

Inclusion of Psychedelic Rock Gecko *Cnemaspis psychedelica* in Appendix I

Proponents: Viet Nam and European Union

Summary: The Psychedelic Rock Gecko *Cnemaspis psychedelica* is moderate-sized gecko mostly active during the day. It is known from the island of Hon Khoai off the southern tip of Viet Nam, which has a total area of 8km², and has recently been reported as occurring on the smaller island of Hon Sao nearby to the southeast; its presence on other smaller neighbouring islands is unconfirmed. On Hon Khoai it is found on granite boulder outcrops in the shade of the surrounding dense vegetation. It has much brighter colouration than other species of *Cnemaspis* (of which there are around 75), with both sexes having orange forelimbs and a blue-grey body. Females are reported to lay a single clutch of two eggs once a year, incubated in communal clutches on the underside of overhanging boulders.

The species has been described as very common and abundant in suitable habitat. It is unclear how much suitable habitat there is, although given the small size of the island it is unlikely to be extensive. A population assessment carried out on Hon Khoai in November 2015 and January 2016 estimated the total population to be up to 732 individuals, with an effective mature population of 507.

The island of Hon Khoai is an outpost of the Ca Mau border guard and therefore public access to the island should be prohibited, however several tourist websites offer trips to visit the island. A fishing port is under construction on the island, which will impact suitable habitat and increase the number of people living on the island. In addition, introduced Long-tail Macaques *Macaca fascicularis* have been observed eating the gecko and its eggs.

Cnemaspis psychedelica was first described in 2010, and live individuals have been offered for sale for the pet trade since 2013. The largest market appears to be in the EU and the Russian Federation but it is also advertised on the internet in the USA. The species commands a high price, likely because of its bold colouration and rarity on the market. Online it is generally advertised in breeding pairs, with suggestions that this species is easy for hobbyists to breed¹. The species is reportedly easy to collect in the wild².

Currently there are no protection measures in place for this species or its habitat, although trapping and exportation of forest animals is only allowed by permit. A captive breeding programme has been started which has recently reported successful reproduction.

Analysis: *Cnemaspis psychedelica* has a very restricted area of distribution, occurring in only one or two known locations. It has a low reproductive rate. Indications are that it also has a very small wild population which may be vulnerable to extrinsic factors including predation by introduced species and collection for export. It would appear therefore to meet the biological criteria for inclusion in Appendix I. The species is or may be affected by trade.

Reviewers: L. Grismer and S. Altherr.

References:

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

¹ Anon. (2016) For Sale 1.1 Cnemaspis Psychedelica. Available at: <http://forums.teetk.com/threads/for-sale-1-1-cnemaspis-psychedelica.241938/>. Viewed on 23rd June 2016.

² Nguyen, T.Q., Ngo, H.N., Nguyen, T. V., van Schingen, M. and Ziegler, T. (2015) Population assessment, natural history and threat evaluation of the Psychedelic Rock Gecko (*Cnemaspis psychedelica*). Part II: Preliminary data on population status, natural history and threats; December 2015. *Unpublished report for the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, Division Species Protection, Bonn, Germany and for the Species Programme, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, UK*, 1–6.