

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES  
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Joint sessions of the 27th meeting of the Animals Committee and  
21th meeting of the Plants Committee  
Veracruz (Mexico), 2-3 May 2014

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Amendment of the Appendices

EXTINCT OR POSSIBLY EXTINCT SPECIES

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. Decision 16.164, directed to the Animals and Plants Committees states the following:

*The Animals and Plants Committees shall review the provisions of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16) on Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II as they apply to species that are either extinct or possibly extinct and report to the Standing Committee on their findings.*

3. Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16) on *Criteria for amendment of Appendices I and II* states in its Annex 4 on Precautionary measures, that:

*Species that are regarded as possibly extinct<sup>1</sup> should not be deleted from Appendix I if they may be affected by trade in the event of their rediscovery. These species should be annotated in the Appendices as 'possibly extinct'.*

4. The provision indicated in paragraph 3 of the present document had previously been included in Resolution Conf. 2.21 on *Species thought to be extinct*, which recommended that "no action be taken to remove such species from the appendices and that species not observed for at least 50 years despite repeated surveys be annotated in the appendices as p.e. (possibly extinct)". Subsequently Resolution Conf. 2.21 was repealed and the text incorporated into Annex 4 of Resolution Conf. 9.24 in a slightly amended form. However, its application appears to have been rather inconsistent as the species *Thylacinus cynocephalus*, *Caloprymnus campestris*, *Chaeropus ecaudatus*, *Onychogalea lunata*, *Macrotis leucura* and *Campephilus imperialis* were all deleted from Appendix I at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP16, Bangkok, March 2013) on the grounds that they were likely to be extinct, but only the first three of these had been annotated 'possibly extinct' in the Appendices. All these species were deleted from Appendix I (and the Appendices as a whole) notwithstanding the precautionary measure in Annex 4 of the Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16) which states that no species included in Appendix I shall be removed from the Appendices unless it has been first transferred to Appendix II, with monitoring of any impact of trade on the species for at least two intervals between meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

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<sup>1</sup> *Annex 5 of the Resolution states that species should be considered "possibly extinct" "when exhaustive surveys in known or suspected habitat, and at appropriate times (diurnal, seasonal, annual), throughout its historical range have failed to record an individual. Before a species can be declared possibly extinct, surveys should take place over a time-frame appropriate to the species' life cycle and life form".*

5. The guidance on this subject agreed by Parties could be improved in a number of respects. Firstly, by providing advice on what to do in the case of proposals to amend the Appendices relating to species which actually are extinct or almost certainly so, as opposed to being possibly extinct and secondly by addressing species included in Appendices II and III as well as Appendix I.
6. If the guidance referred to in paragraph 3 above, was extended to species included in Appendix II, it would need to take account of the possibility that dead specimens and parts or derivatives of an extinct species could still be in trade and may resemble other species which qualify for inclusion in Appendix II. Further, if one of the purposes of removing species which are extinct or possibly so, from the Appendices is to simplify them, this objective may be confounded if a note has to be added to a higher taxonomic listing covering many species, to the effect that just one or a small number of them are excluded from the higher taxonomic listing.

#### Recommendations

7. The Animals and Plants Committees are requested to undertake the review referred to in Decision 16.164 in order to report to the Standing Committee and in doing so are invited to take into account the observations in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of the present document.