

## Deletion of Lesser Bilby *Macrotis leucura* from Appendix I

### Proponent: Australia

**Summary:** The Lesser Bilby *Macrotis leucura* was one of two species of bilby (genus *Macrotis*) in the bandicoot family (the Peramelidae). It was endemic to Australia where it occurred in arid regions in the interior. The last verified specimen was collected in 1931, although oral accounts by Aboriginals suggest that it may have survived into the 1960s. It has been classified as Extinct by IUCN since 1982. The reasons for its demise are unclear, although predation by introduced Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and feral cats and habitat alteration have been implicated.

*Macrotis leucura*, along with its sister-species the Greater Bilby *Macrotis lagotis*, was included in CITES Appendix I in 1975, when the Convention came into force, by which time it was almost certainly extinct. No trade in any specimens has ever been recorded under CITES.

In the highly unlikely event of the species being rediscovered, it would be covered by Australian legislation that prohibits the export of native mammal species for commercial purposes and requires a permit for export for non-commercial purposes.

*Macrotis lagotis*, which is easily distinguishable from *M. leucura* by its greater size and different colouration, is extant and classified as Vulnerable by IUCN. A very small amount of non-commercial trade in specimens of this species is recorded in the CITES trade database.

**Analysis:** 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 (para. A. 1). It 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' (para. D).

It is not evident that either of these two apply in this case. Para. A. 1 clearly applies to extant species as there can be no impact of trade on an extinct species, while para. D applies to species that are 'possibly extinct' rather than species that are regarded as extinct, as in the present case. There is no reason to assume that the species would be affected by trade in the extremely unlikely event of its rediscovery. Export for commercial purposes would be prohibited by Australian legislation.

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<u>Taxonomy</u>	
<u>Range</u>	
Australia	<u>IUCN Global Category</u>
Extinct	Classified as Extinct in 1982 (Thornback and Jenkins, 1982).
<b>Biological criteria for inclusion in Appendix I</b>	
<p><b><u>A) Small wild population</u></b>  <b>(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</b></p>	
<p>Extinct.</p> <p>The Lesser Bilby disappeared between the 1920s and 1960s. Aboriginal people reported their last sightings for central Western Australia as: Clutterbuck Hills, 1960s; north of Rawlinson Range, 1950s; Walter James Range, 1950s; Great Sandy Desert between Southesk Tablelands and Jupiter Wells, 1940s; Murray Bore (south of Blackstone), late 1920s.</p>	<p><i>The last confirmed collection of a specimen was in 1931 near Cooncherie in north-east South Australia; a skull of unknown age was found in 1967 in a Wedge-tailed Eagle's (Aquila audax ) nest south-east of Alice Springs; Aboriginal oral history suggests survival possibly into the 1960s (Burbidge et al., 2012).</i></p>
<p><b><u>B) Restricted area of distribution</u></b>  <b>(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</b></p>	
<p>The total range of the Lesser Bilby extended over two regions in arid Australia: the north-east of South Australia and adjoining south-east Northern Territory; the Gibson and Great Sandy Deserts of Western Australia; and adjoining areas of the Northern Territory.</p>	
<b>Trade criteria for inclusion in Appendix I</b>	
<b><u>The species is or may be affected by trade</u></b>	
<i>Never reported in trade under CITES.</i>	

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### Precautionary Measures

The EPBC Act regulates trade in CITES listed and Australian native wildlife and their products. Export of live Australian native mammals is strictly prohibited for commercial purposes but may they be exported for specific non-commercial purposes (e.g. for research, education or exhibition). As an Australian native mammal an Australian native export permit would be required for the export of *Macrotis leucura* even if it were removed from the CITES Appendices.

If the species was rediscovered, any take from the wild would be strictly regulated by relevant Australian domestic environmental legislation.

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### Other information

The primary cause of the extinction of the Lesser Bilby is most likely due to predation by feral cats *Felis catus* and Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*. Altered fire regimes and feral dromedary camels *Camelus dromedaries* are threats to the vegetation that occurs in the former range of the Lesser Bilby and may have contributed to their extinction.

### Threats

### Similar species

*M. leucura* was readily distinguished from the still surviving *M. lagotis* by its size and colouration.

*M. lagotis* is included in Appendix I; it is classified as Vulnerable by IUCN (assessed 2008). A very small amount of trade in scientific specimens of this species is reported in the CITES trade database. *Macrotis* species are easily distinguishable from all other bandicoots (family Peramelidae).

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### References:

- Burbidge, A., Johnson, K. and Dickman, C. (2008). *Macrotis leucura*. In: IUCN 2012. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2012.2. <[www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org)>. Downloaded on 23 October 2012.
- Thornback, J. and Jenkins. M. (1982). *The IUCN Mammal Red Data Book part 1*. IUCN, Cambridge, UK and Gland, Switzerland.