

CoP17 Prop. 41. [China] Inclusion of the Hong Kong Warty Newt *Paramesotriton hongkongensis* in Appendix II

The Hong Kong Warty Newt *Paramesotriton hongkongensis* is found in Guangdong and Hong Kong, where the population is considered stable. Its main threats are habitat alteration, stream channelization and water pollution. It has also been collected for both domestic use and export. *Paramesotriton* were frequently recorded in a pet market survey in Guangdong Province in 2006 to 2008 and there were reports of large numbers appearing at interior pet markets in large cities in mainland China in the early 1990s. An average of 40,000 Hong Kong Warty Newts were imported into the USA annually between 2004 and 2013. The species is likely to be confused with other species of *Paramesotriton*, or with *Cynops*, *Hyselotriton* or *Pachytriton*. Specimens imported into the USA were increasingly reported as captive-bred. However, large scale captive-breeding for commercial purposes in Hong Kong is not known and unlikely to be economically viable as the species is of relatively low value. Deliberate mis-declaration of source may be a potential management concern.

The species has been protected in Hong Kong since 1997 and in mainland China since 2000; collection requires approval and is not permitted in protected areas. The USA banned imports of Asian newts and salamanders in January 2016 due to disease concerns; a closely related species was found to carry the Bsal pathogen. It is not known if or when this ban will be lifted. The species has been listed on Annex D of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations since 2009, but no imports have been recorded.

Recent TRAFFIC research indicates there is a large trade in little-known Asian newts, taken from the wild for the international pet trade, with the vast majority of this trade going unrecorded, and there may be a justification for Parties to consider a listing of the genus in future. It is likely that the species has been confused with other *Paramesotriton* species or with species of *Cynops*, *Hyselotriton* or *Pachytriton* in trade. Non-professional identification to distinguish *P. hongkongensis* from other similar species may be difficult. Because of high levels of recorded trade, the species may therefore benefit from an Appendix II listing through improved monitoring and regulation of trade.

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