

LAO WARTY NEWT

Support Proposal to include *Laotriton laoensis* in Appendix II with a zero annual export quota for wild-taken specimens traded for commercial purposes

L *aotriton laoensis*, known by the common names Lao warty newt or Paddletail newt, is an Endangered monotypic newt endemic to the Lao People's Democratic Republic. It is a relatively large newt with bright coloration. It inhabits fast-moving freshwater streams. *L. laoensis* has a small range, which falls entirely within unprotected lands. Habitat degradation and overharvesting to supply the international pet trade, as well as to meet demand related to consumption and medicinal use (for both local and international markets), have contributed to a 50% decline in this species over the past decade. This proposal is to list the Endangered Lao warty newt in Appendix II with a zero quota for wild-taken specimens traded for commercial purposes to ensure that international trade in these species is not a threat to their survival in the wild.

Proponents of Listing

European Union.

Distribution and Habitat

L. laoensis is associated with fast-moving freshwater streams. Adults can be found in pools along these streams and juveniles morph just beside the streams. Seasonally, *L. laoensis* congregate in large groups to breed. Generally, they can be found in streams within evergreen forests, shrubs, grasslands, and rice fields. The species is endemic to a small region of less than 5,000 km² in the Lao PDR. According to species distribution models, *L. laoensis* is found exclusively at elevations above 1,000m where habitat characteristics are suitable for the species. Given these requirements, there is only a small amount of habitat available for *L. laoensis*.



CC BY-NY 3.0 Henk Wallays 2007

SPECIES: *Laotriton laoensis*

FAMILY: Salamandridae

IUCN STATUS: Endangered

MAJOR THREATS: Over-harvesting for international trade, consumption, and medicinal use, and habitat degradation

RANGE: Freshwater streams in the Lao PDR

At Risk of Extinction in the Wild

The IUCN classifies *L. laoensis* as Endangered with a declining population trend. The newt is known to occur entirely outside of protected areas and is threatened by collection for international trade, consumption, and medicinal use. The species is also threatened by habitat loss and degradation from lowered water quality and deforestation. These cumulative threats have contributed to a 50% decline in *L. laoensis* over the past decade.

Overexploitation

L. laoensis is collected for the international pet trade, consumption, and medicinal purposes. The newt is internationally sought by collectors and the pet trade has been identified as the primary driver for population declines (Rowley et al. 2016, Stuart et al. 2006). It is also used for traditional medicine both locally and internationally (Phimmachak et al. 2012). Local people also consume the species as a food source. During its breeding season (November through February), large numbers of *L. laoensis* congregate within small freshwater streams. Once the location of a breeding group is discovered, mass collection of the species is known to occur. These mass collection events contribute to the species' high level of vulnerability and have led to population declines.



Laotriton laoensis

FAMILY: SALAMANDRIDAE
RANGE: LAO PDR

THREATS:

- INTERNATIONAL TRADE
- HABITAT DEGRADATION
- CONSUMPTION
- MEDICINAL USE

SPECIES PROPOSED FOR LISTING:

To list *Laotriton laoensis* in CITES Appendix II, with a zero export quota for wild-taken specimens traded for commercial purposes, in accordance with Annex 2(a), Criterion A and B.

International Trade

Due primarily to its novelty and unique markings, *L. laoensis* is highly desired in the international pet trade, where actual levels of trade are likely much higher than those recorded. The species is coveted by collectors who are willing to pay exorbitant prices to procure specimens. The combination of high demand and ease of collection makes *L. laoensis* extremely vulnerable to exploitation for international trade. Prior to being scientifically described as a species in 2002, there was virtually no international demand for this newt. However, demand for the species has grown quickly in the last decade as it has become more popular in the international pet trade and as demand for live specimens and preserved specimens has increased.

Habitat Degradation and Loss

L. laoensis is also threatened by habitat degradation and loss. Due to its high dependence on freshwater streams, water quality is important to their survival. Degradation of water quality from pesticides, nutrients, and other pollutants can be harmful. It is also threatened by disrupted water flow or other mechanisms of stream encroachment, such as grassland burning for agricultural purposes. *L. laoensis* are put at further risk due to deforestation, which has become increasingly prevalent in the Lao PDR due to increased demand for agricultural production to feed the local population, an expansion of cash crops (e.g., rubber, coffee, tea), and increased hydropower development.

Classification

The genus *Paramesotriton*, which has similar biological and international demand characteristics to *Laotriton laoensis*,

was listed in CITES Appendix II at CoP18. In 2009, the European Union included *Paramesotriton* in Annex D of the EU Council Regulation (EC) No. 338/97. In 2012, *L. laoensis* was listed as *P. laoensis* but then in 2013 it was reclassified as *L. laoensis*.

Support this Proposal

L. laoensis is threatened by overexploitation and habitat degradation. These compounding threats put the species at significant risk and have caused dramatic population declines over the past decade. Due to its IUCN status of “Endangered,” its significant population decline, and the serious threat posed to it by the international pet trade, this species requires listing in Appendix II with a zero annual export quota for wild-caught specimens traded for commercial purposes.

References

This fact sheet is a summary of the proposal to include *L. laoensis* under Appendix II of CITES. The full proposal can be found on the CITES webpage:

https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/cop/19/prop/as_received/E-Laotriton_laoensis.pdf

Phimmachak, S. *et al.* (2012). Distribution, natural history, and conservation of the Lao newt (*Laotriton laoensis*) (Caudata: Salamandridae). *J. Herpetol.* 46: 120–128.

Rowley, J. *et al.* (2016). Estimating the global trade in Southeast Asian Newts. *Biological Conservation* 99(1):96-100.

Stuart, B. *et al.* (2006). Scientific description can imperil species. *Science* 312(5777) 1137. DOI: 10.1126/science.312.5777.1137b

Wallays, H. (2007). *Paramesotriton* / *Laotriton laoensis* juvenile.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/unovidual/4058499325>