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VKM assessment: Non-detriment finding for Cuban crocodiles

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Competing interests: The authors declare no competing interests in relation to this NDF.

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Scientific name: *Crocodylus rhombifer* Cuvier, 1807.

Common name: Cuban crocodile.

Norwegian name: Cubakrokodille.

Type of permit: CITES Appendix I (Norwegian CITES Regulation Annex I, List A).
Country of Export: Denmark (DK)
Country of Import: Norway (NO)

Purpose and source: The proposal concerns the import from Denmark (Krokodille Zoo) to Norway (Opplev Tropisk AS) of four live Cuban crocodiles (purpose-of-transaction code Z; source code F).

For Appendix I species (Norwegian Cites Regulation Annex 1, list A) it is required to establish that exports will not be detrimental to the survival of that species, in compliance with CITES Article III. In the Norwegian CITES regulation (Lovdata 2018) the criteria for import to Norway is described in Chapter 2, Section 4.

VKM has adopted the definition of detriment, cf. Conf. 16.7 (Rev. CoP17) suggested by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Scientific Authority:

1. Harvest that is not sustainable.
2. Harvest that harms the status of the species in the wild.
3. Removal from the wild that results in habitat loss or destruction, or that interferes with recovery efforts for a species.

Conclusion

VKM concludes that the import of four live Cuban crocodiles born in captivity from Denmark to Norway for the purpose of zoological exhibition will not be harmful to the future survival of the wild population.

The conclusion is based on the following factors:

- The individuals are born in captivity in Denmark (Krokodille Zoo) and the export will not have any harmful effect on the conservation status of the species.
- Hybridization with American crocodiles in the wild is a main threat to the Cuban crocodile, and keeping a pure captive bred stock is thus considered important for the future survival of the species.

1. Biological information

Distribution

The species is endemic to Cuba. The distribution is restricted to one swamp on the mainland and one on Isle of Youth ([Cuban Crocodile.pdf \(iucncsg.org\)](#)).

Life history

The average clutch size has been estimated to 25.4 eggs in captivity and 14.5 eggs in the wild (Ramos-Targarona, 2013 in McMahan et al., 2022). *Crocodylus rhombifer* interbreeds with *C. actus* and hybrids outnumber pure bred offspring (Milian-Garcia et al., 2015).

Role in the ecosystem

The species is hole nesting and feeds on fish, turtles, and small mammals (McMahan et al., 2022). Data on its ecology is limited (IUCN Crocodile Specialist Group, not dated).

2. Population trend

Decreasing. The population size has been estimated to 2,400 mature individuals (McMahan et al., 2022).

3. Conservation status

Crocodylus rhombifer is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (McMahan et al., 2022) (assessed in 2022).

4. Threats

The main threat is the limited distribution in two small and isolated populations in the wild. Hybridization with *C. acutus* is common and few pure individuals of *C. rhombifer* are left (McMahan et al., 2022, Milian-Garcia et al., 2015).

5. Conservation and Management measures:

International legislation

Crocodylus rhombifer is listed under Appendix I of CITES. It is listed under Annex I of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations.

National legislation

NA

Conservation measures

Captive breeding is considered of high importance to avoid hybridization (Milian-Garcia et al., 2015). A program to support in situ and ex situ efforts to preserve the species is ongoing (Association of Zoos and Aquariums and SAFE Saving Animals from Extinction, 2024).

6. Trade/use

Legal

The skin of *C. rhombifer* is considered less attractive than that of other crocodiles (McMahan et al. 2022).

Illegal

Illegal hunting for meat occurs (McMahan et al., 2022).

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