

## CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF APPENDICES I AND II

## Other proposals

## A. Proposal

Transfer of the Bangladesh Population of *Varanus bengalensis* from CITES Appendix-I to Appendix-II for an export quota of 150,000 skins in 1997, 225,000 in 1998 and 2,25,000 in 1999 (Pursuant to Resolution Conf. 9.21).

## B. Proponent

The People's Republic of Bangladesh.

## C. Supporting Statement

## 1. Taxonomy

- |     |                 |   |                              |
|-----|-----------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1.1 | Class           | - | Reptilia                     |
| 1.2 | Order           | - | Sauria                       |
| 1.3 | Family          | - | Varanidae                    |
| 1.4 | Scientific name | - | <i>Varanus bengalensis</i>   |
| 1.5 | Common names    | - | engl. : Bengal Monitor       |
|     |                 |   | esp. : Varano de Bangala     |
|     |                 |   | fr. : Varan du Bengale       |
|     |                 |   | de. : Bengal-Waran           |
|     |                 |   | ital. : Varano del Bengala   |
|     |                 |   | bangla : Guil, Kalo gui shap |

1.6 Code No. A-303.016.001.002

## 2. Biological Data

2.1 Distribution : Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burma, India, Sri-Lanka, SE Iran, Nepal.

## 2.2 Populations :

*Varanus bengalensis* is very common in Bangladesh and occurs throughout the country.

In a survey conducted in 1981 in 13 villages of Dhaka, Mymensingh and Tangail districts mainly by interviewing village people, it was found that on average 1.80 individuals of the species occur in a homestead i.e., in every three acres of homestead habitats. In the same survey, the density of the species was found to be 0.45 individuals in a homestead i.e., in every acre in the villages of Rajshahi Division. Density was found to be much lower in the mango gardens of Rajshahi : 4 individuals in 50 acres. Average adult and young percentage was 62% and 38% (Table of the WCMC's report annexed, Annexure-I).

In a crude extrapolation of the results of the survey by WCMC, (World Conservation Monitoring Centre), the population size of the species was estimated at 2 millions given 70,000 to 85,000 villages in the country.

In an extensive survey conducted in 17 out of 19 districts of the country in 1988, density of the species was estimated at 13.3 individuals per square kilometer (Table prepared by WCMC annexed, Annexure-II). The survey was conducted by using transects through forests and complete investigation in villages with the assistance of village people. Country total of the species from the above survey was estimated at 507118 individuals. In the survey report it was recommended that if the population of monitors in the country is one million, 5% of could be called for commercial purposes.

In a survey conducted in 1996, density of the species was determined at 43.53 individuals per Km<sup>2</sup>; and the population size for the country was estimated at about 1.6 million individuals. Average adult : young percentage was 37% and 63%. The method used in this survey was "Trap, record, mark and release". All monitor lizards in a block of one square kilometer was trapped and counted. It was an actual whole count. The survey was made almost in all habitats throughout the country. A copy of the survey report is enclosed (Annexure-III). It has been recommended in the survey report that 10% of the total population could be harvested from the wild for commercial purposes.

### **Population trend :**

The species had been under continuous harvest from the wild for a long time (since twenty decade of this century). From 1958 to 1988, average export of monitor skins from Bangladesh has been estimated to be about 716657 skins per year. From this average export figures it is obvious that the monitor lizards have very high reproductive potentiality in Bangladesh. For this reason, after withdrawal of CITES reservation by Japan in 1992, the populations of monitor lizards in the country have increased very rapidly. Secondly, habitats of this species are very suitable in the country (through, the country is highly populated). The species prefers bushes and dirty places where human activities are very unusual and uncommon. The species breeds i.e., lays eggs in termite mounts which are not used by the people. For this reason, breeding success of the species is much higher in the country than any other reptilian species or group. So, population trend of the species in Bangladesh is always towards rapid increase.

- 2.3 **Habitats :** It mainly lives in bushes of homestead jungles. It prefers dirty places of homestead bushes where human activities are unusual. It also lives in earth holes and tree holes.

### **3. Trade Data**

3.1 **National Utilization :** Its meat is reported to be eaten by tribal people of the country, and skins available from incidental and natural deaths are used in the manufacture of purses, shoes, belts and are sometimes seen to be sold in the local city markets. These local activities are insignificant in comparison to the population sizes.

#### **3.2 Legal International trade :**

##### **3.2.1 History of trade :**

Export of monitor skins from the Indian Sub-continent was started in the beginning of this century and was well established since twenty decade. Bangladesh being situated almost in the middle of the range of this species, is very likely to be involved in trade of the species, is very likely to be involved in trade of the species from the wild since twenty decade. Japanese Customs statistics shows that Bangladesh had trade of monitor skins with Japan since 1958 and continued till 1988.

### 3.2.2 Annual average export :

Year-wise export of monitor skins from Bangladesh to Japan are annexed (Annexure-IV). As per explanation of the table by WCMC export of monitor skins from Bangladesh jointly recorded with the then West Pakistan (Now Pakistan) for the period from 1961 to 1971, and separately recorded for the years 1958 - 1960 and 1972 - 1988, and estimated annual average export for these three phases has been respectively estimated at 1080694.8, 865079.3 and 636476.12 skins. Of the average 10,80694.82 skins exported per year jointly from the then East Pakistan and West Pakistan, 60 - 95% were from the then East Pakistan i.e., Bangladesh. From this proportion, the annual average estimated export for the period from 1961 to 1971 alone from Bangladesh has been found to be about 648416.89 skins. Thus the average annual export of monitor skins from Bangladesh stands at 716657.44 skins (average of the three phases average). Species ratio of monitor skins exported to Japan is not known. However, based on estimation by All Japan Reptile Association (AJRA), WCMC reported that *Varanus bengalensis* had 60% and *Varanus flavescens* had 40% of the Monitor skins imported to Japan. The Bangladesh annual country report to CITES for 1983, 1984 and 1985 had the following species composition :

<i>V. bengalensis</i>	=	10,99,395 Skins.
<i>V. flkavescens</i>	=	3,55,720 "
<i>V. salvator</i>	=	9,500 "

It is obvious from the above statistics that export of *V. bengalensis* skins was much higher than *V. flavescens*, and about 67% i.e., about 4,80,000 pieces of skins of *V. bengalensis* were exported every year during the period from 1958 to 1988 from Bangladesh.

### 3.2.3 Legal Trade :

CITES entered into force in Bangladesh on 18th February 1982, and till this date, monitor skins were legally exported from Bangladesh.

In 1982, Government received a stock of about two millions of monitor skins which were procured by traders before 1982. Due to CITES Appendix-I status of *V. bengalensis* and *V. flavescens*, these skins could not be exported to any party but Japan. CITES Secretariat had been informed of the stock, and the Government did not allow export of any monitor skins after completion of export of about 1.5 million skins of this confiscated stock to Japan; and about 5,00,000 pieces of skins were damaged.

3.2.4 **ILlegal Trade** : After 1985, the Ministry of Environment and Forest and the Management Authority for CITES in Bangladesh i.e., the Chief Conservator of Forest did not issue any permit for export of monitor skins from Bangladesh after completion of export of 1.5 million pcs. of skins mentioned in the above paragraph. However, there were reports about illegal trade of monitor skins from Bangladesh, and in 1991, an illegal consignment of about 1,00,000 skins were seized in the Chittagong sea-port. The skins were confiscated and damaged.

3.2.5 **Potential Trade threats** : Trade volume of the species for a period of last about 30 years and present population status of the species in the country indicate that there is no potential trade threats to the natural populations of the species in Bangladesh.

#### 4. **Protection Status** :

4.1 **National** : The species is included in the Third Schedule of the Bangladesh (Preservation) (Amendment) Act, 1974; and due to this status, harvest of the species without government permission, is punishable offence.

4.2 **International** : The species is included in Appendix-I of CITES and at present, there is no reservation on this CITES status (Japan withdrew its reservation from the species in 1992).

4.3 Additional Protection needs : Not required. Domestic legislation is comprehensive to give necessary protection.

5. Information on similar species :

The two other monitor species of the country are *Varanus flavescens* and *Varanus salvator*. Both of these species are included in the Third Schedule of the Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation)(Amendment) Act, 1974. *Varanus flavescens* is very common in the country and occurs throughout the country except the coastal saline region, and *Varanus salvator* is also very common in the coastal districts.

6. Comments from Range States :

Range states have been requested for support and comments on the proposal (Annexure-V).

7. Additional Remarks :

- (1) Forest Directorate has been periodically surveying the species. Based on the results of the survey conducted in 1996, management of the species at sustainable level has been approved by the Government.
- (2) All the very species of monitor lizards breed very well in Bangladesh. Though no study has been conducted on breeding biology of the species in the country, it is assumed that the species has very high reproductive potentiality. For this reason, continuous harvest from the wild for trade of its skins for last 75 years has been found to cause no effect on the wild population. So, past trade volume has proved the potentiality of the species for utilization at sustainable level.
- (3) It is reported that the species is smuggled out of Indian to Bangladesh. But there was no documented evidence on smuggling of the species from India to Bangladesh. Bangladesh supports a very potential population which could sustain harvest at 10% without detrimental effect of the populations.

- (4) In the seventh meeting of the COP of CITES there was a suggestion from the Secretariat that after withdrawal of the reservation on the species by Japan, proposal for transfer of the species from Appendix-I to Appendix-II would be considered. Japan withdrew its reservation from the species in 1992.

**References :**

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3. Khan, M. A. R. (1982). Wildlife of Bangladesh-a Checklist. Published by the University of Dhaka, 1992.
4. Khan, M. A. R. (1988). A report on the survey of the biological and trade status of *Varanus bengalensis*, *Varanus flavescens* and *Varanus salvator* in Bangladesh.
5. Luxmoore, R. and B. Groombridge (1982) Asian Monitor Lizards : a review of the distribution, status, exploitation and trade in four selected species. A draft report to the CITES Secretariat.

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