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Agenda Item 7.2

PROPOSAL FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE WHITE-EARED KOB (*Kobus kob leucotis*) IN CMS APPENDIX II

Summary

The Government of Ethiopia has submitted a proposal for the inclusion of the White-eared Kob (*Kobus kob leucotis*) in CMS Appendix II at the 11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11), 4-9 November 2014, Quito, Ecuador.

The proposal is reproduced under this cover for its evaluation by the 18th Meeting of the CMS Scientific Council.

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

A. PROPOSAL: Inclusion of White-eared Kob (*Kobus kob leucotis*) on Appendix II - Migratory species requiring international cooperation

B. PROPONENT: Government of Ethiopia

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxon

1.1 Classis	Mammalia
1.2 Order	Artiodactyla
1.3 Family	Bovidae
1.4 Genus/ Species/sub species:	<i>Kobus kob leucotis</i> (Lichtenstein and Peters, 1853)
1.5 Common name(s)	White-eared Kob

2. Biological data

2.1 Distribution (current and historical)

White-eared Kob (*Kobus kob leucotis*) have the most restricted range of all kob sub species and occurs only in South Sudan, south-west Ethiopia and historically in the extreme north-east Uganda. However recent information shows that their distribution is restricted to South Sudan and Ethiopia only (EWCA/CMS, 2013 EWCA/HoAREC/APN 2013, Cherie et al, in press).

2.2 Population (estimates and trends)

White-eared Kobs are currently classified by the IUCN (2008) as ‘Least Concern’, however populations are in decline due to habitat destruction, poaching and expansion of human settlements (EWCA/CMS, 2013, Cherie et al, in press). White-eared Kobs play an important ecological role in the transboundary migration corridor shared with Nile Lechwe (*Kobus megaceros*), elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) and other large mammals. In order to not lose the ecosystem services that the large herds of White-eared Kobs provide to the ecosystem today, the subspecies is proposed for listing on Appendix II despite population estimates suggesting that the total number of White-eared Kob is as high as 753,000 (WCS 2001, EWCA/CMS/CITF2012).

2.3 Habitat (short description and trends)

Typical habitat of White-eared Kobs includes riverine open bush and woodland, grasslands and floodplains of major rivers; seasonal floodplains and open woodlands (East 1999). White-eared Kobs are grazers, and are confined to regions with year-round access to water and green

vegetation. White-eared Kobs inhabit the Gambella Boma ecosystem, which is one of the most ecologically diverse in the African continent, encompassing moist forests and the flood plains of the rivers Baro, Alwero, Gilo, Pibor and Akobo. This landscape represents a transition from the East African ecological zone to the Central African ecological zone, harbouring wildlife species that are classified on the IUCN Red List as Endangered including Nile Lechwe (*Kobus megaceros*), Lelwel Hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus lelwel*) and many species classified as Vulnerable like the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) and Lion (*Panthera leo*). The area also supports Vulnerable avian species like the shoebill stork (*Balaeniceps rex*) and Black crowned crane (*Balearica pavonina*).

2.4. Migrations (kinds of movement, distance, proportion of the population migrating)

White-eared Kobs (*Kobus kob leucotis*) in the Gambella landscape are a keystone species migrating between South Sudan and Ethiopia. The largest part of the White-eared Kob population shared between Ethiopia and South Sudan leave Ethiopia around June at the start of the wet season, when food and water is abundant, possibly to avoid surface flooding that occurs during the rains from June to November. Most Kobs migrate to South Sudan, which has less rainfall. The animals return to Ethiopia during the dry season lasting from December to May, when the surface flooding has dried up (CMS/EWCA 2013).

3 Threat data

3.1 Direct threat of the population

Hunting for bushmeat, wildlife diseases, as well as entanglement in snares targeting other species, are considered to be the primary direct threats to White-eared Kobs. It is suspected that the continuing uncontrolled hunting of White-eared Kobs is likely to have reached unsustainable levels. Despite legal protection, the White-eared Kobs are still being hunted throughout their range for meat and skin. The large part of the hunters are from communities residing within and surrounding the Kob's range. Recently the influx of refugees from South Sudan (more than 100,000) has aggravated the bushmeat offtake.

3.2 Habitat destruction (quality of changes, quantity of loss)

Habitat destruction is one of the key threats to White-eared Kobs, specifically loss of habitat, reduction of habitat quality due to invasive species and growing livestock numbers, disruption of the natural flooding regime and barriers to migration (e.g. resulting from fencing and infrastructure development). A considerable amount of grassland and bush land which used to provide essential habitat for the White-eared Kobs has been converted for small scale and large scale farming and is further threatened by uncontrolled fire, human settlement and deforestation. Some further breeding and feeding grounds are likely to be converted to other land use systems due to the expansion of human settlements, agricultural development and growing livestock numbers and uncontrolled fire (CMS/EWCA2012, EWCA/HoAREC/APN 2013).

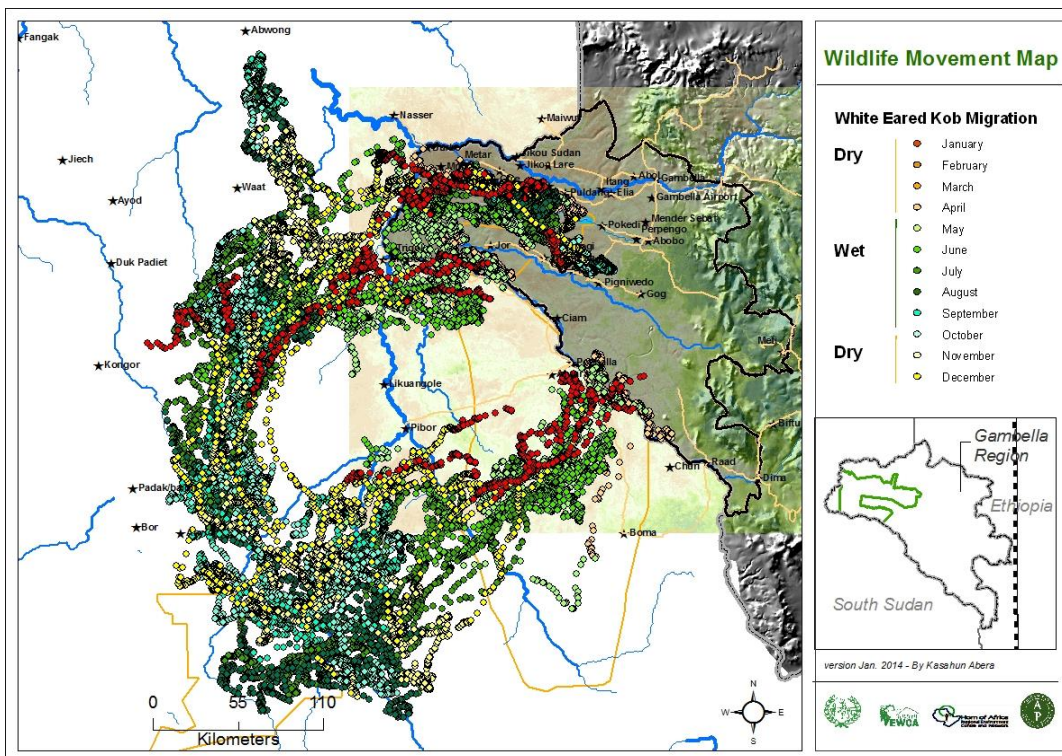
3.3 Indirect threat (e.g. reduction of breeding success by pesticide contamination)

Civil conflict has been a major indirect threat to both migratory and resident wildlife populations in the Gambella landscape. Bushmeat has been the main sources of protein

during decades of civil war in South Sudan. Although about one millions of White-eared Kobs were discovered in 2007 after decades of civil war, their population size has since then continued to decline. It is noteworthy that the Kob's range has also declined, possibly in connection to human disturbance. The range of other species such as elephants also been significantly reduced and species which used to be abundant like hippopotamuses have become very rare today and have become locally extinct from most of their former range in the Gambella landscape (local information).

3.4 Threats connected especially with migrations

The migration of White-eared Kobs is thought to be threatened by ever growing human and livestock encroachment on critical habitat corridors and a reduction in native food pasture and vegetation quality. In addition, this unique migration corridor is suffering from mismanagement of the catchment, unsustainable exploitation of the resource and road construction. The corridors are not well protected and collaboration of range states for the management of White-eared Kobs is in an infancy stage. Across all of the range states, the sub species is hunted especially along the cross border areas, which are suffering from low level of law enforcement, notably during the rainy season when large parts are flooded and difficult to access.



Movement of satellite-collared Kobs

3.5 National and international utilization

Although White-eared Kobs are listed as one of the subspecies for which hunting is permitted under national law in Ethiopia no trophy hunting has taken place in the landscape in recent years.

4. Protection status and needs

4.1 National protection status

The White-eared Kobs are protected by national law in the two countries in which it occurs today. However, no sound management collaboration between these countries exists and poaching and illegal utilization continues throughout its range.

Ethiopia proposed “Gambella National Park” in 1973, which covers large parts of the White-eared Kob habitat in the country. However, the formal establishment and final agreement of the borders of the Park are still not completed. Recent tracking of White-eared Kobs, Nile Lechwe and elephants has helped to better understand the distribution of these species and guide the demarcation of the Park on this basis.

4.2 International protection status

White-eared kob (*Kobus. k. leucotis*) have the most restricted range of all Kobs occurring in South Sudan and Ethiopia and historically extreme north-east Uganda (East 1999). The total number of White-eared Kob is estimated to be over 1,000,000, of which around 250,000 individuals are believed to be resident in Ethiopia (WCS 2001, Cherie et al, 2009). The conservation status of White-eared Kob may eventually decline to a threatened status, as it is localized on the borders of South Sudan and Ethiopia and no legally established transboundary conservation areas have been established. White-eared Kob are still abundant and widely spread in the Gambella landscape. However, ecological connectivity and migration corridors are not well protected. To ensure the long-term wildlife migration across borders the establishment of Transboundary protected areas should be a priority for range states and the international community.

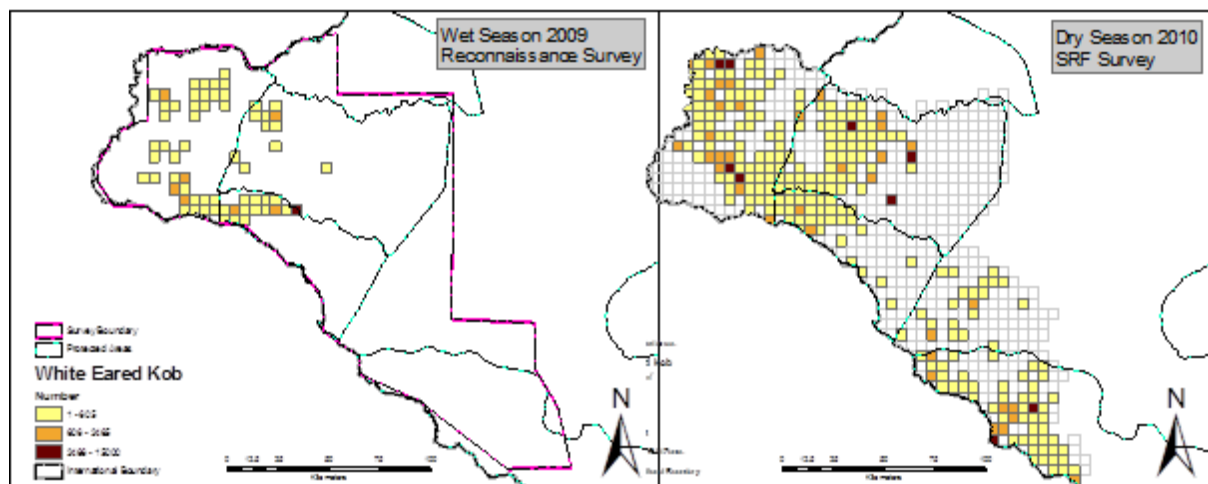


Fig 1. Distribution of White-eared Kobs in the Gambella landscape (Ethiopia) during the wet and dry season

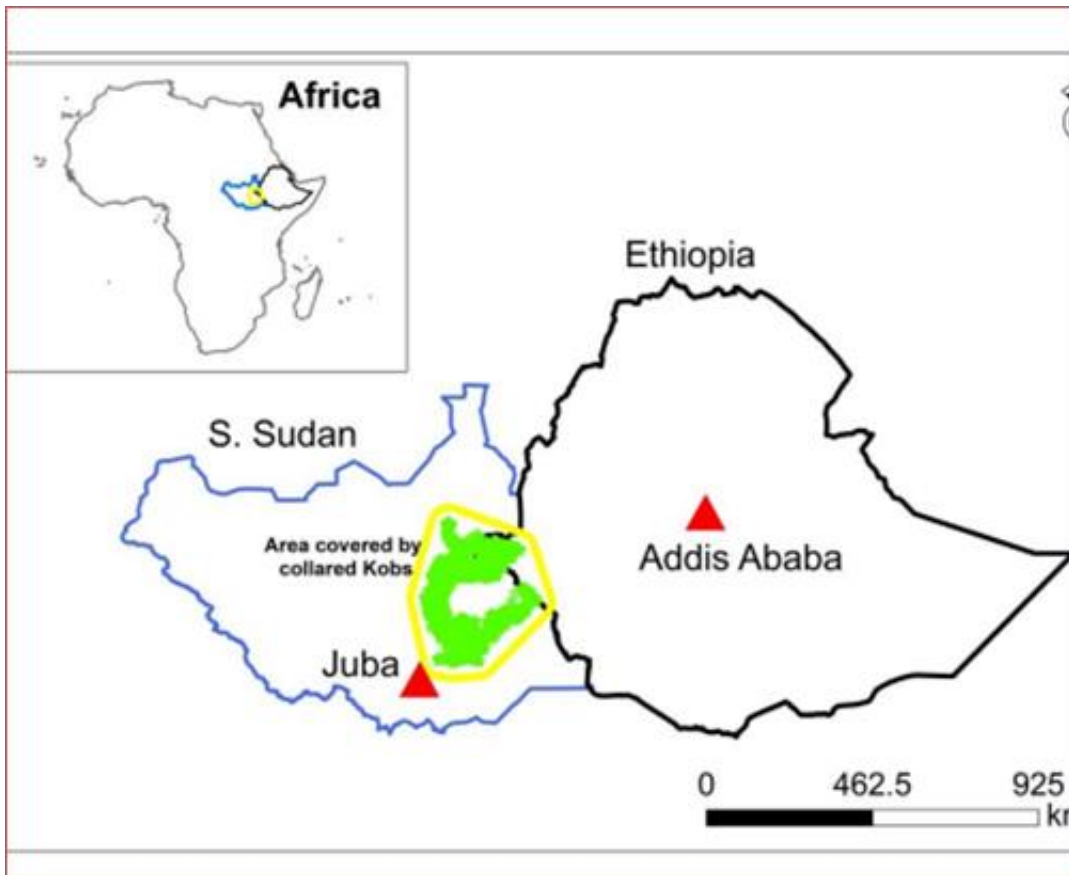


Fig. 2. Transboundary distribution of White-eared Kob

4.3 Additional protection needs

Some progress has been made to improve the understanding of the population status and migration of White-eared Kobs, both through aerial surveys (EWCA/HoAREC/APN/ 2009, 2010, 2013) and satellite-collaring of 45 Kobs since 2012 (e.g. through financial support from Norway via CMS). However, while the understanding of the important role and precarious state of White-eared Kobs is improving, adequate management is still lacking, especially across national borders. Ethiopia and South Sudan have discussed the establishment of transboundary protected areas, but this ambitious plan would benefit from continued CMS facilitation through a listing of the subspecies on Appendix II. The need for increased community-based education and resource management programs to increase awareness of the conservation problem is urgent and range states need to find ways to stop or at least reduce the current level of unsustainable hunting. Thus listing of White-eared Kobs under CMS Appendix II would assist to:

- Strengthen collaboration between range states, sharing of lessons learnt, methods, capacity building tools, joint meetings to facilitate closer collaboration of law enforcement personnel from the two range states etc.
- Application of same and technically coherent monitoring methodology based on best scientific knowledge across range states.
- Removal of barriers to migration (e.g. Road, fence), which are currently restricting the transboundary movement of the animals.

5. Range States

Historically White-eared Kobs occur in Ethiopia, South Sudan and the extreme north-east of Uganda (IUCN, 2008). However, recent animal tracking information suggests that White-eared Kobs only persist in Ethiopia and South Sudan today (CMS/EWCA, 2013).

6. Comments from Range States

7. Additional remarks

8. References

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