

Transfer of Philippine Pangolin *Manis culionensis* from Appendix II to Appendix I

Proponents: Philippines and United States of America

Summary: The Philippine Pangolin *Manis culionensis* is endemic to six islands in the Philippines: mainland Palawan and the much smaller adjacent islands of Coron, Culion, Balabac, Busuanga and Dumaran Island. It has also been introduced to Apulit Island adjacent to Palawan. Pangolin populations in the Philippines were previously considered part of the Sunda Pangolin *Manis javanica*, but were split from it in 2005. The species occurs in lowland primary and secondary forests, grasslands/secondary growth mosaics, mixed mosaics of agricultural lands and scrubland adjacent to secondary forests. It is solitary and typically gives birth annually to one young after a gestation period of approximately six months¹. It is thought that breeding occurs in August and September. Generation time is taken as seven years.

There is a lack of population data, mainly because the species is elusive, solitary and nocturnal. In 2004 it was described by local people as fairly common, though subject to moderately heavy hunting pressure². There are relatively recent (2012) estimates of densities of 0.05 individuals per km² in primary forest and 0.01 per km² in mixed forest/brush land³. Higher estimates made in 2014 of 2.5 adult pangolins per km² on Palawan and Dumaran Island are considered unreliable⁴. The species is thought still to be considerably more abundant in northern and central Palawan than in the south; it is reportedly abundant on Dumaran Island (435km²). Local hunters on Palawan report that populations are declining as a result of hunting. One study on Palawan in 2012 reported that increased effort is now needed to catch pangolins, potentially as a consequence of declining populations.

The species is believed to be affected by habitat loss and degradation caused by shifting cultivation and conversion of forest to permanent agricultural crops and industrial tree plantations, particularly palm oil. Palawan, with an area of 15,000km² and estimated tree cover in 2000 of 10,000km², lost an estimated 770km² of tree cover between 2001 and 2014⁵. As noted above, observed densities in secondary habitats are much lower than those in primary forests.

The CITES Trade Database records export of around 1200 pangolins per year from the Philippines between 1982 and 1989 (predominantly skins and live) reported as *Manis javanica* (before *M. culionensis* was split from it). Reported trade dropped to almost zero after 1989. The Philippines made illegal the export of all wild-caught fauna in 1995. A review of trade in Asiatic pangolins suggested that, based on seizures, around 70 per year were illegally traded between 2000 and 2013. Since 2010, there have been 17 seizures involving the *M. culionensis* in Palawan province believed to be destined for international trade⁶.

This species is classified by IUCN as Endangered (2014). Since 2015, this species has been listed as critically endangered in the Philippines under Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) Resolution No. 15-521.

Analysis: Information on the status of the *M. culionensis* is scarce. The species does not have a restricted range. If recent estimates of population density (of ca. one per 20km² in dense forest and one per 100km² in forest/scrub mosaic) are reliable, then the global population may be small. There are no baseline data on which to base population trends although there is anecdotal information that the species is scarcer than it was, in at least part of its range. If historic records of legal trade and recent estimates of illegal trade are at all reliable, there has been a marked decline in trade in the past 20-30 years, from ca. 1200 per year in the 1980s to around 70 per year in 2000-2013. Assuming this is not due to reduced hunting effort (unlikely) or improved enforcement efforts, it might be indicative of a corresponding marked decline in the wild population. If that were the case (or the estimate for a small and probably declining wild population were reliable), the species would appear to meet the criteria for inclusion in Appendix I in *Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16)*.

Reviewers: C. Shepherd and C. Waterman.

References:

Information not referenced in the Summary section is from the Supporting Statement.

¹ Gaubert, P. (2011) Family Manidae (Pangolins). Pp. 82-103 In: Wilson, D.E. & Mittermeier, R.A. eds (2011). Handbook of the Mammals of the World. Vol. 2. Hoofed Mammals. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

² Lagrada, L., Schoppe, S. & Challender, D. (2014). *Manis culionensis*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2014.

³ Lagrada, L.S.A. (2012) Population density, distribution and habitat preferences of the Palawan Pangolin (*Manis culionensis*, de Elera 1915). University of the Philippines Los Banos, Philippines.

⁴ Schoppe, S. (2016) *In litt.* to the IUCN/TRAFFIC Analyses Team, Cambridge, UK.

⁵ Global Forest Watch. (2016) Philippines Country Profile, <http://www.globalforestwatch.org/country/PHL/59>. Viewed on 15 June 2016.

⁶ Anon. (2016) Efforts to protect Palawan Pangolin continue. PCSD Updates. February 2016, Issue 2, Vol 1. <http://pcsd.gov.ph/blog/world-pangolin-day-2016-efforts-to-protect-palawan-pangolin-continue/> Viewed on 15 June 2016.