

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF APPENDICES I AND II

Proposals resulting from reviews by the Animals and Plants Committees

**A. Proposal**

*Gallirallus australis hectori*

Deletion from Appendix II

**B. Proponent**

New Zealand

**C. Supporting Statement**

**1. Taxonomy**

- 1.1 Class Aves
- 1.2 Order Gruiformes
- 1.3 Family Rallidae
- 1.5 *Gallirallus australis hectori*
- 1.6 No recent scientific synonyms
- 1.7 Common names
  - Weka
  - Eastern Weka
  - Buff Weka
  - Woodhen

- 1.8 Code Number
  - A-215.003.018.004

**2. Biological Parameters**

**2.1 Distribution**

The Buff Weka is a subspecies of *G. australis* restricted to the Chatham Islands, 400km east of the main islands of New Zealand. Originally, its range consisted of lower rainfall areas east of the Southern Alps of the South Island, but the last record there was in 1924. However, this weka had been introduced to the Chatham Islands in 1904 (Fleming 1939) where, in contrast to its extirpation on the mainland, it is still common today.

**2.2 Habitat Availability**

While there is some habitat change on the Chatham Islands, there remains abundant habitat occupied by weka.

### 2.3 Population status

Though restricted to the Chatham Islands, the subspecies is relatively abundant there (Marchant and Higgins 1993). Buff weka are not held in captivity in large numbers.

### 2.4 Population trends

There is no detailed reliable information on population trends.

### 2.5 Geographic trends

No change.

### 2.6 Role of the species in the ecosystem

Weka have broad food preferences.

### 2.7 Threats

Though disease has been promoted as a reason for decline of other sub-species of weka, there is no direct evidence for this (Marchant and Higgins 1993). Studies underway of North Island Weka *G. australis greyi* indicate that predators, particularly cats and mustelids present the greatest direct threat, while habitat removal has doubtless had an effect in the past. Trade is not a threat at present.

## 3. Utilization and Trade

### 3.1 National utilization

The buff weka is considered sufficiently secure to be accorded gamebird status in the Chatham Islands.

It is subject to a restricted hunting season. This is in contrast to the absolutely protected status of most indigenous New Zealand birds, including the other subspecies of weka.

The level of harvest is unknown at present.

### 3.2 Legal international trade

The Animals Committee reports 2 records of trade in this bird since the inception of CITES and none in the last ten years.

### 3.3 Illegal trade

None known or suspected.

**3.4 Trade impacts**

None

**3.5 Captive breeding for commercial purposes**

None known

**4. Conservation and Management**

**4.1 Legal status**

**4.1.1 National**

Semi-protected. Subject to hunting controls.

**4.1.2 International**

CITES Appendix II

**4.2 Species management**

Sixteen birds were reintroduced to South Island (Arthurs Pass) in 1962. The population failed to establish. There are potential further reintroductions into managed areas in the South Island.

**4.2.1 Population monitoring**

Long-term population monitoring planned.

**4.2.2 Habitat Conservation**

Several major reserves established.

**4.2.3 Management measures**

Weka Recovery Plan drafted incorporating priority actions for all subspecies.

**4.3 Control measures**

**4.3.1 International trade**

Export from New Zealand illegal under the Wildlife Act 1953.

**4.3.2 Domestic measures**

Compliance and enforcement programme under Wildlife Act 1953.

5. Information on Similar Species

*Gallirallus sylvestris*, Lord Howe Island Woodhen, is under active conservation recovery and is the only other member of the genus listed under CITES. Look-alike problems are not expected to arise with the de-listing of *G. australis hectori*. The species are significantly different in size and appearance.

6. Other Comments

This proposal is at the suggestion of the Animals Committee and is consistent with the conditions for de-listing under the ten-year review. It is also consistent with an acknowledged need to remove species not subject to trade from the Appendices.

7. References

Fleming, C.A. 1939. *Emu* 38: 380-413

Marchant and Higgins. 1993. *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, Vol 2. Melbourne. Oxford University Press. 984pp.