AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

Other Proposals

A. PROPOSAL

Deletion from Appendix I of *Lissemys punctata punctata* and inclusion in Appendix II of *Lissemys punctata*.

B. PROPONENT

The Swiss Confederation.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Reptilia

12. Order: Testudinata

13. Family: Trionychidae

14. Species: *Lissemys punctata* (Lacépède, 1788)

15. Common Names: English: Indian flapshell turtle
French: Tortue de l'Inde
Spanish: Tortuga plana indiana

16. Code Numbers: A-301.012.004.001

2. Biological Data

21. Distribution:

Bangladesh: Widely distributed in the Ganges and Brahmaputra drainages and along the coast (Chittagong).

India: Distributed all over the country from the upper reaches of the Indus drainage area, the Nepalese border and Sikkim to Cape Comorin. Introduced on the Andaman Islands.

Myanmar: Western part of the country - Arakan (Iverson, 1992), Irrawaddy and Saleen rivers (Ernst and Barbour, 1989).

Nepal: Terai.

Pakistan: Indus drainage area, including Sutley, Chenab and Jhelum Rivers, from the NE border to the sea.

Sri Lanka: Widely distributed.

Thailand: Restricted range.

22. Population

221. Wild Population: Common in many relatively undisturbed environments throughout the Indian subcontinent. This may be the commonest turtle in the area (Das, 1991). Most populations seem to be relatively stable (Bhupathy and Webb). Ghosh (1993, *in litt.* to Indian MA) notes: *Lissemys punctata* is the commonest freshwater turtle of India. Although there is a general decline in its population due to reclamation of wetlands, pollution of water bodies etc., yet the situation is not so alarming as to include this species in either Schedule I of the Indian (Wildlife) Protection Act or Appendix I of CITES. Rashid and Swingland (1990) noted that, in general, freshwater turtles are becoming rarer in Bangladesh, due to the increased hunting/collecting pressure. The recently rediscovered population in Thailand is very small (P.P. van Dijk, 1994, *in litt.* to IUCN/SSC).

222. Captive Population: None recorded in the International Zoo Yearbook's 1992 census of rare animals nor in the list of animals bred in captivity (Olney and Ellis, 1993). The species thrives well in captivity. Artificial incubation of eggs and hatching has been accomplished at the Madras Crocodile Bank. As part of the Turtle Rehabilitation Project, eggs of *Lissemys* are maintained and hatched in artificial hatcheries in Karnal and Lucknow and released in the wild (Bhupathy and Webb).

23. Habitat: Shallow, quiet, often stagnant waters of rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, marshes, salt marshes, ricefields, irrigation canals, canals and gutters in metropolitan cities, and tanks. Waters with sand or mud bottoms are preferred, and *Lissemys* is often forced to estivate in the mud during dry periods. (Ernst and Barbour, 1989).

3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization: *Lissemys punctata* and its eggs are rather heavily exploited for food and is one of the most frequently observed species in the city markets. Vijaya and Manna (in Das, 1991) recorded 50'000 to 75'000 sold each year (early 1980's) in the Howrah Market near Calcutta. The flesh is also considered a remedy for anemia and tuberculosis (Deraniyagala, 1939, quoted by Bhupathy and Webb). Live individuals are maintained for asundry ritualistic and religious reasons and often kept in wells and water tanks to consume aquatic organisms (Das, 1991). Some individuals probably are sacrificed for the artifact trade (dried whole specimens, shells, masks). In Bangladesh, the rate of turtle meat consumption has accelerated due to the high price of other meat sources, and there has been a rapid and drastic increase of the trade volume from 1980 to 1990 (Rashid and Swingland, 1990).

32. Legal International Trade: According to WTMU statistics, a total of 22 live and 10 dead specimens of *Lissemys p. punctata* have been reported by CITES Parties from 1987 to 1992. Exporting countries were India (16 specimens in 1988/91), Pakistan (10 specimens in 1987), Sri Lanka (5 specimens in 1988) and Hongkong (1 specimen in 1988).

33. Illegal Trade: While other turtle species are regularly exported from Bangladesh's Zia International Airport to Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, where they are mostly used for food, are *Lissemys punctata* not legally exported but smuggled to neighbouring India (Rashid and Swingland, 1990).

Yellow-spotted flapshell turtles are traded under the name of *Lissemys punctata andersoni* (see section 5 below) in Japan, where a survey of 35 pet shops revealed, in 1992, that seven shops sold 36 animals. Frozen carcasses of *L. p. andersoni* were available in Beijing supermarkets in 1993, and live animals were available, in 1994, in Bangkok pet shops (Kazuhiro Nitta, 1992, and P.P. van Dijk, 1994, *in litt.* to IUCN/SSC).

34. Potential Trade Threats: The transfer from Appendix I to Appendix II of *Lissemys p. punctata* is unlikely to increase threats from international trade. In 1991, the IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Specialist Group even suggested that *L. punctata punctata* be removed from CITES Appendices.

4. Protection Status

41. National

Bangladesh: Totally protected species under Schedule III of the Wildlife (Preservation) Act, 1974.

India: Totally protected species under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act No. 53, 1972.

42. International: The subspecies has been listed in Appendix I of the Convention since 01/07/75.

43. Additional Protection Needs: Continuous monitoring of populations and their utilization. Marketing should be regulated with special attention to eggs and gravid females (Bhupathy and Webb). Existing national legislation should be implemented (Rashid and Swingland, 1990).

5. Information on Similar Species

Annandale (1912) recognized five subspecies, Smith (1931) reduced them to three, and currently two subspecies of *Lissemys punctata* are recognized, while the third is considered a separate species (cf. Bhupathy and Webb):

The species was described as *Testudo punctata* in 1788 by G.E. Lacépède, giving the type locality as "des grandes Indes". J.E. Gray (1831) restricted the type locality to the "Ganges", a river system which is mainly inhabited by a yellow-spotted form of the species, even though Lacépède's description made no mention of any spots. The unspotted form was named Testudo granosa by J.D. Schoepff in 1801, the type locality being given as "Coromandeliae", and granosa was generally used for this form from southern India and Sri Lanka until R.G. Webb clarified the situation in 1980. Webb examined the holotype and confirmed that it lacked yellow spots, and then redescribed it, designating the type locality as Pondycherry, Coromandel Coast, India. *L. p. granosa* thus became a junior synonym of *L. p. punctata*. As there was no available name for the yellow-spotted, Indogangetic form, Webb (1980) proposed the name *L. p. andersoni*, designating a holotype from Belbari, south-east Nepal. A third form of Lissemys from Myanmar was named *Emyda scutata* by W.H.K. Peters in 1868, and this was generally (e.g. by Smith, 1931) regarded as a subspecies of *L. punctata* until Webb (1982) outlined reasons for treating it as a separate species. King and Burke (1989) have followed Webb in treating scutata as a separate species but, even though they make reference to Webb (1980), have further confused the issue by recognising two subspecies of *L. punctata*: *L. p. punctata* and *L. p. granosa*, both with the Coromandel coast as the type locality.

Today, the northern subspecies (formerly *punctata*) is called *L. p. andersoni*, and the southern subspecies (formerly *granosa*) *L. p. punctata*. The northern subspecies occurs in the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra drainages in eastern Pakistan, northern India, southeastern Nepal, Bangladesh, and northern coastal Myanmar. Turtles having morphologically intermediate patterns are reported from the Indian States of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Rajahstan, Mahya Pradesh, and the Kathiwar Peninsula, Gujarat (Bhupathy and Webb).

The taxonomic confusion has caused enforcement problems in importing countries. In Japan, for instance, animals of the northern subspecies (i.e. *L. p. punctata* following the taxonomy used by CITES) were, correctly in the terms of Webb's revision of the taxonomy, imported by the name of *L. p. andersoni* which allowed them to escape CITES controls.

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

The Scientific Authority of India (Ghosh, *in litt.* to the Indian MA, 1993) has suggested to list the entire species in Appendix II instead of maintaining *L. p. punctata* in Appendix I. According to a letter of TRAFFIC India to the Asian representative to Animals Committee, the Indian CITES MA has, unofficially, agreed to the proposal.

7. Additional Remarks

L. p. punctata was listed prior to Webb's redesignation of the type locality. One has to assume that the proponents wished to list the yellow-spotted form of the species which has been renamed *L. p. andersoni* (c.f. Honegger, 1982).

As *Lissemys punctata punctata* has been listed in Appendix I prior to the adoption of the Berne criteria, Resolution Conf. 2.23 on Special Criteria for the Deletion of Species and other Taxa applies.

The present proposal has been prepared and submitted by Switzerland upon request from the Animals Committee.

8. References

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