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

Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Bangkok (Thailand), 3-14 March 2013

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF APPENDICES I AND II

A. Proposal

Deletion of *Caracara lutosa* from Appendix II.

B. Proponent

Mexico*.

C. Supporting statement

1. Taxonomy

1.1 Class: Aves

1.2 Order: Falconiformes

1.3 Family: Falconidae

1.4 Genus, species or subspecies (including author and year): *Caracara lutosa* Ridgway, 1876a

1.5 Scientific synonyms: *Polyborus lutosus, Polyborus plancus lutosus, Caracara plancus lutosus*, and *Caracara lutosus*.

1.6 Common names:
English: Guadalupe caracara
French: Caracara de Guadalupe
Spanish: Carancho de Guadalupe, Caracara de Guadalupe, Quebrantahuesos, Quelele

1.7 Code numbers: A-213.005.009.002

2. Overview

The Guadalupe caracara (*Caracara lutosa,* Ridgway, 1876a, 1876b) was formerly endemic to the island of Isla Guadalupe in the Gulf of California, Mexico (AOU, 1998), where it is now considered extinct (Bent 1961, Dickinson 2003).

It has been listed in CITES Appendix II since 1975.

At the 25th meeting of the Animals Committee (Geneva, 2011) it was selected in the periodic review process as a species to be reviewed between CoP15 and CoP17. Accordingly, the CITES Scientific

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Authority of Mexico (CONABIO) made an arrangement with Dr. Adolfo Navarro and the biologist Alejandro Gordillo of the Zoological Museum of the Faculty of Sciences of the UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), both specialists in ornithology, to carry out the study "Evaluation of the status of *Carcara lutosa* and *Campephilus imperialis* in the CITES Appendices", which would take the form of an exhaustive review of the sources of bibliographic information available. The conclusions of the study were as follows:

1. Since 1900, and despite frequent zoological expeditions to the region (e.g. Jehl and Everett 1985, Oberbauer *et al.* 1989, Pyle *et al.* 1994, Sweet *et al.* 2001), not a single specimen has been observed either in the wild or in captivity.

2. The species was exterminated from the island of Guadalupe by means of direct hunting and poisoning because it was considered a harmful bird, owing to its carrion-eating habits and because it hunted domestic animals (Iñigo-Elías 2000). Additionally, it appears that there used to be considerable scientific interest in skins of it, which may have contributed to its disappearance, given that at that time there was no applicable legislation (Abbott 1933).

3. The species is listed as extinct both in Mexico's legislation (NOM-059-SENMARNAT-2010) and in the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (BirdLife International 2008, DOF 2010).

4. The species fulfils the definition of "Possibly extinct" given in Annex 5 of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15), since it disappeared more than 100 years ago.

For the reasons given above, at its 26th meeting (Geneva, April 2012) the Animals Committee endorsed the recommendation of Mexico that *Caracara lutosa* should be deleted from the CITES Appendices.

3. Characteristics of the species

3.1 Distribution

This species was formerly endemic to the island of Guadalupe, located 217 km west of the Baja California peninsula in Mexico (AOU, 1998).

3.2. Habitat

The main habitat on the island comprised bushy scrubland at lower levels and trees higher up, specifically cypresses (*Cupressus guadalupensis)*, pines (*Pinus radiata* var. *Binata)*, island oaks (*Quercus tomentella)* and palms (*Erythea edulis)* (Howell and Cade 1954). According to the few data published about the species in its natural environment, the Guadalupe caracara frequented low-lying land, valleys and plateaux, primarily those with cover of bushes and trees, and also the coastline and pools of either brackish or fresh water (see Abbott 1933).

3.3. Biological characteristics

The diet of the species consisted mainly of carrion, although it would occasionally eat birds that were already dying, insects and fish (Bent 1961, Iñigo-Elías 2000). Furthermore, when the first settlers reached the island they brought goats as livestock, and the young offspring also became part of the diet of the caracara (Iñigo-Elías, 2000). The Guadalupe caracara utilized the hollows between rocks and trees to build its nests, although it is also known that it nested in the forks of cacti and shrubs (Bryant 1887, Bent 1961, Iñigo-Elías 2000). It is known that it laid one or two eggs a year and that these were short and oval, ranging from white to a light earthy colour, with reddish coffee-coloured markings on the shell (Iñigo-Elías 2000).

3.4. Morphological characteristics

The Guadalupe caracara was of a dark coffee colour over the whole body, with white cheeks and throat. In other parts of its plumage, it had feathers with dark coffee-coloured to white transversal bands. It had a large head, with a small crest and a featherless face. The skin of the face was chrome yellow in colour and the iris of the eye light coffee-coloured. The beak was short and thick, light lead blue in colour. It had a long tail and long legs, with strong talons and pale yellow tarsi (Friedmann 1950, Iñigo-Elías 2000). It was 60 cm in length and had a wingspan of 132 cm. There was no sexual

dimorphism in the species, although among the specimens that were measured and utilized by Ridgway (Friedmann 1950) to describe the species, the males were smaller than the females. In males, average wing length was 393.3 mm, tail length 265.7 mm and tarsus length 89.3; in females, average wing length was 407.5 mm, tail length 272.6 mm and tarsus length 88.5 mm.

3.5. Function of the species in its ecosystem

The Guadalupe caracara played an essential biological role in its ecosystem, as a scavenger (Bent 1961, Iñigo-Elías 2000). Its diet of carrion determined the role it played within the food chain, as it removed the remains of other species that had died in the wild, thereby preventing the spread of disease among other wild animals.

4. Status and trends

4.1 Habitat trends

At the present time all that remains of the original vegetation of the island are some introduced grasses and some scrubland plants. The greatest part of the original vegetation succumbed to the continuous degradation caused by the introduction of free-roaming goats and their subsequent uncontrolled reproduction (Iñigo-Elías 2000). This trend was probably worsened by the presence of scientific collectors (Howell and Cade 1954).

4.2 Population size

The size of the population of the Guadalupe caracara before the anthropogenic changes on the island is not known. The reports of Dr. Edward Palmer (who discovered the species) are not conclusive, as they state that, by 1875, the species was still abundant throughout the island, whereas it is reported elsewhere that, for some reason, it was already close to extinction (Ridgway (1876a).

Subsequent reports indicate that population numbers of the Guadalupe caracara never exceeded a dozen individuals on the island, suggesting that its rate of reproduction was extremely low (Abbott 1933). According to the final report on the species in 1900, the population dwindled rapidly to extinction (Abbott 1933, Bent 1961).

4.3. Population structure

No published information is known on its population structure.

4.4 Population trends

The species was discovered by Dr. Edward Palmer in 1875. The birds were called “queleles” by the inhabitants of the island, on which at the time they were abundant.

It appears that the islanders, observing that the caracaras attacked the young of the goats, which were not defended by their mothers, decided to control the population of the caracara by means of poison and firearms.

Ten years after the visit of Dr. Palmer, Dr. Walter E. Bryant visited the island (1885) and observed a major drop in the population numbers of the species. This drop continued in 1886 and by 1889 Dr. Bryant asserted that the species had been exterminated from the island (Bryant 1889), a finding that was corroborated by Dr Palmer who revisited the islands the same year. In 1896, four individuals were sighted by “goat hunters”, in March of 1897 one specimen was spotted and it appears that the last sighting recorded was of a flock of eleven in 1900. Those 11 were collected by the scientific collector Rollo Beck, who asserted that those were the only individuals remaining on the island (Abbott 1933, Bent 1961).

During a stay of two months on the island in 1906, W. W. Brown, I. Oroso and H. W. Marsden did not manage to spot a single specimen (Thayer and Bangs 1908). Similarly, specimens of the species have not been observed in more recent expeditions (e.g., Jehl and Everett 1985, Oberbauer *et al.* 1989, Pyle *et al.* 1994, Sweet *et al.* 2001).

5. Threats

It is thought that the principal threat to the species was the targeted persecution and extermination carried out by the people who had settled the island. In addition, the collection of its skins for scientific purposes (Abbot 1933) and the grazing and uncontrolled reproduction of goats brought about a considerable reduction in the habitat available to the species for nesting and feeding. The outcome led to deterioration in the conditions that would have allowed the subsistence of the species, reducing its chances of survival (Iñigo-Elías 2000).

There is a theory that depredation by cats and the collection of specimens played a significant role in its rapid dwindling, as did the disappearance of species that might have provided food for it, such as the colonies of seabirds, the elephant seal (*Mirounga angustirostris*) and the Guadalupe fur seal (*Arctocephalus townsendi*) (Thayer and Bangs 1908, Anthony 1925).

6. Utilization and trade

From 1875, when it was discovered (Abbott 1933), to 1900, the year in which the taking of possibly the last specimens of the species is recorded, living and dead (stuffed) specimens were taken at a rate that was very high by comparison with the possible rate of reproduction of the species. It is highly probable that the local inhabitants participated in that process by working as assistants for the scientific collectors from North America who undertook expeditions during the 19th century (Abbott 1933), with a primary interest in their skins. In 1897, six live individuals were taken from the island, having been caught by a fisherman who took them to San Diego, California, where they were kept in a cage with the intention of selling them. All of them died within a month.

6.1 National utilization

Historical records show that the species was hunted and poisoned by the local people (Íñigo-Elías 2000). It is evident that there was commercial interest in stuffed specimens of the species on the part of private and scientific collectors, which contributed to its disappearance.

6.2 Legal trade

The trade in skins and live specimens of the Guadalupe caracara took place at a time when no applicable legislation existed.

There are no records of international trade in the species between 1975, the year in which it was listed under CITES, and 2010 (UNEP-WCMC CITES Trade Database, September 2012).

6.3 Parts and derivatives in trade

Live specimens or stuffed skins for scientific and private collections (Abbott 1933).

6.4 Illegal trade

Unknown.

6.5 Actual or potential trade impacts

Since the species is extinct, there is currently no actual or potential negative effect of trade. There might be exchanges of stuffed specimens.

7. Legal instruments

7.1 National

The species is considered extinct in the relevant official Mexican regulation NOM-059-SEMARNAT-2010 (DOF 2002, DOF 2010).

7.2 International

The Guadalupe caracara is listed as extinct in the IUCN Red List (BirdLife International 2008).

8. Species management

8.1 Management measures

No specific management measures are taken for this species.

8.2 Population monitoring

There are no monitoring measures for the species.

8.3. Control measures

8.3.1 International

Apart from CITES, there are no other international control measures for the species.

8.3.2 National

The control measures are laid down in the official Mexican regulation NOM-059-SEMARNAT-2010 and are explained in Section 8.6 of the present proposal.

8.4 Captive breeding

Abbott (1933) indicates that various attempts were made to keep the species in captivity, without success.

8.5 Habitat conservation

There are no specific habitat conservation measures for this species, because it is extinct. The vegetation on the island of Guadalupe has been severely degraded for almost two centuries owing to overgrazing by goats, both in the lowlands and in the mountains (Oberbauer 2006).

8.6 Safeguards

In accordance with national legislation, paragraph 6.4 of NOM-059-SEMARNAT-2010 states that, in the event of rediscovery or reintroduction of any population of a species formerly considered as probably extinct in the wild, there would be an immediate change in its classification, with it then being listed as in danger of extinction. By that process, it would automatically become regulated and protected by national legislation (DOF 2010).

9. Information on similar species

The Guadalupe caracara was similar to the crested caracara (*Caracara cheriway*); however, the latter species is found on the mainland, is lighter in colour over most of its body and has fewer bands on the chest and the back (Friedmann 1950, Iñigo-Elías 2000, Rodríguez-Flores *et al.* 2010).

10. Consultations

Since the Guadalupe caracara is a species that was endemic only to Mexico, there were no consultations with other countries.

11. Complementary observations

None.

12. References

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