

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

A. PROPOSAL: Inclusion of Sterna balaenarum in Appendix II.

B. PROPONENT: Government of the Federal Republic of Germany

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxon

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1.1. Classis | Aves |
| 1.2. Ordo | Charadriiformes |
| 1.3. Familia | Laridae |
| 1.4. Genus/Species/Subspecies | <u>Sterna balaenarum</u> (Strickland) 1852
Monotypic |
| 1.5. Common names | |
| English: | Damara Tern |
| Spanish: | - |
| French: | Sterne des baleiniers |

2. Biological data

2.1. Distribution

Endemic to the western seaboard of Africa south to the Cape. Breeds on coastal beaches in South Africa, Namibia and probably also Angola, and winters along the west African coast north to Gabon, Cameroon, Nigeria and Ghana, with the main wintering area probably being in the Gulf of Guinea.

2.2. Population

Only one population is recognized.

- Entire population: 10,000+; decreasing in some areas (Rose & Scott 1993).

The total population was previously thought to be only about 4,000 birds (Collar & Stuart 1985; Urban et al. 1986), but recent surveys have located at least 10,000 birds. Estimates of the breeding population in Namibia have ranged from 2,000 birds to over 2,000 pairs (Collar & Stuart 1985), with most birds breeding north of Swakopmund. Far smaller numbers breed in South Cape (east to Algoa Bay) and North Cape (four colonies between the Orange River and Kleinsee) (Urban et al. 1986). Cooper et al. (1984) have estimated the South African breeding population at about 150 pairs at ten sites, although Collar and Stuart (1985) give a figure of 200 pairs. It probably also breeds in southern Angola, e.g. up to 150 have been recorded at Cunene River during the breeding season (Urban et al. 1986).

The species is a common migrant in Gabon, with 2,000 birds seen moving south over a period of three days in October 1986 (Collar & Andrew 1988). Other high counts of migrants have included flocks of up to 100 at Luanda and Cacuaco in Angola, up to 250 in Nigeria, up to 40 in Ghana and up to 75 in Togo. A total of 330 was recorded in Namibia

during the African Waterfowl Census of January 1993 (Taylor 1993). There is no clear evidence of an overall decline in numbers, but the population in southern Cape Province has probably been reduced as a result of dune stabilization, and at least one colony has been abandoned (Collar & Stuart 1985).

2.3. Habitat

Strictly marine, inhabiting estuaries, creeks, bays, harbours, coastal lagoons, salt-pans and the surf zone along the open shore. Roosts communally on sandbanks and beaches, but usually feeds alone. Semi-colonial, forming loose aggregations of 4-60 pairs, but usually fewer than 10 pairs. Nests on sand or shingle beaches near the sea, or on gravel plains, the hardened surface of salt pans, bare rocky areas and slack areas between dunes up to three km from the sea (Urban *et al.* 1986).

2.4. Migrations

A partial migrant. The bulk of the population apparently migrates north to winter in the Gulf of Guinea, but substantial numbers remain throughout the year along the coast of Namibia, with adults present in their highest numbers during the austral winter (March-October). Further south, the species is wholly migratory, with the breeding sites in Cape Province, South Africa, being abandoned in winter. In Nigeria, it has been recorded in all months except February and March, but is commonest from July to October; it is also common in Togo from July to October, and in Angola from May to October (Urban *et al.* 1986).

3. **Threat data**

3.1. Direct threats to the population

The species is particularly vulnerable throughout its range to disturbance by tourists at its breeding colonies, including people on foot, cars driven off roads, dune buggies and trail bikes. Breeding failures due to human disturbance have been reported in South Africa. It is unfortunate that the peak tourist season (mid-December to mid-January) coincides with the tern's breeding season. Gravel extraction, road-building and open-cast mining have also caused disturbance to breeding colonies in some areas (Collar & Stuart 1985; Urban *et al.* 1986). The species is almost certainly persecuted on its West African wintering grounds, as are other tern species.

3.2. Habitat destruction

Development for tourism, road-building and open-cast mining have destroyed some nesting habitat (Urban *et al.* 1986). Military developments along the coast might also pose a threat to the terns' habitat (Collar & Stuart 1985). In Cape Province, South Africa, some breeding sites have been lost because of the planting of vegetation to stabilize coastal dunes (Cooper *et al.* 1984).

3.3. Indirect threats

The impact of native mammalian predators on nesting terns may increase as dunes become vegetated (Cooper et al. 1984).

3.4. Threats connected especially with migrations

None known.

3.5. National and international utilization

Possibly some trapping for food in West Africa.

4. **Protection status and needs**

4.1. National protection status

The species is fully protected by law in Benin, Namibia and South Africa. As for all terns, it is classified as a game species in Ghana, but very few birds extend this far west. In South Africa, colonies at Heuningnesmond (De Mond) and near the Sondags River are in State Forest Reserves, while the Brandfontein colony is in a private nature reserve. In Namibia, some breeding areas between the Orange River and Sandwich Harbour near Walvis Bay are in a restricted zone controlled by the Consolidated Diamond Mines of South West Africa. Public access is also restricted to the Skeleton Coast Park, which supports a large breeding population (Collar & Andrew 1985).

4.2. International protection status

Sterna balaenarum is listed in the category 'R' (Rare) in the 1990 edition of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals (IUCN 1990).

4.3. Additional protection needs

Sterna balaenarum is listed in the category 'Threatened' in the Draft Management Plan for the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds because of its IUCN listing as a globally threatened species. As many breeding sites as possible should be included in conserved areas to which access should be strictly controlled between November and February; in particular, dune buggies and other vehicles should be excluded from the vicinity of breeding colonies during the breeding season. In some cases, it might be worth fencing around colonies to keep vehicles and other intruders out. The practice of vegetating sand dunes should also be discontinued in the vicinity of colonies. More research is needed on the species, in particular a more detailed assessment of the human impact on breeding colonies and more rigorous censuses to enable an understanding of population trends (Collar & Andrew 1985).

5. **Range States**

See attached table.

6. **Comments from Range States**

7. Additional remarks

8. References

- Collar, N.J. & Andrew, P. (1988). Birds to Watch. The ICBP World Checklist of Threatened Birds. ICBP Technical Publication No.8. ICBP, Cambridge, U.K.
- Collar, N.J. & Stuart, S.N. (1985). Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands. Third Edition. ICBP, Cambridge, U.K., and IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.
- Cooper, J., Williams, A.J. & Britton, P.L. (1984). Distribution, population sizes and conservation of breeding seabirds in the Afrotropical Region. In: Croxall, J.P., Evans, P.G.H. & Schreiber, R.W. (eds), Status and Conservation of the World's Seabirds: 403-419. ICBP Tech. Publ. No.2. Cambridge, UK.
- Harrison, P. (1983). Seabirds: an identification guide. Croom Helm Ltd., Beckenham, U.K.
- IUCN (1990). 1990 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals. Compiled by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre. IUCN-The World Conservation Union, Gland, Switzerland.
- Rose, P.M. & Scott, D.A. (1993). Waterfowl Population Estimates. Draft report presented at the Fifth Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, 9-16 June 1993, Kushiro, Japan. IWRB, Slimbridge.
- Taylor, V. (1993). African Waterfowl Census 1993. IWRB, Slimbridge, U.K.
- Urban, E.K., Fry, C.H. & Keith, S. (1986). The Birds of Africa. Volume II. Academic Press, London & Orlando.

Taxon: <i>Sterna balaenarum</i>		
Population		
(a) Entire population		
State	Pop.	Status
Angola	a	Rs?
Benin	a	W
Cameroon	a	W
Congo	a	W
Equatorial Guinea	a	W
Gabon	a	W
Ghana	a	W
Namibia	a	Rs
Nigeria	a	W
South Africa	a	Rs
Togo	a	W
Zaire	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		