

# Madagascar Reptiles

## Malagasy Spider Tortoise

*Pyxis arachnoides*

## Leaf-tailed Geckos

*Uroplatus spp.*

## Leaf-nosed Snakes

*Langaha spp.*

## Arboreal Snake

*Stenophis citrinus*

**CoP13 Prop. 15** (Madagascar) Transfer from Appendix II to Appendix I of Malagasy spider tortoise (*Pyxis arachnoides*)

### SSN VIEW: SUPPORT ADOPTION OF PROPOSAL

- Commercial collection for the international pet trade has escalated since 1998 and has probably caused local extinctions of this endemic species.
- In 2000 and 2001, exports of this species greatly exceeded nationally established export quotas.
- The very low reproductive potential hampers recovery.
- An expert workshop organized by the Madagascar CITES Authority recommended listing on Appendix I.
- Appendix I listing would assist Madagascar in enforcing trade controls.
- Madagascar is the sole range State.

*Pyxis arachnoides* meets the criteria for listing in Appendix I. This species is highly sought-after in international trade, has been heavily exploited in recent years, and meets the trade criteria in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP12). The two subspecies of Malagasy spider tortoise are endemic to the dry southwest coastal areas of Madagascar, where populations have been significantly reduced in the recent past due to over-exploitation for the international pet trade. In 2000, at least 2,634 specimens were officially exported from Madagascar, representing a significant portion of the total population. Only ten local populations are believed to remain, and the viability of these populations has been jeopardized. The low reproductive rate—sexual maturity is reached at twelve years and clutch size is only one egg—cannot compensate for heavy off-takes. Large-scale habitat loss has reduced the area of distribution by 51- 80%. As a consequence of the serious and ongoing decline in both population size and distribution, a 2002 Conservation Assessment and Management Plan workshop recommended that this species be classified by IUCN as “Endangered” (IUCN/CBSG 2002). The situation is aggravated by illegal trade, which would be better controlled under an Appendix I listing. Currently, *P. arachnoides* is protected by some importing countries (e.g. the EU member states). The only other species of the genus *Pyxis* was transferred from Appendix II to Appendix I at CoP12. *Pyxis arachnoides* would benefit from a transfer to Appendix I as well, as it is likely that the international demand for specimens of this genus will continue.

**CoP13 Prop. 27** (Madagascar) Inclusion in Appendix II of leaf-tailed geckos (*Uroplatus spp.*)

### SSN VIEW: SUPPORT ADOPTION OF PROPOSAL

- All eleven species described to date are offered for sale in the international pet trade; at least six species are traded in very large numbers (thousands of specimens); at least 22,493 specimens were exported from Madagascar from 2001 to 2003; trade records show regular imports into the EU and the USA since the late 1990s.
- Leaf-tailed geckos occur at low densities and several species have restricted distributions.
- It is feared that the considerable off-take for commercial export may cause local extinctions unless measures are taken to control trade.
- *U. alluaudi* meets the Appendix II listing criteria and may fulfill the criteria for inclusion in Appendix I.
- An expert workshop organized by the Madagascar CITES Authority recommended listing the genus in Appendix II.
- An IUCN workshop recommended that *Uroplatus malahelo* be categorized as Endangered (facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future) and that *Uroplatus lineatus* be categorized as Vulnerable (facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future) (SSC/IUCN 2002).

Leaf-tailed geckos meet the criteria for listing in Appendix II. Leaf-tailed geckos are highly sought-after in the international pet trade due to their bizarre appearance and their distinctive behavior; the largest species, *U. fimbriatus*, is known among reptile keepers for its impressive threat display. All eleven known species are offered for sale in international pet markets; most are offered in large numbers. Between 2001 and 2003 the following numbers were exported: 5,074 *U. phantasticus*; 4,708 *U. sikorae*; 3,770 *U. fimbriatus*; 3,392 *U. henkeli*; 3,179 *U. ebenau*; 2,333 *U. lineatus*; 37 *U. guentheri*; at least 37 specimens of the very rare *U. alluaudi*; and 10 *U. malahelo*. Even the newly described *U. pietschmanni* is offered for sale in the USA and European pet markets (Böhle and Schönecker 2003).

*U. alluaudi* might be one of the rarest species in Madagascar and is only described from a few locations in the North; *U. malama*, *U. malahelo* are considered as rare and have restricted distributions; *U. guentheri* and *U. phantasticus* are known from only few localities and have fragmented populations; the area of distribution of *U. lineatus*, *U. fimbriatus*, *U. ebenau*, *U. henkeli* and *U. sikorae* is fragmented; the distribution of *U. ebenau* is limited to northern Madagascar; and *U. pietschmanni* seems to be endemic to Amboasary Gara in central East-Madagascar. All leaf-tailed geckos except *U. lineatus* are limited to primary, undisturbed rainforests and therefore are especially prone to habitat destruction. Although detailed population data are not available, the present level of off-take and increasing demand from the international pet trade must be having a serious impact on wild populations. The reproductive rate of leaf-tailed geckos is limited: clutch size normally consists of two eggs and, although nesting may occur several times a year, this reproductive rate cannot compensate for large-scale exploitation. Unless international trade is strictly regulated through an Appendix II listing, several species of leaf-tailed geckos will meet the criteria for inclusion in Appendix I in the near future. All other *Uroplatus* species should be included in CITES Appendix II for look-alike reasons.

**CoP13 Prop. 28:** Inclusion in Appendix II of leaf-nose snakes (*Langaha spp.*)

#### **SSN VIEW: SUPPORT ADOPTION OF PROPOSAL**

- Two of the three leaf-nose snakes (*L. pseudoalluaudi*, *L. alluaudi*) are rare; *L. madagascariensis* occurs at low densities and has a fragmented area of distribution.
- *L. madagascariensis* has been regularly traded in recent years.
- For look-alike reasons the entire genus should be listed in Appendix II.
- An expert workshop organized by the Madagascar CITES Authority recommended listing *Langaha spp.* in Appendix II and establishing a zero or minimal export quotas for *L. alluaudi* and *L. pseudoalluaudi*.

This genus meets the criteria for listing in Appendix II. *L. pseudoalluaudi* has a very limited distribution and is restricted to Ambilobe (North Madagascar) and Ankarafantsika National Park in northwestern Madagascar (Kuchling 2003); this species is very rare and known from only two specimens. *L. alluaudi* is rare and restricted to a specialized habitat, has a limited area of distribution and occurs at low densities. *L. madagascariensis* has a large but fragmented area of distribution and occurs at low densities.

Due to their bizarre appearance, leaf-nose snakes are considered one of the most spectacular snakes in the world and are increasingly sought-after by reptile keepers in Europe and the USA. *L. madagascariensis* is regularly offered for sale in international pet markets, often under its synonym *L. nasuta*, for about US \$65. Exports between 2001 and 2003 totaled at least 347 individuals. Due to its regular and increasing presence in international trade, in combination with habitat destruction in its fragmented distribution area, *L. madagascariensis* meets the criteria for Appendix II. Although both of the other species of this genus are extremely rare, it is known that *L. alluaudi* is also offered for sale (exports of 27 specimens were recorded from 2001-2003). As no data on population size and trends are available for *L. alluaudi* or *L. pseudoalluaudi*, these species should be included in Appendix II at least for look-alike reasons.

**CoP13 Prop. 29:** Inclusion in Appendix II of the arboreal snake (*Stenophis citrinus* = *Lycodryas citrinus*)

#### **SSN VIEW: SUPPORT ADOPTION OF PROPOSAL**

- Its restricted distribution and dependence on a very specialized habitat render this arboreal snake particularly vulnerable to over-exploitation.
- This attractive species is valued in the pet trade and by collectors; it has been documented in international markets.
- An expert workshop organized by the Madagascar CITES Authority recommended listing *Lycodryas spp.* in Appendix II and establishing a zero or minimal export quotas for *L. citrinus*.

This species meets the criteria for listing in Appendix II. Distribution is very restricted: only two populations of this arboreal snake are known, in the national parks of Tsingy de Bemaraha and Namoraka. With a spectacular yellow-black pattern, this species is especially attractive to international pet traders. In recent years, exports to the USA and Europe have been recorded. For example, specimens of *S. citrinus* were offered for sale on the internet by an importer based in Switzerland. Although there is not much information on population sizes and trends, the limited distribution, in combination with known commercial off-take, makes this species especially prone to local extinction. Appendix II listing will assist Madagascar in controlling international trade in this species.