

PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF SPECIES ON THE APPENDICES OF THE CONVENTION
ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS

- A. **PROPOSAL:** Inclusion of Ixobrychus minutus minutus (Western Palearctic populations) in Appendix II.
- B. **PROPONENT:** Government of the Federal Republic of Germany

C. **SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

1. **Taxon**

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1.1. Classis | Aves |
| 1.2. Ordo | Ciconiiformes |
| 1.3. Familia | Ardeidae |
| 1.4. Genus/Species/Subspecies | <u>Ixobrychus minutus</u> (Linnaeus) 1766 ssp. <u>minutus</u> |
| 1.5. Common names | |
| English: | Little Bittern |
| Spanish: | Avetorillo Comun |
| French: | Blongios nain |

2. **Biological data**

2.1. Distribution

Three subspecies occur. I. m. payesii breeds widely in Africa south of the Sahara and appears to be mainly sedentary. I. m. podiceps is almost confined to Madagascar (recorded once in Zanzibar). The nominate subspecies breeds widely across southern Eurasia east to the Central Asian Republics, northwest China and northwest India, and winters mainly in Africa south of the Sahara.

2.2. Population

Two migratory populations are recognized, although these overlap extensively on their main wintering grounds in East Africa.

- South & West European breeders (wintering in West and Eastern Africa): Over 100,000; decreasing.

- Southwest Asian breeders (wintering mainly in Eastern and Southern Africa): Probably in the range 25,000-100,000; poorly known.

The species has declined over much of its range in the Western Palearctic since the middle of the present century. In Belgium, a population of 100-200 pairs before 1960 had fallen to 60 pairs by the end of the 1970s, while in France, a population of 1,260 pairs in 1970 had dropped to 453 pairs by 1983. Unpublished data suggest that the total breeding population in Europe excluding Russia is currently between 30,000 and 60,000 pairs. This is considerably higher than some earlier estimates suggest, e.g. the breeding population in South and West Europe has been estimated at only 4,400-7,100 pairs (del Hoyo et al. 1992). Perennou (1991) estimated the wintering population in West Africa at about 10,000 birds. The species remains fairly common in Southwest Asia, and even locally abundant, e.g. in the South Caspian Region, but no information is available on numbers or trends.

2.3. Habitat

Occurs in a wide variety of wetland habitats, most commonly in freshwater marshes with reed-beds or other kinds of dense aquatic vegetation, preferably with bushes or trees; also occurs around the margins of lakes, ponds and reservoirs, in peat bogs, at small oasis wetlands in arid regions, in wooded swamps, on the overgrown banks of rivers and streams, and in wet grassland and rice fields. During migration and in winter, also occurs on more open waters, as well as on dry land including fields of cereal and sugar cane. Usually nests in aquatic vegetation, especially reed-beds, but also occasionally low in bushes or trees; generally a solitary nester (del Hoyo et al. 1992).

2.4. Migrations

Breeding populations in the Western Palearctic winter in Africa south of the Sahara south to the Cape, with the majority apparently wintering in the southern half of the continent. However, a few birds remain throughout the winter in Southwest Asia, especially Iraq. The migration is mostly nocturnal, but can be diurnal; normally in small flocks. Birds regularly overshoot northwards during the return migration in spring. The species performs post-breeding dispersals in all directions.

3. **Threat data**

3.1. Direct threats to the population

No information.

3.2. Habitat destruction

The loss and degradation of wetland habitats, especially reed-beds and other freshwater marshes with tall emergent vegetation (the preferred habitat of I. minutus), has occurred widely throughout the range of the species in the Western Palearctic in recent decades, and this is thought to be the principal cause of the decline in numbers during the second half of this century.

3.3. Indirect threats

Water pollution, and especially the contamination of wetlands with pesticides, is thought to have been at least partly responsible for the decline in numbers of I. minutus in Europe in recent decades.

3.4. Threats connected especially with migrations

None known.

3.5. National and international utilization

None known.

4. Protection status and needs

4.1. National protection status

Protected under national legislation in all twelve member states of the EEC. In Africa, protected under national legislation in Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda; partially protected as a game species in Benin, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria.

4.2. International protection status

Ixobrychus minutus is listed in Appendix II (strictly protected fauna) of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne Convention), and is also listed in Annex I of the EEC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC).

4.3. Additional protection needs

The European breeding population of Ixobrychus minutus was listed in the category 'Threatened' in the Draft Management Plan for the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, because it is a biogeographical population which was thought to number less than 25,000 individuals and appeared to be declining throughout all or a large part of its range. Recent data suggest that the European population may be over 100,000 birds; thus, listing in the category 'Potentially vulnerable' might be more appropriate. See attached note on additional protection needs for species and populations with an unfavourable conservation status.

5. Range States

See attached table.

6. Comments from Range States

7. Additional remarks

The small population of I. minutus minutus breeding in Pakistan and India and apparently wintering in South Asia is covered by the Asian-Australasian Waterfowl Agreement.

8. References

- Brown, L.H., Urban, E.K. & Newman, K. (1982). The Birds of Africa. Volume I. Academic Press, London & New York.
- Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. (eds). (1977). Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Vol.1: Ostrich to Ducks. Oxford University Press. Oxford, London and New York.
- del Hoyo, J., Elliott A. & Sargatal, J. (eds). (1992). Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume 1: Ostrich to Ducks. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.
- Hancock, J. & Elliott, H. (1978). The Herons of the World. London Editions, London.

Perennou, C. (1991). Les recensements internationaux d'oiseaux d'eau en Afrique tropicale. IWRB Special Publication No.15. IWRB, Slimbridge, U.K.

| Taxon: <i>Ixobrychus minutus minutus</i> | | |
|--|------|--------|
| Population | | |
| (a) S & W Europe/W & E Africa | | |
| (b) SW Asia/E & S Africa | | |
| State | Pop. | Status |
| Angola | a | W |
| Armenia | b | S |
| Austria | a | S |
| Azerbaijan | b | S |
| Bahrain | b | P |
| Belarus | a | S |
| Belgium | a | S |
| Benin | a | W |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | a | S |
| Botswana | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Bulgaria | a | S |
| Burkina Faso | a | W |
| Burundi | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Cameroon | a | W |
| Central African Republic | a | W |
| Chad | a | W |
| Congo | a | W |
| Cote d'Ivoire | a | W |
| Croatia | a | S |
| Czech Republic | a | S |
| Djibouti | b | W |
| Egypt | a | Ws |
| Equatorial Guinea | a | W |
| Estonia | a | S |
| Ethiopia | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| France | a | S |
| Gabon | a | W |
| Gambia | a | W |
| Georgia | a | S |

| | | |
|---------------|---|---|
| Germany | a | S |
| Ghana | a | W |
| Greece | a | S |
| Guinea | a | W |
| Guinea-Bissau | a | W |
| Hungary | a | S |
| Iran | b | S |
| Iraq | b | S |
| Israel | a | S |
| Italy | a | S |
| Jordan | a | S |
| Kazakhstan | b | S |
| Kenya | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Kuwait | b | P |
| Latvia | a | S |
| Lebanon | a | S |
| Lesotho | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Liberia | a | W |
| Liechtenstein | a | S |
| Lithuania | a | S |
| Luxembourg | a | S |
| Macedonia | a | S |
| Madagascar | b | W |
| Mali | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Mauritania | a | W |
| Moldova | a | S |
| Monaco | a | S |
| Morocco | a | S |
| Mozambique | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Namibia | a | W |
| " | b | W |
| Netherlands | a | S |
| Niger | a | W |
| Nigeria | a | W |

| | | |
|----------------------|---|----|
| Poland | a | S |
| Portugal | a | S |
| Qatar | b | P |
| Romania | a | S |
| Russian Federation | b | S |
| " | a | S |
| Rwanda | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| San Marino | a | S |
| Saudi Arabia | b | Rp |
| Senegal | a | W |
| Sierra Leone | a | W |
| Slovakia | a | S |
| Slovenia | a | S |
| Somalia | b | W |
| South Africa | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Spain | a | S |
| Sudan | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Swaziland | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Switzerland | a | S |
| Syria | a | S |
| Tanzania | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Togo | a | W |
| Turkey | a | S |
| Turkmenistan | b | S |
| Uganda | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Ukraine | a | S |
| United Arab Emirates | b | P |
| Uzbekistan | b | S |
| Yugoslavia | a | S |
| Zaire | b | W |
| " | a | W |
| Zambia | b | W |

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Zambia | a | W |
| Zimbabwe | b | W |
| " | a | W |

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| Key to Status | |
| S/s Breeding summer visitor | R/r Resident |
| W/w Winter visitor | V Vagrant |
| P/p Passage migrant | ? Status uncertain |
| Upper case = primary status Lower case = secondary status | |