

AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

A. PROPOSAL

Transfer of the Congolese populations of Crocodylus cataphractus and Osteolaemus tetraspis from Appendix I to Appendix II, subject to an annual export quota.

B. PROPONENT

The People's Republic of the Congo.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Reptilia
12. Order: Crocodylia
13. Family: Crocodylidae
14. Species: Crocodylus cataphractus
Osteolaemus tetraspis
15. Common Names: English: African slender snouted crocodile
African dwarf crocodile
French: faux gavial d'Afrique
crocodile à front large
Spanish: Cocodrilo hociquifino africano
Cocodrilo chico africano
16. Code Numbers:
21. Distribution:

Historical: Three crocodile species occur in the Congo: Crocodylus niloticus, Crocodylus cataphractus and Osteolaemus tetraspis. In the past, these three species were occurring over the entire national territory. Crocodylus niloticus and Crocodylus cataphractus were abundant in all large rivers and Osteolaemus tetraspis was the master of the forest. Their distribution was almost homogeneous in all the regions except the Bateke Plateau which did not provide a suitable biotope.

Present: As a result of the study on the crocodile distribution which just took place in the Congo in June-July 1986, the following facts have been noted:

- In the three regions of the northern part of the country (Sangha, Likouala and the Congolese Basin) the three species occur.
- From one site to another, and in connection with the ecological features of the surroundings, the crocodile distribution is variable. It is homogeneous in some places (niloticus), but there are, however, concentrations characterized by high density populations. We may mention Betou Island as an example.

Reason to Com I from Wily S.P.
C. cat - 600
O. tet. - ~~1000~~ 500
Agreed by Com I

- Due to hunting pressure, Crocodylus cataphractus is finding shelter in the ponds and lakes of the deep forest far from the large rivers. The densest populations of this specie are found in the above-mentioned sites (ponds and lakes).

Crocodylus niloticus remains in the large rivers but is also found in ponds and lakes of the deep forest.

Osteolaemus tetraspis which also lives in the forest is occurring in the three regions at more or less identical levels.

22. Population: The study which has just been conducted provides a clear idea of the abundance and density of the populations of the three crocodile species in the sites considered. The numerical results of the study will be entered in the final report to be submitted to the CITES Secretariat and will serve as a basis to justify our application. As a result of it, however, we may say that contrary to what we thought, the populations of Crocodylus niloticus and Crocodylus cataphractus have significantly increased. This evolution is the result of the ban on hunting and export of crocodile skins introduced since 1980. The populations of Osteolaemus tetraspis remain stable in the whole northern part of the country.

In the South, in the Kouilou region, this last species is proliferating as its meat is not liked by the inhabitants of this region.

23. Habitat: The preferred habitats of Crocodylus niloticus and Crocodylus cataphractus are the rivers and river areas edged with grass (reeds), where they can be seen during the night in shallow water. They also like ponds, lakes and, sometimes marshes, in the depth of the forest. These last sites often constitute shelter of difficult access where the animals are gathering in very high densities.

The very busy navigable rivers do not offer a pleasant surrounding for crocodile life.

24. Breeding: Additional major data have been collected during the study, in particular on the breeding seasons of Crocodylus niloticus and Crocodylus cataphractus.

For Crocodylus niloticus:

Egg laying: End of November, December, January and February.

Hatching: From March to May.

For Crocodylus cataphractus:

Egg laying: July and August

Hatching: From November.

Clutches are from 50 to 150 eggs for Crocodylus niloticus and 15 to 50 eggs, and sometimes 90, for Crocodylus cataphractus. However, there are specimens which breed outside the above-mentioned periods.

3. Trade Data

Since 1980, the trade in crocodile skins has been officially banned; but some poachers have continued to hunt; often escaping the control of the officers of the Eaux et forêts. No export has taken place since then.

31. National Utilization: Crocodile meat is highly appreciated by natives of the North of the country. Osteolaemus is the most eaten species and it is hunted mainly for that purpose. Specimens are captured alive and transported to Brazzaville by boat from the region of Sangha and Likouala Rivers and the Congolese Basin. During the study, 150 crocodiles (Osteolaemus tetraspis) were counted on a boat between Impfondo - Mossaka.

At the national level the trade in crocodile skins is still in its infancy; only some leather workers in Brazzaville are tanning on a small scale. On the local market, some crocodile items (bags, briefcases and others) are offered to the public.

32. Legal International Trade: Exports of crocodile skins were suspended since the ratification of CITES by the Congolese Government as the species occurring in the Congolese territory are listed in Appendix I.

While exports were taking place, the major importer was France. Officially, no export took place since then, neither skins nor live specimens, except in the framework of exchange with foreign zoos or other scientific institutions.

33. Illegal Trade:

34. Potential Trade Threats:

4. Protection Status

The present situation is not regrettable, it is true that crocodile populations in some regions have been depleted by over-hunting during the past years. The study which has just been completed shows us that these populations are notably increasing as far as Crocodylus niloticus and Crocodylus cataphractus are concerned. In the whole northern part of the country, the exploitation of crocodile skins remains feasible, but it should be conducted rationally in order to be sustainable. There is, within our Department (the Ministère de l'économie forestière) une Direction de la conservation de la faune which monitors the implementation of the existing regulations. The establishment of hunting licences and killing fees on crocodiles constitutes already a brake on uncontrolled exploitation of them, as not everyone can afford the licence fee.

Even though Osteolaemus tetraspis is captured on a regular basis for human consumption, its populations are not threatened at all because of the empirical and low destructive techniques and primitive tools used for their capture.

5. Acceptable Quotas to Avoid Over-exploitation

<u>Crocodylus niloticus</u> :	600
<u>Crocodylus cataphractus</u> :	400
<u>Osteolaemus tetraspis</u> :	1000

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

Not applicable.

7. Additional Remarks

71. Hunting Season: It is established throughout the whole national territory and goes from May to the end of October, as the close season is the most favourable for the species breeding. Presently, hunting is open for all game species except crocodiles.
72. The study undertaken was a joint Franco-Congolese activity. A local scientist, Dr. Agnana, gained experience working with researchers of the Museum national d'histoire naturelle of Paris and he will follow-up the work done in the field study. He will remain in contact with the researchers of the University of Paris VIII and of the Institut national de la recherche agronomique and thus acquire the necessary information to follow the evolution and the status of the populations of each species.
73. The Congo will have to establish a general project for the management of the populations and an exploitation strategy in order to preserve them, and thus enhance their status in the regions which were subject to heavy hunting pressure.
74. The Congolese Authorities envisaged some years ago the creation of crocodile farms. Some projects are being studied, but the present economic situation makes it impossible for the government to afford the entire cost of studies and conduct of projects of that size. Private bodies and farms are being offered the opportunity to invest money in the conservation and follow-up on crocodiles.