

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

A. PROPOSAL: Inclusion of Pelecanus onocrotalus (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	Pelecaniformes
1.3. Familia	Pelecanidae
1.4. Genus/Species/Subspecies	<u>Pelecanus onocrotalus</u> Linnaeus 1758 Monotypic
1.5. Common names	
English:	Great White Pelican
Spanish:	Pelicano Comun
French:	Pelican blanc

2. Biological data

2.1. Distribution

Breeds patchily from Southeast Europe to west-central Asia and in subsaharan Africa. Populations breeding in Africa are largely sedentary, undertaking irregular local movements related to changes in feeding conditions. Two largely discrete populations may be present in West Eurasia: a population breeding in Southeast Europe and western Turkey and wintering in Israel and Northeast Africa (formerly also in the Nile Delta); and a population breeding in the Caspian Region, eastern Turkey and northwestern Iran and wintering from Iraq and southern Iran to Afghanistan and probably also Pakistan.

2.2. Population

Two populations are recognized in the Western Palearctic.

- Black Sea/East Mediterranean/Northeast Africa: 80,000; declining (Rose & Scott 1993).

- Caspian Region/Iraq/Iran: 10,000 (Rose & Scott 1993).

Western Palearctic populations have declined dramatically over the past century and are now considered regionally threatened. The number of pairs breeding in Greece, Rumania and the republics of the former U.S.S.R. have remained stable in recent years, while those in Turkey have declined markedly. The total Western Palearctic population has been estimated at 7,345-10,500 pairs at 23-25 colonies, with 3,000-3,500 pairs at the Danube Delta in Rumania and 3,070-4,300 pairs in the republics of the former U.S.S.R. (Crivelli *et al.* 1991). However, the breeding population is likely to be much higher than this, as at least 75,000 birds occurred on migration through Israel in the late 1980s; this suggests a breeding population in the region of 18,000 pairs. At least 10,000 birds winter in Southwest Asia. Over 3,600 were observed

in a small part of the Mesopotamian Marshes in Iraq in January 1979, and it was estimated that the total population there might exceed this figure by several fold (Scott and Carp 1982). In neighbouring Iran, the wintering population in the 1970s varied between 500 and 2,300 birds, depending on water levels in the principal wintering area in the Seistan Basin (Scott 1992). There is a large breeding colony in NW Iran, which held 1,000-1,600 pairs in the 1970s (Scott, 1992), and it is possible that, until recently at least, there were large breeding colonies in Iraq which have never been documented. No information is available on the trends in this Southwest Asian population.

2.3. Habitat

Occurs in fresh and brackish water wetlands, including lakes, deltas, lagoons and marshes, and often requires extensive reed-beds for nesting, although in some areas it nests on barren islands in large lakes (e.g. at Lake Uromiyeh, a highly saline lake in NW Iran). Its fishing technique usually demands shallow, warm water (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992). Much less frequent in coastal waters in Eurasia than *P. crispus*, but occasionally occurs on estuaries.

2.4. Migrations

Migratory. The western population formerly wintered in large numbers in the Nile Delta in Egypt, but increasing human pressure has forced the birds to move further south into northeastern Africa. Details are lacking, but it is suspected that many of these birds now winter in the Sudd in Sudan. The species migrates in large flocks, with the Western population following an overland route to Africa via Turkey, the Levant and Sinai (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992). The eastern population appears to winter mainly in Iraq; birds ringed at the large breeding colony at Lake Uromiyeh in NW Iran have been recovered in the Mesopotamian Marshes in winter. In wet years, up to 2,000 birds winter in the Seistan Basin on the Iran/Afghanistan border. When these wetlands are dry, the birds presumably continue on southeast to the Indus Valley in Pakistan.

3. **Threat data**

3.1. Direct threats to the population

Persecution by hunters for food, and by fishermen because of its perceived impact on fish stocks. In the 1970s and early 1980s, breeding colonies were repeatedly destroyed by fishermen (e.g. in the Danube Delta), causing either a drop in numbers or complete abandonment of the site (Crivelli *et al.* 1991). Illegal shooting occurs at many of the principal migration staging areas, and collision with high-tension power lines is also known to be a problem in some areas. Shooting was considered by Crivelli *et al.* (1991) to be the most worrying cause of mortality in this species and *P. crispus*, and quote as an example the shooting of 35 *P. onocrotalus* (half of which were immatures) in the Goksu Delta in Turkey in November and December 1987. In most cases, pelicans are shot for 'sport', or because they have been accused of taking fish from fish-farms or lakes. Shooting for food still takes place in Egypt, and the species is regularly found for sale in the markets. In the Mesopotamian Marshes of Iraq, pelicans are frequently

shot for their gular pouches, which are used to make drums (Maxwell 1957). Pelicans are also not uncommonly found drowned in fishing nets.

3.2. Habitat destruction

The principal threat to the species is drainage and degradation of the extensive freshwater lakes and marshes which it requires for breeding. Widespread drainage of wetlands in Southeast Europe and parts of the Middle East have resulted in the loss of much suitable breeding habitat, while drainage coupled with greatly increased levels of human disturbance resulted in the disappearance of the large wintering population in the Nile Delta (del Hoyo et al. 1992).

3.3. Indirect threats

Pelicans are amongst the birds most affected by pesticide poisoning and general contamination of wetlands. A 12-20% decrease in eggshell thickness has been reported in P. crispus at Lake Prespa in Greece (Crivelli et al. 1991), and it seems likely that a similar phenomenon is occurring in P. onocrotalus in Southeast Europe. Depletion of food supplies as a result of over-fishing by humans is reported to be a problem at some breeding colonies (del Hoyo et al. 1992). The great increase in ornithological tourism and wildlife photography has caused disturbance from time to time at many colonies, and has led to the abandonment of some colonies (Crivelli et al. 1991).

3.4. Threats connected especially with migrations

The species occurs in large concentrations at favoured staging areas, and is here subject to persecution by fishermen because of its perceived impact on fish stocks. This situation is particularly serious in Israel, where mass slaughter of pelicans has been advocated. Few of the principal staging areas are under protection, and most are subject to intense tourist pressure and a wide range of degradations, such as eutrophication, destruction of shorelines and pollution, which could prevent them from being used by pelicans in the future (Crivelli et al. 1991).

3.5. National and international utilization

Some hunting still occurs. Birds are regularly offered for sale in markets in Egypt, and it has been calculated that about 75 birds are sold each season. In Southeast Europe, the pouches of pelicans have traditionally been used to make tobacco pouches and sheaths (del Hoyo et al. 1992).

4. **Protection status and needs**

4.1. National protection status

P. onocrotalus is a legally protected species in all countries in the Western Palearctic in which it occurs (Crivelli et al. 1991). Western Palearctic populations wintering in Africa are protected under national legislation in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

4.2. International protection status

Pelecanus onocrotalus 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). The Palearctic populations of Pelecanus onocrotalus are listed in Appendix I of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

4.3. Additional protection needs

The Black Sea/East Mediterranean population of Pelecanus onocrotalus is listed in the category 'Vulnerable' in the Draft Management Plan for the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, because it is a biogeographical population which is thought to number less than 100,000 individuals and appears to be declining throughout all or a large part of its range. The Southwest Asian population is listed in the category 'Vulnerable' because it is a species or biogeographical population which is thought to number less than 25,000 individuals and is dependent on a habitat type which is widely under threat. See attached note on additional protection needs for species and populations with an unfavourable conservation status.

More than half of the breeding sites of pelicans in the Western Palearctic remain unprotected. Protection of the breeding sites is absolutely essential to ensure that reproductive success is high. The creation of nature reserves in the breeding areas is the ideal solution, since this also provides some measure of protection to the habitat. However, if this is impossible, some protection should be afforded to the nesting birds during the breeding season, in order to prevent disturbance of the colonies by fishermen, bird-watchers and photographers (Crivelli et al. 1991).

5. **Range States**

See attached table.

6. **Comments from Range States**

7. **Additional remarks**

8. **References**

- 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.
- Crivelli, A.J., Catsadorakis, G., Jerrentrup, H., Hatzilacos, D. & Michev, T. (1991). Conservation and Management of Pelicans Nesting in the Palearctic. In: Salathe, T. (ed.), Conserving Migratory Birds: 137-152. ICBP Technical Publication No.12. ICBP, Cambridge, U.K.

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Taxon: <i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>		
Population		
(a) Black Sea/E Mediterranean/NE Africa		
(b) Caspian/Iran/Iraq		
State	Pop.	Status
Albania	a	S?
Bahrain	b	W
Djibouti	a	W
Egypt	a	W
Ethiopia	a	W
Greece	a	S
Iran	b	Sw
Iraq	b	W?s
Israel	a	Pw
Jordan	a	V
Kazakhstan	b	S
Kuwait	b	W
Macedonia	a	W
Romania	a	S
Russian Federation	a	S
Saudi Arabia	a	Wp
"	b	W
Sudan	a	W
Turkey	a	Sw
"	b	S
Ukraine	a	S
United Arab Emirates	b	W
Uzbekistan	b	S
Yugoslavia	a	W

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	