

AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

Other Proposals

A. PROPOSAL

Transfer from Appendix I to Appendix II of *Felis bengalensis bengalensis*** - 103.

B. PROPONENT

The Swiss Confederation.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Mammalia
12. Order: Carnivora
13. Family: Felidae
14. Species: *Felis bengalensis* Kerr, 1793
15. Common Names:

English:	Leopard Cat
French:	Chat léopard du Bengal
Spanish:	Gato bengalí, Gato de Bengala
German:	Bengalkatze
Hindi:	Chita billi
16. Code Numbers: A-112.007.001.003

The taxonomic situation at the subspecies level is extremely complex and confusing. More than 30 subspecies have been described of which at least 11 have been recognized by other authors, but the validity of some of them is questionable. The CITES Identification Manual (Dollinger, 1992) parts from seven subspecies, and the 1992 Animals Committee Report recognized nine subspecies. To the best of the knowledge of the proponent and of WCMC (Inskipp *in litt.*, 26.11.1992), there has never been a complete review of the infraspecific taxonomy of this species.

The subspecies *Felis bengalensis bengalensis* (includes *elliotti* Gray, 1842; *herschellii* Gray, 1869; *ingrami* Bonhote, 1903; *jerdoni* Blyth, 1863; *servalinus* Gray, 1843; *tenasserimensis* Gray, 1867; *undata* Desmarest, 1818; *wagati* Gray, 1867) occurs, according to material provided by the IUCN Cat Specialist Group, in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Cambodia, India, Lao PDR, peninsular Malaysia, Viet Nam, Thailand and a few southern areas of China.

According to Trense (1989) however, the nominate form of *bengalensis* extends into insular Malaysia, Indonesia (Sumatra, Borneo, Java, Bali) and Taiwan where, according to other authors, the subspecies *borneoensis*, *javanensis*, *sumatrana*, *tingia* and *chinensis* occur. Trense is not a good taxonomic reference, but his book is widely distributed in the German and English language areas, and may thus contribute to further confusing the situation. The subspecies *sumatrana* and *tingia* are considered to be synonyms by WCMC. There may also be authors who limit the distribution of *bengalensis* to the Indian subcontinent and recognize different subspecies in the Indomalaysian region (as is the case also for the tiger and the

leopard). Chasen (1940) among others indicated that the population of the Malay peninsula was morphologically distinguishable from *sumatrana* and nominate *bengalensis*. If these distinctions are upheld a new name is required for this population. A (single) specimen collected by Osgood (1932) in central Viet Nam was ascribed to *chinensis*.

Apart from the confusing taxonomy, the situation is complicated by the fact, that in several range states more than one subspecies occurs: e.g. in China *bengalensis*, *chinensis* and *euptilura*, in India *bengalensis* and *horsfieldi*, in Malaysia *bengalensis*, *borneoensis* and *sumatrana*, and in Nepal *horsfieldi*, *trevelyani* and most likely *bengalensis*. This means that some States have leopard cats in both Appendix I and Appendix II.

To the best of the knowledge of the proponent and of WCMC (Inskipp *in litt.*, 26.11.1992), there have been no countrywide field surveys on the distribution of the species and its subspecies in India. Recent regional surveys of cats did not attempt to determine the distribution at the subspecies level.

2. Biological Data

21. Distribution: See also comments under Taxonomy. The total range of the subspecies most likely exceeds 5'000'000 sq.km.

Bangladesh: Occurs in the east of the country, mainly in Sylhet and Chittagong (Khan, 1985).

Cambodia: Recorded from Kratie (Osgood, 1932).

China: Occurs in Yunnan and two counties, Leipo and Huitong, in southern Sichuan (Tan Banjie, 1984; Yu Jinping *in litt.* to A. Bräutigam, 1991). Jinping Yu (*in litt.*, 1992) reports that specimens from Tibet usually have distinct black spots, which are a typical characteristic of *F. b. bengalensis*, although their ground colour is paler; however, variation among the subspecies is tremendous. Southern Tibet is closer to the geographical range of *F. b. bengalensis* than the other subspecies present in China.

India: Pocock (1939) gives the distribution as western and central areas of the peninsula, parts of the Eastern Ghats, southern West Bengal, and probably in the hills south of the Brahmaputra in the north-east. Israel and Sinclair (1987), Saharia (1981) and/or Singh (1980) refer to the occurrence of the leopard cat in Andhra Pradesh (Eturnagaram Sanctuary), Arunachal Pradesh (Mehao Sanctuary), Assam (Kaziranga NP, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary), Karnataka (Bandipur NP, Nagarhole NP), Madhya Pradesh (Kanha NP), Mizoram (Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary), Orissa (Bhitarkanika Sanctuary), Rajasthan (Keoladeo Ghana, Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary), Sawai Madhopur, Dudhwa NP), West Bengal (Buxa Tiger Reserve). According to Tikader (1983), the leopard cat is found all over India.

Lao PDR: Recorded from Phong Saly, Thateng and Xieng Kuang (Osgood, 1932).

Malaysia: Throughout Peninsular Malaysia.

Myanmar: Occurs widely in the country (Pocock, 1939).

Thailand: It is found throughout Thailand including the offshore islands (Boonsong and McNeely, 1977).

Viet Nam: Recorded from Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina (Osgood, 1932); also Kon-ha-nung (Sokolov *et al.*, 1983).

22. Population

221. Wild population: There is very little information available about the status of populations of *Felis bengalensis* in the majority of range states. Paradiso (1972) reported that "it seems abundant in many areas" within its range. According to Santiapillai & Supraham (1985), it is the most common cat in Southeast Asia. Also according to comments from the IUCN Cat Specialist Group it does not seem that *Felis bengalensis bengalensis* meets the biological criteria for retention in Appendix I.

Bangladesh: Overall, cats have been fairly common ... Now they are primarily restricted to the forested belt. (Khan (1985) states, however, that the species is not common anywhere).

India: Distributed throughout the country but contradictory reports on its status (vulnerable, persecuted, not uncommon in Sikkim, common in the NE States, reported to leave the forests and raid poultry in the outskirts of Chillong ...)

Malaysia: In Peninsular Malaysia, Flower (1900) reported it to be abundant, and Medway (1978) found it to be common in most habitats.

Myanmar: Populations are likely to be in good shape.

Thailand: The only common wild cat in Thailand, found throughout the country including offshore islands (Boonsong and McNeely, 1977; Humphrey and Bain, 1990).

Cambodia, Lao PDR, Singapore, Viet Nam: no information on status.

The Animals Committee noted in 1992 that there are no reliable estimates of population size of the species but, on the basis of the annual harvest, the Chinese population (including other subspecies, e.g. *chinensis*, is believed to be in the region of 1-1.5 million. In the 1985 proposal for downlisting the Chinese population of *Felis bengalensis bengalensis*, the total Chinese population of this subspecies has been estimated at about 500,000-600,000. This was somewhat speculative, but was accepted by the Parties. Other "educated guesses" could part from the overall range of the species and the assumption that the average home range size of 0.9 km² for males and 1.22 km² for females calculated from radiotelemetry studies of five males and one female, on the Tsushima Islands (Izawa *et al.*, 1990) and the home range sizes for three males and one female in Thailand, ranging between 1.5-7.5 km², with core areas of 0.7-2 km² (Rabinowitz, 1990) are more or less representative.

222. Captive population: Frequently kept by zoos and by private persons. Not included in the International Zoo Yearbook's census of rare animals. During 1991, 42 *Felis bengalensis* subspp. (and 81 *Felis bengalensis euptilura*) were born in 15 (and 13) collections reporting to the International Zoo Yearbook (Olney and Ellis, 1993).

23. Habitat: Forest and bushland in proximity of water, from sea level to 3000 m above sea level, including secondary growths, plantations and suburban areas.

The wide geographical distribution indicates that the Leopard Cat is a highly adaptable animal that is flexible in its habitat requirements. It turns up occasionally within areas as densely settled as the suburbs of Beijing (Tan Banjie *in litt.* to P. Jackson, 1991), or in logged forest or agricultural plantations e.g. in peninsular Malaysia (M. Khan *in litt.* to P. Jackson, 1991). On the other hand, Leopard Cats in dry tropical forest mosaic in central Thailand made less use of forest patches subject to annual burning, suggesting that a tolerance of altered habitat is indeed limited, probably due to a reduced prey base

(Rabinowitz, 1990). Many observers have commented on the cat's arboreality: most recently, a male was radio located resting in a tree at a height of over 20 metres (Rabinowitz, 1990).

The Leopard Cat is an opportunistic predator and therefore takes advantage of a broad spectrum of prey; it even scavenges food when it is available (Santiapillai & Suprahman, 1985).

3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization: In India, local people are reported to eat Leopard Cat meat and sell the skins illegally (A. Wright *in litt.* to P. Jackson, 1991). There is a certain demand for leopard cat fur on the national markets of the species' range (which may include sales to tourists and subsequent illegal international trade). During 1988 and 1989 surveys, it was noted that 31 of 36 shops visited in Kathmandu, Nepal, offered for sale garments containing *Felis bengalensis* fur skins (Doc. SC 31.9.3).
32. Legal International Trade: According to the WTMU database, only 10 *Felis bengalensis bengalensis* specimens (including 8 scientific specimens) listed in Appendix I have been exported from range States from 1985 to 1992. In addition, 31 live specimens bred in captivity in non-range States and some Appendix II specimens erroneously reported under Appendix I have been traded during that period.

The Appendix II-populations of the species are regularly in the zoo, pet and fur trade. Trade in live specimens is not significant. Skin and plate exports are important and have been analyzed in the Significant Trade Study.

33. Illegal Trade: Obviously, there is some illegal international trade in furskins on the Indian subcontinent (e.g. from Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir) to Kathmandu (Nepal)). The volume of illegally traded specimens intercepted by customs or other enforcement agencies is relatively modest, e.g. in 1989 India seized two shipments in Calcutta containing a total of over 200 Leopard Cat pelts (S. Das *in litt.* to P. Jackson, 1991), and 2 live specimens were confiscated in May 1992 and 2 skins in October 1992 (TRAFFIC Bulletin Vol. 13).
34. Potential Trade Threats: None, as the subspecies will remain in Appendix II and as national protection will not be affected by the change of CITES Status. Demand for leopard cats from zoos is decreasing, the regionally still existing demand for leopard cat furs is traditionally covered by supply from China where large numbers of *F. b. chinensis* and Appendix II-*F. b. bengalensis* skins are stockpiled, and to a lesser extent from Russia and both Koreas. It should be noted that demand for leopard cat fur has been steadily increasing from 1983 to 1988/89, and is decreasing since then.

4. Protection Status

41. National (all information according to Nichols *et al.*, 1991)

Bangladesh: Listed on the First Schedule - Regulated Game Species - to the Wild Life Preservation Act, 1974.

Bhutan: Protected in reserved forests under the Forest Act, 1969.

China: Regulated under the 1988 Act on Wild Animals, but not included in the lists of species to which national or local "key protection" is afforded.

India: Totally protected species under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act No. 53, 1972.

Indonesia: Protected species under the Wildlife Protection Ordinance No. 134, 1931, and Wildlife Protection Regulation No. 266, 1931.

Lao PDR: In 1986, a total ban on trade of all wildlife species was decreed by the Council of Ministers.

Malaysia: Totally protected under Schedule One of the protection of Wild Life Act, 1972.

Myanmar: Regulated under the Wild Life Protection Act, 1936.

Nepal: Protected species under Schedule I of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2029 of 1973.

Thailand: Protected species of the first category under Schedule 1 of the Wild Animals Preservation and Protection Act, B.E. 2503 of 1960.

42. International: The subspecies has been listed in Appendix I of the Convention since 01/07/75. At COP 5 (Buenos Aires, 22 April to 3 May 1985) the Chinese population of *Felis bengalensis bengalensis* was transferred to Appendix II.
43. Additional Protection Needs: The necessary legal instruments are in place in most range states. Required are an improvement of CITES controls and a better enforcement of the existing national legislation. In some countries efforts have to be made to reinforce inter-agency cooperation (SC 31.9.3. Annex).

5. Information on Similar Species

All other subspecies and populations of *Felis bengalensis* are listed on CITES Appendix II.

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

In January 1993, the Secretariat wrote to all the range States of *Felis bengalensis* (including all subspecies) to inform them of the difficulties of distinguishing subspecies and of taxonomic disagreements about the subspecies, and to ask for their views about the present proposal. This letter was sent to the Management Authorities of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Thailand, and the United Kingdom (Hong Kong). Replies were received from India, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and the United Kingdom (and a separate reply from Hong Kong). Only the Management Authority of India objected to the possible transfer of Appendix-I populations to Appendix II. This resulted in some further correspondence between the Secretariat and the Indian MA, the Secretariat pointing out that maintenance of the Indian population of *Felis bengalensis* would not really be necessary, as India could simply maintain its policy of not issuing export permits. By letter dated 5 May 1994, the Secretariat informed India that the Depositary Government had been requested to submit the present proposal.

7. Additional Remarks

As the taxon has been listed in Appendix I prior to the adoption of the Berne Criteria, Resolution Conf. 2.23 on Special Criteria for the Deletion of Species and other Taxa applies.

The present proposal has been prepared and submitted by Switzerland upon request from the Animals Committee.

8. References

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