

# Notes on potential CITES Annex I listing for vultures



Prepared by BirdLife International  
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# What does the MsAP say?

## Threats

*"Trade, particularly in body parts for belief-based use, is a critical threat to vultures in parts of their African range, and so an assessment is underway to inform a potential future proposal to transfer (at least) African vulture species from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I." (p. 81)*

MsAP proposes these 2 actions, in order.

## Actions

- 11.1.7. Conduct a detailed assessment on the scale and impact of legal and illegal trade in live birds, eggs and vulture body parts across the range of the Vulture MsAP (High priority)
- 11.1.8. In light of outcome of Action 11.1.7. (above), undertake risk-benefit analysis and gauge potential support for proposing the uplisting of individual species that meet the criteria to CITES Appendix I (Medium priority)

# Background to CITES and vultures

- CITES regulates international trade in wild animals and plants, alive or dead and including body parts, to ensure that this practice does not threaten their survival
- Legally binding, and all RS (bar DPR Korea) are signatories
- Appendix I: species threatened with extinction; trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances like research
- Appendix II: species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilisation incompatible with survival
- African-Eurasian vultures are covered by Appendix II, under a 'catch-all' heading that includes nearly all raptors (a few raptors, but no African-Eurasian vultures, are listed on Appendix I)
- To move CITES App I spp and their parts for research you need import and export permits, whereas for App II, only export permits

## The case in favour

- Most vultures are highly threatened
- Vultures are traded, whether legally or illegally, and so should be on Appendix I
  - CITES I 'label' and status can mobilise interest and support for conservation; conversely, absence from Appendix I could suggest low concern.
- Trade involving Nigeria (hub for belief-based use) is international: vulture parts are imported (illegally) from other countries
- Not only about illegal trade for belief-based use: CITES database shows legal trade in vultures (whole and body parts); data difficult to interpret but suggest hundreds per year, especially Griffon, Cinereous

# The case against

- Possible increase in difficulty of moving samples for analysis and birds for reintroduction/captive management (BUT permits can be obtained for this purpose; this has been overcome for many CITES I species)
- Potentially long and complex process to have species listed both in compiling the evidence to support and in the necessary advocacy work around it; would this divert precious resources from other conservation measures?
- Proof that trade is a driver of declines is difficult to establish – neither the declines nor the threat are understood in detail to link them (BUT is such proof essential? Not a strict CITES I criterion)
- Majority of trade, especially in the threatened species, is illegal; CITES I might not change this, (but could help shine the spotlight on it)

## Comments

- *Gyps* (7 spp., 4 CR, 1 EN) species are difficult to distinguish, especially immatures. Listing proposal must decide how to deal with this
- For moving from App II to App I, evidence needed on legal trade, but will consider illegal trade as well, for all sources
- Appendix I listing means no commercial trade; RS who benefit could object

## Key steps

- Information: illegal and legal trade – data or anecdotal info
- Advice: TRAFFIC and CITES Secretariat, key individuals
- Strategy: respect steps as set out in MsAP (earlier slide)?
- Understand national legislation in key countries, re. legality of trade or killing
- Parties to submit proposals to amend appendices 150 days prior to COP, i.e. 2021/2022 (COP 19 date?; too late for COP18)

# Questions to TAG

- Do you feel that CITES App I listing would help/ hinder or have no effect on conservation efforts for vultures within the country?
- Do you think that CITES App I listing would help/ hinder/ have no effect on conservation efforts for vultures internationally?
- How much trade in vultures/ parts is within the country versus international?
- Is it legal or illegal to trade vultures/ parts within and between countries?
- Do you have experience of moving animals and samples under CITES, how long does this typically take for CITES I or II?
- Do you think we would have enough info on trade to make a convincing case for any spp?