

A. Proposal Transfer of Varanus bengalensis from Appendix I to Appendix II

B. Proponent—Japan

C. Supporting Statement

1. Taxonomy:

11. Class: Reptilia

12. Order: Sauria

13. Family: Varanidae

14. Species: Varanus bengalensis

15. Common names:

V. bengalensis: English: Bengal monitor

Spanish: varano de Bengala

French: varan du Bengale

16. Code Numbers:

V. bengalensis: A-303.016.001.002

2. Biological Data:

21. Distribution:

V. bengalensis occurs in South and Southeast Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kampuchea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (former Burma), Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam).

22. Population:

V. bengalensis is common in most of the range states. In their draft report to the CITES Secretariat (summary and conclusions attached; see Annex), Luxmoore and Groombridge (1989) mentioned that V. bengalensis is widespread and common in the five following countries; Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand. This report indicates that V. bengalensis is not currently endangered nor threatened animal.

### 23. Habitat:

Although three Varanus species, V. flavescens, V. griseus and V. salvator show habitat preference to particular type of vegetation or topography, V. bengalensis occurs in a great variety of habitats ranging from hill rainforest to semi-desert (Luxmoore and Groombridge 1989). Auffenberg (1988) noted that V. bengalensis could flourish in agricultural habitats unless there is excessive hunting pressure. It suggests that this monitor lizard is adaptable to various types of habitat.

### 3. Trade Data:

#### 31. National Utilization:

Monitor meat is eaten by local people as food although the custom is not so popular. A small quantity of skins are used to process products in some countries.

#### 32. Legal International Trade:

The skins of V. bengalensis are exported from Myanmar (non-party) to Japan (reserving country) and used to be exported from Thailand (formerly reserving country) to Japan. Pre-Convention stocks of V. bengalensis were exported from Bangladesh to Japan from 1984 to 1985.

#### 33. Illegal Trade:

Japan is the only country that has a reservation on V. bengalensis, although Thailand had a reservation until 1987. Therefore, the exportation of their skins from Party states are illegal except for those skins from Thailand to Japan before 1987 and from Bangladesh to Japan in 1984 and 1985.

### 4. Protected Status

#### 41. National:

V. bengalensis is protected in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, although the species is not protected in Thailand.

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#### 42. International:

V. bengalensis is listed in CITES Appendix I and its trade for commercial purpose is prohibited.

#### 5. Information on Similar Species:

The genus Varanus consists of 36 species which are distributed from Africa through Asia to Australia. Among the 36 species, V. bengalensis, V. griseus, V. flavescens and V. komodoensis are listed in Appendix I.

#### 6. Comments from Countries of Origin:

At the Asian regional meeting held in November 1988, the representative of Thailand mentioned that V. bengalensis should be transferred to Appendix I because of its commonness.

#### 7. Additional Comments:

The Central Committee for the Ten Year Review of the Appendices held in Gland, Switzerland in 1982 discussed the whole genus Varanus extensively. The Committee agreed that an urgent review of the genus would be necessary since the general consensus was that several species were inappropriately listed in Appendices.

At its second meeting in Lausanne in 1986, the Technical Committee designated species for which high priority should be given in order to develop projects for conservation.

Accordingly, Japan has agreed to fund the project for the survey of Varanus species, the species graded as top priority.

Luxmoore and Groombridge mention that there is no justification for suggesting that V. bengalensis is, as a species, threatened with extinction.

From a biological point of view, the species does not meet Berne criteria and there is no appropriate reason to continue to list V. bengalensis in Appendix I. Therefore, the species should be transferred from Appendix I to Appendix I.

When Japan concluded to the Convention, it made reservation on V. bengalensis because it had thought that the species was abundant. If V. bengalensis is transferred to Appendix II, there will be no reason for Japan keeping reservation.

In their report to the CITES Secretariat, Luxmoore and Groombridge pointed out that national enforcement conditions suggest the species be retained on Appendix I until such time as appropriate management plans and mechanisms are formulated for population exploited for international trade.

The Management Authority of Japan visited Bangladesh in November 1988 and in July 1989 to examine the solution to the problem of Japan's reservation on Varanus species with the Management Authority of Bangladesh. The measures that should be taken when V. bengalensis was transferred to Appendix I were also discussed at both meetings. The government of Japan, when the proposal should be approved, is willing to co-operate with the Management Authority of Bangladesh to solve the problem of reservation of all Varanus species and to build up a sound trade management system. Therefore, if V. bengalensis would be transferred to Appendix I, the illegal exportation could be stopped consequently.

#### 8. References:

- Luxmoore and Groombridge. 1989. Asian Monitor Lizards: a Review of Distribution, Status, Exploitation and Trade in Four Selected Species. A Draft Report to the CITES Secretariat.
- Khan. 1988. A Report on the Survey of the Biological and Trade Status of V. bengalensis, V. flavescens and V. salvator in Bangladesh
- Auffenberg. 1988. Exploitation of Monitor Lizards in Pakistan

### 1. Varanus bengalensis

- 1.1 Most of the distribution range of V. bengalensis has been examined in greater or lesser detail in this study. Whilst some local or national populations may be somewhat depleted as a result of intense exploitation, the species remains abundant over much of its range, and is not, as a whole, threatened with extinction.
- 1.2 Current world trade in skins of V. bengalensis probably amounts to between 100 000 and 400 000 skins a year. Most of the skins are exported to Japan from Bangladesh. Pakistan, with lesser quantities from Thailand and Malaysia. It is believed that many of the skins originate in India before being smuggled out of the country.
- 1.3 Overall, no adequately documented biological reasons for listing Varanus bengalensis on Appendix I of CITES can be found; however, national and enforcement considerations suggest that the species be retained on Appendix I until such time as appropriate management plans and mechanisms are formulated for populations exploited for international trade.

### 2. Varanus griseus

- 2.1 The area covered by this report is peripheral to the distribution range of V. griseus, and includes only two countries (Pakistan, India) where the species is present. The species as a whole is listed on Appendix I of CITES. One subspecies, V. g. caspius, has been listed as Vulnerable (1988 IUCN Red List); within the study area, this taxon occurs only in northern and western parts of Pakistan's Baluchistan Province, the subspecies present in India and most of Pakistan is V. g. koniecznyi.
- 2.2 Recent international trade in the species or its products appears to be minimal and of little significance. It is doubtful if there has ever been any substantial volume of trade in skins of this species.
- 2.3 Little justification can be found for the present Appendix I listing of Varanus griseus; Appendix II is more appropriate on biological grounds, although there would probably be no call from the trade for such a move. The present IUCN Red List treatment of V. g. caspius may be questionable, although conditions in the major part of the subspecies's range have not been examined in this study.

### 3. Varanus flavescens

- 3.1 Much of the distribution range of V. flavescens, except for Nepal and India (although West Bengal has been treated), has been examined in the present study. Although the inferred former range of the species, corresponding to marshland in the floodplain of the Indus-Ganges-Brahmaputra system, has been greatly diminished by habitat modification (agricultural development, river control), and some local extirpations are reported, some man-made habitats (irrigated plantations and other cropland, fish-farm ponds) have been colonised. Distribution and abundance within the bounds of the former range are not known in detail (some populations may have been overlooked), but the species has since the 1930s generally been regarded as rare and local. Present information

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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

suggests that the species is relatively abundant in suitable habitat in many parts of Bangladesh, the eastern-most part of the range.

- 3.2 World trade in skins of V. flavescens may be as high as half a million skins a year, mostly from Bangladesh, Pakistan and northern India. The skin sizes most in trade correspond to virtually all adult size classes; this, and the highly localised distribution in west and central parts of the range, appear to make the species particularly susceptible to over-exploitation.
- 3.3 The Yellow Monitor Varanus flavescens is a candidate for listing in the next edition of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals, and should remain listed on Appendix I of CITES. Although, on biological grounds, the V. flavescens population of Bangladesh might be considered suitable for limited sustainable commercial exploitation, the lack of sufficient population data, the apparent susceptibility of the species to over-harvesting, the evidence for illegal movement of skin consignments from India into Bangladesh, and the current lack of enforcement mechanisms in Bangladesh all make any change in the present CITES listing premature.

#### 4. Varanus salvator

- 4.1 The Water Monitor V. salvator is the most widely distributed and most heavily exploited of the Asian Monitors. It is locally abundant despite prolonged exploitation, although many instances of local decline in response to intense hunting for skins are known or suspected; the species as a whole is not threatened with extinction. Distribution and status in much of South East Asia (in particular, Burma, Laos, Kampuchea, Viet Nam) remain poorly known.
- 4.2 The annual trade in V. salvator probably varies between 1 and 1.5 million skins. The great majority of these derive from Indonesia (Sumatra Kalimantan, Java), with substantial harvests in Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines, and are exported via Singapore to Japan, Europe and North America. Most of the skins in trade are 25-30 cm in width, which is slightly smaller than the size at which the lizards reach sexual maturity.
- 4.3 On present evidence, the current Appendix II listing of Varanus salvator is appropriate, although enhanced management and enforcement procedures are generally desirable, and more information is urgently required on: (1) population dynamics and responses to exploitation; (2) detailed distribution and status in the countries with the most-exploited wild populations (primarily Indonesia, secondarily Thailand and Malaysia); (3) range and status in countries not covered in this study.