

Deletion of Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus* from Appendix II

Proponent: Switzerland, as Depositary Government, at the request of the Animals Committee (prepared by New Zealand)

Summary: The Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus*, a round partridge-shaped pheasant (40-45 cm in length) is found in Bhutan, southwestern and central China, northern India, extreme northern Myanmar, and Nepal. It is the only pheasant in the genus *Ithaginis*. The species has a very large range estimated at between 650 000 and 800 000 km² although is believed to occur only patchily within this. There are no overall population estimates; it is considered to be locally common in some areas but rare in others. Blood Pheasants are hunted locally for food and the species may in some areas be targeted for its bright plumage as well as opportunist egg collection. Normally a fairly tame bird, where it is hunted it is wary. The species is also believed to be affected by habitat loss and degradation caused by timber extraction for firewood, overgrazing and agricultural conversion. The global population is suspected to be slowly declining but not sufficiently rapidly to approach the thresholds used by BirdLife International and IUCN as criteria for listing as threatened. It is currently classified by BirdLife and IUCN as Least Concern.

The species was listed in CITES Appendix II on 1st July 1975 along with a number of other Phasianidae species, due to concerns about the international trade in live specimens for private aviary holdings and in feathers for use in the manufacture of fly-fishing lures. There has been little recorded trade in the species since the listing, a total numbering perhaps in the region of 100 live specimens from captive and wild sources have been recorded. Since 2000 only four trophies have been reported in trade. There is apparently limited demand by collectors and the species is not known to breed well in captivity.

It is difficult to confuse *Ithaginis cruentus* with other species. The male is very distinctive. The less brightly coloured female is still readily recognisable because of its erectile crest, which means that it cannot be confused with female *Tragopan spp.* or Koklass Pheasant *Pucrasia macrolopha*.

Analysis: The Blood Pheasant has a very large range. There are no recent population estimates, but the species is considered to be at least locally common and is classified by IUCN as Least Concern. There has been very little reported trade in this species since its inclusion in the CITES Appendix II in 1975 and no evidence of significant international demand. There are no records of illegal trade in the CITES trade database, nor has the species been subject to a recommendation under the provisions of the Review of Significant Trade to improve its conservation status within the last two intervals between meetings of the Conference of the Parties. It seems unlikely that deletion from the Appendices would stimulate trade such that it would qualify for inclusion in the Appendices in the near future. It would appear therefore that the species does not meet the criteria for inclusion in Appendix II and that the precautionary measures in Paras 4 and 5 of Annex 4 to *Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15)* Annex 4 Paragraphs 4 and 5 are met.

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p>Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal</p> <p>Least Concern</p>	<p><u>Range</u></p> <p> </p> <p><u>IUCN Global Category</u></p> <p> </p> <p><i>Least Concern (Assessed 2012, criteria version 3.1)</i></p>

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p>Biological and trade criteria for retention in Appendix II (Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) Annex 2 a)</p> <p><u>A) Trade regulation needed to prevent future inclusion in Appendix I</u></p> <p>The global population size has not been quantified although the species is reported to be common in some areas and rare in others.</p> <p>Locally common game bird.</p> <p>Large distribution of about 800 000 km² along the Himalayas from Nepal through Bhutan and extreme northeast India to extreme northern Myanmar, and northward into southern China.</p> <p>The population is suspected to be slowly declining but BirdLife International (2012) do not consider that the decline is sufficiently rapid to approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the population trend criterion (>30% decline over ten years or three generations).</p> <p>Some subspecies are distributed in a narrow range with very limited population.</p>	<p><i>It is listed as Vulnerable in China Red Data Book of Endangered Animals (Zheng and Wang, 1998).</i></p> <p><i>BirdLife estimates the extent of occurrence area of breeding/resident Blood Pheasants to be 658 000 km² (BirdLife International, 2012). Probably inhabits an area much smaller than its geographical limits as its habitat is naturally restricted and increasingly fragmented (Madge and McGowan, 2002).</i></p> <p><i>Blood Pheasants inhabit high mountains at an altitude from 2135 m to 4575 m (Johnsgard, 1999), their limited dispersal ability (sedentary, poor flight ability) could mean their really suitable habitat may be much smaller than earlier estimates given. It was very common in some suitable habitat, such as in reserves, but in some parts of Yunnan and Sichuan illegal hunting was very heavy. Birds were shot or captured by snare for food use by local people; eggs were also collected during the spring. In winter because of the heavy snowfall Blood Pheasants move to lower altitudes closer to villages making them more accessible for hunting. Sometimes the birds were found in the farmers market of Yunnan. Blood Pheasants are rarely seen in these areas now (Jia Chenxi in litt., 2012).</i></p> <p><i>The species has declined throughout Nepal especially outside protected areas. While birds were sighted frequently outside protected areas of Nepal pre-1990, only two reliable reports of birds have been made from areas outside Protected areas post-1990 indicating that the birds have continued to decline (Baral in litt., 2012).</i></p> <p><i>The range sizes of several races in Hengduan Mountain were very limited, such as the subspecies cluster of kuseri/rocki/holoptilus/marionae/clarkei with possibly as little as 25 000 km² of available habitat, and they may well be vulnerable (del Hoyo et al., 1994). According to the literature, Blood Pheasant were found in some areas in the recent past, but now no sightings have been reported in these areas for many years, such as southern Shanxi, northwestern Henan and central Gansu. Possibly they may already be extinct in these areas (Zheng and Wang, 1998).</i></p> <p><i>Those populations in the Eastern Himalaya and deep valleys of the Myanmar/Yunnan border region may be threatened (Madge and McGowan, 2002).</i></p>

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p data-bbox="297 220 2024 272"><u>B) Regulation of trade required to ensure that harvest from the wild is not reducing population to level where survival might be threatened by continued harvest or other influences</u></p> <p data-bbox="174 304 936 328">Since 2000, there has been minimal trade in the species (four trophies).</p> <p data-bbox="174 360 1070 496">There has been virtually no international trade reported since 2000. About half of the trade in the period 1975-1999 was of live birds raised in captivity in Germany and Japan, exported to the United States and Switzerland, though many of these records of trade from non-range States appear to have been erroneously classified as being 'wild caught'.</p> <p data-bbox="174 528 1043 632">The only exports of wild-caught live birds from a range State were of 42 birds exported from Nepal to Switzerland (20) and the United States (22) between 1984 and 1988. The four trophies traded since 2000 were exported from China to the United States in 2005.</p> <p data-bbox="174 663 636 687">Illegal trade is not believed to be significant.</p>	<p data-bbox="1144 304 2063 464"><i>Before 1999 there was limited trade reported in the CITES trade database in both "captive" and "wild-caught" specimens, likely amounting to fewer than 100 specimens in total. In 2005 four trophies were exported from China to the USA. No trade has been reported in the CITES trade database since then. Baral (in litt., 2012) and Jia Chenxi (in litt., 2012) considers that there is likely to be unreported/illegal trade in this species, which they believe will increase if the species is removed from the CITES Appendices.</i></p> <p data-bbox="1144 496 2047 552"><i>BirdLife International (2012) records the harvests of the species for the international pet trade as at a trivial level, whereas domestic use for food is recorded as non-trivial.</i></p> <p data-bbox="1144 584 2063 743"><i>There is some demand for this species within a few Chinese zoos, less so from private collectors. The Chinese zoo demand is addressed partly by trapping of wild birds, but more by finding nests to take and incubate eggs. Hatch rates have been satisfactory, but survival of birds to adulthood is low. Therefore collection of wild-laid eggs has continued in order to maintain exhibits, but probably the total numbers involved are small (tens, not hundreds) (Davison in litt., 2012).</i></p> <p data-bbox="1144 775 2056 911"><i>Where it is hunted it is very wary and flees on sight, but seems to maintain a scattered population. Where protected it can be very tame. Such sites can be close together. The wildness of birds away from protected areas clearly indicates that hunting takes place. Pressures are mostly hunting rather than taking of eggs since these are not particularly easy to find (Davison in litt., 2012).</i></p> <p data-bbox="1144 943 2063 1134"><i>Jia Chenxi (in litt., 2012) considers that the aviculturists often meet their needs, legal or illegal, from wild harvest in general. In recent years, captive breeding attempts have been made in Beijing Zoo. Baral (in litt., 2012) also considered that there is some demand from captive breeders for wild stock to strengthen their captive stock. According to some websites "they are a difficult species to breed, and yet they are gaining popularity in aviculture." See http://www.birdtrader.co.uk/breed/pheasants_blood_pheasant/171</i></p> <p data-bbox="1144 1166 2047 1302"><i>Davison (in litt., 2012) considers that there is not much international demand because it is known to be a "difficult" species. Otherwise, no doubt demand would increase. However, Baral (in litt., 2012) considers that because this is not an easy species to breed it is likely to be seen as a challenge to some who will continue to "explore" captive breeding by acquiring birds from wild stock.</i></p>

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
Retention in Appendix II to improve control of other listed species	
<u>A) Specimens in trade resemble those of species listed in Appendix II under Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) Annex 2 a or listed in Appendix I</u>	
<p>Males of <i>Ithaginis cruentus</i> are distinctive, with no look-alike issues. Females have less distinct plumage, but size and shape of bare parts makes them quite recognisable.</p> <p>It is difficult to confuse <i>Ithaginis cruentus</i> with other species. The male is very distinctive. The less brightly coloured female is still readily recognisable because of its erectile crest, which means that it cannot be confused with female <i>Tragopan spp.</i> or Koklass Pheasant <i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i> (Madge and McGowan, 2002).</p>	
Other information	
<p>Adults and juveniles are caught for human subsistence at a national level.</p> <p>Habitat loss and degradation caused by timber extraction for firewood, overgrazing and agricultural conversion.</p> <p>The species is also threatened by hunting. Blood Pheasant are hunted for their bright plumage, and opportunistic collection of their eggs may occur.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <p><i>The species is declining throughout much of its range owing to habitat loss and degradation caused by timber extraction, overgrazing and agricultural conversion as well as hunting pressure (del Hoyo et al., 1994).</i></p> <p><i>In Nepal Blood Pheasants are threatened by hunting and trapping, especially outside protected areas, but also within some protected areas, although as it is a bird of high altitudes, it may be under less pressure than pheasants at lower elevations. (Draft Red Data Book for Birds of Nepal, in prep; Baral in litt., 2012).</i></p> <p><i>In China its population size is believed to be declining because of continuing habitat loss, habitat fragmentation and hunting (Zheng and Wang 1998).</i></p>
<u>Conservation, management and legislation</u>	
<p>CITES Appendix II and EU Annex B.</p> <p>In India, the species is protected on Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, and in China it is on the national list of second class protected species under the Law of the Peoples Republic of China on the Protection of Species 1988.</p> <p>In Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar, it is protected within National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries and other conservation areas.</p> <p>Throughout its range, <i>Ithaginis cruentus</i> occurs in many protected areas, for example in Nepal, the species is found in four conservation areas, five national parks and one hunting reserve.</p>	<p><i>In Sichuan and Shaanxi is it well protected by Buddhist beliefs or within nature reserves (Davison in litt., 2012).</i></p>

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<u>Captive Breeding/Artificial Propagation</u>	
<p>The World Pheasant Association captive census recorded about 100 <i>Ithaginis cruentus</i> in Europe in 2010/2011. ISIS (2012) records no captive individuals in ISIS institutions; however, it is held in Beijing Zoo. Both WPA and ISIS databases rely on voluntary submission of records.</p>	<p><i>Has been successfully bred in captivity in Belgium (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LonlFIPAWB4).</i></p> <p><i>Davison (in litt., 2012) considered that although captive breeding is recorded, successes are fairly short-lived, and the skills and care these birds need mean that a large captive population spread across numerous establishments will be very unlikely. Successes tend to fade away over a few years.</i></p> <p><i>In recent years, captive breeding attempts have been made in Beijing Zoo (Jia Chenxi in litt., 2012).</i></p>
<u>Other comments</u>	
<p>After consulting with the Scientific Authority of China and the domestic authorities of wildlife management, the Management Authority of China suggested that the species should be retained in Appendix II. This suggestion arose because, "although the scientists still have disputes about the taxonomy of subspecies of <i>Ithaginis cruentus</i>, the population and habitat situation of the subspecies is quite different. Some subspecies are distributed in a narrow range with very limited population. To retain <i>Ithaginis cruentus</i> in Appendix II is of great importance to the protection of these subspecies".</p>	<p><i>Eleven (Madge and McGowan 2002) - fourteen (del Hoyo, 1994) subspecies are recognised (l.c. cruentus, l.c. affinis, l.c. tibetanus, l.c. geoffroyi, l.c. berezowskii l.c. beicki, l.c. michaelis, l.c. sinensis, l.c. annae, l.c. kuseri, l.c. rocki, l.c. marionae, l.c. holoptilus, l.c. clarkei). Considerable intergradation between most of the described races suggests that much of the variation observed is probably clinal, and therefore the validity of many races is dubious.</i></p>

Reviewers: H. Baral, Jia Chenxi, G. Davison, T. Inskipp, P. McGowan (also contributed to the original compilation of information for the US as part of the Periodic Review), R. Thomas.

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