

AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

Other Proposals

A. Proposal

Inclusion of Vipera wagneri in Appendix II.

B. Proponent

Sweden.

C. Supporting Statement

1. Taxonomy

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|-------------------|---|
| 11. Class: | Reptilia |
| 12. Order: | Serpentes |
| 13. Family: | Viperidae |
| 14. Species: | <u>Vipera wagneri</u> Nilson & Andrén, 1984 |
| 15. Common names: | English: Wagners viper
French:
Spanish: |

2. Biological Data

21. Distribution: Far eastern Turkey.

Vispera wagneri was identified in 1984 from a single 1846 specimen from Iranian Azarbaijan; its only known living population was discovered several years later from 1,600-1,900m along the Aras Valley in far eastern Turkey. Its full world range lies between the Ala Dagh and Arasguneyi Daglari mountains on the Aras River near Karakurt and Kagizman and along associated tributaries, with the main population centred on the valley 12 kms east of Karakurt (Joger et al., 1988; Nilson & Andrén, 1984).

22. Population: No population estimates have been made. Having a very limited distribution and a heavy commercial exploitation currently going on it must be considered a rare and threatened species (Nilson et al., 1988).

23. Habitat: Mountain grass-steppe.

Rocky slopes often north-facing, damp, and with locally lush vegetation of grasses, herbs and small bushes, always close to water courses. Described as

montane grass-steppe with an Artemisia austriaca/fragrans association (Nilson et al., 1988).

3. Trade Data

31. National utilization: Not known.
32. International Trade: Since the unfortunate publication of a scientific paper with full details of the single known locality with a living population (Joger et al., 1988), the main population of this most beautiful snake has been decimated by organized and continuing commercial collection by known western Europeans, amateur and professional. The lack of protection of this species and its limited habitat has facilitated the current exploitation. From 1988 and onwards mass collection takes place in May during the reproductive period when the snakes are gathered in small areas and exposed. There is an increasing demand in this species especially for the pet-trade in Europe and the United States. Vipera wagneri is offered for 1,500-2,000 DM per pair in 1991. As an example of rare viper prices Vipera latifii could be an example. This species is offered for 2,500 Dollars per pair in the USA [pers. comm. A.P. Belcher, Rio Grande Zoo, New Mexico (Snake Advisory Group)].
33. Illegal Trade: It is not clear whether the collection and commercial trade is legal or not in Turkey. However, the species is illegally brought into some western countries and offered from those countries to the international market.
34. Potential Trade Threats: The great increase in the trade of this species in the last three years and its rare and threatened population status may cause the species to become highly endangered.

4. Protection Status

41. National: There is no Turkish species legislation to protect this snake or its habitat.
42. International: The commercial exploitation of this endangered endemic snake has been depreciated by the Council of Europe which has asked its member states to inform about the situation nationally.
43. Additional Protection Needs: Its trade should be controlled and adequate and appropriate site conservation is needed along the limited stretch of the Aras Valley, with protection secure enough in the short term to allow the species a full period of recovery. For better monitoring the international trade Vipera wagneri should be included in Appendix II of CITES.

5. Information on similar species

Vipera kaznakovi "The Red Viper" confined to a narrow zone of 0-1000m between the Black Sea coast and the east Pontics in Turkey, and between the same coast and the west Caucasus in the USSR has been commercially exploited during the last ten years and is now endangered by trade.

A similar fate may be true for a new species of Viper, Vipera albizona, discovered in 1989 from an unusual and highly restricted mountain habitat in the Kulmac Daglari

of central Turkey. From the extent of its habitat type and its geographical isolation, the total world range of this endemic species cannot exceed 2000 hectares, with its best site less than 1000 ha in extent.

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

Comments from Turkey highly needed.

7. Additional! Remarks

Professional reptile dealers from western Europe have a well organized team of local reptile collectors in different parts of Turkey. There are no figures available of the species or numbers of reptiles collected every year in Turkey for the western European countries, but the trade is probably large scale.

8. References

Joger, U.,A. Teynié, & D. Fuchs (1988). Morphological characterization of Vipera wagneri Nilson & Andrén, 1984 (Reptilia:Viperidae), with first description of the males. Bonn. Zool. Beitr., 39: 221-228.

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Nilson, G & C. Andrén (1986). The mountain vipers of the Middle East - The Vipera xanthina complex (Reptilia:Viperidae). Bonn. Zool.Monogr., 20: 1-90.

Nilson, G., C. Andrén & B. Flärdh (1988). Die Vipern der Türkei. Salamandra 24:215-247.

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Orlov, N.L. & B.S. Tunijev (1990). Three species in the Vipera kaznakowi Complex (Eurosebirean Group) in the Caucasus: Their present distribution, Possible Genesis, and Phylogeny. Asiatic Herpetological Research 3: 1-36.

