

A. PROPOSAL

Inclusion of Chelonia mydas in Appendix I

B. PROPONENT

Federal Republic of Germany

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT1. Taxonomy

1.1 Reptilia

1.2 Testudines

1.3 Cheloniidae

1.4 Chelonia mydas (Linnaeus 1758)

1.5 Common names: Green Turtle (English)

Suppenschildkröte (Germany)

Tortue verte (French)

Penyu Hijau (Indonesian)

2. Biological data

2.1 Distribution: The green turtle regularly occurs in seas and on beaches nearly throughout the tropical zone and in large parts of the subtropical zone, i.e. in waters where the temperature is still over 20° C even in the coldest months of the year. The recent geographical extent of the range still corresponds roughly to the historical distribution of the species; within this range, the species is, however, extinct in many places either locally or even in large areas. Detailed data on the distribution and its changes are found in Groombridge (1982: 151-156) and Sternberg (1980). Outside this zone of regular occurrence, some stray individuals were discovered (see e.g. Brongersma 1972).

2.2 Populations: The quantitative coverage of the population is only possible on the breeding beaches. It was found that the overall range only contains about 150 separate nesting areas, among them approx. one dozen of significant sizes (2,000 or more females). There are also fragmentary records from former times, on the basis of which the extent of the decline in the populations can be seen. Colonies in the Caribbean area are most severely affected by the decline,

whereas breeding populations in south east Asia and in Australia are, by comparison, in a better condition. According to the latest studies, the individual breeding colonies form separate reproduction communities, which is of special importance to the strategy of species conservation. It is also known that the females do not proceed to breeding every year and that the annual growth rate of the regional population is subject to strong fluctuations. Nevertheless is the decrease of the overall population very strong, particularly in the 20th century. More precise figures on the populations in the various countries or geographical regions are found in Groombridge (1982: 156-163).

- 2.3 Habitat: The green turtle is the only species of the sea turtles which mainly feeds on plants; the result is that the occurrence of these animals is dependent on areas where numerous pelagic algae occur, especially of the species of Saragossium fluitans and S. natans. Reproduction places are found on remote, quiet sandy beaches. Outside the breeding season, the animals live in shallow coastal waters; only during migration, they go far into the open sea.
- 2.4 Migrations: The species is highly migratory, but the animals' cycle and course of migration from the various breeding regions are not yet sufficiently known. Up to now, it was, among other things, proved that both sub-adult and adult animals go on migrations and that these migrations are of a cyclical nature, that they are repeated at two- to five-year intervals and that they end with the animals' arrival on their traditional breeding beaches. The longest distances of migration, which have been traced to date, are covered by the west Atlantic population, namely from the coasts of Brazil as far as the Ascension Islands - a distance of 2,250 km (Carr 1975).

3. Threat data

- 3.1 Direct threat to the population: Both eggs and meat are used for culinary purposes. Parts of the adult animals serve for the manufacture of articles which are mostly offered to tourists. Traditional utilization by the local population increased owing to the

population explosion over the last few decades - add to that a growing commercial exploitation, which gains particular importance owing to the high demand from abroad (e.g. the collection of eggs was intensified by the use of appropriate machinery). Another factor which is quite significant is the animals' being caught or drowned in fishermen's nets. Some quantitative data on the extent of direct reduction are found in Groombridge (1982: 166-168), in regional individual publications (e.g. Frazier 1980) or also in the CITES documents.

- 3.2 Habitat destruction: The currently severest threat factors probably derive from the negative impacts of mass tourism on the breeding beaches (incl. their being built up), the pollution of beaches, the destruction of coastal vegetation as well as from the oil pest in coastal and open waters. The quantitative extent of this threat has so far been studied too little (since most studies deal with direct interference and trade).
- 3.3 Indirect threat: Probably yes, but little studied. These can primarily be disturbances during the breeding period as well as increased mortality of the freshly hatched animals (increase in the number of predators caused by human agency; chemical pollution of the breeding beaches).
- 3.4 Threat especially connected with migrations: Oil pollution of the high seas as well as trawl nets used by modern fishing vessels.

4. Protection status and needs

- 4.1 National protection status: In large parts of the overall range the species is partly or fully protected by law; there is only one part where legal protective measures are missing; however, in many areas the legislation is inadequately enforced and widely ignored. For details see Groombridge (1982: 168-170).
- 4.2 International protection status: Appendix I of the Washington Convention, but with reservations from France, Italy, Japan and Suriname.
- 4.3 Additional protection needs: The populations of the green turtle are still larger than those of most of the other species listed in Appendix I. Nevertheless they are threatened with extinction, since a number of threat factors not only directly reduce the populations but also destroy the complicated biological structure (always the same breeding and - feeding grounds - migratory routes - wintering areas) (also see Carr 1985, 1980 Carr et al. 1978, 1980, Hendrickson 1980, Hirth 1980, Mrosovsky & Yntema 1980). For this reason it is necessary to carry out coordinated protective measures in different countries, which guarantee the survival of entire partial populations: conservation of biotopes on breeding beaches as well as in feeding and wintering areas, elimination of threats on migratory routes as well as control of direct impacts (for details see Groombridge 1982: 170-171). Apart from the improvement of the national protective measures and the extension of protection by CITES, this will only be possible by developing regional conservation programmes for sea turtles as well as by concluding regional agreements for the protection of these animals (also see Björndal, in press).

5. Range states

Angola, Australia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Belize, Bermuda, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Cape Verde Is., Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador (including Galapagos), Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia Fiji, France (Guadeloupe, Martinique, New Caledonia, Reunion, Society Is., Tuamctu Is., French Guiana), Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea - Niddsu, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India (including Andaman Is., Lakshadweeps and Nicobar Is.), Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Italy (including Sicily), Jamaica, Japan, Kenya Kiribati, Kuwait, Liberia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mariana Is., Marshall is., Mauritania, Mauritius (including Rodrigues), Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, North Yemen, Namibia, Netherland Leeward Is., New Zealand (Cook Is., Kermadec Is. and Tokelau Is.), Nicaragua, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Pacific, Trust Territories, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Portugal (Azores and Madeira), Puerto Rico, Qatar, Sao Tome, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seycelles, Sierra Leone, South Yemen, Solomon Is., Somalia, South Africa, Span (Canary Is.), Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Sudan, Suriname, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, U.K. (Antigua, Ascension I., British Indian Ocean Territory, Cayman Is., Turks and Caicos Is.), U.S.A. (including American Samoa, Guam, Hawaiian Is., U.S. Virgin Is.), Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Western Samoa, Zaire and international waters.

6. Comments from range states

None

7. Additional remarks

The green turtle is listed as being "endangered" in the IUCN Red Data Book of 1982. From the species conservation point of view, controlled breeding of the green turtle for culinary purposes is a significant measure to lessen the direct threat to the wild populations (Bustard 1981, Groombridge 1982, 1971-73).

8. References

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