

**Transfer of Yellow-headed Amazon *Amazona oratrix* from Appendix II to Appendix I.****Proponent: Mexico.**

**Summary:** The Yellow-headed Amazon is a large parrot that occurs in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. Its preferred habitat includes low deciduous forest, medium sub-deciduous forest, savannah, gallery forest and mangroves. Listed as Endangered by IUCN, the species is considered threatened by habitat loss and intensive collection for trade. Harvest for international trade is prohibited in all range States, but seizures continue to be made. The species is thought to have suffered a rapid decline in population. Although reliable historic estimates are not available, the decline has been estimated at 90% since the 1970s, and around 70% during the last decade. The total population was estimated at 7 000 birds in 1994. The proposal is to transfer *Amazona oratrix* from Appendix II to Appendix I.

**Analysis** Based on available information, *A. oratrix* is likely to meet the criteria for inclusion in Appendix I. The total population was estimated in 1994 to be 7 000 individuals, which is close to the guideline figure for a small population in Annex I of Resolution Conf. 9.24. The population is believed to be declining, the range is reported as fragmented and the species is reported to be vulnerable because of its low productivity. The species is also in international trade.

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<b><u>Taxonomy</u></b>	
Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. Wild populations of the taxonomic complex <i>Amazona oratrix</i> [ <i>ochrocephala</i> ] have established themselves in North America, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, although it is not always evident which species is involved or which of these consist of hybridised specimens.	<i>The species was recognised as a distinct species from A. ochrocephala in 1983 (A.O.U., 1983).</i>
	<b><u>Range</u></b> <i>Taxonomic uncertainty surrounding the species creates problems with defining its range (BirdLife, 2000).</i>
<b><u>IUCN Global Category</u></b>	
EN A1acd	

**Biological criteria for inclusion in Appendix I****A) Small wild population**

**(i) Population or habitat decline; (ii) small sub-populations; (iii) one sub-population; (iv) large population fluctuations; (v) high vulnerability due to biology or behaviour**

In 1994 the total population was estimated at fewer than 7 000 birds.

Studies conducted in 1976 and 1979 estimated the total population of Mexico at less than 17 000 birds, with every subpopulation decreasing. On the Pacific slopes in 1995, *A. oratrix* was considered rare or not common and localised. In 2000 in the coastal regions of Chamela and Jalisco, the population had decreased to a point where only a few birds or small flocks were occasionally observed. It has been extirpated from the state of Guanajuato. The species was considered to be in danger of extinction in Belize in 1997.

*A. oratrix* has a low index of productivity (only 0.3 young per nest). Additionally, the species has a high proportion of pairs that do not nest (65%) and a very low nesting success rate (one in four), further predisposing them to future negative impacts from over-harvest.

*Because of low nesting success, the species has not been able to recover from the extensive legal international trade of the species in the 1960s to 1980s (Iñigo-Elias, 2002).*

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p><b><u>B) Restricted area of distribution</u></b>  <b>(i) Fragmented or localised population; (ii) large fluctuations in distribution or sub-populations; (iii) high vulnerability due to biology or behaviour; (iv) decrease in distribution, population, habitat or reproductive potential</b></p> <p>More than 70% of <i>A. oratrix</i> habitat is thought to have been lost.</p> <p>In Belize, 2.6% of the species' habitat was lost in the period 1990-2000 (annual deforestation rate [ADR] of 35 625 ha/yr.). In Guatemala, 25% of its sub/rainforests had been lost from 1990-2000 (ADR of 53 743 ha/yr.) which is considered particularly alarming given the small population size. The Honduran and Mexican annual deforestation rates are also causes of concern being 58 970 ha/yr. and 678 000 ha/yr. respectively.</p> <p>Mexico has suffered one of the highest rates of deforestation globally and <i>A. oratrix</i> habitat is highly disturbed and altered. Between 1950 and 1994, 18.3 million ha or approximately 64.2% of the sub rainforests of the Pacific slopes, Gulf of Mexico and Mexico's Caribbean slopes (including the low deciduous forest where <i>A. oratrix</i> occurs), had been lost. In 1995, it was thought that few healthy populations remained, with all of these in isolated patches</p>	<p><i>Although the present range of the species is very similar to its historic range, its distribution is contracting and reduced to isolated populations within its core range (Snyder et al., 2000).</i></p> <p><i>BirdLife (2000) estimates the current range of the species as 45 000 km<sup>2</sup>. Iñigo-Elias (2002) believes that the range is extremely fragmented, stating that the combined area of patches totals less than 15 000 km<sup>2</sup>.</i></p> <p><i>Habitat requirements for semi-deciduous forest, and potential seasonal movements make the species vulnerable to pressures from habitat loss (Renton, 2002). Competition due to a lack of suitable nesting sites is thought to affect the reproductive success (Iñigo-Elias, 2002).</i></p>
<p><b><u>C) Decline in number of wild individuals</u></b>  <b>(i) Ongoing or historic decline; (ii) inferred or projected decline</b></p> <p>The Yellow-headed Amazon has suffered one of the most dramatic population declines of all birds in the Americas. At the global level, in 1994 the population was estimated to have decreased by more than 90% since the early 1970s. In the last ten years, it is reported to have declined by 68% as a result of live wild bird trade and a loss of 70% of its habitat.</p>	
<p><b><u>D) Status suggests inclusion in Appendix I within 5 years</u></b></p>	<p><i>If the current population decline continues, the population could be down to fewer than 5 000 individuals in the next five years (Renton, 2002).</i></p>

## Trade criteria for inclusion in Appendix I

### The species is or may be affected by trade

The Yellow-headed Parrot has been one of the most popular birds in the domestic and international bird trade for approximately 50 years as it breeds well in captivity and demonstrates excellent speaking ability.

Prior to 1986, the species was not reported in CITES Annual Report data as it was considered a sub species of *A. ococephala*.

From 1986-1999, a total of 509 specimens were recorded in international trade. Between 1968 and 1971, the USA imported 5 322 specimens of *A. ochrocephala oratrix*, half of which originated in either Mexico or Guatemala.

There is evidence of considerable harvest in Belize for international trade. *A. o. guatemalensis*, primarily nestlings, are captured illegally by Hondurans

*Illegal trade in this species is widespread in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico (Iñigo-Elias, 2002). Seizure information gathered for the period 1996-1999 (PROFEPA) clearly shows that illegal trade in the species is an ongoing activity in Mexico (TRAFFIC North America – Mexico, 2002) the trade being in both chicks and adults (Renton, 2002). Between 1995 and 2002, a total of 137 individuals were seized. Figures should be considered a minimum as much illegal trade goes undetected (TRAFFIC North America - Mexico, 2002).*

*Although the majority of the trade is in live specimens, feathers used for traditional art may also be traded (Renton, 2002; Iñigo-Elias, 2002).*

*Retail price of *A. oratrix* ranges between USD 844 and USD 1 300 per bird; the middleman is paid*

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p>crossing towards Guatemala. The species is also frequently collected on Honduran territory.</p> <p><i>A. oratrix</i> is the species with the second-highest number of birds confiscated by USA authorities on the Mexico-Texas (USA) border from 1990-1993 (542 specimens); it is thought that these specimens originated in Mexico. In the 1990s, a three-year undercover investigation by US authorities resulted in the confiscation of 360 <i>Amazona oratrix</i>.</p> <p>Among parrot species which are prohibited to trade, <i>A. oratrix</i> was the most frequently confiscated between 1998 and 2000 by the Federal Office of Environmental Protection.</p> <p>Mexico established an export quota of 60 specimens in 2001 that was not used.</p>	<p><i>between USD 60-80 and the local harvester USD 30-40 (Renton, 2002).</i></p>

### Other information

#### Threats

The population declines observed are a result of the harvest of live birds for trade and habitat loss.

Capture and sale of the species in Mexico was prohibited in 1983, but domestic trade continues. Between 1994 and 1995, an increase in the number of specimens for sale in the Sonora Market in Mexico City was recorded. The species is in such high demand throughout Mexico that other species of *Amazona*, or even species of *Aratinga*, are sold with their heads dyed yellow to pass as *A. oratrix*.

*Over the last ten years the invasion and expansion of the Africanised honeybee has created a predator/competitor relationship with A. oratrix (Iñigo-Elias, 2002; Renton, 2002). The bees have been known to take nesting cavities of A. oratrix and other psittacine species. On several occasions the Africanised bees have been reported to kill the chicks and fledglings (Iñigo-Elias, 2002).*

*It is suggested that wild populations of the species carry Newcastle Disease and Psittacosis (Iñigo-Elias, 2002).*

#### Conservation, management and legislation

The organization 'Programme for Belize' is working in cooperation with the Government of Belize to ensure the conservation of the last viable population. In Belize, *A. oratrix* is completely protected from capture and export under the Belize Wildlife Protection Act of 1981. In Honduras, Decree 001, of 1990, prohibits trading in wildlife. Guatemala prohibited the export of Wild domestic birds in 1986.

In Mexico, the species was first prohibited in trade in 1983 as part of the *A. ocyrocephala* complex. In 1994 and 2002, *A. oratrix*'s status as 'in danger of extinction' was ratified by the Official Mexican Regulation NOM- 059-ECOL (D.O.F. 1994 and 2002). Article 87 of the General Law on Ecological Balance and Environmental Protection establishes restrictions on the use of natural populations of species that are in danger or extinction (D.O.F. 1996). The General Wildlife Act (D.O.F 2000) states that authorisation of utilisation of species at risk will only be allowed for conservation related purposes. For species in danger of extinction, specimens have to be the product of controlled reproduction and contribute to the enhancement of wild populations

Currently, there is no permanent monitoring programme for the species. However a project is planned to evaluate the current state of the populations of the Yellow-headed Amazon in Mexico.

*Iñigo-Elias (2002) estimates that 20% of the species population occurs in protected areas.*

*Reviewers believe that the current legislation is not effective (Renton 2002; Iñigo-Elias, 2002).*

*Iñigo-Elias (2002) believes that there is a lack of well trained staff to implement the legislation in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. He also believes that in some cases the corruption within the authorities is hindering the conservation of the species.*

Supporting Statement (SS)	Additional information
<p>The species occurs in a number of protected areas.</p>	
<b><u>Similar species</u></b>	
<p><i>A. oratrix</i> is one of three species recognized in the complex <i>Amazona ochrocephala</i>, together with the Yellow naped parrot <i>A. auropalliata</i> and the Yellow crowned parrot <i>A. ochrocephala</i>. Different geographical breeds mentioned by different authors exist.</p>	
<b><u>Captive breeding</u></b>	
<p><i>A. oratrix</i> is one of the species of the genus <i>Amazona</i> that is in demand by amateur and commercial breeders in Europe, the USA and Asia. In the USA, the yellow-headed parrot is often found in captivity and it is thought to be “the Amazon parrot most often bred in captivity”. However, in 1990, nine years after the ban on exports, a survey of bird breeders in the USA reported that fewer than 20% of <i>A. oratrix</i> in captivity were known to have been captive bred, and that more than 50% were of wild origin.</p>	<p><i>In a 1991 captive breeding survey of breeders based in the USA, the species (referred to as A. othrocephala oratrix) was one of the eight most commonly bred Amazon species, with 283 established pairs and 157 proven breeding pairs (Johnson, 1992). Currently there are a number of private breeding programs for A. oratrix in the USA and Europe. In the USA, captive-bred A. oratrix are readily available from several companies, with an average price of USD 800 (TRAFFIC North America - Mexico, 2002).</i></p>
<b><u>Other comments</u></b>	
<p>It is thought that if the proposal to include <i>A. auropalliata</i> in Appendix I is also adopted, this will facilitate the work of importing countries in enforcing the CITES provisions for the two species (<i>A. oratrix</i> and <i>A. auropalliata</i>) since they will both be listed in Appendix I.</p>	

**Reviewers:** E. Iñigo-Elias, K. Renton, TRAFFIC North America - Mexico.

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