

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

A. PROPOSAL: Inclusion of the Wild camel *Camelus bactrianus* in **Appendix I** of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals:

B. PROPONENT: Mongolia

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxon

- 1.1. Classis: Mammalia
- 1.2. Ordo: Tylopoda
- 1.3. Familia: Camelidae
- 1.4. Genus: Camelus
- 1.5. Species: *Camelus bactrianus* Linnaeus, 1758
- 1.6. Common names: English: Wild or Bactrian camel
 French:
 German: Wildkamel
 Spanish:
 Russian: Dikiy verblud
 Chinese:

2. Biological data

2.1. Distribution

Wild populations are restricted to 3 small, remnant populations in China and Mongolia: in the Taklamakan Desert, the deserts around Lop Nur, and the area in and around region A of Mongolia's Great Gobi Strict Protected Area (Reading et al 2000). In addition, there is a small semi-captive herd of wild camels being maintained and bred outside of the Park.

2.2. Population

Surveys over the past several decades have suggested a marked decline in wild bactrian camel numbers and reproductive success rates (Zhirnov and Ilyinsky 1986, Anonymous 1988, Tolgat and Schaller 1992, Tolgat 1995). Researchers suggest that fewer than 500 camels remain in Mongolia and that their population appears to be declining (Xiaoming and Schaller 1996). Globally, scientists have recently suggested that less than 900 individuals survive in small portions of Mongolia and China (Tolgat and Schaller 1992, Hare 1997, Tolgat 1995, Xiaoming and Schaller 1996). However, most of the population estimates from both China and Mongolia were made using methods which preclude rigorous population estimation.

Xiaoming and Schaller (1996) estimated that 400-500 camels occupied 28,000 km² of Great Gobi Strict Protected Area in the early 1990s and Hare (1997) suggested that only 350-400 camels survived in Mongolia, and even fewer in China. These latter estimates were based on ground surveys covering a portion of the range of wild camels.

2.3 Habitat

Habitat is located in the arid continental climatic areas in the temperate zone., where is hot summer and severe cold (-30-40⁰C) in winter, the daily temperature difference is big (10-20), the annual precipitation <100mm, annual evaporation >2000mm, aridity >5 but >20 in most of the distribution area. (Yuan et al 2000). The food species of the wild camel are wide, but they feed mostly on *Phragmites communis*, *Tamarys chinensis*, *haloxylon ammodendron*, *Caragana spp.*, *Reamuria soongorica*, *Salsola fruticosa*, *Nitraria sibirica*, *N.sphaerocarpa*, *Calligonum leucocladum*, *Alhagi pseudathagi* and succulent woody halophytic plants (Tulgat 1992).

2.4 Migrations

Local movements occur in all distributed areas. But they prefer to stay near water sources as far as 50-60 km.

3 Threat data

3.1 Direct threat of the population

The reasons for low camel recruitment are unknown. Tolgat (1995) suggests that camel predation by wolves is high, although he bases his assessment simply on the presence of wolf sign near the majority (61-84%) of camel carcasses discovered.

3.2 Habitat destruction

Other suggested causes of decline include poaching, especially when camels move across the border and into China (Zhirnov and Ilyinsky 1986) and a decline in habitat quality. Extremely arid and sparsely vegetated, Great Gobi provides little forage in the best circumstances, and a recent prolonged drought has exacerbated this situation.

3.3 Indirect threat

As same as 3.1 and 3.2.

3.4 Threat connected especially with migrations

When they cross national borders they most likely be hunted.

3.5 National and international utilisation

Historically used for meat

4 **Protection status and needs.**

4.1 National protection status

In Mongolia the wild bactrian camel is listed as an Endangered in the Red Book (Shagdarsuren 1987) and protected from hunting as a 'Very Rare' species under the Mongolian Hunting Law (Wingard 1996).

Conservationists are becoming increasingly concerned about the status of wild bactrian camels (Yongzu 1991, Tolgat and Schaller 1992, Xiaoming and Schaller 1996, Hare 1997), although the decline the species of was first noted decades ago and was an important factor associated with the establishment of the Great Gobi Strict Protected Area in 1970 (Zhirnov and Ilyinsky 1986). Great Gobi, as a strict protected area, excludes all human use, except for research, law enforcement, and national border protection. As a result, the camel population and its habitat have been strongly protected in Mongolia for 25 years. Aside from providing this protection, however, little was done to study or conserve the species.

4.2 International protection status

4.3 Additional protection needs

Wild bactrian camels require substantial additional conservation and research attention. Ecological studies should work to assess population dynamics, critical habitats, and migration patterns as a basis for developing a conservation and recovery plan for the species. Mongolian and Chinese conservationists must begin coordinating conservation activities on camels and other species which range across the border between the two countries. Because wild Bactrian camels are declining while other species in the region appear to be faring well, camels may represent important indicators of the health of the Gobi. Understanding camel population dynamics and ecological requirements may therefore lead to camel conservation programs which effectively conserve many of the species of the Gobi Desert.

5 **Range States**

Range states are Mongolia and China.

6 **Comments from Range States**

Not applicable

7 Additional Remarks

Not applicable

8 References

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