

AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

Other Proposals

A. PROPOSAL

Transfer of Aonyx cinerea and Lutra perspicillata from Appendix II to Appendix I.

B. PROPONENT

The Republic of India.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Mammalia

12. Order: Carnivora

13. Family: Mustelidae

14. Species: a) Aonyx cinerea (Illiger, 1815)
syn. Amblonyx cinerea
b) Lutra perspicillata (Geoffroy, 1826)
syn. Lutrogale perspicillata

15. Common Names: English: a) clawless otter,
oriental small-clawed otter
b) Indian smooth-coated otter
French: a) loutre cendrée
b) loutre d'Asie
Spanish: a) Nutria cenicienta,
Nutria inermis asiatica
b) Nutria lisa, nutria simung

16. Code Numbers: a) ISIS No. 5301412004021002001
b) ISIS No. 5301412004024003001

2. Biological Data

21. Distribution:

a) Aonyx cinerea is reported to exist in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Burma, S. China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia (Greater Sundas), Kampuchea, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines (Palawan Isl.), Singapore (?) and Thailand.

In India, it is distributed in the Himalayan foothills from Kullu in Himachal Pradesh eastwards to the North-East Hill States, plains of Assam and West Bengal and in the higher elevation of hill ranges of Coorg (=Kodagu), the Nilgiris (Karnataka) and the Palni (Tamilnadu). It is absent over the whole of Central India.

In Bangladesh, it is found in the eastern hilly districts and in the coastal region (Islam & Feeroz., 1988). In China, it occurs in Yunnan, Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian Provinces (Endi & Helin, 1988).

- b) Lutra perspicillata is found in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Brunei, Burma, S.W. China, India, Indonesia (Sumatra, Java and Kalimantan), Iraq (Tigris River), Kampuchae, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal and Singapore (?).

In India, it is found throughout the country from the Himalayas southwards. In Bangladesh, it was once common throughout the country but, is now seen in the southern districts (Islam & Feeroz, 1988). In Nepal, isolated otter populations are found in Koshi, Narayani, Karnali and Mahakali Rivers (Shrestha, 1988). In China, it is found only in South-western Yunnan Province and the coastal areas of Guangdong Province (Endi & Hellin, 1988).

22. Population:

India: Exact population of the two species in India is not known but has definitely become rare or endangered in recent years due to poaching and reduction in habitat. In the year 1988, attempts were made to determine the status of otters in various states of India and the overall picture was far from satisfactory as explained below:

1. Kerala: Presence of Lutra perspicillata has been confirmed and it was found to be common in the artificial lakes like Parambikulam, Thekkady, Neyyar, etc. and in the lagoons and rivers outside the wildlife protected areas. However, there has been no recent and authentic report on the sighting/capture of Aonyx cinerea which was once reported to exist in the high ranges of Kerala (Surendran, 1988).
2. Andhra Pradesh : Lutra perspicillata is found in all the water bodies distributed in the state, and also in the entries of Krishna and Godavari Rivers, apart from the natural lakes. Occurrence of Aonyx cinerea is not known (Pushp Kumar, 1988).
3. Mizoram : Lutra perspicillata is reported to occur but is said to be quite rare as compared to Lutra lutra (Lalfala, 1988).
4. West Bengal: Large populations of Lutra perspicillata have been reported from Sundarbans and the riverine forest of North Bengal in Corumara and Jaldapara sanctuaries. Although, it is just likely that Aonyx cinerea still survives in both the Himalayan tract of North Bengal as well as in mangrove wetlands of Sundarbans Delta, it indeed needs more intensive survey to ascertain actual situation (Sanyal, 1988).
5. Delhi: After 1983, no sighting or evidence of existence of any otter along the Yamuna River of Dhansa Lake has been reported (Dwivedi, 1988).
6. Goa: Small-clawed otters (Aonyx cinerea) are distributed along the Krishnapur and Madhai Rivers of Satari Taluka, Khandeaper River of Ponda Taluka and along the upper streams of Mandavi River in Panjim. They are not found very frequently (Anon., 1988).

7. Gujarat: A group of five otters, most probably Lutra perspicillata was sighted in December 1966 at Nava Talava fresh water lake, situated 8 km away from Kharaghoda in Surender Nagar District. After that they have neither been sighted nor seen there. Another group was last seen around 1966 in a water pool near Virangam in Ahmedabad District. It once existed in Kutch but it is not to be found there now. Severe drought in the three consecutive years of 1985, 1986 and 1987 dried up most of the water bodies except the big rivers of the South and Central Gujarat, with fatal consequences for all wildlife including otters. Otters, once widely distributed, have now shrunk to only a few pockets in Gujarat (Sinha, 1988).
8. Himachal Pradesh: The status survey conducted in July- August 1988 ruled out the existence of Aonyx cinerea and indicated the presence of Lutra lutra and Lutra perspicillata. The survey was revealed and streams about 15-20 years back and their frequency of sighting has been considerably reduced now (Anon., 1988).
9. Uttar Pradesh: About 250 specimens of Lutra perspicillata in rivers of Dudhwa National Park and 250-300 specimens of the same species in the rivers of Katarniaghat Sanctuary have been reported. A few specimens of this species have also been seen near Sultanpur and Allahabad. Aonyx cinerea could not be recorded in Uttar Pradesh. The reason may be that their population has gone down so much that it is difficult to sight them (Sharma and Ashok, 1988).
10. Bihar: Lutra perspicillata is found to be present in the low lying areas around Patna District. A good number of otters are also available in the Ganges. In Chotanagpur Plateau, these are present in very low numbers in certain streams (Mishra, 1988).
11. Karnataka: Lutra lutra, Lutra perspicillata and Aonyx cinerea are found in Karnataka. A field survey of a few rivers in Karnataka have been taken up and otters have been located in quite a few (Appayya, 1988).
12. Punjab: Lutra perspicillata has been frequently sighted in Harike Lake and found to live in the burrows near the left marginal band (L.M.B.) of the lake. Aonyx cinerea is also reported to exist in Punjab (Gurmit Singh, 1988).
13. Manarashtra: Field studies have revealed wide distribution of Lutra perspicillata but in limited populations (Chitampalli and Gogte, 1988).
14. Chambal Sanctuary: A survey conducted in 1987 along 425 km stretch of Chambal River within National Chambal Sanctuary (NCS) in the States of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, indicated the existence of around 8-9 resident families of otters Lutra perspicillata in NCS with a group size of 2-9 otters (Hussain & Choudhary, 1988).

Bangladesh has three species of otters viz., Lutra lutra, Lutra perspicillata and Aonyx cinerea. The populations of these species have shrunk considerably compared to their past distribution

(Islam & Feeroz, 1988). Bangladesh supports an estimated 50,514 smooth Indian otters (L. perspicillata); 16,740 common otters (L. lutra); and 15,550 clawless otters (Aonyx cinerea); that means the total population of otters in Bangladesh is 83,804 or 0.581/sq km. The three species of otters are endangered and threatened with extinction (Khan, 1988).

Nepal: the population of Lutra perspicillata is steeply declining. The surviving otter populations in the rivers of Nepal is estimated to be 450 (Shrestha, 1988).

Malaysia: A preliminary survey conducted from July to September 1988 in Peninsular Malaysia revealed the occurrence of only two species of otters viz., Lutra perspicillata and Amblonyx (= Aonyx) cinerea. They were noted to be widely distributed along the rivers, streams, marshes and rice fields. The highest populations of the two species were obtained from the State of Kedah. These Malaysian otters can be considered as being vulnerable due to the rapid loss and degradation of their habitats (Osman & Shariff, 1988).

Thailand: the smooth-coated otter (Lutra perspicillata) is a threatened species while the small clawed otter (Aonyx cinerea) is uncommon (Boonkird & Kanchanasaka, 1988).

China: During 1963-64, 300 pelts were produced in Sichean Province annually, but in 1970 only, 700 were produced. This shows the extent of decline of the otter in China (Endi & Helin, 1988).

Information about other countries is not available.

23. Habitat: Aonyx cinerea occurs in small streams, irrigation ditches and rice fields, in both upland and coastal areas. They feed mainly on small crabs, molluscs and small fish, such as gouramis and catfish.

Lutra perspicillata lives in estuaries, coastal mangrove swamps and large rivers, requiring undisturbed forest, mangrove or scrub adjacent to the water. They feed mainly on fish with crabs being important in coastal areas.

Reclamation of wetlands for agricultural purpose, deforestation, pollution of water bodies and erection of dams and barrages across rivers have resulted in a great loss of habitat of otters throughout their range.

3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization: Otters are killed in India, Nepal and Bangladesh usually by the tribals for meat. They are also exploited for pelts used for making garments and various types of fancy goods. In Mizoram, the people are reported to kill male otters, remove their sexual organs and sell the same at a substantial price across the border to the Burmese people (Lalfala, 1988). Live specimens are also kept as pets by some people or exhibited in zoological parks. In some parts of India, fishermen tame otters for capturing fish. In Nepal, fishermen use

otters as decoys to capture gangetic dolphin (Platanista gangetica) (Shrestha, 1988). Otter is also used in Chinese medicine and its skin is traded (Endi & Helin, 1988).

In India, however, trade in all species of otters or their derivatives is not permitted by law.

32. Legal International Trade: Export of all species of otters or their derivatives from India is prohibited. Hence, there is no legal international trade from India. However, international trade in respect of both species (live specimens as well as skins) does exist. According to the Identification Manual sheet No. A-112.004.023.006, 7,616 skins of Lutra perspicillata were involved in CITES transactions between 1978 and 1981, Bangladesh and Federal Republic of Germany being main exporting and importing countries respectively. According to the Identification Manual sheet No. A-112.004.021.002 8 skins have been recorded by CITES Parties from 1979 to 1981. Recent figures of trade are not known.

33. Illegal Trade: Clandestine export in the pelts of otters (all species) from India is believed to take place in not insignificant quantity. Every year the customs and wildlife authorities seize a big number of otter skins and garments made of otter skins being smuggled from India. In 1987, the wildlife authorities seized about 60 skins of clawless otters (Aonyx cinerea) in Delhi. In May 1988, a parcel containing 50 skins of smooth Indian otter (Lutra perspicillata) was seized at Kanpur Railway Station in Uttar Pradesh. Export parcels containing otter skins are quite often intercepted by the Customs at the Foreign Post Office in New Delhi. Within the last few years (from 1984 onwards) due to stricter controls and enforcement, the major use has shifted from coats to fur caps, this shift has enabled the traders to operate illegally without much fear of detection. Often otter skins and articles are hidden among other non-important furs (especially rabbit), which are dyed the same colour as otter skin, making it very difficult to detect. Smuggling through land border to Nepal and Pakistan and through sea-routes to Gulf countries is also reported (Patel, 1988).

34. Potential Trade Threats:

341. Live Specimens: Trade (legal or illegal) in live specimens appears to be insignificant.

342. Parts and Derivatives: Most of the trade is in the form of skins which are in great demand on international market for various type of garments, purses, gloves, capes and other fancy items.

4. Protection Status

41. National: Aonyx cinerea is included in Schedule I and Lutra perspicillata is included in Schedule II (Part II) of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and no trade in respect of these species is permitted in India. All otters are covered under Part A of Schedule I of the Export (Trade) Control Order 1988 issued by the Government of India and, therefore, export of live specimens or derivatives of otters from India is prohibited. A

number of wetlands (for example, Harike Lake in Punjab and Koringa in Andhra Pradesh) containing populations of otters have been declared as wildlife sanctuaries.

42. International: Aonyx cinerea and Lutra perspicillata are covered under Appendix II of CITES.
43. Additional Protection Needs: It may be pointed out that another species of Asian otters viz. Lutra lutra is listed in Appendix I of CITES. Available information indicate that Aonyx cinerea and Lutra perspicillata are as rare or threatened, if not more, as Lutra lutra and require protection against the vagaries of trade. Pollution and loss of habitat have already brought down the population of Asian otters considerably throughout their range and continuous trade is simply accelerating the process of their extinction. It is, therefore, felt that all commercial trade in respect of these two species should be prohibited immediately. This can be achieved by including them in Appendix I of CITES.

5. Information on Similar Species

Aonyx capensis is a species similar to Aonyx cinerea. Likewise, Lutra lutra is a species similar to Lutra perspicillata. Identification Manual sheets A-112.004.021.001 and A-112.004.023.004 are available to help in distinguishing the above-mentioned species.

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

Due to scarcity of time, comments from countries of origin could not be invited. However, from the country papers presented at the First International Asian Otter Symposium held at Bangalore, India in October 1988, it can be gathered that the species in question are endangered or vulnerable. In the Draft Action Plan adopted at the said Symposium, it has been recommended that the neighbouring countries should collaborate in programmes involving protection and prevention of illegal trade including smuggling. It was also recommended that all countries in Asia should be enjoined upon to prohibit internal trade in otters and products derived therefrom. The Draft Action Plan further states that those countries that are not yet members of CITES should join the Convention and make attempts to include all otter species in Appendix I and II and if this is not possible, the left out species should at least be included in Appendix II of CITES (Ref. Asian Otter Specialist Group Newsletter, No. 1, Autumn 1988).

7. Additional Remarks

Aonyx cinerea is covered under the Species Survival Plan (SSP) initiated by the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA) in 1981. These otters are now maintained in twelve American facilities which are co-operative in captive breeding and research projects. One of the goals of the SSP is to maintain a suitable captive population to meet the genetic and demographic requirements necessary to provide a back-up for wild populations that appear to be declining (Foster-Turley, 1988). A captive breeding programme for Lutra perspicillata and Lutra lutra has also been initiated in Karnataka in 1987 (Appayya, 1988).

8. References

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AONYX CINEREA

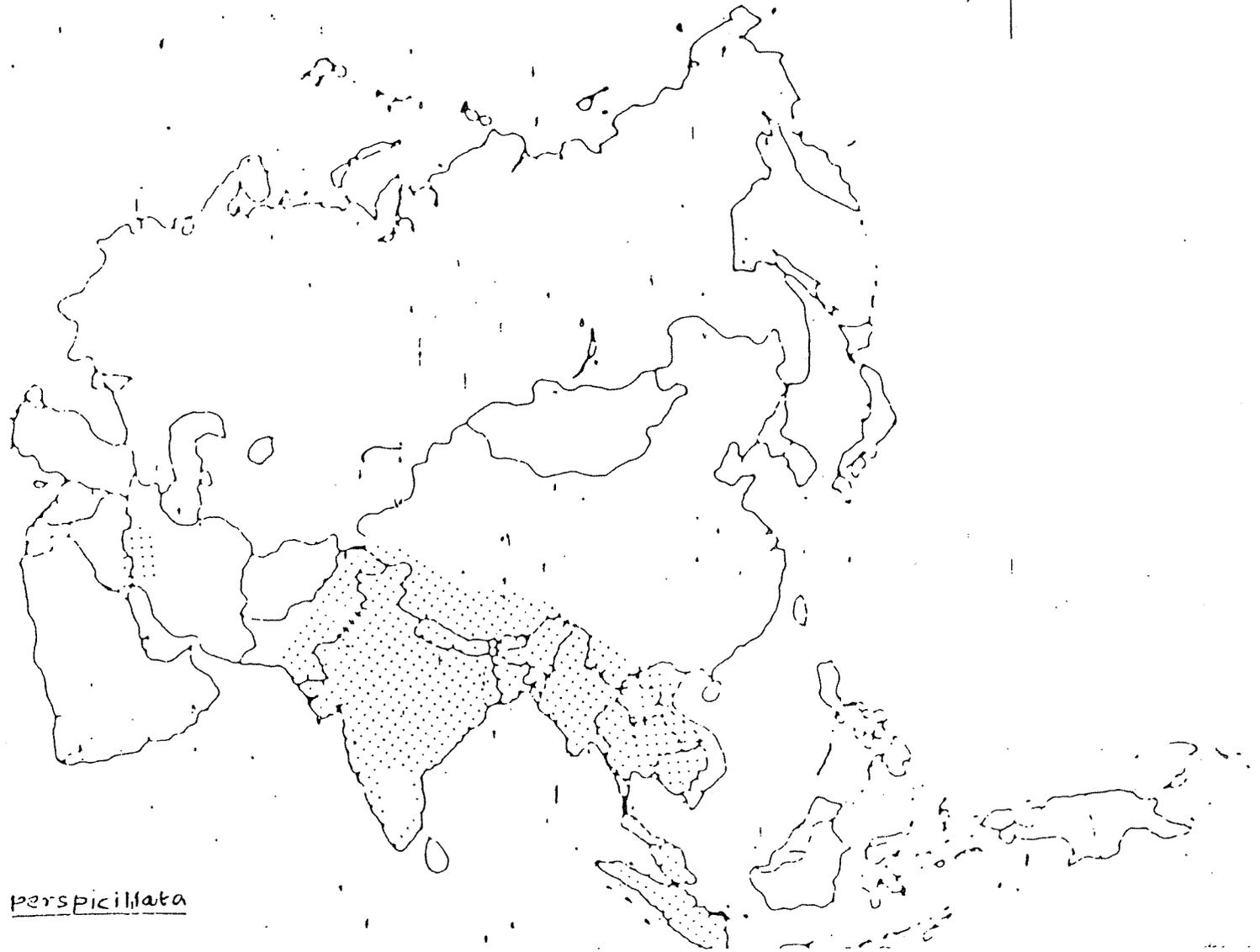
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Aonyx cinerea

LUTRA PERSPICILLATA

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Lutra perspicillata