

## Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention

CONSERVATION OF EDIBLE-NEST SWIFTLETS OF THE GENUS *COLLOCALIA*Background

1. At the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Fort Lauderdale, United States of America, 7-18 November 1994), a proposal to include edible-nest swiftlets of the genus *Collocalia* (Aves, Apodiformes) in Appendix II of CITES was submitted by Italy.
2. The aim of the proposal was to regulate trade in nests of four species (*Collocalia fuciphaga*, *Collocalia germani*, *Collocalia maxima* and *Collocalia unicolor*), trade that has increased notably in the past 10 years. The inclusion of these four species was proposed in accordance with Article II.2(a) and the inclusion of the rest of the genus in accordance with Article II.2(b) of the Convention.
3. The proposal was withdrawn by Italy. However a resolution on the conservation of these birds was drafted, in collaboration with range States, and was adopted by the Conference of the Parties as Resolution Conf. 9.15 (Annex 1).
4. In Resolution Conf. 9.15 the Conference of the Parties initiated two different courses of action. Firstly, it urged range States to:
  5. – encourage scientific research to promote the sustainability of nest harvesting through standardized management programmes;
  6. – explore ways of enhancing participation of representatives of the bird-nest industry in swiftlet conservation and sustainable-use programmes; and
  7. – review regulations controlling harvesting of wild-breeding swiftlet populations, in accordance with the results of the scientific research carried out under paragraph 5.
8. Secondly, it requested the CITES Secretariat to convene a technical workshop to establish conservation priorities and actions to achieve sustainability of swiftlet-nest harvesting.
9. Thanks to contributions from the Governments of Italy and Japan, the Sarawak Bird's Nest Import & Export Association, the Bird's Nest Trade Association of Singapore, TRAFFIC East-Asia, WWF International, WWF Italy and the C&M Foundation, the Secretariat was able to convene the workshop in Surabaya (Indonesia) from 4 to 7 November 1996. Moreover, the Swiftlet Nest Association of Indonesia generously funded the local accommodation expenses and the Government of Indonesia kindly hosted the workshop.
10. The agenda is annexed to this document as Annex 2.

The Workshop

11. The meeting was attended by 100 participants. The following countries were represented, by the staff of Management Authorities or Scientific Authorities or both: Bhutan (non Party), China (including its Province of Taiwan), India, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Spain, Thailand, the United Kingdom (including Hong Kong) and Viet Nam. The following observers were represented: TRAFFIC South-East Asia, World Wildlife Fund for Nature, Wildlife Management International, Edible Bird's Nest Merchants (Hong Kong), the Bird's Nest Trade Association of Singapore, the Indonesian Bird's Nest Association, the Indonesian Swiftlets Lovers Association, the

Sarawak Bird's Nest Import & Export Association and Swan International.

12. The meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the Animals Committee.
13. During the meeting there were two plenary sessions (first and fourth days). Following the formal opening ceremony on the first day, the plenary session received a background presentation by the Earl of Cranbrook on the biology of edible-nest swiftlets. Reports from representatives of range States were presented on current management of the wild resource and regulation of the industry utilizing swiftlet nests. The second day was devoted to a field excursion to enable participants to view swiftlet "house-farming", which is practised widely in urban centres in the Province of East Java. Participants were divided into two working groups on the third day. One working group examined management and research requirements for the conservation and sustainable use of wild populations of edible-nest swiftlets. The other working group reviewed existing legislation and the regulatory controls in range and consumer States. The workshop reconvened in plenary session on the fourth day to review the conclusions reached by each working group and to adopt recommendations.

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Workshop

14. Edible nest swiftlets are widespread and abundant across their historical range. Their aggregate populations are estimated as tens of millions, based on current yields from nest harvesting. Despite documented declines in some cave populations, there is no immediate conservation risk.
15. The taxonomy of the swiftlets is confusing, with several different nomenclatures in use (Sibley and Monroe, 1990, followed by CITES; Chantler and Driessens, 1995; Cranbrook *et al.*, 1996). There is no obligation on scientists or managers to use any one nomenclature either now or in the future but there should always be a clear indication of which is being used. Er *et al.* (1995) provide a list of synonyms which may assist people in understanding the situation more fully.
16. The management of swiftlets should incorporate careful consideration of the environmental, social, economic and legal circumstances prevailing in the countries in which they occur, in conjunction with broader national objectives and priorities.
17. The goal of management should be to ensure that the conservation of swiftlets and that the harvest of edible nests is sustainable. Annual recruitment to cave populations is necessary to achieve sustainability. In the absence of definitive information on the effects of nest harvesting, each pair should be able to produce one brood per year, fledging at the optimal season. Consideration should be given, where appropriate, to the granting of clearly defined, long-term rights for nest harvesting in swiftlet caves (through ownership or leasing). Co-operation among nest harvesters, nest traders, regulatory and monitoring agencies will facilitate the process of management to achieve sustainable harvest.
18. The meeting has brought to light a considerable amount of knowledge and research pertaining to the management of swiftlets. It would be valuable for this

to be made more widely available throughout the range States. A review of this research would identify information gaps and would help to target future research. The research undertaken in swiftlet houses undoubtedly contributes to understanding of cave swiftlets and their management needs.

#### *Structure*

19. To guide and co-ordinate research and management on edible-nest swiftlets, and reassess priorities on the basis of new information, a Steering Committee should be established under the auspices of the ASEAN Working Group on Forestry.

#### *Management*

20. Ensuring the sustainability of swiftlet nest harvesting will also require attention to the following:
  21. – monitoring of cave populations – this can be done by population survey and/or trade data. Trade data give minimum estimates of total population size. Population surveys should use standardized techniques and practical sampling strategies;
  22. – mechanisms for controlling harvests;
  23. – ability to adapt management in the light of new information or results of monitoring;
  24. – periodic reviews to evaluate the effectiveness of management regimes;
  25. – in the interest of conserving the genetic integrity of wild populations, establishment of swiftlet nest houses undertaken using local stock; and
  26. – the participation of local communities in management, noting that enabling them to share economic benefits is likely to increase the effectiveness of harvest regulations.

#### *Research*

27. Research should be promoted in the following areas:
  28. – standardization and development of monitoring techniques. This should include a clear understanding of potential or actual errors with the existing capacity of implementing agencies in mind;
  29. – the design of practical sampling strategies for monitoring cave populations. All caves will not need to be sampled in all years. Once again, the existing capacity of implementing agencies should be kept in mind;
  30. – effects of harvesting and other factors on population dynamics; and
  31. – understanding of landscape, ecological and environmental variables.
32. While not a priority at the present time, there may be a future need to carry out research through the use of DNA and by other means for the purpose of differentiating between nest material derived from houses and caves.
33. The birds' nest industry should collaborate with regional organizations (e.g. universities and ACSUG) to obtain new data and information on swiftlet biology, management, harvest, etc.

#### *Administration*

34. The procedure for recording trade in swiftlet nests should be improved and, where possible, standardized.
35. – Customs, or another relevant government agency that records official trade statistics should provide

the basis for collecting and maintaining data on trade in swiftlet nests.

36. – Categories for raw/processed nest material and manufactured products should be incorporated into the recording systems.
37. – The CITES Secretariat should write to the World Customs Organization (WCO) to explore the possible development and adoption of harmonized uniform standards, codes and categories for recording trade in commodities from the edible nests of swiftlets.
38. – Until such time as a new Customs nomenclature is introduced by the WCO, all countries that allow export, import or re-export of edible swiftlet nests should recognize and apply the Harmonized Commodity System, Code 04.10.00 (nests) and 21.04.10 (soup) in their national trade statistics and should record trade data for these items.
39. – Exchange of information on illegal trade within the region, especially to identify illegal trade routes and the movements of the individuals concerned is encouraged.
40. – Legislation for all range States and consumer countries should be reviewed to assist all countries in the region to understand and address the issue of illegal trade.
41. – Range States and importing countries should provide to the Secretariat, as soon as possible, a list of their legislation related to swiftlet nests, to be included in the document that the Secretariat will present to the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
42. – The authority for administering legislation controlling the harvest and export of edible-nest swiftlet materials should be vested in the wildlife conservation agency of each range State.
43. – Subject to the availability of resources, the proposed Steering Committee should undertake, or commission, an independent review of the adequacy of existing legislation within range States to regulate the harvest and export of nests.
44. – Range States wishing to study and obtain the regulations of other States may do so on the basis of bilateral arrangements.
45. – The proposed Steering Committee should compile a list of the harvest regulations and licensing systems operating in each range State for distribution to all countries in the region.
46. – The proposed Steering Committee should review harvest regulations to determine the best practices that could serve as guidelines for the range States to implement.

#### *Industry*

47. Industry groups in the South East Asian region are encouraged to form a regional association as soon as possible. Furthermore, the newly established regional association should consider becoming affiliated with the Asian Conservation through Sustainable Use Group (ACSUG).
48. Industry representatives should participate in future meetings on edible-nest swiftlets between range and consumer States. Invitations should be extended to each trading association and the proposed regional federation of associations.

49. Industry representatives are encouraged to be open with data and information on swiftlet nest harvest and trade.

*Education and Awareness*

50. Range States and industry associations are encouraged to collaborate in the development and implementation of awareness programmes for cave owners and persons involved in the harvest of swiftlet nests to enhance sustainable management of the resource.

*General*

51. Parties, birds' nest industry associations and other bodies are encouraged to continue their financial support for activities directed towards the sustainable management of edible-nest swiftlets in the wild.

References

52. Chantler, P. and Driessens, G. (1995). Swifts: a guide to the swifts and treeswifts of the world. Pica Press, The Banks.

53. Cranbrook, Earl of, (1984). Report on the Bird's Nest Industry in the Baram district and at Niah, Sarawak. Sarawak Museum Journal. 33:145-170
54. Cranbrook, Earl of, Somadikarta, S. and Kartikasari, S.N. (1996). Swiftlets (Aves, Apodidae, "Collocaliini"): an annotated bibliography prepared for the Department of Environment (UK). Department of Environment (UK) Bristol.
55. Er, K.B.H., Vardon, M.J., Tanton, M.T., Tidemann, C.R. and Webb, G.J.W. (1995). Edible birds' nest swiftlets and CITES: A review of the evidence of population decline and nest harvesting effects. CRES Working Paper 1995/3, ANU, Canberra.
56. Sibley, C.G. and Monroe, B.L. (1990). Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the world. Yale University, New Haven.

COMMENTS OF THE SECRETARIAT

57. The recommendations of the workshop indicate that the Secretariat should take action regarding species that are not included in the appendices and for which no proposal for inclusion is being submitted. The Conference of the Parties should state whether this is acceptable considering the amount of work and the limited funds that the Secretariat has.

58. The Secretariat believes that the recommendations of the workshop should not be accepted as they are but the recommendations addressed to the Secretariat should instead be directed to the proposed Steering Committee (para. 19).

**Doc. 10.50 (Rev.) Annex 1**

RESOLUTION CONF. 9.15 OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Conservation of Edible-nest Swiftlets of the Genus *Collocalia*

AWARE that swiftlets of the genus *Collocalia* build nests wholly or partially made of saliva and that trade in the nests of some species is of very high commercial value and is providing benefits for local communities;

RECOGNIZING the high priority that all range States place on the conservation of the swiftlets and sustainable use of their nests;

RECOGNIZING also that nest harvest from many caves in range States appears to be declining and that such declines may be related to various factors such as disturbance of the colonies and reduced breeding productivity;

NOTING that more scientific studies are urgently needed in order to assess the sustainability of nest harvesting with respect to the wild-breeding swiftlet populations;

CONSIDERING that the Conference of the Parties has competence to consider any species subject to international trade;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE  
CONVENTION

URGES those Parties that are range States of the genus *Collocalia* to:

- a) encourage scientific research to promote the sustainability of nest harvesting through standardized management programmes;

- b) explore ways of enhancing the participation of representatives of the bird-nest industry in swiftlet conservation and sustainable-use programmes; and
- c) review regulations controlling harvest of wild-breeding swiftlet populations in accordance with the results of the scientific research carried out under paragraph a);

DIRECTS:

- a) the CITES Secretariat to convene a technical workshop in order to establish conservation priorities and actions for the sustainability of swiftlet-nest harvesting, and to invite the Chairman of the Animals Committee to participate in this workshop to be held within twelve months; and
- b) the Animals Committee to provide scientific guidance for the implementation of this Resolution; and

REQUESTS Italy to co-ordinate the interested Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to provide funding in order to implement this Resolution, particularly referring to the scientific research and the technical workshop.

Technical Workshop on Conservation Priorities and Actions for the Sustainability  
of Harvesting of and Trade in Nests of Swiftlets of the Genus *Collocalia* that  
Feature Prominently in the Bird-nest Trade (*Collocalia fuciphaga*, *Collocalia maxima* and *Collocalia germani*)

Surabaya (Indonesia), 4-7 November 1996

AGENDA

1. Welcome – Opening addresses by the Host Government and the Chairman of the Animals Committee
2. Comments from range and consumer States
  - a) Conservation and management in range States
  - b) Methods and regulations of harvesting in range States
  - c) Trade controls in range and consumer States
3. Biological data (for each of the three species)
  - a) Distribution and habitat
  - b) Population size and trends
  - c) Breeding success
4. Trade data
  - a) National use
  - b) International trade
  - c) Illegal trade
5. Potential trade threats
  - a) Disturbance at colonies
  - b) Over-harvesting
  - c) Harvesting period
  - d) Other threatening factors
6. Management options
  - a) Wild harvesting
  - b) Swiftlet farming
7. Review of regulations controlling harvesting and export
8. Conservation priorities and actions required
  - Scientific research required
9. Information on other species of *Collocalia*
10. Summary and conclusions
11. Closing remarks