

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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RECLASSIFICATION PROPOSED FOR AN AFRICAN ANTELOPE, THE RED LECHWE

The red lechwe, an African antelope, has been proposed for reclassification from endangered to threatened status by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The proposal, published in the November 27, 1979, Federal Register, was based on information gained from a review of the species' status, initiated on April 19, 1978, in response to a petition from the Safari Club International. The Service also relied on information submitted by Botswana to the 54-nation treaty, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Convention countries voted last March to transfer the lechwe to a less restrictive category under the treaty that regulates imports and exports of listed species.

Lechwe populations, now estimated at about 150,000, appear to be stable or increasing in their native countries of South West Africa, Botswana, Angola, Zambia, and Zaire, where they are protected. However, their existence continues to be threatened by illegal poaching and loss of habitat from development. The animals are graceful, swift runners and their heads and horns are prized by sport hunters.

Under the proposal, the red lechwe could be imported under terms of the international Convention for all but commercial purposes. No permit would be required from the Fish and Wildlife Service. Public comment on this proposal is invited through February 25, 1980, and should be sent to the Director (OES), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The Service also announced that no new information had been received to justify proposing a change in status for two other foreign animals, the bonebok, also an antelope, and the argali, a type of bighorn sheep.

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