

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



Nineteenth meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 18-21 August 2003

Standard taxonomy and nomenclature

STANDARD NOMENCLATURE FOR BIRDS

1. This document has been prepared by Mexico.

Background

2. Following a proposal from the Nomenclature Committee (NC), the Conference of the Parties adopted at its 12th meeting (CoP12) the *Checklist of CITES species*, compiled by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, 2001 and its updates accepted by the NC as the standard reference for animal species included in the Appendices (Resolution Conf. 12.11).
3. In its report to CoP12 [document CoP12 Doc. 10.3 (Rev. 1) paragraphs 9 and 10], the NC recommended using the nomenclatural reference *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, Vol. 4 (1997) and Vol. 5 (1999) for the taxa Psittaciformes and Trochilidae, respectively, instead of Sibley and Monroe (1990), which is the reference used in CITES for the rest of the class Aves.
4. Nevertheless, in the same document [CoP12 Doc. 10.3 (Rev. 1), paragraph 26], the NC advised that, as long as the amendments to a taxonomic status were under discussion within the scientific community, these changes should not be adopted.
5. Consequently, Mexico considers it inappropriate that, for certain taxa, alternative references be used that are not peer-reviewed, do not originate from a collegial body and are not recognized worldwide. In this case, the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* is not a peer-reviewed taxonomic revision. It is a popular reference primarily aimed at the general public that is interested in learning about the natural history and distribution of birds, but by no means is it an academic reference used as a basis for taxonomic analyses, let alone to make decisions in national or international policies.
6. There is currently a strong debate in the international taxonomic community about the validity of subspecies as real and recognizable entities. In this regard, the Conference of the Parties recommends in Resolution Conf. 12.11, paragraph a), that "a subspecies be proposed for inclusion in the Appendices only if it is generally recognized as a valid taxon, and easily identifiable in the traded form". This situation is particularly complicated in cases such as the complex *Amazona ochrocephala-oratrix-auropalliata* that now comprises the following subspecies of *A. ochrocephala* in Appendix I: *A. o. auropalliata*, *A. o. belizensis*, *A. o. caribaea*, *A. o. oratrix*, *A. o. parvipes* and *A. o. tresmariae*, whilst *A. o. ochrocephala* is still included in Appendix II.
7. Given that the book in question recognizes a large number of subspecies, this change implies that, in order to implement the Convention in relation to any international movement of specimens of these taxa, each specimen needs to be identified to the subspecies level. This renders the work of the Management and Scientific Authorities and other implementing bodies even more difficult, and above all the work of inspectors, because of the use of various references for a single taxonomic group.

Recommendations

8. Given the problems associated with the current reference, such as the recognition of its taxonomic validity, the use of subspecies not recognized as a valid taxon by the majority of experts, and the difficulties in using it, Mexico recommends that:
 - a) The Secretariat send a Notification to the Parties requesting information on their experience and technical comments on the application of the new nomenclature for Psittaciformes and Trochilidae, as well as information on the nomenclature used by their main museums for these taxonomic groups;
 - b) As a complementary proposal to references of a general scope, the adoption of recent and more detailed additional reference material be considered, such as the regional listings (elaborated collegially), and that the NC, through consultation and discussion with the Parties, assess the pros and cons of using these. Examples of such regional listings are:
 - i) AOU para Norte, Centroamérica, el Caribe y Hawai;
 - ii) Ridgely R. S., Tudor G. 1989. The birds of South America. Volume 1. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press;
 - iii) Ridgely R. S., Tudor G. 1994. The birds of South America. Volume 2. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press; and
 - iv) Dickinson, E. C., Kennedy, R. S. and Parkes, K. C. 1991. The birds of the Philippines: an annotated check-list. Tring, U.K.: British Ornithologists' Union; and
 - c) The Secretariat compile and analyse in collaboration with the NC the information received and prepare a document for consideration at the next meeting of the Animals Committee (AC).

Comments from the Secretariat

9. The Secretariat is of the opinion that matters that are clearly relating to problems of nomenclature should be submitted first to the NC, which may ask for assistance of the Animals or Plants Committee as necessary. It also refers to its comments on document AC19 Doc. 20.1 that discusses a similar subject. The AC's relationship with the NC is explained in the terms of reference for the AC, contained in Annex 2 of Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP12) and providing that the AC shall assist the NC in the development and maintenance of a standardized list of species names.
10. The Secretariat does not concur with the view of Mexico expressed in paragraph 5 concerning the standard reference for Psittaciformes and Trochilidae that was adopted by the Conference of the Parties, and is not aware of problems associated with the current reference. The adoption of the *Checklist of CITES species*, compiled by UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, 2001 and its updates accepted by the NC as the single standard reference for species included in the Appendices addresses Mexico's concerns about the use of different references. It believes that the recommendations in paragraph 8 are unwarranted and inappropriate.
11. The Secretariat notes that problems in identifying specimens of species listed in the Appendices have been a long recognized concern, which Parties have addressed through capacity building activities, the use of identification materials, the development of marking systems, forensic support, etc. It would hope that Mexico and other range States can assist Parties in the identification of *Amazona* species in trade.