

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO THE PROPOSAL 12.16 TO TRANSFER THE YELLOW-NAPED AMAZON
(*Amazona auropalliata*) FROM APPENDIX II TO APPENDIX I (Costa Rica)

Presented by
CITES Management Authority of Costa Rica and
CITES Representative of the Central American Commission on the Environment and Development

Prepared by
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This information document is presented to the 12th Conference of the Parties with the aim of communicating that there is a consensus position by all range states of the yellow-naped amazon (Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica) to support the transfer of the species to appendix 1. Belize and Panama, member states of the Central American Commission on the Environment and Development (CCAD) also support the proposal 12.16. In addition, this document expands the justification for this transfer by arguing that available numbers of population size are probably, considerable overestimates. This species meets the biological and trade criteria for inclusion in appendix 1.

1. Support of all range states to transfer the species to appendix 1.

At the meeting of the CITES Technical Committee of the Central American Commission on the Environment and Development¹ (CCAD), celebrated in San José on 25.-26. September 2002, it was agreed by consensus to support proposal 12.16 at COP12. The member states of CCAD are Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Belize, Nicaragua, Panama and Costa Rica. Mexico assisted to the meeting as an observer and equally supported this proposal. Therefore, all range states of this species, including Nicaragua, the only range country that currently exports the species commercially, support the proposal 12.16. The position of support has been confirmed to Costa Rica by the respective government delegations at the meetings of CCAD member states celebrated on 4. and 6. of November 2002 in Santiago de Chile.

2. Overestimation of the population size of *Amazona auropalliata*

Proposal 12.16 and the information document COP12 Inf. 13 (prepared by Mexico) present evidence of the marked decline of the populations and available habitat of *Amazona auropalliata*, as well as local extinctions and a reduction in the range of distribution. The only estimates of the population size of this species have been produced for Honduras and Nicaragua (Wiedenfeld 1993, Wiedenfeld 1995, Wiedenfeld et al. 1999). The estimates for Nicaragua made in 1995 and 1999 suggest a decline of 48% within a period of four years. Nonetheless, the authors explain that this difference is not statistically significant, reflecting the crudeness of the methodology used. This methodology and the low number of yellow-naped parrots sighted during the fieldwork generate wide confidence intervals for national extrapolations (Renton & Wright (2002) for IUCN-Traffic, *Analyses of the proposals to amend the CITES appendices* for COP12). Moreover, the total population size is overestimated since the extrapolation consisted of multiplying the densities calculated from bird counts by the surface area of the country, without considering the area of habitat actually available to the species. The current habitat is much less than the countries' area as a consequence of ecological heterogeneity and of the deforestation documented in proposal 12.16 and document COP12 Inf.13. The magnitude of the overestimate is even larger upon consideration of the fact that the species is not necessarily present in available habitat. A conservative estimate of the potential habitat of *A. auropalliata* in Costa Rica, including areas of forest, grasslands and farmland of the dry Pacific slope, yields a size of 6.871 km², out of which only 1.085 km² (16%) is under state protection (Abadia et al., 1998). The species is considered common only in protected areas, whereas outside of these it is rare or locally extinct. Nest poaching for the pet trade takes place even inside of protected areas, thereby limiting the recruitment of juveniles to the reproductive cohorts of the population (Wright 1996). The nesting tree is commonly fell to catch the chicks, thus what may look as available habitat lacks breeding sites as a consequence of poaching pressure. The actual population size of *A. auropalliata* is unknown – but it is undoubtedly much smaller than has been reported thus far.

In the evaluation of this proposal, the Secretariat suggests that the global size of the population rests weight to the justification to transfer the species to appendix 1. This appreciation is based on national estimates for Honduras and Guatemala, which as explained in this document, are overestimates produced by methodological limitations.

¹ The CCAD represents the conference of ministries of the environment of Central America.

Moreover, the estimates should be interpreted in their pertinent biological context, in the light of the demographic structure resulting from the significant nest poaching documented in proposal 12.16. Sightings of yellow-naped parrots most likely correspond to an aging population of adults with very low recruitment rates due to the pronounced nest poaching levels. Given that the species is long lived, not even a total extraction of chicks would be noticed but several years after, and the population would collapse as the adults die off naturally (Wiedenfeld 1995).

3. Satisfaction of the criteria for inclusion in Appendix 1.

The yellow-naped amazon meets the criteria of Res.Conf. 9.24 for inclusion in appendix 1. The species is subject to trade and meets the biological criteria C i and C ii of Annex 1: a decline in the number of animals in the wild caused by levels of exploitation and a reduction in the area and quality of the habitat. In addition to the local extinctions documented in all range countries in proposal 12.16, the population of *A. auropalliata* probably declined by 50% within two generations (Renton & Wright (2002) for IUCN-Traffic, *Analyses of the proposals to amend the CITES appendices for COP12*) and hence meets the guiding definition of "decline" in Annex 5 of Res.Conf. 9.24.

4. International trade is associated to poaching levels in the range states.

Proposal 12.16 amply documents the significant levels of nest poaching in the range states. In addition to supplying the internal pet market, these poaching levels are related to the international demand and illegal trade associated to it. For this reason, the inclusion of the species in appendix 1 would mitigate the pressure on wild populations in as much as the international legal demand would be halted. Also, the transfer of the species to appendix 1 would allow stronger sanctions to be applied to illegal traders of specimens of the yellow-naped amazon (document COP12 Inf.13). The link between nest poaching and international trade is justified as follows:

- 4.1 Nest poaching of parrots in the range states, including *A. auropalliata*, declined significantly after the ban on imports of wild caught birds to the U.S. was passed in 1992 with the Wild Bird Conservation Act (Wright et al. 2001). It is to be anticipated that the transfer of the species to appendix 1 will reduce even more the levels of poaching, given the global scope of its application.
- 4.2 North American bird breeders consider that parrot species selling for more than US\$ 500 (*A. auropalliata* sells in the U.S. for US\$ 825-1.350) are more likely to be imported illegally to the U.S., because these can be sold cheaper than specimens bred in captivity in the U.S. (Harris 1994, Sefton 1995).
- 4.3 Levels of poaching are significantly smaller in species selling in the U.S. for less than US\$ 500, than in species, as *A. auropalliata*, which sell for prices higher than that amount (Wright et al. 2001).
- 4.4 Illegal trade with the species is ongoing. It was the species most commonly confiscated in the border between Mexico and the U.S. in the period 1990-1993 (Gobbi et al. 1996), including birds from Honduras and Guatemala (Snyder et al. 2000). Seizures of yellow-naped amazons at international borders persist in the period between 1994 and 2001: the confiscated birds came from Mexico, Nicaragua and Costa Rica (references in Renton & Wright (2002) for IUCN-Traffic, *Analyses of the proposals to amend the CITES appendices for COP12*).

5. Toward a regional strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of psittacids

The conservation status of the yellow-naped amazon reflects a multi-threat scenario, in which international illegal trade contributes to the poaching of nests in the range states. The transfer to appendix 1 would contribute in a pertinent and timely manner to mitigate this pressure on the species by halting the international, commercial demand. Aware of the urgency to also address the illegality associated to the internal demand for chicks of *A. auropalliata* as pets and its habitat destruction, as well as to implement adequate management schemes for the sustainable use of parrots, the member states of CCAD agreed through their Technical Committee at the meeting of 25.-26. September 2002 in San José to initiate "regional work on psittacids under the framework of CCAD, in order to learn about the status of Mesoamerican species and to look for conservation options and sustainable use alternatives in the long term, as a strategy that would be announced to the COP12 seeking the support of the international community."

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