Transfer of African Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* from Appendix II to Appendix I

Proponents: Angola, Chad, European Union, Gabon, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo and United States of America

Summary: The African Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* is a medium-sized frugivorous parrot from forested parts of Western and Central Africa. It occurs in 22 or 23 range States and has a range estimated at around three million km^2, of which nearly 90% is in Central Africa (from eastern Nigeria and Cameroon eastwards), around half of this in Democratic Republic of the Congo. It has been included in Appendix II under the general listing of Psittaciformes since 1981.

Typically inhabiting dense, moist lowland forest, it may also occur in or at forest edges, clearings, gallery forest, mangroves, wooded savannah, cultivated areas and gardens. The species often forms large communal roosts of hundreds, sometimes thousands, of birds and may also congregate in large numbers at mineral licks[1]. Breeding is dispersed or loosely colonial[2]. The nest is in a tree cavity usually between 10 and 30m above the ground. In captivity birds have a mean lifespan of around 45 years and first breed at about five years of age; from this generation time is estimated at just over 15 years. It is estimated that in the wild 15 to 30% of the population breeds in any one year. Clutches comprise three to five eggs; wild productivity has been estimated at around 0.4 chicks/nest per year[1], or one to 1.8 fledglings per year.

Population density is very variable: estimates in different areas and different habitats range from 0.15 birds per km^2 to two breeding pairs per km^2. Combining these figures with estimates of habitat extent, a very rough estimation of between ca. 700,000 and 13 million birds in total was derived in 2008, with 160,000 to 360,000 in West Africa and the remainder in Central Africa[2].

Information on changes in population is patchy, not well quantified and often anecdotal. There are indications of local declines, some of them marked, over the past two to three decades in countries including Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, and more widespread marked declines in Ghana[3] and Guinea[1, 4]. A recent country-wide estimate in Cameroon of around 200,000 is lower than one made in the mid-1990s (300,000 to 500,000); however the basis of both these estimates has been questioned and the two are not comparable[4]. The 2013 BirdLife assessment for the IUCN Red List noted that the rate of decline was hard to quantify, but that a rate of 30 to 49% over three generations might be a conservative estimate. The species was classified in the IUCN Red List as Vulnerable (2013) on this basis.

There is essentially no information on population status or trends for a very large proportion of the range in Central Africa. Population declines here have been inferred from habitat loss and harvest for international trade. Loss and fragmentation of forest cover is generally agreed to have affected African Grey Parrot populations although quantitative data linking the two are lacking. FAO figures indicate that, as a very rough estimation, some 8% of forest cover has been lost in countries within the range of the species between 1990 and 2010. However, forest loss has been considerably lower in the Central African basin, where the bulk of the population is believed to occur, with 4% loss from 1990 to 2010, or roughly 0.2% per year in Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The African Grey Parrot is a popular pet. Wild-caught birds to supply the demand have featured prominently in international trade. Records from importers in the CITES Trade Database indicate fluctuating levels of trade since the early 1980s, averaging around 35,000 birds per year from 1982 to 2006; fluctuations were in part due to changing trade patterns based on introduction of stricter domestic measures in importing countries and regions, notably bans on imports of wild birds into the USA in 1992 and into the European Union in 2005. Declared trade in wild-caught birds since then has been lower, averaging around 11,000 birds per year according to importers' records (about half this according to exporters). There are numerous reports of unauthorised or illegal capture and trade, including from Central African parts of the range, but these are not well-quantified. Estimates of post-capture pre-export mortality of wild birds vary, but average 30 to 40%[1].

The CITES Trade Database shows that in recent years South Africa has been reporting the export of large and rapidly increasing numbers of captive-bred African Grey Parrots as captive-bred, rising from some 8000 in 2007 to ca. 29,000 in 2010 to ca. 76,000 in 2014. A recent assessment indicated that there were over 1600 separate breeding facilities for the species in South Africa with, collectively, around 50,000 breeding pairs[5].

The species is vulnerable to trapping at roosts and mineral licks where it tends to congregate, and there are

reports of population declines at such sites where these have been targeted[Error! Bookmark not defined.]. However there is very little information on the intensity of trapping or its impact in large parts of the range.

Legal status varies across the range. In some countries it is completely protected, in others partially. The species has been included in the Review of Significant Trade three times (in the 1980s, in 2004 and 2011) resulting in recommendations for various exporting range States. Currently Cameroon and Democratic Republic of the Congo have published annual export quotas (3000 and 5000 respectively)[Error! Bookmark not defined.]. In 2015 the CITES Standing Committee recommended that all Parties suspend imports of African Grey Parrots from Democratic Republic of the Congo, the major exporter in recent years, because of persistent irregularities in the trade (Notification 2016/021).

Analysis: The African Grey Parrot has a very extensive range. Total population is unknown, but it is clearly not small, and may be very large (several million). There is evidence of severe widespread declines in two range States in West Africa and declines have been observed elsewhere, particularly in areas where the species is known to be collected. Population trends are unknown in a very large proportion of its range although declines have been inferred from loss of habitat and over-collection. Given the relatively low rate of forest conversion in major parts of the range (notably Central Africa), and the ability of the species to survive in some modified habitats, habitat loss alone is highly unlikely to have led to a decline in line with the guidelines in *Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16)*, in this case a reduction of 50% in 45 years (three generations). Given the relatively low productivity of the species, and taking into account estimates of post-capture mortality, it is likely that much collection has led to population declines in areas where it takes place or has taken place. Overall, however, there is insufficient information to determine whether these declines have been widespread and severe enough for the entire population to have undergone a marked decline in the sense of the Resolution (the Red List Assessment note that the rate of decline is uncertain and may be between 30% and 49%). It is unclear, therefore whether the species meets the biological criteria for inclusion in Appendix I or not. Much reported trade is now in captive-bred birds originating outside of range States.

References:

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

[1] CITES (2006) Species selected following CoP12 *Psittacus erithacus*. AC22 Doc. 10.2. Annex I. https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/ac/22/E22-10-2-A1.pdf.

[2] BirdLife International (2013) *Psittacus erithacus*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2013.

[3] Annorbah, N.N.D., Collar, N.J. & Marsden, S.J. (2015) Trade and habitat change virtually eliminate the Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* from Ghana. *Ibis* 158: 82-91.

[4] Martin, R.O., Perrin, M.R., Boyes, R.S., Abebe, Y.D., Annorbah, N.D., Asamoah, A., Bizimana, D., Bobo, K.S., Bunbury, K.S., Brouwer, J., Diop, M.S., Ewnetu, M., Fotso, R.C., Garteh, J., Hall, P., Holbech, L.H., Madindou, I.R., Maisels, F., Mokoko, J., Mulwa, R., Reuleaux, A., Symes, C., Tamungang, S., Yalor, S., Valle, S., Waltert, M. & Wondafrash, M. (2014) Research and conservation of the larger parrots of Africa and Madagascar: a review of knowledge gaps and opportunities. *Ostrich: Journal of African Ornithology* 85: 205-233.

[5] Newton, D. (2016) *In litt*. to IUCN/TRAFFIC Analyses Team, Cambridge, UK.