

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF APPENDICES I AND II

A. Proposal

Inclusion of *Annamemys (Mauremys) annamensis* in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), by fulfilling the criteria A, B (i) and B (ii) according to Article II, paragraph 2 (a) of the Convention, as specified in Resolution Conf. 9.24.

B. Proponent

The People's Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Germany (on behalf of the Member States of the European Community).

Executive Summary

- An Appendix II listing is proposed for the Annam Pond Turtle (*Mauremys annamensis*); the species meets the criteria in Res. Conf. 9.24, as outlined below. Inclusion of *Mauremys annamensis* in CITES Appendix II is expected to provide further controls on international trade, providing importing countries with a mechanism to monitor and evaluate trade levels and the significance of their involvement, and allowing the range state to assess unreported trade levels by cross-checking against other Parties' registered imports.
- *Mauremys annamensis* is understood to be restricted to the marshes and slow-flowing streams of the plains of Quang Nam-Da Nang Province of central Viet Nam, effectively the basin of the Boung river drainage. Reputed occurrence of *M. annamensis* in Cambodia requires confirmation.
- The species is rated in the 2000 IUCN Red List as **Critically Endangered** under criteria A1d+ 2d (Known or inferred population reduction of at least 80% over the past three generations due to actual or potential levels of trade, and a similar projected future decline over the same time period).
- As for most of the freshwater turtles, any removal of reproductive adults, and to a lesser extent of juveniles, from one or a few small population of animals with a limited annual reproductive potential and late maturity, would have significant effects on the population structure, recruitment and population genetics.
- Given that no animals are legally exported from Viet Nam, the species' only Range State, the conclusion is inevitable that all animals in international trade are, to some extent, traded illegally. Trade levels are not exceptionally high, but extensive and consistent enough for serious concern. Individual animals or small numbers are regularly offered for sale in markets in Viet Nam, East Asian food markets and world-wide pet trade in Asia, America and Europe in the 1990's.
- This species meets the criteria listed in Res. Conf. 9.24, Annex 2a, A, namely that "it is known, inferred or projected that unless trade in the species is subject to strict regulation, it will meet at least one of the criteria listed in Annex 1 in the near future". The species also meets criteria in Annex 2a, B (i) and (ii), namely that "it is known, inferred or projected that the harvesting of specimens from the wild for international trade has, or may have, a detrimental impact on the species by exceeding, over an extended period, the level that can be continued in perpetuity," and "reducing it to a population level at which its survival would be threatened by other influences".
- **China** approved the proposal and asked to act as a co-proponent. – All participants of the "Technical workshop on conservation of and trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises", held at Kunming, P.R. China, on 25-28 March 2002, including representatives from range and non-range countries, supported this proposal.

C. Supporting statement

1. Taxonomy

- 1.1 Class: Reptilia
- 1.2 Order: Testudines (Chelonia)
- 1.3 Family: Bataguridae (Geoemydidae)
- 1.4 Genus and species: *Mauremys annamensis* (Siebenrock, 1903)
- 1.5 Scientific synonyms: *Cyclemys annamensis* Siebenrock, 1903
Annamemys merkleni Bourret, 1939
Annamemys annamensis (Siebenrock, 1903)

No subspecies are currently recognised.

See Wermuth & Mertens (1961: 45-46, 460-461) for full nomenclatural history and citations. Synonymy of *Cyclemys annamensis* and *Annamemys merkleni* while retaining the monotypic generic status by Savage (1953) led to the combination *Annamemys annamensis*; the taxon *annamensis* was placed in *Mauremys* by Iverson & McCord (1994).

- 1.6 Common names:
- | | |
|-------------|--|
| English: | Annam Pond Turtle |
| French: | Emyde d'Annam |
| Spanish: | |
| German: | Annam-Schildkröte, Annam Wasserschildkröte |
| Vietnamese: | Rùa Trung Bộ |

1.7 Code numbers:

2. Biological parameters

Mauremys annamensis is a moderately large freshwater turtle; females reach a carapace (dorsal shell) length of 28.5 cm, males reach 18.8 cm. The carapace is broad and bears three moderately distinct keels; the posterior margin is lightly indented. The plastron is rigidly attached to the carapace by the proportionally long bridge. The head, limbs and tail are moderate to graceful in proportions, the hands and feet are fully webbed.

The carapace is rich brown to black. The plastron, bridge and underside of marginals are yellow with a large, angular and sharply-defined black blotch on each scute, and a second blotch on the bridge part of the pectoral and abdominal scutes; the black blotches cover most of the plastron, usually restricting the yellow colour to the central area, the outer margin and the scute seam areas. The head is olive-grey with several bold yellow lines continuing onto the neck, including a more or less distinct stripe encircling the upper surface of the head and passing over the eye. The chin is yellow with several longitudinal pale grey stripes. The limbs and tail bear black scales on pale grey skin, creating a dark grey appearance.

Females reach substantially larger size than males; males develop little or no plastral concavity.

No information is available on growth rate, age at maturity, clutch size or annual reproductive output.

2.1 Distribution

Countries of Origin: Viet Nam; Cambodia?

Mauremys annamensis is understood to be restricted to the marshes and slow-flowing streams of the plains of Quang Nam-Da Nang Province of central Viet Nam, effectively the basin of the Boung river drainage (Bourret, 1941; Iverson, 1992). Reputed occurrence of *M. annamensis* in Cambodia (Tana et al., 2000) requires confirmation.

2.2 Habitat availability

Available information indicates that much of the lowland wetlands in central Viet Nam has been converted to agricultural use (MacKinnon, 1997: map 18).

2.3 Population status

In the late 1930's, Bourret (1941) considered the species abundant in its localised area of occurrence. In recent years, field surveys have attempted, but failed, to find the species in the wild, indicating that the species is rare (Hendrie, pers. comm. to van Dijk, 2000, in litt. to German Scientific Authority, Nov. 2001).

2.4 Population trends

No detailed information is available. However, "where once this species was observed more frequently in trade seizures, only a few specimens have been observed in 1998 and 1999. This reduction in observed occurrence within the trade, combined with loss in habitat and continued hunting pressures within its extremely limited known range, would suggest that *M. annamensis* is under serious threat of extirpation." (Hendrie, 2000).

2.5 Geographic trends

The species occurs in a restricted geographical range; it is not known or supposed to have experienced range contraction or expansion during the period that it is known to science.

2.6 Role of the species in its ecosystem

No information is available on the natural history of the species and its ecological role in the wild. Captives feed on a variety of vegetables, fruits, chopped meat and fish, worms and other animal matter, and it is reasonable to conclude that the species is a generalist feeder on vegetation and small animals in nature.

2.7 Threats

The species is under dual threats of direct collection and habitat degradation (Hendrie, 2000). Conversion of natural lowland wetlands to agricultural land use, such as rice paddies and irrigation canals, may not be incompatible with habitat use by *Mauremys annamensis*, but it is likely that close proximity of humans and turtles leads to extensive collection of animals that are encountered incidentally while tending crops and water management infrastructure. Direct collection of adults and juveniles, historically for subsistence consumption but mainly for international trade in recent years (Hendrie, 2000), is highly likely to significantly impact populations of a species whose life history has evolved to accept moderate losses of juveniles but whose reproductive adults are of great population value (see e.g. Gibbons, 1990; Doroff & Keith, 1990).

The species is rated in the 2000 IUCN Red List (Hilton-Taylor, 2000; IUCN TFTSG & ATWG, 2000) as Critically Endangered under criteria A1d+ 2d (Known or inferred population reduction of at least 80% over the past three generations due to actual or potential levels of trade, and a similar

projected future decline over the same time period – IUCN, 1994). The species was categorised as 'Insufficiently Known' in the 1994 IUCN Red Data List (IUCN, 1993), and omitted (probably erroneously) from the 1996 Red List (IUCN, 1996). The 1992 Viet Nam Red List (Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Viet Nam, 1992) does not list the species.

3. Utilization and trade

3.1 National utilization

Little detailed information is available. Le Dien Duc & Broad (1995) reported it traded at low volume and modest prices at Ca Mau market during trade surveys in Viet Nam in September 1993. One *M. annamensis* occurred in a shipment of 58 turtles confiscated at Ninh Binh on 29 October 1999 (Hendrie, 1999). One animal was offered at a shop near the An Duong Vuong Statue in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, in May 2000 (van Dijk, in litt. to German Scientific Authority, Nov. 2001). In the past, *Mauremys annamensis* was probably hunted for local consumption, however in recent years it is likely that most turtles encountered are sold to traders (Hendrie, 2000).

3.2 Legal international trade

While the species is not specifically protected under either Vietnamese domestic legislation nor is it currently included in the CITES appendices, the CITES office of Viet Nam's Forest Protection Department requires that export permits be issued and compiles statistics on numbers and species of turtles and other wildlife exported from Viet Nam. No *Mauremys annamensis* are recorded as exported during the period 1994-1999 (Forest Protection Department, in Hendrie, 2000).

3.3 Illegal trade

Given that no animals are legally exported from Viet Nam, the species' only Range State, the conclusion is inevitable that all animals in international trade are, to some extent, traded illegally. Trade levels are not exceptionally high, but extensive and consistent enough for serious concern. Individual animals or small numbers are regularly offered for sale in markets in Viet Nam, East Asian food markets and world-wide pet trade in Asia, America and Europe in the 1990's.

Mauremys annamensis has been observed to be offered for sale in food markets in southern China (Lau & Shi, 2000). In Ping Xian, a town in Guangxi province, China, on the border with Viet Nam, a trader had at least 5 adult *M. annamensis* among her stock in May 2000, in addition to other turtles (van Dijk, in litt. to German Scientific Authority, Nov. 2001). At the Qing Ping market in Guangzhou, China, in May 2000, a few small or medium-sized *M. annamensis* were offered for sale in the pets and aquarium section of the market; no precise numbers or price information were recorded (van Dijk, in litt. to German Scientific Authority, Nov. 2001). At the same market in November 2000, several animals of *M. annamensis* were offered for sale (Artner & Hofer, 2001). In October 2001, a total of about 30 *M. annamensis* were offered for sale at this market. This included 15 large adult animals, almost certain to have been captured from the wild, at a single trader at a price of RMB 230 per jin (about USD 50 per kg) (van Dijk, in litt. to German Scientific Authority, Nov. 2001). A single animal was encountered during a 5-month survey during 1999 of food and pet markets in Shanghai, P.R. China, at a price of RMB 280 (USD 35.00) (Wu & Zhang, 2000).

In Hong Kong, *M. annamensis* was occasionally encountered in the pet trade and once in the food trade during a year-long survey in 1998-1999 (Chan, in Lau *et al.*, 2000). A survey was carried out of 3 food markets in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, China, and one turtle trader in Hong Kong SAR between 30 October 2000 and 13 October 2001 observed 743 individuals of *M. annamensis* offered for sale. Another 15 individuals were observed in surveys of 5 pet shops in Hong Kong and one pet market in Guangzhou. These markets and shops were surveyed twice during every winter month and once during each summer month; thus, the number observed is a minimum number, not an approximation of total annual turnover (Ades, 2002).

At the Chatuchak Market in Bangkok, Thailand, occasional animals of *M. annamensis* have been offered by pet traders since about 1993; these generally concerned single, small individuals at a rate of one or a few per year. (van Dijk, in litt. to German Scientific Authority, Nov. 2001).

A review by the German Scientific Authority of 13 available offer lists (dating from 1990 to 2002) from German reptile wholesalers yielded offers of *M. annamensis* at DEM 75.00 per animal in 1993 and DEM 49.50 per animal in 1996. Altherr & Freyer (2000) reported that *M. annamensis* was offered by pet traders in Germany and Switzerland in 1999. Correspondingly, the German CITES Scientific Authority recorded import of at least 403 animals into Germany during 1999.

Records of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for 1996-1999 show that *Mauremys annamensis* has been consistently imported in small quantities in recent years. In 1996, 40 animals were imported in 2 shipments originating from Viet Nam, valued at USD 1.50 to USD 4 per animal. In 1997, 8 animals were imported in 3 shipments from Viet Nam and China, valued at USD 3 to USD 7.50 per animal. In 1998, 13 individuals were declared as imported, in 4 separate shipments whose origin was declared as China and Hong Kong. The value of the animals ranged between USD 3 and USD 25 per animal. In 1999, 26 animals were imported in 4 shipments originating from Viet Nam, with declared values of USD 2-3 per animal. In all cases the animals were declared as collected from the wild. Weissgold (2002) listed total imports of *M. annamensis* into the USA during 1997-2001 as more than 200 individuals, indicating increased imports during 1999-2001.

3.4 Actual or potential trade impacts

Exploitation for trade has been indicated as one of the main causes of the species' decline (see 2.7 Threats) and is considered the primary threat to the future survival of the species (Hendrie, 2000; Hilton-Taylor, 2000; IUCN TFTSG & ATTWG, 2000).

Inclusion of *Mauremys annamensis* in CITES Appendix II is expected to provide further controls on international trade, providing importing countries with a mechanism to monitor and evaluate trade levels and the significance of their involvement, and allowing the range state to assess unreported trade levels by cross-checking against other Parties' registered imports.

3.5 Captive breeding for commercial purposes

Mauremys annamensis is one of about 30 species of freshwater turtles that is commercially bred at a turtle farm at Tun Chan, Hainan Island (Shi & Parham, 2001, Shi *et al.*, 2002). During a visit in October 2001, at least 25 adults and another 50 juveniles were observed at this farm (van Dijk, in litt. to German Scientific Authority, Nov. 2001). The animals are bred under the same practices as *Mauremys mutica* and are sold for similar prices.

Modest numbers of *M. annamensis* are bred by hobbyists, and since surplus animals are generally sold rather than given away it can be argued that this represent commercial trade, but hobbyist breeding of *M. annamensis* is primarily a hobby effort, and a commercial interest for only a very limited number of breeders.

4. Conservation and Management

4.1 Legal status

4.1.1 National legislation

Mauremys annamensis is not included in Decree 18 of the Council of Ministers of Viet Nam (17 January 1992), thus no national legislation specifically protects the species. *Mauremys annamensis* (or its synonyms) is not among the species proposed for inclusion in this Decree under the current process of amendments (Le Xuan Canh *et al.*, 2002).

Directive 359 (1996) restricts trade in wildlife and animal parts, including prohibiting the sale of wildlife in restaurants. Commerce and trade regulations require a permit issued at the provincial level for trade in any commodity, including wildlife.

Circular 62/2001/TT-BNN issued on 05 of June 2001 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to guide imports and exports of goods and commodities managed by the Ministry for the period of 2001 - 2005 -- stipulates that Viet Nam prohibits exports of all wild animals and rare and precious plants. Thus export of this and all other native turtle species is prohibited. A similar directive had been in effect from 1 April 2000 until it was superseded by Circular 62/2001 (Le Xuan Canh *et al.*, 2002).

4.1.2 International legislation

Mauremys annamensis is currently not protected by any international legislation.

4.2 Species management

4.2.1 Population monitoring

No population monitoring is known to have been carried out or to be in progress.

4.2.2 Habitat conservation

Mauremys annamensis is not known to inhabit any protected areas. However, there is a possibility that the species could inhabit the proposed Phu Ninh nature reserve, currently a Watershed Protection Forest, which is centered on a reservoir. Other protected areas in or near the species' range cover mainly mountains (Birdlife International Viet Nam Programme, 2001), and are thus unlikely to protect significant populations of this lowland species.

4.2.3 Management measures

The best available information indicates that no management measures have taken place or are in preparation in the species' range beyond the establishment of a legal framework for sustainable development and conservation of freshwater turtles and tortoises (Le Xuan Canh *et al.*, 2002), outlined in section 4.1.1.

The species is occasionally bred in captivity in Europe, the United States and Hong Kong. One member of the Schildkrötenfreunde Österreich bred 6 animals in 2000 and 3 animals in 2001 (Schildkrötenfreunde Österreich, 2001, 2002). The Columbus Zoo, Ohio, bred 2 hatchlings in 1991 and 1993, respectively (Slavens & Slavens, 2002). Unpublicised breeding successes have occurred at Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden in Hong Kong and at an undisclosed breeder in the USA (van Dijk, in litt. to German Scientific Authority, Nov. 2001). In recent years, hobbyist efforts to breed the species in captivity have developed from isolated attempts towards co-ordinated breeding programs, involving information exchange and management of genetics. A European studbook for the species was established some years ago within the OOS Foundation framework and *M. annamensis* is one of the priority species for the project Schildkrötenrettung im Allwetterzoo Münster (Meier, 2000). A Taxon Management Group (TMG) was established for the species at the Ft. Worth workshop in January 2001 and runs under the auspices of the Turtle Survival Alliance, a joint working group of the IUCN / SSC Tortoise & Freshwater Turtle and Conservation Breeding Specialist Groups. In January 2001, 77 animals were held within the Asian Turtle Consortium in the USA and another 54 animals were registered with European studbooks managed by the OOS Foundation.

4.3 Control measures

4.3.1 International trade

Once exported from Viet Nam, animals of *M. annamensis* are subject to national regulations pertaining to customs regulation and quarantine measures when entering the importing country.

4.3.2 Domestic measures

No control measures such as quotas are known to be in effect for freshwater turtles in Viet Nam.

5. Information on Similar Species

Mauremys annamensis can easily be recognised by its clear pattern of creamy yellow stripes on its otherwise deep olive-green face, head and neck. The only other Asian turtle with a similar head pattern is *Cuora amboinensis*, which is instantly separated from *M. annamensis* by its possession of a transverse hinge in the plastron, which allows *Cuora amboinensis* to close its shell completely. In contrast, *Mauremys annamensis* cannot move its shell. *Ocadia sinensis* has much finer and more numerous yellow head stripes and also has yellow stripes on the limbs.

6. Other Comments

Both the Management and Scientific Authorities of Viet Nam had been contacted in March 2002. Up to date, no response has been received. **China** approved the proposal and asked to act as a co-proponent.

All participants of the "Technical workshop on conservation of and trade in freshwater turtles and tortoises", held at Kunming, P.R. China, on 25-28 March 2002, including representatives from range and non-range countries, supported this proposal.

7. Additional Remarks

8. References

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Pages:

Subject: Co-sponsor the Draft Proposals on Asian Freshwater Turtle

Dear Dr. Emond and Mr. Heiko Haupt,
It is my pleasure to formally inform you that, having got the final approval from
concerning national authorities on the freshwater turtle issues, China would like to
co-sponsor all draft proposals on freshwater turtles prepared by Germany, including
Heosemys spp., *Leucocephalon yuwonoi*, *Mauremys annamensis*, and *Orlitia borneensis*.

If US and Germany decide to package all the 11 proposals on freshwater turtles, China
will also co-sponsor that package.

I wish the above information helpful.

Best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Meng Xianlin
2002/6/3

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P.S. Is it necessary for me to formally write to the Secretariat on our decision? Or you
can just attach this letter when submitting the proposals? Please tell me which way is
preferred.

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