

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

A. PROPOSAL: Inclusion of the total population of the Saffron-cowled Blackbird *Agelaius (Xanthopsar) flavus* on Appendix II.

B. PROPONENT: Government of Paraguay.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT:

1. Taxon

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| 1.1 Class: | Aves |
| 1.2 Order: | Passeriformes |
| 1.3 Family: | Icteridae |
| 1.4 Species: | <i>Agelaius (Xanthopsar) flavus</i> |
| 1.5 Common Name : | Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Tordo amarillo, Dragón, Chopî sa'yju |

2. Biological Data

2.1 Distribution

The distribution of this species originally included the grasslands of southern Brazil (Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul), south-eastern Paraguay, north-eastern Argentina (primarily Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos and Corrientes provinces) and Uruguay. The range of the species has sharply contracted, and there are now only local centres of abundance, though it was probably never abundant in Argentina.

2.2 Population

The global population is estimated between 2500 and 9999 individuals, and is considered to be in decline. In Paraguay, the population in the Aguapey and Tacuary watersheds (in Itapúa and Misiones departments respectively) is estimated at 1500 birds, and the total Paraguayan population between 2000 and 3000 individuals. In Argentina, there are two apparently disjunct populations totalling 500 to 1000 individuals in north-east Corrientes (possibly continuous with populations in west Rio Grande do Sul) and south-east Entre Ríos. The global population is estimated to have decreased by over 30% in the past 10 years, and projections suggest that this will continue in the future.

2.3 Habitat

This species is dependent on natural marshes and grasslands. In Entre Ríos (and locally in southern Paraguay), it has adapted relatively well to agropastoral zones, though despite feeding in rice-fields and grazed areas, it only breeds in dense marsh vegetation.

2.4 Migrations

In the non-breeding season the species is highly mobile. During the austral winter, the populations in southern Brazil, western Uruguay, Corrientes province, Argentina, and southern Paraguay move north.

3. Threat data

The species is listed as “Vulnerable” on the IUCN Red List (Criteria A2c, d, e; A3c, d, e; C2a(i)), largely as a result of habitat loss and additional threats such as capture for the cage bird trade.

3.1 Direct threats

It is trapped for the cage bird trade.

3.2 Habitat destruction

The main threat to the species is the loss of habitat resulting from the many different uses of grasslands, such as agriculture, burning, pine and eucalypt plantations, drainage and urbanization. Large areas of habitat have been lost by the transformation of wetlands into rice plantations and flooding resulting from the construction of hydroelectric dams (such as Yacyretá). Another important factor is the frequent burning which affect breeding sites, and fires have destroyed whole colonies in Paraguay. In Rio Grande do Sul, the greatest threat is the damming of marshy valleys for irrigation.

3.3 Indirect threats

Brood-parasitism by the Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis* can be significant, particularly in populations reduced by habitat loss. Pesticides and other agrochemicals are carried by drainage and run-off directly into marshes.

3.4 Threats connected especially with migrations

The species is threatened by habitat loss throughout its range. Consequently, it requires conservation actions to be implemented in breeding and wintering areas and at migration stopover sites. It is likely that the large lake created by the Yacyretá hydroelectric dam has impeded the movement of individuals between the Corrientes, Argentina, and southern Paraguay.

3.5 National and International utilisation

The species is prized in the cage bird trade.

4. Protection status and needs

4.1 National protection status

The species is protected under Brazilian law, and occurs in at least one protected area in Brazil, two in Uruguay and two in Paraguay. Since birds are highly mobile, it is virtually impossible to designate reserves that will provide adequate protection.

4.2 International protection status

The species is listed on the appendices I of both CMS and CITES.

4.3 Additional Protection needs

The species would benefit from conservation actions coordinated across the four range states. Specific actions include enforcement of environmental legislation in the four countries (including the prohibition of trade), surveys to assess range and numbers in Brazil, the monitoring of populations in Paraguay and Argentina, and assessment of the impact of brood-parasitism. An action plan considering the creation of a reserve network should also be developed.

5. Range States

ARGENTINA, Brazil, PARAGUAY and URUGUAY.

6. Comments from Range States**7. Additional remarks****8. References**

BirdLife International (2004) *Threatened Birds of the World*. CD-ROM. Barcelona & Cambridge, UK: Lynx Edicions and BirdLife International.

BirdLife International (2005) Species factsheet: *Xanthopsar flavus*. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 16/06/2005.