), which are compiled in an annex. The Commission Regulation (EU) No. 750/2013 replaces the anterior annex and puts both medical leeches into list B again, making trade and removal from wildlife to a subject to authorization. But, medical leeches are not included in the Austrian Red Lists of endangered species, probably because specimens of both species establish indigene populations since roughly half a millennium, but they are no more autochthonous species in Austria since the Early Modern Age. Their living spaces are protected by national and federal biotope protection regulations adapted from the Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (*H. medicinalis* only), and from the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, called the Ramsar Convention.

Email address of presenting author: andreas.hassl@meduniwien.ac.at

A medical leech, Hirudo medicinalis, protected by EU regulations, in a clear Carinthian pond used for recreation purposes