

AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

Other Proposals

A. PROPOSAL

Inclusion of Rhea americana in Appendix II.

B. PROPONENT

Argentina.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Aves  
12. Order: Rheiformes  
13. Family: Rheidae  
14. Species: Rhea americana (Linnaeus, 1758)

Five subspecies are usually identified:

- R. a. albescens (Lynch Arribalzaga & Holmberg, 1978)  
R. a. americana (Linnaeus, 1758)  
R. a. araneipes (Rothschild & Chubb, 1914)  
R. a. nobilis (Brodkorb, 1939)

These subspecies differ from one another by subtle morphological differences (Guittin, 1985) and are unevenly distributed. Other authors (Short, 1975; Fauna Argentina, 1984) recognize only two subspecies (R. a. albescens and R. a. araneipes) and indicate that both subspecies are overlapping in the Chaco region. In the review of species subject to significant trade carried out by CITES and the IUCN (Inskipp *et al.*, 1988), it was concluded that it is not clear whether these are valid taxonomic subspecies.

Undoubtedly, for the control purposes that CITES envisages, the subspecies (if it is concluded that any exist) cannot be differentiated in commercial products.

Nor can the subspecies be identified on the basis of place of origin. The natural continuity of the Chaco ecosystem in Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina makes it impossible to claim that the subspecies albescens is the only one present in Argentina, and, at the same time, that it is not found in other countries.

- 15: Common Names: English: rhea, American ostrich  
French: nandou  
Spanish: Nandu, Avestruz americano  
Portuguese: ema  
Quechua: suri

16. Code Numbers:

2. Biological Data

21. Distribution: The species is extensively distributed in south-east South America. It occurs in Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina. Contrary to the other genera of Rheidae (Pterocnemia), it does not occur westwards of the Cordillera of Andes.

In Brazil, it is found in environments of open vegetation such as "cerrado", "caatinga" and in some districts of the Parana phytogeographic province (sensu Cabrera and Willink, 1873).

According to Sick (1986), the distribution in Brazil goes from southern Para State, Nordeste (including Maranhao State and areas of the valley of San Francisco River) and generically all east, south and central west of the country.

In Argentina, the southern range limit is in the ecotonal area between the Pampa region and Patagonia, which corresponds to the southernmost part of the phytogeographic province of the "monte", close to the Río Negro. Close to the mouth of this river into the Atlantic, close to the city of Viedma, its presence has been confirmed in various states of the southern riverside (Balabusic, 1989). Various authors record its occurrence in several provinces of Argentina, always in the extra-Andean part of the country. Rabinovich et al. (1987) mentioned it in 18 provinces while Narosky and Yzurieta (1987) mentioned it in 20 provinces, adding San Juan and Río Negro.

22. Population: To date, no bona fide population data exist in any of the range states. In Argentina, complete census have been undertaken in some private estates (estancias) of the Buenos Aires (Parisi, pers. comm) and Entre Rios (Reboreda, unpubl. report) Provinces during the last two years.

The species has been recently recorded (1990/91) in various localities of the Formosa, Corrientes, Entre Rios, Santiago del Estero, Jujuy, La Pampa and Buenos Aires Provinces (DNFS, Programa Nacional de Censos e Informes de Avistajes).

In 1991, the authority responsible for implementing CITES in Argentina initiated a study funded by the CITES Secretariat to determine the status of the species and its population parameters.

Despite the lack of systemized data, there is no doubt that the species is no longer as widely distributed, primarily because its habitat has been affected by the expansion of agriculture, mostly in the Pampas region of Argentina, in Uruguay and in eastern and southern Brazil. On some cattle ranches it has been wiped out by hunting.

However, even in areas heavily disturbed and fairly close to large urban centres, the species is found on many private estates, where it receives relative protection by rural landowners. As a result of the dividing-up of the land, groups of these birds, although reduced in number, remain confined within large private domains, in what has been called, perhaps improperly, as state of "semi-captivity" (Inskipp, 1988) or "ranches" (Godoy, 1963).

23. Habitat: Although the species characteristically lives in open grasslands, it is also found in denser woodlands like the Chaco. In the latter, it prefers patches of natural pastureland (clearing), as has been reported in the Copo Reserve, one of the few remaining virgin stands of quebracho in Argentina (Porini, pers. comm.).

### 3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization: In its range, the species has always been used for its meat, eggs, feathers, skin and grease, with very diverse applications for the aboriginal and creole cultures (Fauna Argentina, 1984; Sick, 1986).

With the increasing use of the Pampas for modern agriculture in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of this century, the species was heavily hunted.

Subsequently, live animals were plucked to satisfy the demands of European fashion. On a number of Argentine ranches it became common to use "plucking corals" as a nondestructive method of exploitation. In Brazil, similar methods were used in the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

In Argentina, ostrich skin is commonly used in leather products. Similarly, Rhea feathers are used to make dusters, although feathers have been partially replaced by less expensive synthetic products.

The meat, especially from the thighs, called "picana", is consumed locally on the Argentine coast and in southern Brazil. The eggs are also eaten locally.

32. Legal International Trade:

- a) Skins: Cajal (1986) provided the following figures for Argentina's legal international trade in Rhea americana skins:

1976	25,499
1977	22,316
1978	43,054
1979	22,251
1980	24,578
1981	26,995
1982	14,580
1983	10,619
1984	14,430

Gruss and Walter (1988) give the same figures for Argentina, except for the following years:

1975	21,055
1982	21,120
1984	5,879
1985	13,240

There also exist export figures for the past decades, such as these provided by Godoy (1963) for Argentina:

1941-50	94,928
1961-60	104,238

Godoy also reports that commercial hunting yielded 15,000 skins annually, of which 5,000 were used domestically.

Inskipp *et al.* (1988) provide the following figures as totals for the species:

1980	56,930				
1981	49,732	+	11,877 kg	+	1,262 m <sup>2</sup>
1982	36,028	+	6,300 kg	+	160 m <sup>2</sup>
1983	7,055	+	11,479 kg	+	4 m <sup>2</sup>
1984	17,207	+	18,869 kg	+	96 m <sup>2</sup>
1985	20,773	+	9,081 kg	+	202 m <sup>2</sup>

The method used in this last study provides figures for net imports reported by the importing countries (see Annex 1), accounting for all trade in the species, although only the subspecies albescens is included in the Convention to date.

Annex 2 contains the figures by country of origin for the subspecies albescens according to the same source. It can be seen that a substantial part of the trade in the species is reported as having originated in Paraguay, since the subspecies is not found in that country.

Annex 3 provides figures (again taken from Inskipp *et al.*, 1988) for Rhea americana as a whole, including both imports identified as the subspecies albescens and imports that are not identified as any subspecies.

With the coming into force of Resolution 532/90, Argentina authorized trade in legal stocks remaining in the country (Notification to the Parties No. 626), and a total of 18,000 tanned skins were exported between March and August of this year.

An analysis of recent export permits showed the relationship between the weight and the number of 7,100 skins weighing 1,430 kg., giving an average weight of 200g/skin.

This is particularly valuable for adjusting the figures provided by Inskipp *et al.* (op. cit.), which would be:

1980	56,930		
1981	109,117	+	1,262 m <sup>2</sup>
1982	67,528	+	160 m <sup>2</sup>
1983	64,450	+	4 m <sup>2</sup>
1984	111,507	+	96 m <sup>2</sup>
1985	66,178	+	202 m <sup>2</sup>

- b) Feathers: According to official records (Godoy, 1963), Argentina's annual export volume in the decade 1941-50 was 3,720 kg; the following decade (1951-60) this volume fell to 2,350 kg. The same author reports an annual volume of 35,000 kg for these years, which would indicate either significant domestic trade or else that some manufactured products (e.g. dusters) were not included in these export statistics.

For more recent years, the following volumes (in kg) have been reported for Argentine exports (Gruss and Walter, 1988):

1975		1981	230
1976	280	1982	1,170
1977	309	1983	955
1978	515	1984	372
1979	760	1985	315
1980	2,744		

According to official records, during 1990 and the first eight months of 1991, feather exports totalled only 122 kg.

The relationship between the amount of feathers obtained and the number of ostriches involved is not clearly established. It has been reported that a bird can yield 500 g of feathers (Davel, 1911). According to information provided by former owners of plucking corrals, the average amount of marketable feathers per bird varies according to geography. They report 700 g/bird for the province of Buenos Aires, 600 g for Entre Ríos and 500 g for Corrientes. This is because of the smaller body size and less thick plumage in more-temperate areas.

Although this conversion is accepted, it is confusing that the total obtained must be added to the reported exports of skins when calculating the total annual export. This is because, with the falling into disuse of plucking corrals, the feathers come mostly from birds that are shot from which both products are derived (Rabinovich *et al.*, 1987).

33. Illegal Trade: In recent years the volume of illegal international trade in this species has been significant, especially as regards skins.

The countries of origin have been Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, and the main destination has been Japan.

This emerges from an analysis of the following cases:

- 1) On 8 September 1988, 1,722 kg of Rhea americana skins were seized at Ezeiza Airport (Buenos Aires) as they were about to be shipped to Japan via Madrid. Without data from commercial firms. TRAFFIC South America, the Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina and the Argentine Wildlife Service intervened in the affair.
- 2) On 4 September 1988, 2,470 kg of ostrich skins were illegally shipped to Japan by the same means; they reached Japan on 9 September 1988, after being transshipped in Madrid. The consignor was Luis Sanz & Sons (a fictitious company) and the consignee was Stock Kojima of Tokyo. The evidence from this and the previous incident has been filed under case 6928/88 by the Administrative Investigations Office of Argentina's Public Prosecutor.
- 3) The Argentine office of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) reports (in litt. 90-07-24) that, according to figures published in Japan Exports & Imports, Japan imported a total of 1,550 kg of common rhea skins from Paraguay in 1987.

- 4) At the end of 1989, Japan seized a shipment of 5,000 skins of Rhea americana which arrived by air from Argentina, sent by the company Sumeo SRL (another fictitious company), and reported a similar shipment of 20,000 skins that apparently failed to materialize. The documentation was consigned to the Japanese companies Oguma and Inoue, in each case respectively. In Argentina, the case is being dealt with under Department of Commerce file no. 4792/90.

The method used in this case illustrates an elaborate way of getting around the Convention by taking advantage of the imperfections in the lists of the appendices. The relevant documentation was seen by the Argentine and Japanese authorities and analyzed jointly by the Japanese Embassy in Argentina and the Argentine Government.

In these cases the skins were accompanied by documentation (certificates of origin) issued by the Argentine Department of Commerce, falsified by the traffickers. Papers issued for the export of goat skins were altered to include products of Rhea americana.

The scheme devised by the dealers in the two countries involved consisted to evade the controls in Argentina or Paraguay in order to remove the goods and furnish themselves with the aforementioned falsified documents, consigning as subspecies any of the four not listed in the Convention (i.e., araneipes, americana, nobilis or intermedia).

Since the Japanese authorities naturally did not require CITES documents for those subspecies, the shipments were authorized on presentation of the documentation of origin, which was easily forged.

Argentine authorities estimate that more than 120,000 skins have been exported illegally from Argentina in the past five years. There are no figures available for the number taken out of Paraguay, except for the figure mentioned in point 3 above.

It is clear that the lack of an effective way of distinguishing between subspecies of Rhea americana on the basis of their parts, combined with the fact that other subspecies are not included in the Convention, has made possible an illegal trade of alarming proportions.

#### 34. Potential Trade Threats:

341. Live Specimens: The trade in live specimens is insignificant compared with the other uses mentioned. Inskipp (1988) gives a total of 63 specimens for a six-month period.
342. Parts and Derivatives: There has been a constant demand on the world market for products of the species, as mentioned above. Today the demand for skins greatly exceeds that for feathers. However, given the unpredictability of fashion trends, the demand for feathers could increase in the future.

It is clear that the provisions of the Convention have not been very effective in protecting this species. Since four subspecies are not included in the Convention, importing countries have not been required to

apply strict controls, and this has resulted in illegal trade which, strictly speaking, does not violate the Convention.

Apparently, the species can be exploited rationally in the future; for this to happen, the studies under way must go ahead.

However, if the whole species is not listed in Appendix II to the Convention, it will be impossible to distinguish between legal and illegal trade.

#### 4. Protection Status

41. National: The species enjoys total protection in Uruguay, which has listed its populations in CITES Appendix III. Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay have generic bans on trade in their wild species, including the common rhea. In Argentina, the species has enjoyed the protection since 1986, under Resolution 24/86 of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries. The marketing of feathers plucked from live birds has been permitted since 1987, and authorization is currently granted for the marketing of stocks of legal skins obtained and declared prior to 1986, after identification of the batches and with strict control by the domestic authorities (Res. 532/90).
42. International: The subspecies Rhea americana albescens is listed in CITES Appendix II.

The whole species is listed in CITES Appendix III for Uruguay.

43. Additional Protection Needs: It is recommended that the whole species be included in CITES Appendix II.

#### 5. Information on Similar Species

The family Rheidae includes the genus Pterocnemia, whose only species, Pterocnemia pennata, is somewhat smaller than the Rhea from which it also differs by the coloration of its plumage, which is brown or dark grey speckled with white.

This species is found in most of the Andean and Patagonian regions of Argentina, and on the high plateau of Peru, Chile and southern Bolivia.

Three subspecies have been mentioned: P. p. pennata, in Patagonia and neighbouring areas in the province of Mendoza, at relatively low altitudes; P. p. garleppi, in the Andean region of Argentina, from San Juan to Jujuy and adjoining regions of the Bolivian altiplano; and P. p. tarapacensis, native to the high plateaus of the western side of the Andes range.

On the basis of the studies that have been done (Cajal, 1988; Castanera et al., 1989), it appears that the two altiplano subspecies are much rarer than the Patagonian subspecies.

Pterocnemia pennata is listed in Appendix I.

## 6. Comments from Countries of Origin

Letters, together with the draft of this proposal, have been sent to the Management Authorities in Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay to ask for their opinion.

The following comment has been received from Bolivia (Forest Development Centre, an agency of the Department of Rural and Agricultural Affairs):

"(...) we support your initiative to have Rhea americana added to CITES Appendix II" (Bolivian Management Authority, in a letter dated 11 September 1991).

The position of Brazil (Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources) is also favourable:

"(...) we will support the proposal to include Rhea americana in CITES Appendix II" (Brazilian Management Authority, in a letter dated 23 September 1991).

At the time of submission of this proposal, replies had not yet been received from Paraguay and Uruguay.

## 7. Additional Remarks

This proposal to include the entire species Rhea americana in Appendix II is based primarily on Article II, paragraph 2b), of the Convention.

Our aim is to provide better protection for Rhea americana albescens, which is already included in Appendix II, so that the regulations cannot be circumvented by marketing it as if it were an unlisted subspecies.

## 8. References

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SERVIÇO PÚBLICO FEDERAL  
INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DO MEIO AMBIENTE E DOS RECURSOS  
NATURAIS RENOVÁVEIS

Brasília, 23 de setembro de 1991

Ofício nº 807/91 - DIREC

Do: Chefe do Departamento da Vida Silvestre - DEVIS

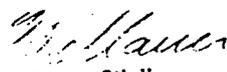
Ao: Coordinador del Area de Investigacion, Proteccion Y  
Criaderos - Direccion Nacional de Fauna Silvestre.  
Buenos Aires- Argentina

Respondendo sua Carta datada de 16 de agosto de 1991, in  
formamos que apoiaremos a proposta de inclusão da Rhea americana no  
Apêndice II da CITES, a ser apresentada na próxima Reunião da Confe  
rência das Partes.

A Lei de Proteção à Fauna brasileira, de 03 de janeiro de  
1967, proíbe a caça, utilização e o comércio de todas as espécies'  
de animais silvestres. O estabelecimento de criadouros é previsto  
por Lei. Mas não possuímos nenhum operando comercialmente.

O comércio interno ilegal de plumas é significativo e não  
temos maiores informações sobre exportações ilegais a partir do Bra  
sil.

Atenciosamente,

  
Jordan Paulo Wallauer  
IBAMA/DIREC/DEVIS  
Chefe do Departamento da  
Vida Silvestre



Ministerio de Economía  
Subsecretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
<b>a. R.a. albescens</b>						
Skins:	56930	49546 11877 kg 1262 m <sup>2</sup>	22817 6169 kg 160 m <sup>2</sup>	2637 11033 kg 3 m <sup>2</sup>	715 18658 kg 26 m <sup>2</sup>	19204 9477 kg 202 m <sup>2</sup>
Feathers:	-	784 160 kg	-	- 98 kg	-	-
Live birds:	-	22	-	-	14	6
Eggs:	-	-	-	-	21	-
<b>b. R. americana</b>						
Skins:	56930	49732 11877 kg 1262 m <sup>2</sup> 6 shp	36028 6300 kg 160 m <sup>2</sup>	7055 11479 kg 4 m <sup>2</sup>	17207 18660 kg 96 m <sup>2</sup>	20773 9081 kg 202 m <sup>2</sup>
Feathers:	-	784 160 kg	130 1170 kg	135 952 kg	20 372 kg	- 348 kg
Live birds:	-	22	-	10	14	17
Eggs:	-	-	-	-	21	-

**CENTRO DE DESARROLLO FORESTAL**  
**LA PAZ - BOLIVIA**

Oficina:  
Av. Camacho 1471 6to. Piso  
Casilla de Correo N° 8928  
La Paz

CITE: VSPN/C.600.074  
La Paz, Septiembre 11 de 1991

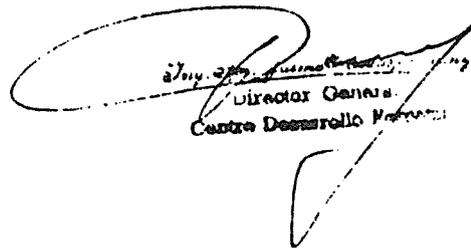
Teléfonos:  
Dirección General 371268  
Dirección Administrativa 367459  
Depto. Técnico 367304  
División de Personal 367460 - 367302

Señor  
Lic. Juan Javier García Fernández  
COORDINADOR DEL AREA DE  
INVESTIGACION, PROTECCION Y CRIADEROS  
DIRECCION NACIONAL DE FAUNA SILVESTRE  
Buenos Aires.-

Lic. García:

Referente a su nota de 16 de Agosto del presente año sobre la propuesta de inclusión en el Apéndice II de CITES del Ñandú (*Rhea Americana*), comunico a usted que en Bolivia existe una Veda General indefinida para el comercio de Fauna y Flora Silvestre, incluyendo -- sus productos, debido a que no existen estudios y censos poblacionales que nos sirvan como indicadores para estimar cupos de exportación, es en este sentido que apoyamos su iniciativa de introducir a la *Rhea Americana* en el Apéndice II de CITES. Consecuentemente -- nuestros países deberán tomar acciones de control y así evitar el -- contrabando lógico de Bolivia hacia Argentina, no solo de la *Rhea Americana*, sino también del *Tayassu Pecari* y otras especies.

Esperando contar con una mayor coordinación, saludo a usted muy -- atentamente,

  
Director General  
Centro Desarrollo Forestal



Lic. JOSÉ L. CAJAL  
Directo: Nacional de Fauna Silvestre



Ministerio de Economía  
 Subsecretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca

		1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
<b>a. <i>Rhea americana albescens</i></b>							
<b>Countries with wild populations of the subspecies</b>							
Argentina	S	1516 (1516)	10203 (10202)	317 (100) 1008 kg (1008 kg)	112 (0)	-  11000 kg (11000 kg)	11599 (11575) 396 kg (396 kg) 202 m <sup>2</sup> (0)
	F	-	160 kg (160 kg)	-	98 kg (98 kg)	-	-
<b>Countries without wild populations of the subspecies</b>							
Bolivia	S	-	-	-	-	-	90
Japan	S	-	2047 1032 m <sup>2</sup>	-	-	-	-
Paraguay	S	55414	37628 11877 kg 227 m <sup>2</sup>	22500 5161 kg	2410 11033 kg 1 m <sup>2</sup>	- 7658 kg 5 m <sup>2</sup>	1164 9081 kg
Singapore	S	-	-	-	-	-	6000
South Africa	F	-	784	-	-	-	-
USA	S	-	-	-	-	-	454
Unknown	S	-	31	4042 160 m <sup>2</sup>	115 4 m <sup>2</sup>	715 22 m <sup>2</sup>	-



*Ministerio de Economía*  
*Subsecretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca*

La posición de la República Federativa del Brasil (Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis) es igualmente favorable:

"... informamos que apoiaremos a proposta de inclusão da Rhea americana no Apêndice II da CITES..." (Aut. Adm. del Brasil, in litt., 23/09/91)

De Paraguay y Uruguay no se recibió respuesta al momento de presentación de esta propuesta.

#### 7. COMENTARIOS ADICIONALES.

La presente propuesta de inclusión de Rhea americana, toda la especie, en el Apêndice II se basa principalmente en la situación prevista en el Artículo II, párrafo 2 b) del texto de la Convención.

Esto es así dado que se busca dar una más acabada protección a Rhea americana albescens, ya incluida en el Apêndice II con anterioridad, evitando que sea comercializada como si se tratara de alguna subespecie no listada, eludiendo las regulaciones pertinentes.

#### B. REFERENCIAS.

Balabasic, A.M.

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Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas  
Subsecretaría de Seguimiento, Operación y Pesca

b. <i>Rhina americana</i>		1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Countries with wild populations of the species							
Argentina	S	1516	10203	11841	1674	5260	13261
		(1516)	(10202)	(11618)	(1562)	(5260)	(13237)
			1008 kg	1008 kg		11001 kg	202 m <sup>2</sup>
			130	130		20	(0)
			160 kg	1170 kg	927 kg	372 kg	348 kg
			(160 kg)	(1170 kg)	(927 kg)	(372 kg)	(348 kg)
Bolivia	S	-	-	-	-	-	643
							(0)
							1169
							(0)
							9081 kg
							(0)
							7659 kg
							(0)
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