

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF APPENDICES I AND II

Other proposals

A. Proposal

Transfer of the Bangladesh Population of *Varanus flavescens* from CITES Appendix-I to Appendix-II for an export quota of 100,000 skins in 1997, 100,000 in 1998 and 100,000 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 - *Varanus flavescens*
 1.5 Common name-
 engl. : Yellow Monitor
 esp. : Varano amarillo
 fr. : Varan jaune
 de. : Gelbwaran
 ital. : Varano giallo
 Bangl. : Kalo gui, Hun gui
 1.6 Code No. A-303.016.001.008

2. Biological Data

- 2.1 Distribution : Bangladesh, Burma, N. India, Pakistan.
 2.2 Populations :

Varanus flavescens is very common in Bangladesh and occurs almost throughout the country except the coastal saline region.

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 0.17 individuals of the species occur in a homestead i.e., in every three acres of homestead habitats. In the same survey, density of the species was found to be 0.09

individuals in a homestead i.e. in every acre in the villages of Rajshahi Division (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 0.2 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 7.5 individuals per square kilometer (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 120083 individuals.

In a survey conducted in 1996, density of the species was determined at 49 individuals per km² in the Barind Tract and 1.08 km² in the flood plains; and the population size for the country was estimated at about 1.7 million individuals. 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 (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); and 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 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 (though the country is highly populated). The species prefers embankments, river banks, khals, ponds or gullies or agricultural lands where human activities are uncommon. The species breeds i.e., lays eggs in termite mounds which are not normally 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 embankments, khals, ponds.

3. Trade Data :

3.2.1 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 sometimes seen to be sold in the local city markets. These local activities are insignificant in comparison to the population sizes.

3.2.2 Annual average export :

Year-wise export of monitor skins from Bangladesh to Japan is 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 1080694.82, 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 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. flavescens</i> | = | 3,55,720 | " |
| <i>V. salvator</i> | = | 9,500 | " |

It appears from the above statistics that 33% i.e., about 236496 pieces of skins of *V. flavescens* 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 (Pre-convention Acquisition). Due to CITES Appendix-1 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 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 Forests did not issue any permit for export of monitor skins from Bangladesh. 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 seaport. The skins were confiscated and damaged.

3.2.5 Potential Trade threats :

The 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 Wildlife (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 bengalensis* and *Varanus salvator*. Both of these species are included in the Third Schedule of the Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation)(Amendment) Act, 1974. *Varanus bengalensis* is very common and occurs throughout the country; and *Varanus salvator* is also very common in the coastal districts.

6. **Comments from Range States :**

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

7. **Additional Remarks :**

- (1) Government of Bangladesh has been periodically surveying the species. Based on the result 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 its wild population. Past trade statistics have proved the potentiality of the species for utilization at sustainable level.
- (3) It is reported that the species is smuggled out of India 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.

References :

1. Akonda, A. W. (1996). Draft report of the survey of Monitor lizards in Bangladesh. Submitted to the Forest Department (Conservator of Forest, Wildlife Circle), on 24th October, 1996.
2. Akonda, A. W., Ahsan, F, and Rahman, M. (1988). Monitor lizards of Bangladesh. Published in the Proceedings of the Second Bangladesh National Conference on Forestry. Dhaka, Jan. 21-26, 1982.
3. Khan, M. A. R. (1982). Wildlife 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 R. 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.

Sattar
01/02/97

(M. A. Sattar)
Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests
Development Planning & incharge of
Wildlife Circle
and
Assistant Management Authority for
CITES in Bangladesh.