

AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

A. PROPOSAL

Inclusion of Balaeniceps rex in Appendix I.

B. PROPONENT

The Kingdom of the Netherlands.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Aves
12. Order: Ciconiiformes, suborder Balaenicipites
13. Family: Balaenicipitidae
14. Species: Balaeniceps rex Gould, 1850
15. Common Names: English: shoebill, whale-headed stork
French: bec-en-sabot du Nil
Spanish:
16. Code Numbers:

2. Biological Data

21. Distribution: The species has a wide, but localised distribution through the swamps of eastern and central Africa. South Sudan (Sudd region, West to Aweil areas), East to West Ethiopia (Baro-Akobo swamps), south through Uganda (Lake Kyoga area), Rwanda (Akagera depression), southern Zaire (Katanga), the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia (Bangweulu and Kafue flood plains).

Occasional records from Central African Republic, Kenya and Botswana. Doubtful records from Chad, Angola, Cameroon and Zimbabwe. In ancient times, the species probably occurred in Egypt and Zimbabwe.

22. Population:

Sudan: In the Jonglei area, an average of c. 5,500 birds were counted, based on three aerial censuses in three different seasons. Extrapolation of these figures for the whole Sudd area could lead to a maximum number of birds of c. 10,000 (Kingdon, 1983).

Ethiopia: The shoebill is only found in the inaccessible far West, near the Sudan border, where it has been seen in 'reasonable numbers' for a big bird (Landells, in litt. 1985).

Rwanda: The population has reduced from 30 to 50 in the beginning of the 1970's to 15 to 25 in 1985 (Vandeweghe, in litt. 1985).

Uganda: Roughly estimated at 400 to 600 (in 1977, Möller, in litt. 1985, Collar, 1985).

United Republic of Tanzania: Over 300 in the Moyowosi swamp (Parker, 1984)

Zaire: No information on numbers.

Zambia: Estimates of c. 250 in some areas, other areas were not surveyed (Howard and Aspinwall, 1985).

23. Habitat: Marshes, large freshwater swamps and in particular Sudd (areas of floating vegetation). The species is basically solitary and mainly or wholly diurnal. Shoebills are extremely vulnerable to disturbance, breeding occurs during the dry season, which makes nests easily accessible (Brown et al., 1982; Guillet, 1978 and 1979). In some cases, due to loss of swamp-availability, the species is changing its habitat into rice and sugarcane plantations. In the main distribution area in southern Sudan, plans to construct the Jonglei canal will have damaging ecological effects to the shoebill. The plans, however, are postponed by the civil war, sabotage and disintegration of the canal ditch (Kingdon, in litt. 1985).

3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization: In parts of the species' range, the shoebill is hunted or trapped for food. Local people sometimes catch young and grow them at home, to be eaten afterward or sold on markets, fetching the price of a large chicken (Möller, in litt. 1985). The skull and the bill have been used in tribal ceremonies (Coller and Stuart, 1985).
32. Legal International Trade: In various parts of the species' range, birds have been caught to stock international zoos, 90 to 100 specimens were sent to zoos in the last 20 years. There seems to be no evidence that the species has ever bred in captivity (Collar and Stuart, 1985, data compiled from International Zoo Yearbooks). The most recent offer comes from a Danish animal trader offering 6 shoebills expected to come in the beginning of 1986.

In the mid 1970's 500 shoebills were captured in southern Sudan, but all perished in Khartoum Zoo (Brown, et al., 1982, in litt. 1985).

In July 1986, 18 specimens were imported into the Netherlands; 6 from Sudan, 6 from Kenya and 6 from Egypt.

33. Illegal Trade: Not known to proponent.
34. Potential Trade Threats: Due to species characteristic features, it is a popular species in zoos. The species' habitat becomes more and more accessible, and a whole breeding population could be caught in short time.

4. Protection Status

41. National: The shoebill is protected by law in the Central African Republic, Uganda, Rwanda, the Sudan, Zaire and Zambia and occurs in a number of protected areas.
42. International: The shoebill is included in Class A of the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.
43. Additional Protection Needs: The species is losing its habitat rapidly. In a number of cases the African swamps are drained and in a number of countries (Rwanda, Zambia, Uganda) plans exist to exploit the area.

5. Information on Similar Species

A look-alike problem does not exist. The family Balaenicipitidae is a monotypic family.

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

7. Additional Remarks

8. References

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