



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240



IN REPLY REFER TO:
FWS/DMA/TRE 1-03 v.3.

CoP17 Doc. 88.2
Annex 13

JUL 26 2016

Mr. John Scanlon, Secretary-General
CITES Secretariat
International Environment House
11 Chemin des Anémones
CH-1219 Châtelaine-Geneve
Switzerland

VIA EMAIL: info@cites.org

Dear Mr. Scanlon:

This letter responds to Notification to the Parties 2016/043, which invites Parties to provide comments on the proposals to amend Appendices I and II that will be considered at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from September 24 to October 5, 2016.

We are writing specifically to provide comments on the pangolin proposals (CoP17 Prop. 8-12), the Pygmy chameleon proposal (CoP17 Prop. 27 & 28), and the thresher and silky shark proposals (CoP17 Prop. 42 & 43). Please find our comments enclosed. Our comments are attached. If you have any questions concerning our comments, please direct them to Dr. Rosemarie Gnam, Chief, Division of Scientific Authority, at: rosemarie_gnam@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Craig Hoover, Chief
Division of Management Authority

Enclosure

Comments from the United States on CoP17 Species Proposals:

Proposal 8 Indian Pangolin () submitted by Bangladesh

As a proponent of CoP17 Proposal 9 to transfer the Indian Pangolin from Appendix II to Appendix I, we appreciate Bangladesh's leadership to conserve this species. We note that their proposal (#8) is very similar in content to our proposal #9 with our proposal (#9) containing more recent information as to why the species meets the CITES criteria and requests support for the same action to transfer the species from Appendix II to Appendix I.

Proposals 8-12 for the transfer of all pangolin species from Appendix II to Appendix I.

Proposals 8 – 12 provide compelling evidence that African and Asian pangolins should be transferred from Appendix II to Appendix I on the basis that all species are being heavily impacted by a rise in illegal exploitation. The proposals highlight the extensive trade in pangolins and their scales to meet consumer demands especially for traditional medicine. Over the last 15 years, seizures by custom officials have recorded more than 260,000 Asian pangolins in illegal trade likely representing an actual 1 million animals harvested from the wild (Please see following reference: D.W.S. Challender, S.R. Harrop, D.C. MacMillan (2015) Understanding markets to conserve trade-threatened species in CITES, *Biological Conservation*, 187:249-259). It is speculated that international trade in African pangolins has escalated more recently. Between 2013 and 2015, approximately 7,500kg of pangolin scales were seized from illegal shipments originating from African countries, representing between 2,100 – 21,000 individual pangolins depending on the actual species harvested. However, more recently, and following the April 27, 2016 submission deadline for CoP17 proposals, the two largest confiscations to date of African pangolin scales were intercepted by customs officials in Hong Kong. The seizures, which originated from Cameroon and Nigeria, were reported on June 23, 2016 and July 19, 2016 and involved over 11,000kg of pangolin scales with an estimated value of \$3 million US on the black market. Based on species specific conversion factors, the volume of scales represents between 3,000 and 18,000 individual pangolins. The smaller value would be accurate if only the largest species of Giant pangolin (*Manis gigantea*) were harvested. However, based on survey and market data it is more probable that a combination of smaller and larger species were included in the confiscations. We wish to reiterate that harvest and trade of African pangolins is likely already at unsustainable levels given that pangolins reproduce slowly. The latest confiscations from Africa lend additional support that pangolins are in high demand and are being harvested at levels detrimental to their wild populations. Therefore, all pangolin species would greatly benefit from higher protection afforded through an Appendix I listing.

Proposal 27 & 28 Inclusion of Pygmy chameleons (*Rhamphaleon spp.* and *Rieppeleon spp.*) in Appendix II

We note that Kenya, as sole proponent, has submitted a proposal (CoP19 Prop28) that covers the same species of African Pygmy Chameleons for inclusion in Appendix II as Prop 27 by Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria, and the United States of America. Both proposals were derived and subsequently modified/updated from an earlier proposal drafted (but never submitted) for CoP16 in 2013. Kenya's proposal provides additional information not included in Prop 27 on species found within Kenya.

Proposal 42 – Inclusion of silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*) in Appendix II.

The United States is a range country for silky sharks. We wish to offer the following recommendation for implementation: We acknowledge that there are still capacity building needs associated with the CITES-shark listings in some regions. Therefore, the United States believes that an implementation delay of 18 months would be helpful for CITES Parties to develop non-detriment findings and address other implementation challenges associated with the adoption of this listing. In addition, besides being harvested for the fin trade, silky sharks are harvested for meat that can be traded internationally. There may be additional implementation issues associated with the processing of permits for the export of fresh and perishable shark meat. The United States notes that as a range country, we do have harvest for meat.

Proposal 43 – Inclusion of three species of thresher sharks (*Alopias spp.*) in Appendix II.

The United States is a range country for thresher sharks. We wish to provide this supplemental information that we ask Parties to consider. Presented below are recent data and literature intended to strengthen the CoP17 proposal 43 to list *Alopias spp.* in Appendix II of CITES and an implementation recommendation to consider as well.

Reference to declining catches of bigeye thresher shark in the Indian Ocean:

There are no abundance trends for bigeye thresher in the Indian Ocean. Longline fishing effort appears to be declining and remaining effort is more concentrated in temperate waters where bigeye thresher sharks are less prevalent. This reduction and shift to more temperate waters likely accounts for some of the reduction in catch. Please see the following reference: Ardill, D., Itano, D., Gillett, R. (2011). A review of bycatch and discard issues in Indian Ocean tuna fisheries. SmartFish Working Papers No. 00X. Indian Ocean Commission-SmartFish Programme.

80% decline of bigeye thresher sharks in the Atlantic Ocean:

A more recent article indicates that thresher populations in the Atlantic appear to have stabilized. Please see the following reference: Baum and Blanchard (2010). Inferring shark population

trends from generalized linear mixed models of pelagic longline catch and effort data. Fisheries Research 102: 229-239.

Historical declines in the Northwest Atlantic were based on logbook data for a species complex. Recent species specific analyses on bigeye thresher sharks using observer data for this fishery shows a stable trend since the 1990s. Please see the following reference: National Marine Fisheries Service, 2015. Status Review Report: Common Thresher (*Alopias vulpinus*) and Bigeye Thresher (*Alopias superciliosus*) Sharks.

83% decline of bigeye thresher sharks in the western and central Pacific:

More recent data shows that Japanese longline catches were stable over the last decade and some areas showed slight increases in catches but no clear trend. Please see the following references: Clarke, S. (2011). A status snapshot of key shark species in the Western and Central Pacific and potential management options. Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Scientific Committee Seventh Regular Session. WCPFC-SC7-2011/EB-WP-04; Lawson, T. (2011) Estimation of catch rates and catches of key shark species in tuna fisheries of the Western and Central Pacific Ocean using observer data. Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Scientific Committee Seventh Regular Session. WCPFC-SC7-2011/EB-IP-02.

Bigeye bycatch in the Hawaiian longline tuna fishery has shown an increasing trend. Please see the following reference: PIFSC (2014). The Hawaii-based longline logbook summary report January–December 2014. 14.

A slightly decreasing trend in the thresher complex from 2003-2011 has been shown for the Western and Central Pacific. Please see the following reference: Rice, J., Tremblay-Boyer, L., Scott, R., Hare, S., Tidd, A. (2015) Analysis of stock status and related indicators for key shark species of the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, Scientific Committee Eleventh Regular Session. WCPFCSC11-2015/EB-WP-04-Rev 1.

Bigeye thresher sharks have undergone a 63% decline in population since 1986:

An updated analysis of this data through 2013 using the same methods as Cortes *et al.* 2007 shows that the bigeye thresher population has stabilized. Please see the following reference: National Marine Fisheries Service, 2015. Status Review Report: Common Thresher (*Alopias vulpinus*) and Bigeye Thresher (*Alopias superciliosus*) Sharks.

18-month implementation delay:

In the consultation phase for this proposal, the United States reviewed a preliminary draft of the proposal that provided an 18-month implementation delay to “enable Parties to resolve the related technical and administrative issues” associated with the CITES listing. This delay was

not included in the proposal that was submitted for consideration at CoP17. The United States believes that an implementation delay would be useful for CITES Parties to develop non-detriment findings and address other implementation challenges associated with the adoption of this listing. In addition, besides being harvested for the fin trade, thresher sharks are harvested for meat that can be traded internationally. There may be additional implementation issues associated with the processing of permits for the export of fresh and perishable shark meat. The United States notes that as a range country, we do have harvest for meat.