

May 31, 2013

Contact: Claire Cassel  
703-358-2357  
[claire\\_cassel@fws.gov](mailto:claire_cassel@fws.gov)

## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Affirms Protection for Three African Antelope Species under the ESA**

U.S. captive-bred specimens of three endangered African antelope species — the scimitar-horned oryx, dama gazelle and addax – continue to warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today. In findings made in response to two petitions seeking the removal of U.S. captive populations of these endangered species from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife, the Service has determined that providing separate legal status to captive specimens of protected species is not permissible under the ESA.

The findings will not impact the current, legal operation of game ranching operations and are consistent with the Service's longstanding practice for applying the protections of the ESA to captive individuals of species that are threatened or endangered in the wild. The findings were submitted to the Federal Register on May 31.

In 2005, the Service added these three antelope species to the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife. The species all inhabit the sparse desert regions of northern Africa. Populations for all three species have been greatly reduced as a result of habitat loss, military activity and uncontrolled killing. In the wild, the scimitar-horned oryx may be extirpated, and the other two species are each estimated to number fewer than 500 individuals.

Each of the three species occurs in greater numbers in captivity than in the wild, and many of the captive animals are held on private ranches in the United States. Captive breeding efforts on these ranches, many of which were established before these species were added to the list in 2005, has resulted in a large number of captive scimitar-horned oryx, addax and dama gazelle in the United States.

The Service recognized at the time of listing the species that some ranches play a role in the conservation of these species by maintaining genetically pure stock that could be used to reestablish the species in the wild. Some of these ranches use limited sport hunting as part of their management program. Allowing these ranches to continue in their management efforts for these species may help to ensure that a viable group of antelope will be available for reintroduction purposes if conditions in the species' native range improve. Therefore, the agency has authorized well-managed ranches to conduct various management practices, including limited sport hunting, to be conducted through the Captive-Bred Wildlife Registration regulation and through the permitting process. Since April 4, 2012, the Service has approved 139 ranches to maintain the species, of which 107 have been authorized to conduct limited hunts to maintain viable herds on their ranches. These petition findings will maintain the status quo and will not affect Service approval of these game ranching operations.

The Service encourages interested parties to continue to gather and submit to the Service data that will assist with the conservation of the scimitar-horned oryx, dama gazelle and addax.

Once published by the *Federal Register*, the rule will be available online at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/frsystem/default.cfm> by clicking on the 2013 Final Rules.

The Endangered Species Act provides a critical safety net for fish, wildlife and plants and to date has prevented the extinction of hundreds of imperiled species, as well as promoting the recovery of many others. The Service is actively engaged with conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species. To learn more about the Endangered Species program's Branch of Foreign Species, visit:

<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/international-activities.html>.

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov). Connect with our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/usfws](http://www.facebook.com/usfws), follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/usfwshq](http://www.twitter.com/usfwshq), watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>.*

-FWS-