Threatened Wildlife and Plants, a Dr. Charles W. Dane at the above DC Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, ADDRESSES: was made on November 23, 1988. DATES: SUMMARY: ACTION: BILUNG CODE

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Notice of Petition To Reclassify Chimpanzee

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of petition finding.

SUMMARY: The Service announces a 12-month finding on a petition to reclassify the chimpanzee from threatened to endangered. The requested action has been found to be warranted.

DATES: The finding announced herein was made on November 23, 1988.

ADDRESSES: Comments, information, and questions should be submitted to the Chief, Office of Scientific Authority, Mail Stop: 527, Matomic Building, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC 20240. The petition, finding, supporting data, and comments will be available for public inspection, by appointment, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, in Room 537, 1717 H Street, NW., Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Dr. Charles W. Dane at the above address (202-653-5948 or FTS 653-5948).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 4(b)(3) of the Endangered Species Act, as amended in 1982, requires that, within 12 months of receipt of a petition to add a species to, or remove a species from, the Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants, a finding be made as to whether the requested action is warranted, not warranted, or warranted but precluded by other listing activity. If the finding is that the action is warranted, section 4(b)(3) also requires prompt publication in the Federal Register of a proposed rule to implement such action. The Service now announces a 12-month finding on a November 4, 1987 petition. The petition was submitted jointly by the Humane Society of the United States, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Jane Goodall Institute. It is dated November 4, 1987, and was received by the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on that same date. It requests that the classification of the chimpanzee (Pan troglodytes) on the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife be changed from threatened to endangered. On February 4, 1988, the Service made finding that the petition had presented substantial information indicating that the requested action may be warranted. On March 23, 1988 (56 FR 9460), the Service published this finding and announced a status review of the chimpanzee. The comment period for the review ended on July 21, 1988.

The petition was accompanied by a detailed report from the Committee for the Conservation and Care of Chimpanzees. The petition and report, along with other data available to the Service, and information provided by many substantive comments received during the review period, indicate that chimpanzee numbers have declined drastically in the wild. Problems include massive habitat destruction, excessive hunting and capture by people, and lack of effective national and international controls. Furthermore, the Committee for Conservation and Care of Chimpanzees states that fragmentation of the populations and associated vulnerability to disease may pose the greatest of all threats. The chimpanzee has been extirpated in 5 of the 25 countries where it formerly occurred, reduced to fewer than 1,000 individuals in 10 others and to fewer than 5,000 in 6 others, and has populations exceeding 10,000 in 2 countries. It has been considered most secure in Gabon, but a serious decline has recently been projected in that nation.

The petition and subsequent supporting comments dealt primarily with status in the wild and not with viability of captive populations. Pursuant to the current threatened classification, there is a special regulation exempting captive chimpanzees in the United States from the general prohibitions of the Endangered Species Act. This exemption may encourage propagation. There is a National Chimpanzee Management Plan for the purpose of optimizing breeding and maintaining these breeding populations and it is currently reported to be working well. To the extent that self-sustaining captive populations provide surplus animals, these populations may reduce the incentive to remove animals from the wild.

The Service has reviewed the petition, other available data, and all comments received, and finds that the requested action is warranted with respect to chimpanzees in the wild. A proposed rule to implement this measure will be published promptly.

Authors


List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 17

Endangered and threatened wildlife, Fish, Marine mammals, Plants (agriculture).


Becky Norton Dunlop,

Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

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