Review of *Hexaprotodon liberiensis* from Guinea

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CITATION


PREPARED FOR

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Introduction

Article 4.6(b) import suspensions for some species/country combinations have been in place for a relatively long time. It was agreed that a review of such import suspensions be undertaken in order to determine whether or not they are still appropriate.

An SRG 52 document presented in-depth reviews for the African mammal and bird species/country combinations subject to Article 4.6(b) import suspension that had been in place since 2001 or earlier and that were not subject to trade suspensions formed through CITES processes. This included the review of *Hexaprotodon liberiensis* from Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone and resulted in the SRG agreeing to remove the import suspension from these countries on the basis of current and anticipated levels of trade. The species is also subject to a long-term import suspension from Guinea, which was not reviewed for the SRG 52 document. This report therefore presents a review of the species in Guinea.
REVIEW OF HEXAPROTODON LIBERIENSIS FROM GUINEA

MAMMALIA HIPPOPOTAMIDAE

SPECIES: Hexaprotodon liberiensis

SYNONYMS: Choeropsis liberiensis

COMMON NAMES: Dværgflodhest (Danish), Dwergnijlpaard (Dutch), Pygmy Hippopotamus (English), Kääpiövirtahepo (Finnish), Hippopotame nain (French), Hippopotame pygmée (French), Zwergflußpferd (German), Ippopotamo pigmeo (Italian), Hipopótamo enano (Spanish), Hipopótamo pigmeo (Spanish), dvärgflodhast (Swedish)

RANGE STATES: Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau (?), Liberia, Nigeria (ex), Sierra Leone

RANGE STATES UNDER REVIEW: Guinea

IUCN RED LIST: Endangered (listed as Choeropsis liberiensis)

PREVIOUS EC OPINIONS: Article 4.6(b) suspensions for wild specimens from Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria and Sierra Leone formed on 22/12/1997 and last confirmed on 21/05/2009.

TRADE PATTERNS:
There have been very low volumes of trade in Hexaprotodon liberiensis ever reported. The majority of the global trade 1976-2008 included 184 live specimens, most of which were captive-bred animals exported by European countries and other non-range states.

The only trade in the species ever reported from Guinea referred to three wild-sourced live animals imported by South Africa in 2006 for zoo purposes.

No export quotas have ever been published for the species by any country.

CONSERVATION STATUS in range states

Hexaprotodon liberiensis is endemic to West Africa, where the nominate subspecies has a fragmented distribution in heavily forested areas close to rivers and streams in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire (Eltringham, 1993; Grubb, 1993; Wilson and Reeder, 2005).

A second subspecies, H. l. heslopi, described on the basis of four skulls obtained from the Niger Delta, southern Nigeria (Corbet, 1969), was reportedly still known of by residents of the delta in the early 1990s (Grubb, 1993), but is probably extinct (Eltringham, 1993; Lewison and Oliver, 2008).
Bourgoin (1958) noted that the species's numbers were difficult to assess, but seemed “not to be very substantial”, and Ansell (1971) reported that it was “considered rare” within its western range. Robinson (1971) described the species as “nowhere abundant”, noting that populations were “much more localised” than they had been formerly, with increased human population, hunting, agriculture, forestry and mining having resulted in a “steady decrease in its range”. Eltringham (1993) indicated that, despite being “widespread throughout its range”, the species was “present only in small numbers in each locality”, and that the overall population was “thought to total a few thousand at the most”. On the basis of responses from local experts, Eltringham (1993) concluded that overall numbers had “probably declined recently”, and that populations had probably “become fragmented, for the animal has disappeared from many of its former sites”.

In 2006, the species's IUCN Red List status was reclassified as Endangered on the grounds that the former population estimate of “less than 3,000 individuals” may have been too high “given the loss of habitat in Upper Guinea and subsequent hunting pressure (as forests become more accessible)”, and that a continuing population decline of 20% over 20 years was “not without reason” (Lewison and Oliver, 2008).

A significant population may still exist in Côte d'Ivoire (Roth et al., 2004), which does not appear to have been taken into account in the above IUCN assessment.

Eltringham (1993) indicated that the main threats to the species were habitat loss owing to deforestation (especially in Liberia), and hunting for meat and trophies (latter only reported from Liberia), adding that, although it was not clear to what extent hunting was affecting the species, any killing was “likely to be detrimental to its survival” given the “low densities and scattered distribution of the species”. Lewison and Oliver (2008) stated that “deforestation for logging and human settlement, hunting and regional conflicts continue to threaten” remaining populations, and that the ongoing viability of the species was “extremely poor”.

According to Eltringham (1993), the species is “fully protected legally in all countries”.

Guinea: Reported as occurring as far west as the Bufon River near Forécariah (south-western Guinea) by Dekeyser (1954; per Corbet, 1969), and “in the forested regions of south-eastern French Guinée” by Sidney (1965). Eltringham (1993) reported that the species was “not considered to be threatened in Guinea, where there is no trade in meat or other products”, and that the population was reported to be “almost stable”. Barnett and Prangley (1997) listed the species as “confirmed” in their preliminary checklist of the mammals of Guinea, noting that although some authors considered the species to be “restricted to the Cavally basin”, others had described its Guinean range limits as “rivers to the south of N’Zérékoré and in the Upper Niader as far as Kissidougou”. Eltringham (1999) indicated that the species occurred in Guinea “in three rivers bordering Liberia and Sierra Leone”, and in the Reserve de Ziama (near the border with Liberia), adding that it seemed likely to number “in tens rather than hundreds”.

In November 2003, the presence of *H. liberiensis* in Diécké Classified Forest was confirmed (on the basis of tracks) by Barrie and Kanté (2006), with Wright et al. (2006) also listing the species for Ziama on the basis of earlier surveys. However, contra Brugièrè and Kormos (2009), the species was not recorded by Wright et al. (2006) during 5–6 days of surveys at Mt. Béro Classified Forest during November–December 2003. The populations in Ziama and Diécké were reportedly estimated at 32-96 and 18-54 individuals respectively in 1994 (Lewison and Oliver, 2008). Brugièrè and Kormos (2009) noted that the species was not known to occur within any of the five Guinean protected areas dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity (i.e. IUCN categories I–IV).

Brugièrè and Kormos (2009) described Ziama (420 km²) and Diécké Classified Forests (150 km²) as the two “largest unfragmented closed-canopy forest blocks in Guinea”, noting that they were “managed according to forest management plans that include conservation core areas with no human activity allowed” (25% in the case of Diécké, according to Wright et al. 2006). However, the threat of logging at Diécké was described as “imminent” by Barrie and
Kanté (2006), who noted that over 5,000 trees had already been marked by workers. Furthermore, bushmeat hunting in Diécké, Mt. Béro and Dééré was “rife” according to Barrie and Kanté (2006), who added that “unless adequate protection can be supported and laws enforced, large mammals in all these three classified forests will be extirpated”. Lewison and Oliver (2008) indicated that the border area with Liberia was “under increasing pressure from the impacts of Liberian war refugee settlements”.

*H. liberiensis* was listed as “completely protected” under Guinean law (République de Guinée, 1999).

REFERENCES:


