

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

Thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Bangkok (Thailand), 2-14 October 2004

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Amendment of the Appendices

Standard nomenclature

STANDARD NOMENCLATURE FOR BIRDS

1. This document has been submitted by Mexico.

Background

2. At its 12th meeting (Santiago, 2002), and at the proposal of the Nomenclature Committee, the Conference of the Parties adopted through Resolution Conf. 12.11 the *Checklist of CITES species*, 2001 compiled by UNEP-WCMC and its updates accepted by the Nomenclature Committee as the standard reference for animal species included in the CITES Appendices.
3. In accordance with the report of the Nomenclature Committee for the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties [CoP12 Doc. 10.3 (Rev. 1), paragraphs 9 and 10], it was recommended to use the nomenclature established in the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, volume 4 (1997) and volume 5 (1999) for the taxa Psittaciformes and Trochilidae, respectively, in place of Sibley and Monroe (1990), which is the reference used by CITES for the rest of the class Aves.
4. Nonetheless, in that same document [CoP12 Doc. 10.3 (Rev. 1), paragraph 26] the Nomenclature Committee recommended that amendments to the taxonomic status of any taxon not be adopted while still under discussion within the scientific community.
5. Taking this into account, Mexico considers it to be inappropriate that alternative, approved references are used for specific groups that do not come from a collegiate body and that are not recognized worldwide. In this case, the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* is not an accepted taxonomic reference. It is a popular reference that has the primary objective of providing information to the general public interested in learning about the natural history and distribution of birds. In no way is it an academic reference that has already been used as a basis for taxonomic analyses and much less for taking decisions at the level of national or international policy.
6. There is currently wide debate in the international taxonomic community about the validity of sub-species as real and recognizable categories. In this regard, the Conference of the Parties recommends in Resolution Conf. 12.11, paragraph a), that "a subspecies be proposed for inclusion in the Appendices only if it is generally recognized as a valid taxon, and easily identifiable in the traded form". This situation is extremely complicated in cases such as that of the *Amazona ochrocephala-oratrix-auropalliata* complex, which is now divided into the following sub-species of *A. ochrocephala* included in CITES Appendix I: *A. o. auropalliata*, *A. o. belizensis*, *A. o. caribaea*, *A. o. oratrix*, *A. o. parvipes* and *A. o. tresmariae*, while *A. o. ochrocephala* is included in Appendix II.
7. Because that source recognizes a large number of sub-species, this change means that the implementation of the Convention and domestic law for any international movement of specimens of these groups (see document AC19 Doc. 20.2, page 2) would require precise identification of each specimen at the sub-species level, complicating even further the work of the Management and

Scientific Authorities and, above all, the work of inspectors through the use of several references for a single taxonomic group.

8. The information provided in the present document was already submitted by Mexico at the 19th meeting of the Animals Committee (Geneva, August 2003) in document AC19 Doc. 20.2, under the same title. Switzerland also submitted at that meeting document AC19 Doc. 20.1 on the Role of taxonomic and nomenclatural references, and amendment of the Appendices as a consequence of nomenclatural changes. The case of *Amazona ochrocephala* is used in that document as an example to present several other complications deriving from the adoption of this new reference, among which figures the split-listing of *Amazona ochrocephala* resulting from the change in the standard taxonomic reference. Both documents were widely debated in plenary session as well as at the concomitant meeting of the Nomenclature Committee. It was suggested that Mexico should formally present a proposal for amendment for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its 13th meeting.

Proposal

9. Given that the current reference gives rise to complications and controversies, such as the recognition of its taxonomic validity and use of sub-species not recognized as valid taxa by most experts, and that the change in the standard taxonomic reference created a split-listing which can cause difficulties in implementing the Convention, Mexico proposes that the Parties return to the original taxonomic reference for Psittaciformes and Trochilidae, namely Sibley and Monroe (1990), which is the reference used by CITES for the rest of the class Aves.
10. Mexico also proposes that the Parties consider the adoption of recent and more-detailed works, such as regional lists (prepared through a collegiate effort) and that the Nomenclature Committee evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using those lists through consultation and discussion with the Parties.
11. Several examples of regional lists are:
 - a) *AOU para Norte, Centroamérica, el Caribe y Hawai.*
 - b) Robert Ridgely and Guy Tudor. 1994. *The Birds of South America*. Volumes 1 and 2. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
 - c) Dickinson, E. C., Kennedy, R. S. and Parkes, K. C. 1991. *The Birds of the Philippines: An annotated checklist*. Tring, United Kingdom: British Ornithologists' Union.

COMMENTS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

- A. The matter of standard nomenclature for birds is also addressed in the report of the Nomenclature Committee (see document CoP13 Doc. 9.3). The Nomenclature Committee has advised that the *Handbook of the Birds of the World* is accepted worldwide as a good source of taxonomy, nomenclature, distribution and life history data for birds, and that the sections on Psittaciformes and Trochilidae were written by recognized international experts. They were adopted by consensus as standard references for these taxa at CoP12. The Secretariat is unaware of complications or controversies that they might have caused other than the concerns expressed by some Parties regarding the specific case of *Amazona ochrocephala*. The Secretariat is of the opinion that changing these standard references after only two years may create confusion unnecessarily. For these reasons, the Secretariat does not support Mexico's proposal in paragraph 9 of this document.
- B. The Nomenclature Committee (fauna) is tasked with making recommendations on nomenclature to the Conference of the Parties, other committees, working groups and the Secretariat. When it accepts new or updated references for a given taxon, it presents these to the Conference of the Parties for adoption as a standard reference for that taxon. The new names are then included in the *Checklist of CITES species*, the single standard reference for the names of species included in the Appendices. In this regard, the proposal by Mexico for the Nomenclature Committee to evaluate certain species lists (see paragraphs 10 and 11) only confirms one of the existing, ongoing functions

of the Committee. The Secretariat recommends that Mexico bring its proposed references to the attention of the Nomenclature Committee for review.

- C. In its report to the Conference of the Parties, the Nomenclature Committee mentions that it examined the possibility of replacing the currently accepted references for bird nomenclature by a single recent publication [Dickinson, Edward C. ed. (2003)], but that the large number of name changes that this would cause dissuaded it from doing so. The Nomenclature Committee may consider this matter again after CoP13 and explore further possibilities to identify a suitable, globally accepted nomenclature reference for birds listed in CITES.