

Deletion of Imperial Woodpecker *Campephilus imperialis* from Appendix I

Proponent: Mexico

Summary: The Imperial Woodpecker *Campephilus imperialis*, the world's largest woodpecker, was formerly distributed throughout the Sierra Madre Occidental of Mexico where the population may historically have numbered around 8000 birds. Extensive habitat destruction through logging has reduced suitable habitat to less than 1% of its former range. This and hunting have led to collapse in the population. The species has not been recorded with certainty since 1956, despite extensive and prolonged searches within its former range. Thorough mapping and analysis of remaining habitat has been conducted and the results do not provide much hope that any population has been able to survive. However, unconfirmed sightings persist – the most recent in 2005 – and IUCN and BirdLife International consider that it cannot yet be presumed to be Extinct as the degree to which individuals can use sub-optimal regenerating forest is unknown, and it remains possible that some individuals survive. Any remaining population is likely to be tiny, and for these reasons it is treated by IUCN as Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct).

Campephilus imperialis was listed in Appendix I in 1975. Since then there has only been one record of re-export of four specimens for scientific purposes from the USA back to Mexico in 2006. There are about 160 stuffed specimens worldwide. The only other woodpecker in the CITES Appendices is the Appendix-I listed *Dryocopus javensis richardsi*, a subspecies of the Asian White-bellied Woodpecker that occurs in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This taxon resembles the Imperial Woodpecker in that both are large black-and-white woodpeckers in which the male has a red crest.

In the unlikely event of the species being rediscovered it would be protected by Mexican legislation under the Ley General de Vida Silvestre which would only authorise the use of specimens of species at risk when prioritising collection and capture for restoration activities, restocking and reintroduction.

The Animals Committee at its 26th Meeting (Geneva, April 2012), considered that the precautionary measures in Annex 4 of *Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev CoP15)* regarding the transfer of Appendix-I listed species to Appendix II before their removal from the Appendices are not considered applicable in this case, and asked Mexico to prepare the proposal to remove the species from the Appendices at CoP16.

Analysis: Despite recent unconfirmed sightings, the Imperial Woodpecker *Campephilus imperialis* is almost certainly extinct.

Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) notes in Annex 4 (Precautionary measures) that no species listed in Appendix I shall be removed from the Appendices unless it has been first transferred 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 (paragraph A. 1). It is not clear that this is intended to apply to species that are definitely or almost definitely extinct. The Resolution also notes: "Species that are regarded as possibly extinct should not be deleted from Appendix I if they may be affected by trade in the event of their rediscovery; these species should be annotated in the Appendices as 'possibly extinct' (paragraph D)". In the highly unlikely event that the Imperial Woodpecker were to be rediscovered, it would be protected by Mexican legislation under the Ley General de Vida Silvestre, which would not permit trade in this species.

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p><u>Range</u></p> <p>Mexico.</p> <p><u>IUCN Global Category</u></p> <p>Extinct.</p>	<p><i>Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct). Assessed first as Critically Endangered in 1994.</i></p>

Biological and trade criteria for retention in Appendix II (Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP15) Annex 2 a)

A) Trade regulation needed to prevent future inclusion in Appendix I

Believed to have once had a total population of around 8000 individuals.

Because of its large size, this Imperial Woodpecker was hunted for fun, as a food source and for medicinal purposes. However, there is no indication that this parts of products entered international trade.

Information from local residents suggested that extinction occurred by 1965 at the latest; the last documented observation of the species was in 1956. However, in 1995 there were reports of two sightings of single individuals, one in Durango and one in Sonora, in locations separated by over 730 miles, without sufficiently large areas of habitat to allow them to find food and nesting sites. A study of the area revealed that the forest had been cut down.

Mature forests of pine and pine-oak, Imperial Woodpecker habitat, changed dramatically due to the creation of mills and the use of trees for pulp. In an intensive search of suitable habitat for the species by image analysis, aerial surveys and field visits, it was concluded that only 0.61% of the original forest habitat of the Sierra Madre Occidental ancient forests remained in patches greater than 1 km².

Although pine-oak forests are represented in many protected areas in the former range of the species, their conservation status is variable and they usually do not provide the necessary conditions of large dead trees over 50 cm in diameter that the species used for nesting. It was considered that the recovery of the species would be virtually impossible even if there were any wild individuals.

Since the species was listed in Appendix I in 1975 there has only been one record of trade of four museum specimens for scientific purposes re-exported from USA back to Mexico in 2006. There are about 160 stuffed specimens worldwide.

A bird was reported in November 2005 in the Barrancas-Divisadero region of Barranca del Cobre, Chihuahua, but subsequent searches have found neither Imperial Woodpecker, nor appropriate habitat or recent local knowledge of the species, within a 50 km radius of the locality (BirdLife International, 2012a). There are now no unsurveyed old-growth remnants that are large enough for a breeding territory. In March 2010, the location of the 1956 record in Durango was checked, but no evidence of the species was found, and interviews suggest that the species disappeared from the area in 1956-1960 (BirdLife International, 2012a). Even if a few individuals persist, extensive habitat modification and continued hunting pressure from rural people has made extinction virtually inevitable (Lammertink et al., 1996; BirdLife International, 2012a).

Any remaining population is assumed to be tiny (numbering fewer than 50 individuals) based on the lack of confirmed records since 1956; analyses of remaining habitat indicate that no tracts remain which are large enough to support the species.

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
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Retention in Appendix II to improve control of other listed species

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

The Imperial Woodpecker was the world's largest woodpecker, with a body mass of 700 g and a length average between 510 and 560 mm. It was completely black except for two white lines along the back at the base of their wings. Displaying sexual dimorphism where males had a red crest, while the female crest was black and curved upward. The male's ivory beak was long and wide, and with a slightly curved the culmen or upper ridge. The eyes displayed a yellow colouration, rather greyish in immature individuals.

Only two woodpeckers are listed in the CITES Appendices.

Dryocopus javensis richardsi, listed in Appendix I, is a rare subspecies of the White-bellied Woodpecker, which may now only be present in People's Republic of Korea, where the population has been estimated at < c.100 breeding pairs (Brazil, 2009) having previously been found in Japan and Republic of Korea too (BirdLife International 2012b). These woodpeckers are similar both being large with males possessing red crests, however, they can be distinguished by their beak colour, that of the Imperial Woodpecker being distinctively ivory in colour. D. javensis richardsi also has a distancing white belly and rump (Thomas in litt., 2012).

Other information

Logging affected 99% of the estimated range of the species in the western Sierra Madre.

The main pressures that led to the species's extinction were the fragmentation and loss of habitat, and hunting. However there is no indication that the latter was related to the international trade. Because of its large size, this woodpecker was hunted for fun, as a food source and medicinal purposes.

The specific habitat requirements the species had made it very susceptible to logging during the 1950s, which also led to greater access for hunting, accelerating the population decline.

Threats

Although over-hunting probably precipitated the initial decline, this was compounded by the widespread removal of dead pines for pulp and mature pines for timber. By 1996, only 22 km² of suitable breeding habitat remained and even the area from which the pair were reported in 1993 had been logged (Lammertink et al., 1996). The species's social nature made it particularly susceptible to both types of threat; it frequently occurred in groups of four to eight (sometimes up to 20) individuals and therefore required large tracts of forest and was easily exploited by hunters (Mendenhall, 2005). Interviews indicate that logging interests encouraged persecution of the species, including through the poisoning of foraging trees (Lammertink et al., 2011; BirdLife International, 2012c).

Conservation, management and legislation

The Imperial Woodpecker is included in the NOM-059-SEMARNAT-2010 (DOF 2010), in which it has been considered extinct since 2001. The pine-oak forests of the Sierra Madre Occidental are present in the states of Durango, Chihuahua, Jalisco and Michoacán. However, they are areas heavily affected by timber activities. Although many reserves in the country contain areas covered by this forest, logging has continued and there are few remnants of mature forests in Protected Areas that could provide habitat for the species.

Prepare to follow-up any further local reports. Continue searching areas of old-growth forest in the former range, especially in small patches now surrounded by managed forest. The forest above the abandoned farm of Bajío de Don Victor, in Taxicaringa, and a patch of remnant forest to the north-west of Babicora, in Chihuahua, have been identified as priority sites for future searches (BirdLife International, 2012b).

Were the species to be re-discovered it would be classified as "En peligro de

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	extinction" (In danger of extinction) and under the Ley General de Vida Silvestre the only authorised collection of specimens would be for restoration activities, restocking and reintroduction.
<u>Captive Breeding/Artificial Propagation</u>	
There are no records of the species in captivity anywhere in the world.	

References:

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- Thomas, R. (2012). In litt. to the IUCN/TRAFFIC Analyses Team, Cambridge, UK.