

Transfer of Caspian Snowcock *Tetraogallus caspius* from Appendix I to Appendix II

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

Summary: The Caspian Snowcock *Tetraogallus caspius* is a large (55-65 cm) gamebird found in mountains in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey and Turkmenistan. It is one of five species of snowcock in the genus *Tetraogallus*, part of the pheasant family (Phasianidae). The species has a very large range, estimated at over 300 000 km². In 2004 the population was estimated by BirdLife International at between 10 000 and 50 000 individuals (6700-33 000 mature individuals). There is said to be some harvest for local use, with over-hunting and habitat degradation from over-grazing believed to have some impact on the species. The population is thought to be declining but not sufficiently rapidly to approach thresholds used by BirdLife and IUCN as criteria for listing as threatened. It is currently classified by BirdLife and IUCN as Least Concern.

The species was included in CITES Appendix I in 1975 when the Convention first came into force. It was one of a number of species of Phasianidae listed at that time, including the Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus*, also listed in Appendix I. Since then no trade in it has been recorded (although no commercial trade would be expected, given that the species was listed in Appendix I). On the basis of available information it appears that there is little demand for the species in international trade.

The Caspian Snowcock can be clearly distinguished by its plumage from the Tibetan snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus*, itself the subject of a proposal for transfer from Appendix I to II (CoP16 Prop. 19). It resembles the three other *Tetraogallus* species (*T. caucasicus*, *T. altiacus* and *T. himalayensis*) although both adults and juveniles of *T. caspius* can be distinguished reasonably easily from these by differences in plumage. None of these species is listed in the Appendices.

The proponents state that they are proposing to transfer *Tetraogallus caspius* from Appendix I to Appendix II, in accordance with provisions of *Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) Annex 4* precautionary measures A1 and A 2a/b. This suggests that the intention is to remove the species from the CITES Appendices after an appropriate period of monitoring of any impact of trade on the species whilst it is in Appendix II. The proponents have been requested by the Animals Committee to submit this proposal, the species having been subject to the Periodic Review process.

Analysis: It would appear that the Caspian Snowcock does not meet the biological criteria for inclusion in Appendix I. No trade has been recorded since its inclusion in Appendix I in 1975 and it is not known to be in demand for international trade. The only other *Tetraogallus* species currently listed in the Appendices is the Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus*, itself proposed for transfer from Appendix I to Appendix II (CoP16 Prop. 19). The two species can be clearly distinguished by their plumage. The transfer of the Caspian Snowcock to Appendix II is unlikely to stimulate trade in, or cause enforcement problems for any other species included in Appendix I regardless of whether the proposal regarding *T. tibetanus* is accepted. The proposal thus appears to meet the precautionary measures in *Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev Cop 15) Annex 4 A1*.

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey and Turkmenistan.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Range</u></p> <p><i>IUCN Red List currently does not list Armenia as a range State, although this is an error and will be corrected (Symes, in litt., 2012).</i></p>

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<u>IUCN Global Category</u>	
Least Concern.	Least Concern (Assessed 2012, criteria version 3.1).
Biological criteria for inclusion in Appendix I	
<p><u>A) Small wild population</u> (i) Population or habitat decline; (ii) small sub-populations; (iii) concentrated geographically during one or more life-history phases; (iv) large population fluctuations; (v) high vulnerability</p>	
<p><i>Tetraogallus caspius</i> is listed by the IUCN as being of 'Least Concern' globally, but is regarded as 'vulnerable' within Georgia, where the population at the edge of the species's range is believed to be very small.</p> <p>The size of the population is estimated to be 10 000 to 50 000 individuals, which equates to 6700 to 33 000 mature individuals.</p>	<p><i>The population size may be moderately small to large, but it is not believed to approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the population size criterion (<10 000 mature individuals) (BirdLife International, 2012).</i></p> <p><i>In Europe, the breeding population was estimated to number 2500-9000 breeding pairs, equating to 7500-27 000 individuals (BirdLife International, 2004). Based on Europe forming 5-24% of the global range and the 2004 estimates; the estimate of global population size was 10 000-50 000 individuals (roughly equating to 6700-33 000 mature individuals), although further validation of this estimate is needed.</i></p> <p><i>Caspian Snowcock in Turkmenistan has limited distribution, it is rare and the only threat is illegal hunting as a game species. The species is included in the Red Data Book of Turkmenistan (2011) as endangered (Rustamov and Soviev in litt., 2012).</i></p>
<p><u>B) Restricted area of distribution</u> (i) Fragmented or localised population; (ii) large fluctuations in distribution or sub-populations; (iii) high vulnerability; (iv) decrease in distribution, population, area or quality of habitat, or recruitment</p>	
<p>The species has a very large range (314 000 km²).</p>	
<p><u>C) Decline in number of wild individuals</u> (i) Ongoing or historic decline; (ii) inferred or projected decline due to decreasing area or quality of habitat, levels of exploitation, high vulnerability, or decreasing recruitment.</p>	
<p>The overall 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><i>In Iran, Tohidifar (in litt., 2012) considers that habitat quality for the species is declining even in protected areas and wildlife refuges.</i></p>

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p>Trade criteria for inclusion in Appendix I</p> <p>No legal trade in this species has been recorded since the species was listed in Appendix I in 1975. Commercial trade would not be permitted for Appendix I species, and so the lack of existing trade does not necessarily indicate a lack of future demand for international trade.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>The species is or may be affected by trade</u></p> <p><i>No other snowcock species appears to be in demand in international trade and no evidence was found to suggest that there is or would be demand for this species if trade were permitted.</i></p> <p><i>Snowcocks dig over the ground extensively when foraging and are therefore somewhat difficult to keep in aviaries, making them less popular as display animals (McGowan, in litt., 2012). Tohidifar (in litt., 2012) notes that live capturing of this bird is quite difficult because of its cautious behaviour.</i></p> <p><i>Tohidifar (in litt., 2012) considers that there is little hunting of the species in Iran mainly because of their low population density and that access to their natural habitat is difficult. However, Khaleghizadeh (in litt., 2012) suggests that the species is being hunted by hunters reaching higher mountain areas, although there is probably not commercial demand.</i></p> <p><i>According to Rustamov and Sopiiev (in litt., 2012) there is no trade of the species in Turkmenistan.</i></p>
<p>Precautionary Measures</p> <p>Commercial trade would not be permitted for Appendix I species, and so the lack of existing trade does not necessarily indicate a lack of future demand for international trade.</p> <p>Information is not readily available, but trade is not believed to be significant. There have been no examples of legal trade nor confiscations in Georgia.</p> <p>The Tibetan Snowcock <i>Tetraogallus tibetanus</i>, the only other snowcock listed in Appendix I of CITES, is clearly identified by its plumage features, especially its white flanks with longitudinal black stripes and lack of white on the primaries.</p> <p><i>Tetraogallus caspius</i> is not in known demand for international trade, nor is its transfer to Appendix II likely to stimulate trade in, or cause enforcement problems for, any other species included in Appendix I.</p>	<p><i>T. tibetanus is currently listed in Appendix I although it is also the subject of a proposal for transfer to Appendix II, which if accepted at the CoP would mean there were no other snowcocks listed in Appendix I.</i></p>
<p>Other information</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <p><i>Conflict was also noted as a threat in Azerbaijan by del Hoyo et al. (1994). No information was available on current levels of hunting and the impact of this.</i></p>

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p>human subsistence on a national level.</p> <p>Illegal trade is not believed to be significant.</p>	<p><i>Land degradation, habitat destruction, overgrazing of livestock and lower effectiveness of conservation measures in protected areas of Iran nowadays, are the main threats undoubtedly reducing the population of many wild animals, and presumably this species, in comparison with three previous decades (Tohidifar, in litt., 2012). Illegal hunting also exists.</i></p> <p><i>Khaleghizadeh (in litt., 2012) raised concerns that in the future climate change may result in a reduction of snow cover on mountains and loss of the species's habitat. This may also result in increased accessibility of the species by hunters.</i></p>
<u>Conservation, management and legislation</u>	
<p><i>Tetraogallus caspius</i> was listed in CITES Appendix II on 1 July 1975 as part of a group of Galliformes species.</p> <p>Listed on EU Annex A.</p> <p>The species is found in five Important Bird Areas in Armenia, five in Azerbaijan, four in Georgia, six in Turkey and one in Turkmenistan. In the Islamic Republic of Iran the species is found in five protected areas and one wildlife refuge.</p>	<p><i>In Iran this bird occurs in protected areas but current control and protection in such areas is reported to be weaker than in previous decades (Tohidifar, in litt., 2012).</i></p>
<u>Similar species</u>	
<p>Males and females are similar to <i>Tetraogallus caucasicus</i> from the Caucasus Mountains of Georgia, Azerbaijan and extreme southwest Russia, except that in the hand they have a grey hindneck and cheek stripes rather than rusty, and spots on the upper breast rather than chevrons or scalloping, but juveniles are harder to distinguish. Also similar in general appearance to <i>T. altaicus</i>, and <i>T. himalayensis</i>, but in the hand, adults and juveniles are easily distinguished by plumage differences. All of these look-alike species are classified as of 'Least Concern' by IUCN.</p> <p>The Tibetan Snowcock <i>Tetraogallus tibetanus</i>, the only other snowcock listed in Appendix I of CITES, is clearly identified by its plumage features, especially its white flanks with longitudinal black stripes and lack of white on the primaries.</p>	<p><i>Tetraogallus caucasicus, T. altaicus and T. himalayensis are not listed in the CITES Appendices.</i></p> <p><i>T. tibetanus is also listed in Appendix I; only one captive-bred live specimen has been recorded in the CITES trade database. It is also the subject of a proposal for transfer from Appendix I to Appendix II.</i></p>
<u>Artificial Propagation/Captive breeding</u>	
<p>There are no records of this species in captivity in Europe in the WPA database (31 July 2012), and ISIS (31 July 2012) records no captive individuals in ISIS institutions; however, both databases rely on voluntary submission of records.</p>	<p><i>There is at least one confirmed case in Iran (Tohidifar, in litt., 2012).</i></p>

Reviewers: P. McGowan, M. Tohidifar, R. Thomas.

References:

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