

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release December 27, 1977

Levitt 202/343-5634

TWO ZEBRA SPECIES PROPOSED FOR ENDANGERED LIST

Two species of zebras, the victims of excessive killing both for their hides and because they compete with livestock for available food supplies, have been proposed for the endangered list, Keith M. Schreiner, Associate Director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announced today.

The proposal, published in the December 23, 1977, Federal Register, would place the Grevy's zebra of Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia and the Hartmann's Mountain zebra of southwest Africa and Angola on the endangered species list. Interested persons have until March 23, 1977, to comment on this rulemaking.

"Grevy's zebra numbers appear to have plummeted in the last decade," Schreiner said. "The only sizable populations are in northern Kenya where it has been estimated that about 1,500 animals survive. This is down from more than 10,000 in 1971.

"In the last 2 or 3 years uncontrolled shooting has wiped out entire populations. On the Leroghi range, part of the Samburu Grazing Scheme, where 1,500 animals were counted in 1975, they are virtually non-existent today."

Although Kenya law protects zebras, poachers are still a major factor in the species' decline, with 8,000 Grevy's zebras estimated to have been poached in the last 3 years. The price of zebra skins, used to adorn walls and floors of homes, has recently skyrocketed from \$150 to as much as \$2,000 a hide.

The Hartmann's Mountain zebra is also killed for its hide, but to a much lesser degree. The main concentration of the species is now restricted to Namibia where numbers total less than 2,000 individuals. In the 1950's, between 50,000 and 75,000 occurred in this general area. In 1960, the estimate was 15,000 and in 1970, 7,000 animals. The decline was brought about when man altered the environment by introducing livestock. The competition between zebras and cattle, sheep, and other livestock for available food resulted in ranchers

(over)

destroying zebras in vast numbers. There are no effective means to control the slaughter. With the current political unrest in Namibia and the associated abundance of firearms in the area, there will undoubtedly be further indiscriminate destruction of zebras.

If this rulemaking is finally adopted, the two species, including their hides and products made from them, could not be imported into this country without a permit which would only be issued for scientific purposes or to enhance the survival or propagation of the species. Interstate shipment of zebra skins or products in the course of a commercial activity would also be prohibited.

Persons having information to assist with this rulemaking should write the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (OES), Washington, D.C. 20240.

x x x