

Transfer of Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus* from Appendix I to Appendix II

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

Summary: The Tibetan Snowcock *Tetraogallus tibetanus* is a large (45-55 cm) gamebird widely distributed in the high mountains of central Asia, from the extreme east of Tajikistan, through extreme northern India, Nepal, south western China, Bhutan, and the extreme north of Myanmar. 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 at over 1 000 000 km². Although there are no recent population estimates its wide range suggests that there are several hundred thousand individuals. There is no evidence of any substantial threats, although the glacial moraines that it inhabits at high altitude are expected to be more affected than other types of habitats by climate change. The population is believed to be stable and is currently classified by IUCN as Least Concern.

The species was listed in CITES Appendix I on 1 July 1975 when the Convention first came into force. It was one of a number of species of Phasianidae listed at that time, including the Caspian Snowcock *Tetraogallus caspius*, also listed in Appendix I. Since then almost no trade in it has been recorded; there has only been one record of a captive-bred bird being imported by the UK from the US in 1981 (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 Tibetan Snowcock can be clearly distinguished by its plumage from the Caspian Snowcock *Tetraogallus caspius*, itself the subject of a proposal to transfer it from Appendix I to II (CoP16 Prop. 18). In appearance it is similar to *T. himalayensis* and *T. altiacus*; however, they are smaller and have distinct markings that differentiate them. Neither of these two species is listed in the Appendices.

The proponents state that they are proposing to transfer *Tetraogallus tibetanus* 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 having been the subject of the Periodic Review process.

Analysis: It would appear that the Tibetan Snowcock does not meet the biological criteria for inclusion Appendix I. No trade has been recorded since its listing in Appendix I in 1975 and *Tetraogallus tibetanus* is not in known demand for international trade. The only species of snowcock that is currently listed in Appendix I is the Caspian Snowcock *Tetraogallus caspius*, itself the subject of a proposal to transfer to Appendix II (CoP16 Prop. 18). Regardless of whether that proposal is accepted, the two species can be clearly identified by their plumage features and therefore the transfer of the Tibetan Snowcock to Appendix II is unlikely to stimulate trade in, or cause enforcement problems for any other species included in Appendix I thus meeting the precautionary measure A 2a of Annex 4 *Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15)*.

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p>Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Tajikistan.</p> <p>Least Concern.</p>	<p><u>Range</u></p> <p>Myanmar not noted as a range State by BirdLife International (2012a and b).</p> <p><u>IUCN Global Category</u></p> <p>Least Concern (Assessed 2012, criteria version 3.1).</p>

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
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>The population size of this central Asian gamebird has not been estimated, but its wide range suggests that there are several hundred thousand individuals.</p> <p>The population size is estimated to be 100 000 to 499 999 mature individuals.</p>	<p><i>No reference is given for the population size of 100 000 to 499 999 mature individuals in the Supporting Statement.</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>Tibetan Snowcock is widely distributed in the high mountains of central Asia, from the extreme east of Tajikistan, through Jammu and Kashmir in extreme northern India, Nepal, south western China, Bhutan, and the extreme north of Myanmar.</p> <p>The species has a very large range (1 070 000 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 population trend is suspected to be stable.</p>	
Trade criteria for inclusion in Appendix I	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>The species is or may be affected by trade</u></p>	
<p>No legal trade in this species has been recorded since it was listed in Appendix I in 1975. Note that commercial trade is not permitted for Appendix I species, and so the lack of existing international trade does not necessarily indicate a lack of future demand for international trade. One specimen recorded in trade between 1975–1999.</p>	<p><i>CITES trade data show one captive-bred live specimen was imported by the UK from the US in 1981 for personal purposes.</i></p>
Precautionary Measures	
<p><i>Tetraogallus tibetanus</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>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>

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p>Its transfer to Appendix II, with monitoring of any impact of trade on the species for at least two intervals between meetings of the Conference of the Parties, will allow an assessment of any international trade that may be stimulated by its transfer to Appendix II.</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).</i></p>
<p>Other information</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p>	
<p>Some subsistence hunting and use as pets. Climate change could be a potential threat to this species. As global warming continues, the glacial moraines that it inhabits at high altitude are expected to be more affected than other type of habitats.</p>	<p><i>BirdLife International (2012b) notes an absence of evidence of substantial threats.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Similar species</u></p>	
<p>Males and females are similar to <i>Tetraogallus himalayensis</i> and <i>T. altaicus</i>, but are smaller, have prominent white flanks with longitudinal black stripes, and lack white on the primaries. These look-alike species are classified as of 'Least Concern' by IUCN and are not listed on the CITES Appendices.</p> <p>The Caspian Snowcock <i>Tetraogallus caspius</i>, the only other snowcock listed in Appendix I of CITES, is clearly identified by its plumage features, especially its dark breast and flanks, and large patches of white on its primaries.</p>	<p><i>The Himalayan Snowcock has been introduced into the USA where it is possible to buy permits to hunt the species (see http://www.ndow.org/about/pubs/almanac/sum07/Sum07_Snowcock.pdf).</i></p> <p><i>Tetraogallus caspius is also the subject of a proposal to transfer the species from Appendix I to II. Proponents do not anticipate any great demand for this species but if accepted, the impact of a listing of the Tibetan Snowcock in Appendix II would be possible to determine through records in the CITES trade database.</i></p>

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

References:

- BirdLife International (2012a). *Tetraogallus tibetanus*. In: IUCN 2012. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2012.1. <www.iucnredlist.org>. Viewed on 16 October 2012.
- BirdLife International (2012b) Species factsheet: *Tetraogallus tibetanus*. www.birdlife.org Viewed on 17/10/2012.
- McGowan, P. (2012). In litt. to the IUCN/TRAFFIC Analyses Team, Cambridge, UK.