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

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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

Delete *Lophura imperialis* from Appendix I

and

Amend the standard reference for birds adopted by the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP15): "Dickinson, E. *C. (ed.)(2003): The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World. Revised and enlarged 3rd Edition. 1039 pp.* London (Christopher Helm)", inserting the following text in square brackets: [for all bird species – except for *Lophura imperialis* and the taxa mentioned below]

B. Proponent

Switzerland, as Depositary Government, at the request of the Animals Committee (proposal prepared by France)[1].

C. Supporting statement

1. Taxonomy

1.1 Class: Aves

1.2 Order: Galliformes

1.3 Family: Phasianidae

1.4 Genus, species, including author and year: *Lophura imperialis,* Delacour et Jabouille, 1924

Birdlife International no longer recognizes the imperial pheasant (*Lophura imperialis*) as a species (2011). According to the IUCN Species Survival Commission / World Pheasant Association Galliformes Specialist Group, *Lophura imperialis* is no longer a valid name and the taxon should be considered a natural hybrid between the species *Lophura edwardsi* (Oustalet, 1896) and *Lophura nycthemera* (Linné, 1758). As a result, *Lophura imperialis* has been removed from the IUCN Red List.

[1] *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

The proponent recognizes that, as a precautionary measure, Appendix-I species must first be transferred to Appendix II before being deleted from the Appendices, in accordance with Annex 4 of Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15). However, such transfer to Appendix II is not justified given that the hybrid will continue to benefit from the Appendix-I status of the parental species *Lophura edwardsi*, in accordance with Resolution Conf. 10.17 (Rev. CoP14).

1.5 Scientific synonyms:

1.6 Common names: English: imperial pheasant
French: faisan impérial
Spanish: faisán imperial
Vietnamese : Ga loi lam mao den

1.7 Code numbers: A-214.003.039.007

2. Overview

The pheasant *Lophura imperialis* was first described by Delacour and Jabouille in 1924 from a single pair captured in 1923 in the region of Dong Hoi, Viet Nam. The pair was taken to France by Jean Delacour, who was an ornithologist, and produced a line of captive-bred offspring in his zoological park in Clères. This captive population died out after World War II because of a lack of additional founder stock. The female of the original pair died in 1927 and was deposited as the holotype in the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. The male died during World War II and was not preserved. Despite thorough searching, no other specimens of imperial pheasant were found for a very long time. The species was considered extremely rare, or perhaps even extinct, and was included in the IUCN Red List and listed in Appendix I at the plenipotentiary conference held in Washington D.C. in 1973.

In 1990, a male specimen was captured in Cat Bin, Viet Nam, but its phenotype differed considerably from that of the birds captured in 1923. Another male was also captured in 2000 in the region of Quang Tri but, again, its phenotype largely differed from that of the type specimen described by Delacour and Jabouille.

The hypothesis of a hybrid origin was put forward as early as 1997. At that time, a thorough analysis of all the skins of the captive specimens descended from the original pair, kept in museums in Paris and Tring, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, led to the following findings:

- major morphological differences existed among the various specimens

- the imperial pheasant might be a natural hybrid between Edwards's pheasant (*Lophura edwardsi*) and the silver pheasant (*Lophura nycthemera*).

This hypothesis was tested with genetic analyses, which revealed that the mitochondrial DNA of the imperial pheasants was identical to that of Edwards's pheasant. A microsatellite DNA analysis showed that the alleles of the imperial pheasant were those of Edwards's pheasant and the silver pheasant.

Finally, a cross between Edwards's pheasant and the silver pheasant was performed at the Zoological Park of Clères, France, which had been donated by Jean Delacour to the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in 1966. Some phenotypes of the offspring obtained were identical to that of the specimens brought by Jean Delacour in 1923, while others were identical to that of the specimen captured in 2000. The entire study was published in 2003 by Alain Hennache *et al.* It concluded that the imperial pheasant was a natural hybrid between Edwards's pheasant and the silver pheasant.

It was pointed out in 2003 (Hennache *et al.,* 2003) that the Vietnamese pheasant (*Lophura hatinhensis*) might well be one of the parental species of *Lophura imperialis*. However, *Lophura*

hatinhensis has recently undergone genetic studies, which have proved that it is only an inbred form of Edwards's pheasant (*Lophura edwardsi*). Therefore, it is no longer considered a species.

At its 15th meeting (Doha, 2010), as shown in the Annex to Resolution Conf. 12.11 (Rev. CoP15), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following publication as the standard reference for pheasant taxonomy and nomenclature: "Dickinson, E.C. (ed. 2003): The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World. Revised and enlarged 3rd Edition. 1039 pp. London (Christopher Helm)". In this publication, *Lophura imperialis* is still considered as a species, since the study by Hennache *et al*. was published in that same year (2003). However, the species *Lophura imperialis* will not appear in the upcoming fourth edition of the publication "Dickinson E.C., The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World" (in press, scheduled for publication in August 2012), as it has been permanently removed from the taxonomy of birds.

At its 26th meeting (Geneva, March 2012) and in the context of the Periodic Review of the Appendices, the Animals Committee reviewed a proposal to delete *Lophura imperialis* from Appendix I because of its status as a hybrid species (see document AC26 Doc. 13.2.1 and its Annex). The Committee recommended preparing a proposal to delete this taxon from the Appendices for submission at CoP16 by the Depositary Government on behalf of the Committee (executive summary of the 26th meeting of the Animals Committee: *Periodic Review of animal species included in the CITES Appendices*, agenda item 13). France volunteered to prepare such proposal.

3. Species characteristics

3.1 Distribution

After Jean Delacour's discovery of the imperial pheasant in Viet Nam in 1923, the mystery of the existence of this species puzzled the scientific community for nearly 80 years.

One single pair of imperial pheasants was captured in 1923 in the region of Dong Hoi in Viet Nam and no specimens have ever been captured in any other countries. It was not until 28 February 1990 that a new specimen – an immature male – was captured in a secondary forest 12 km from Cat Bin, about 200 km from the known range of the taxon in the region of Dong Hoi, Viet Nam . A second immature imperial pheasant was captured on 27 February 2000 also in a secondary forest in the district of Da Krong, in Quang Tri province, Viet Nam, in the known range of Edwards's pheasant.

3.2 Habitat

It is inferred that the imperial pheasant shares the habitat of the silver pheasant and Edwards's pheasant in Viet Nam (i.e. the secondary forests of the Annamite range).

3.3 Biological characteristics

Although it has not been possible to study the biological characteristics of the imperial pheasant, they are likely to be similar to those of its parental species, *Lophura edwardsi* and *Lophura nycthemera*.

3.4 Morphological characteristics

The only description available was made by Jean Delacour:

"Male: entirely dark blue, the body feathers being black with a wide glossy blue fringe; feathers of the lower back, rump and wing- and tail-coverts deep black with a glossy metallic blue border; head with a short slender blue-black crest; central rectrices long, pointed, slightly curved and inconspicuously spotted with brown; back and wings also inconspicuously spotted with brown. Iris orange-brown; skin of the face bright scarlet, with two wattles; bill pale greenish yellow with a blackish base; legs and feet crimson.

Length: 750 mm, wing 250 mm; tail 300 mm; culmen 30 mm; tarsus 87 mm

Female: no true crest but long and often raised crown feathers; head greyish brown with paler cheeks, chin and throat; upperparts chestnut-brown, with whitish shafts and faint black vermiculations; uppertail-coverts bright brown; central-tail feathers chestnut-brown with black vermiculations, the others being black; primaries black, with pale grey vermiculations along the shaft; secondaries black, bordered with chestnut; underparts pale greyish chestnut, sometimes faintly spotted. Bare parts as in the male.

Length: 600 mm, wing 214 mm; tail 190 mm; culmen 28 mm; tarsus 67 mm

Chick: crown and neck chestnut-brown with a blackish line in the middle; face pale buff; irregular black line from the eye to the neck; back dark brown with buff-white lines on the flanks, larger near the rump; wings dark brown with a buff-white stripe on the secondaries; chest and flanks pale chestnut; rest of underparts buff." »

3.5 Role of the species in its ecosystem

It has not been possible to study the role of the species in its ecosystem. However, its role is likely to be similar to those of its two parental species, *Lophura edwardsi* and *Lophura nycthemera*.

4. Status and trends

This chapter is not applicable given that the taxon has been found to be a hybrid and that very few specimens have been found in the wild.

5. Threats

Not applicable.

6. Utilization and trade

6.1 National utilization

Not applicable.

6.2 Legal trade

Several live specimens exhibiting the phenotype of *Lophura imperialis* have been rediscovered and captured in the wild since 1990. The imperial pheasant has sometimes been reconstituted by crossing species of pheasants in captivity.

Table 1a: *Lophura imperialis*
CITES reported trade (source = wild [W]) during 1975-1999 and 2000-2010

Terms	Total 1975-1999	Total 2000-2011
Live total	4	0
Total	4	0
Source: UNEP-WCMC CITES Trade Database. Gross Exports/Imports. Accessed on 3 July 2012.		

Table 1b: *Lophura imperialis*
CITES reported trade (sources = all)) during 1975-1999 and 2000-2010

Terms	Total 1975-1999	Total 2000-2011
Live total	22	9
Total	22	9
Source: UNEP-WCMC CITES Trade Database. Gross Exports/Imports. Accessed on 3 July 2012.		

6.3 Parts and derivatives in trade

Information is not readily available.

6.4 Illegal trade

Not applicable.

6.5 Impacts to look-alikes

Not applicable.

6.5 Actual or potential trade impacts

Trade will have no actual or potential impacts given that *Lophura imperialis* will be treated as a hybrid of *Lophura edwardsi* and, as such, will retain its Appendix-I status in compliance with Resolution Conf. 10.17 (Rev. CoP14).

7. Legal instruments

7.1 National

Lophura imperialis is included in the Red List (2007) of endangered species of Viet Nam.

7.2 International

Lophura imperialis was included in CITES Appendix I at the plenipotentiary conference held in Washington D.C. in 1973. Yet, the listing is no longer applicable. Since one of the parental species (*Lophura edwardsi*) is included in CITES Appendix I, hybrids will be considered as falling under the provisions of Appendix I as per Resolution Conf. 10.17 (Rev. CoP14).

8. Species management

8.1 Management measures

Not applicable.

8.2 Population monitoring

Not applicable.

8.3 Control measures

Not applicable.

8.4 Captive breeding and artificial propagation

In 2003, Alain Hennache used artificial insemination to cross the two parental species at the Zoological Park of Clères, France, owned by the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle. Five chicks were produced from this cross.
The last record of *Lophura imperialis* in captivity in Europe was in the United Kingdom in 2009. A breeder had three birds (http://www.wpa-europe.ch.vu/ accessed on 20 December 2011).

8.5 Habitat conservation

Not applicable.

8.6 Safeguards

Not applicable.

9. Information on similar species

Edwards's pheasant (*Lophura edwardsi*), one of the parental species of this hybrid, is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. *Lophura edwardsi* is included in CITES Appendix I.

The Vietnamese pheasant (*Lophura hatinhensis*) has recently undergone genetic studies, which have proven that it is an inbred form of Edwards's pheasant (*Lophura edwardsi*). Therefore, it is no longer considered a species (Hennache *et al.,* 2012, *in press*).

Lophura nycthemera, the other parental species of this hybrid, is not considered globally endangered and is even common in some places. It is not included in CITES.

10. Consultations

Viet Nam, the only range State of *Lophura imperialis*, expressed its support for the proposal through an email sent on 18 June 2012.

11. Additional remarks

None.

12. References

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