

AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

Other Proposals

A. PROPOSAL

Inclusion of the populations of Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Pakistan of Ursus arctos in Appendix I instead of Ursus arctos isabellinus, transfer of the remaining populations of Ursus arctos isabellinus from Appendix I to Appendix II and deletion of the subspecies name isabellinus.

B. PROPONENT

The Kingdom of Denmark.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Mammalia
12. Order: Carnivora
13. Family: Ursidae
14. Species: Ursus arctos isabellinus Horsfield 1826
15. Common Names: English: Himalayan bear
French: ours brun du l'Himalaya
Spanish: Oso pardo del Himalaya
16. Code Numbers:

2. Biological Data

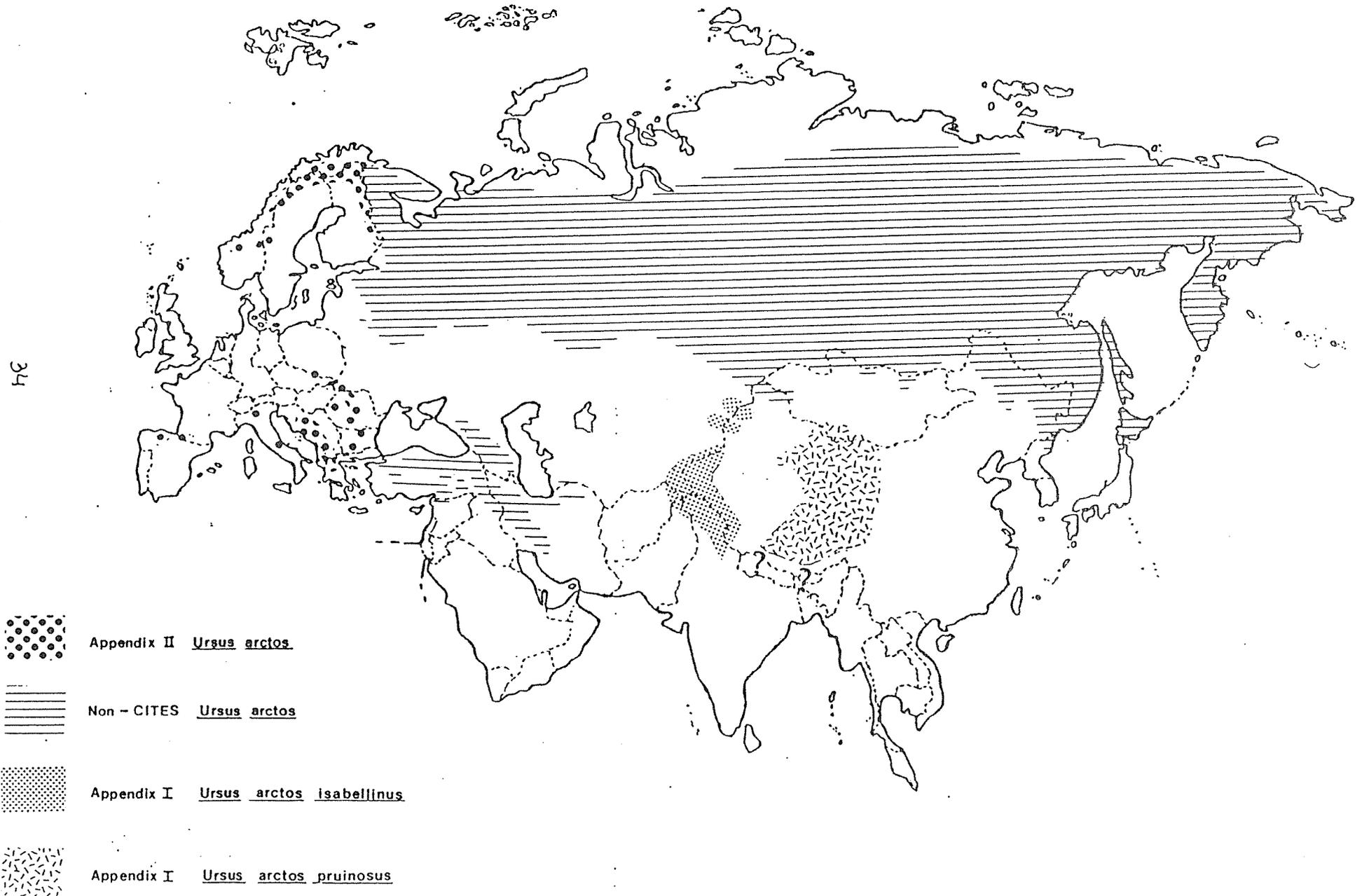
21. Distribution: Himalayas, (see Fig. 1). Range states involved are Afghanistan, China, India, Pakistan, the USSR and possibly Nepal.

In Afghanistan, if the species still survives it is to be found in the Pamir valleys in the extreme North-East of the country (Naumann and Niethammer, 1973) and possibly in other extreme North-eastern mountains such as Safed Khirs and the mountains of Nuristan.

In China, animals from the 'subspecies' isabellinus are found in the Tianshan and Pamir Mountains in the western part of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (Ma, 1983). Judging by its distribution in the USSR, the animal may also occur in the Chinese part of the Khr. Dzhungarskiy Alatau and the Khr. Tarbagatay mountains both in North-West China.

In India, the species is found in the Himalayan area, notably in the Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh areas. Saharia (1981) also mentions the species coming from the Sikkim areas but this needs clarification as its occurrence in Nepal which stands between the aforementioned areas and Sikkim is in doubt. Specimens from Sikkim are perhaps probably more likely to be of the 'subspecies' pruinusus.

Fig 1. The Eurasian distribution of Ursus arctos



There are no confirmed records from Nepal (Mitchell, 1975) but the type locality for the 'Ursus isabellinus' is actually "Mountains of Nepal" (Horsfield, 1828). In view of the occurrence of the animal close-by in neighbouring China it seems that the species may occur in Nepal.

The Pakistani population is also confined to the Himalayas, particularly the Chitral, Gilgit and Balistan areas North of the river Indus and the Deosai plains to the South of the river.

In USSR, the isabellinus population is present in the Pamir Mountains of Tadzhik SSR, the Gissaro-Alai and Tien-Shan-Mountains of Kirgiz SSR and Uzbek SSR and the Krh. Dzhungarskiy Alatau and Khr. Tarbagatay mountain areas in Kazakh SSR on the border with China.

22. Population: In China, in two months of survey work in 1985 and 1986 Ursus arctos was found to be rare in South-West Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on the border with Pakistan, Afghanistan and the USSR. It was noted at only two localities (Schaller et al., 1987). Schaller (1988) states that the brown bear is extinct or very rare in these areas. Brown bears in China as a whole are on the brink of being threatened by over-exploitation for domestic and international trade (Wang, 1989).

Several visits over a number of years to the Pamir Valleys area of North-East Afghanistan showed the species to be very rare outside the valley areas and even within these, few sightings were made (Naumann and Niethammer, 1973). Habibi (1977) mentions only 3 or 4 records since 1948, Petocz (1988) considered the brown bear in Afghanistan to be either very rare or extinct.

In India, the species is regarded as 'endangered' (Saharia, 1981). In the Ladakh area of Kashmir, however, Osborne et al. (1983) between 1980 and 1983 found the species more widespread than expected being regularly seen in some areas. These authors also noted that much larger populations also occurred in the forested areas of the Himalayas. Further South in the Himachal Pradesh area of India, Gaston et al. (1983) found Ursus arctos to have declined; formerly common, it was in 1978-80 rare throughout their study area.

In Pakistan, the species occurs very sparsely throughout and has been noted to have declined in several areas (Roberts, 1977).

In the USSR the population of the Himalayan brown bear was put at just of 2,000 individuals in the mid 1970's (Borodin, 1978). By the mid 1980's the population had risen to over 3,200 but strangely, the species was noted to have declined numerically and in range in a number of areas (Borodin, 1978). The animals are threatened by the felling of mountain forests and agricultural developments in mountain areas. They are most numerous in areas which are far from human habitation (Borodin, 1978).

23. Habitat: The habitat of the isabellinus population appears to vary. In China it inhabits forested areas at elevations between 700 and 4,000 m (Ma, 1983). In the USSR the bears are present in alpine or subalpine zones in summer and descend to mountains forests in winter (Borodin, 1978). In contrast, in Ladakh, India,

they are fairly widespread in areas over 2,750 m. and in the Himachal Pradesh area, they are found almost exclusively above the tree line. In Pakistan too, the species lives at high altitude, generally above 10,000 feet (Cowans, 1972). In Afghanistan the species was found in alpine and sub-alpine valleys and mountain forest between 2,500 and 5,000 m (Habibi, 1977). In the same country, Hassinger (1973) states Ursus arctos to be found in similar habitats usually above 1,500 m.

3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization: In India bears are hunted for their fur, gall bladders, fatty flesh and other derivatives (Saharia, 1981). In China, more than 20 skins per year were being received from the western part of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region during the period 1970-1977 (Ma, 1983) and bears are widely hunted for their gall bladders and paws (Wang, 1989).

32. Legal International Trade: Recorded trade by CITES Parties 1976-1986 inclusive.

Year	Country of		Origin	Imports reported (purpose)	Exports/Re-exports Reported (purpose)
	Export	Import			
1979	CH	IR		1 skin (P)	
1982	SU	JP	(SU)		7 live (T)
1984	JP	CN			2 live captive bred (Z)
1985	JP	CN			2 live
1986	US	TR		1 trophy (I)	

Codes:

CH	Switzerland	(P)	Personal
CN	China	(T)	Circus
IR	Iran	(Z)	Zoological
JP	Japan	(I)	Illegal
SU	Sweden		
TR	Turkey		
US	United States of America		

It should be noted that the species does not occur in either Turkey or the Islamic Republic of Iran mentioned above.

33. Illegal Trade: Japanese Customs statistics reveal a very considerable trade in bear gall bladders (used for medicinal purposes) from the area in which these animals are found, none of which was reported in CITES records. Between 1979 and 1984 it is thought that 1,048 kg of bear gall bladders were imported into Japan from India and 978 kg from Nepal, representing some 10,480 bears from India and 9,780 from Nepal. As a number of bear species occur in these countries it is impossible to say conclusively if any of this trade was in specimens of Ursus arctos isabellinus (Milliken, 1985).

34. Potential Trade Threats:

341. Live Specimens: Little demand anticipated.

342. Parts and Derivatives: A considerable potential trade in gall bladders, skins and claws exists.

4. Protection Status

41. National:

Afghanistan: Not known.

China: Listed in the Second Category (=Vulnerable) in the State Protected Species List of Wildlife attached to the Wildlife Protection Law, 1988.

India: Listed on Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 i.e., a game species but one for which hunting licences are only given under special circumstances.

Pakistan: Protected.

USSR: Killing is forbidden, the animals are protected in certain nature reserves (Borodin, 1978).

5. Information on Similar Species

Although readily distinguishable in live form from other bear species, it is impossible to distinguish specimens of the subspecies Ursus arctos isabellinus from other animals within the Ursus arctos species (Erdbrink, 1953). This is the view of the current bear biologists (Herrero, 1988).

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

Sought but no replies received except from India which supports the retention of its population of Ursus arctos in Appendix I (Agrawal, 1989) and China which supports the proposal (Wang, 1989).

7. Additional Remarks

The wish of the Parties to strictly control trade in Ursus arctos isabellinus was confirmed by the success of the listing proposal by Pakistan at the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties (San José, 1979). At the same meeting, however, the impracticality of listing indistinct subspecies in the appendices was recognised (Resolution Conf. 2.20). Ursus arctos isabellinus is not a valid subspecies and cannot be identified as such (Herrero, 1988). In view of the impossibility of distinguishing Ursus arctos isabellinus from other subspecies of this species, it is proposed to list these animals by geographical range. However, a particular problem occurs in the case of China and the USSR where, in addition to isabellinus, other subspecies occur which are not listed in Appendix I. In view of the insuperable practical problems that such a listing presents in as much as upon visual examination it is impossible for the competent authorities to decide if a particular specimen is from the Appendix I population or not, it is proposed that 'isabellinus' populations in these countries be placed in Appendix II.

8. References

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