

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

RIN 1018-A182

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Endangered Status for Scimitar-Horned Oryx, Addax, and Dama Gazelle**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.**ACTION:** Proposed rule; reopening of comment period.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the re-opening of the comment period on the proposed listing of three species of antelope: scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*), addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*), and dama gazelle (*Gazella dama*), as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended. We are re-opening the comment period to request additional information and comments from the public regarding the proposed rule. The original proposed rule was published on November 5, 1991 (56 FR 56491). Comments previously submitted need not be resubmitted because they will be incorporated into the public record as part of this comment period and will be fully considered in the final determination.

DATES: We will accept public comments until October 22, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Submit any comments, information, and questions by mail to the Chief, Division of Scientific Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 750, Arlington, VA 22203; or by fax to 703-358-2276; or by e-mail to ScientificAuthority@fws.gov. Comments and supporting information will be available for public inspection, by appointment, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the above address. You may also obtain copies of the November 5, 1991, proposed rule from the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Eleanora Babij at the above address, or by phone, 703-358-1708; fax, 703-358-2276; or e-mail, ScientificAuthority@fws.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

The scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*), addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*), and dama gazelle (*Gazella dama*) originally occupied the same general region of North Africa. The reasons for the decline of all three

antelope species are similar. Desertification, coupled with severe droughts, has dramatically reduced available habitat. The growth of permanent farming has brought additional pressures, such as human habitat disturbance and competition from domestic livestock, which have restricted these antelopes to marginal habitat. Additional pressures from the civil wars in Chad and the Sudan have resulted in increased military activity, construction, and uncontrolled hunting.

The range of the scimitar-horned oryx in North Africa once covered semi-deserts and steppes north of the Sahara, from Morocco to Egypt. Over-hunting and habitat loss have been the main reasons for the decline of the wild population of this antelope according to the World Conservation Union (IUCN 2002). Competition with domestic livestock has also contributed to the species' decline. During the 1970s and 1980s, the scimitar-horned oryx was first classified as vulnerable and then as endangered by the IUCN. In 1975, the scimitar-horned oryx was listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The addax once occurred throughout the deserts and sub-deserts of North Africa, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Nile River. Motorized illegal hunting following World War II has been noted as the primary reason for decline of the addax (Antelope Taxon Advisory Group 2002), and hunting continues to threaten this species (IUCN 2002). Habitat degradation as a result of overgrazing by domestic livestock has also played an important role in the decline of the addax. Similar to the scimitar-horned oryx, during the 1970s and 1980s, the addax was first classified as vulnerable and then as endangered by the IUCN. In 1975, the addax was also listed in Appendix II of CITES.

The dama gazelle, the largest of the gazelles, was once common and widespread in arid and semi-arid regions of the Sahara. It has suffered greatly from uncontrolled hunting and overgrazing by domestic livestock (Mallon and Kingwood 2001). Habitat destruction and hunting are still the most serious threats facing dama gazelles today (Antelope Taxon Advisory Group 2002; IUCN 2002). Two subspecies of the dama gazelle, *Gazella dama lozanoi* and *Gazella dama mhorh*, were designated as endangered, and then the entire species of *G. dama* was designated by the IUCN as vulnerable and then endangered. In 1983, these two subspecies and *G. dama* were listed in CITES Appendix I. Two subspecies of

dama gazelle, *G. d. lozanoi* and *G. d. mhorh*, have been listed as endangered under the ESA since 1970. A third subspecies, *G. d. ruficollis* was not included in this original listing. However, there is currently a taxonomic debate over the validity of *G. d. lozanoi* as a subspecies.

Of the three antelope species, the scimitar-horned oryx was the most susceptible to the threats it faced. By the mid-1980s, it was estimated that only a few hundred were left in the wild, with the only viable populations known to be in Chad. There have been no reported sightings of this species in the wild since the late 1980s, and the 2002 Red List status of the scimitar-horned oryx is "extinct in the wild" (IUCN 2002). However, this antelope has been reintroduced into Tunisia, and once the reintroduced population breeds, especially to the second generation, it is anticipated that the status of "extinct in the wild" will change.

The addax is better able to utilize waterless areas in the heart of the Sahara Desert and is less susceptible to human disturbance and livestock competition. It is believed that the addax was extirpated from Tunisia during the 1930s, and the last animals were killed in Libya and Algeria in 1966 and 1970, respectively. Remnant populations may still exist in the remote desert areas of Chad, Niger, and Mali, and occasionally move north into Libya and Algeria during times of good rainfall. In the Antelope Specialist Group's *Global Survey of Antelopes*, the addax is considered to be "regionally extinct" (Mallon and Kingwood 2001). Addax are listed as critically endangered in the 2002 Red List and probably number fewer than 250 in the wild.

The dama gazelle is able to utilize both semi-desert and desert habitats, and is smaller than either the oryx or addax. Although the dama gazelle is the least susceptible of these three antelopes to pressures from humans and domestic livestock, it is estimated that only small numbers survive in most of the eight countries within its historical range. It was previously extinct in Senegal, but has since been reintroduced, and in 1997, at least 25 animals existed there as part of a semi-captive breeding program (IUCN 2002). The IUCN lists all forms of dama gazelles as endangered. The dama gazelle has declined rapidly over the last 20 years, and recent estimates show numbers fewer than 2,500 and declining (Mallon and Kingwood 2001). *G. d. mhorh* may be extinct in the wild and only found in captive collections or reintroduced

populations (Antelope Taxon Advisory Group 2002; IUCN 2002).

Public Comments Solicited

We will accept written comments and information during this re-opened comment period from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested party. Comments particularly are sought concerning:

(1) Biological, commercial trade, or other relevant data concerning any threat (or lack thereof) to the scimitar-horned oryx, addax, and dama gazelle;

(2) Additional information concerning the range, distribution, and population size of the scimitar-horned oryx, addax, and dama gazelle;

(3) Current planned activities in the species' range and their possible impacts on the scimitar-horned oryx, addax, and dama gazelle;

(4) Information on the validity of *G. d. lozanoi* as a subspecies;

(5) Alternatives to the treatment of captive populations of scimitar-horned oryx, addax, and dama gazelle; and

(6) Information on the genetic integrity of captive populations of scimitar-horned oryx, addax, and dama gazelle, and particularly whether any captive populations are likely to have been hybridized.

Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Any person commenting may request that we withhold their home address, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. In some circumstances, we may also withhold a commenter's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name or address, you must state this request prominently at the beginning of your comment. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. To the extent consistent with applicable law, we will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection, by appointment, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Division of Scientific Authority (*see ADDRESSES* section).

References Cited

- Antelope Taxon Advisory Group. 2002. Addax Fact Sheet. American Zoo and Aquarium Association. Downloaded from <http://www.csew.com/antelopetag>.
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Metzler, S. 2000. *Addax Gazelle North American Regional Studbook 1999 Update*. Disney's Animal Kingdom.

Author

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Matt Hogan,

Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.
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