

## Inclusion of the Hong Kong Warty Newt *Paramesotriton hongkongensis* in Appendix II

### Proponent: China

**Summary:** *Paramesotriton hongkongensis*, the Hong Kong Warty Newt, is a relatively large, stocky newt endemic to China, where it is found in Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region) and the coastal Guangdong Province of mainland China. Its total area of distribution is estimated at approximately 20,000km<sup>2</sup>. It is primarily terrestrial, spending on average 45 to 60 days per year in streams and the rest in terrestrial habitat<sup>1</sup>. It has high critical requirements for water quality. Breeding is seasonal, females producing ca. 120 eggs per year. Maturity is reached in three to five years.

Available information suggests that the species may be relatively abundant in at least parts of its range. Monitoring at seven breeding pools in Hong Kong (SAR) between 2007 and 2014 indicated the population in these was generally stable. Much of the population in Hong Kong (SAR) is within protected areas and it is considered that these populations are generally stable<sup>1</sup>. Populations in Hong Kong (SAR) are believed likely to be larger than those in mainland China<sup>2</sup>.

The species is reported to be affected by habitat alteration, stream channelization and water pollution. It has also been collected for both domestic use and export, in both cases as a pet and in research institutions.

*Paramesotriton* species 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. However, it is likely that these reports represent other as then-undescribed species of *Paramesotriton*<sup>1</sup>.

Trade data indicate that an average of around 40,000 *P. hongkongensis* per year were imported into the USA between 2004 and 2013<sup>3</sup>. Imports increased from 2006 to 2010, before dropping considerably in 2013. Import of all Asian Caudata (newts and salamanders) into the USA has now been suspended because of concerns over disease<sup>4, 5</sup>. There are no European Union trade records of this species despite it having been listed in Annex D of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations since 2009.

It is likely that the species has been confused with other *Paramesotriton* species or with species of *Cynops*, *Hyselotriton* or *Pachytriton* in trade. It has been imported into the USA under the generic names *Paramesotriton*, *Triturus* and *Trituroides*.

The species has been included in legislation in Hong Kong (SAR) since 1997 and in China since 2000; collection in both requires approval from competent departments and is not permitted in protected areas.

An increasing proportion of the trade into the USA has been reported as in captive-bred individuals<sup>3</sup>; however large scale captive-breeding for commercial purposes in Hong Kong (SAR) is not known and is believed unlikely to be economically viable as the species is of relatively low value<sup>2</sup>. The species has been successfully bred in captivity by hobbyists in Hong Kong (SAR)<sup>2</sup>, in Europe and the USA.

Whilst it does appear possible to distinguish *P. hongkongensis* from other similar species based on morphological characteristics, non-professional identification may be difficult.

This species was classified in the IUCN Red List as Near Threatened (2004 – in need of updating).

**Analysis:** *Paramesotriton hongkongensis* has a reasonably large area of distribution, within which much of the population is reported to be in protected areas and apparently stable, at least in Hong Kong (SAR). It has been collected in the past in some numbers for domestic use and export as a pet and laboratory animal; the impact of such collection is unclear. The only country known to have imported significant numbers is the USA, which has currently suspended import of all Asian Caudata, therefore it seems unlikely that the species meets the criteria for inclusion in Appendix II.

**Reviewers:** A. Lau, S. Chng, M. Lau and J. Janssen.

### References:

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

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- <sup>1</sup> Lau, A. (2016) *In litt.* to the IUCN/TRAFFIC Analysis Team, Cambridge, UK.
- <sup>2</sup> Lau, M. (2016) *In litt.* to the IUCN/TRAFFIC Analysis Team, Cambridge, UK.
- <sup>3</sup> Analysis of US Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement Management Information System (LEMIS) data, May 2016.
- <sup>4</sup> UNEP-WCMC (2016) *Review of the risk posed by importing Asiatic species of Caudate amphibians (salamanders and newts) into the EU.* UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge.
- <sup>5</sup> Stark, T. (2016) *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (Bsal). <http://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/120547>. Viewed on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016.