

Uromastyx benti Anderson, 1894

FAMILY: Agamidae

COMMON NAMES: Bent's Mastigure, Bent's Spiny-tailed Lizard, Rainbow Benti, Mountain Benti, Yemen Uromastyx (English); Fouette-queue de Bent (French)

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS: Not yet assessed by IUCN.

SIGNIFICANT TRADE REVIEW FOR: Oman, Saudi Arabia, Yemen

Range States selected for review

Range State	Exports* (1994-2003)	Urgent, possible or least concern	Comments
Oman	8	Least concern	International trade over period almost zero.
Saudi Arabia	0	Least concern	Country is probably not a range State for this species. No trade recorded.
Yemen	6,852	Least concern	No systematic population monitoring in place to determine non-detriment; however current international trade likely to be well within sustainable limits for species.

* Excluding re-exports

SUMMARY

Uromastyx benti, often know as Bent's or Rainbow Spiny-tailed Lizard, is found in Yemen, Oman and questionably Saudi Arabia. International trade in this medium-sized colourful lizard is for the pet trade, with the USA being the main importer. Around 7,000 specimens were recorded in trade in the period 1994-2003, almost all originating in Yemen. No exports were recorded in 2003.

U. benti is recorded as at least locally fairly common in Oman, with densities of around one individual per hectare, comparable with those recorded in other *Uromastyx* species. Its extent of occurrence probably amounts to well over 10 million hectares, so that if the species is at all widespread within this, its total population is likely to number at least several hundred thousand individuals and quite possibly over a million. The rocky arid habitat of the species is not suitable for agriculture and there are low levels of human population throughout its range so that human disturbance and habitat loss are not believed to be significant threats.

All species of *Uromastyx* were listed on CITES Appendix II in 1977. No information was available on whether non-detriment findings for *U. benti* have been made and, if so, what these were based on. However, given the species' relatively large range and lack of other known threats, it seems very unlikely that offtake to supply international trade of the magnitude recently recorded will have any significant impact on wild populations. Trade in this species is therefore considered of Least Concern from each of the three range States selected for this review.

SPECIES CHARACTERISTICS

Uromastyx benti, commonly know as Bent's Spiny-tailed Lizard, is a medium-sized lizard that can reach a total length of 36 cm (Western New York Herpetological Society, undated). The species is relatively colourful for a *Uromastyx*; males are often predominantly blue, sometimes with orange and red colouring, while females are usually light tan with reddish tails (Sorin and Sorin, 2001).

Uromastyx benti inhabits arid, rocky areas. Its range is generally given as Oman, Saudi Arabia and Yemen (Arnold, 1986; UNEP-WCMC, 2006; Wilms and Böhme, 2000; Wilms, 2001). There is little detail on the extent of occurrence within these range States. There is doubt that the species actually occurs in Saudi Arabia; its range may be predominantly restricted to the southern Yemen extending into the southern coastal region of Oman (Anderson *in litt.*, 2005).

Little specific information is available on the ecology of this species in the wild. *Uromastyx* species in general are oviparous with clutch sizes of between 8 to 20 eggs. Eggs are laid in female burrow systems in the late spring-early summer or at the beginning of the dry season. They hatch after an incubation period of approximately 8 to 10 weeks (Bahiani *et al.*, 1997; Schliech *et al.*, 1996; Zug *et al.*, 2001) and the hatchlings stay within the burrow system for several weeks to months before leaving to establish their own burrows (Peters, 1971). The smaller *Uromastyx*, of which *U. benti* is one, may reach sexual maturity in two or three years (Gray, 1995). The lifespan of *U. benti* is believed to be 20 years (The Big Zoo, undated; Western New York Herpetological Society, undated).

Like other *Uromastyx* species, *U. benti* appears to be entirely or very largely herbivorous as an adult; juveniles, in captivity at least, show a preference for feeding on insects and other invertebrates (Gray, undated; Pough *et al.*, 2001; Schliech *et al.*, 1996). Most of the water that they require is absorbed from their food. *U. benti* has been observed climbing trees (Reynolds, 2001).

Papenfuss (*in litt.*, 2006) has estimated a density of around one individual per hectare in the Mirbat region of Oman. This is well within the range of density estimates for other *Uromastyx* species (0.1-1.0 per hectare for *U. acanthinura* in very arid environments in Algeria and up to six per hectare for *U. aegyptius* in somewhat more productive environments in the Middle East (Robinson, 1995; Schliech *et al.*, 1996; Vernet *et al.*, 1988).

The estimated distribution provided by Anderson (*in litt.*, 2005) gives an extent of occurrence of some 12.5 million hectares; if the species is at all widely distributed within this range at similar densities to those in the Mirbat region of Oman, its total population is likely at the very least to number several hundred thousand individuals and quite possibly over a million, the majority in Yemen.

No information is available on threats to this species. Concerns for other *Uromastyx* species are over-harvesting for the international pet trade, as well as some domestic use for food and traditional medicine, and habitat loss. The rocky arid habitat of this species is not suitable for agriculture and there are low levels of human population throughout the range of the species so that habitat loss is not likely to be a threat (Papenfuss *in litt.*, 2006).

The relatively isolated distribution of this species means that the taxonomic confusion associated with other trade in *Uromastyx* species is not as problematic. The species shares its range with *U. thomasi*; however, this latter species is almost never traded internationally and has only been reported as exported from Oman.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Table 1: Exports excluding re-export of live wild *Uromastyx benti*, 1994-2003

Export Country	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Oman					8						8
Yemen			1686	566		1700	500	1700	700		6852
Total	0	0	1686	566	8	1700	500	1700	700	0	6860

(Source: CITES trade statistics derived from the *CITES Trade Database*, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, UK.)

COUNTRY ACCOUNTS

Oman

Status:

The species is found in the coastal areas of extreme southwestern Oman between the Yemen border and the town of Mirbat. The species is fairly common in the Mirbat region, with a density of around 1one per hectare (Papenfuss *in litt.*, 2006).

Management and trade:

Only eight specimens of *Uromastyx benti* were reported as exported from Oman in the period 1993-2004, all in 1998. International trade is therefore not currently a threat to the species in the country and of Least Concern. However, access to *U. benti* habitat, through new road building to the international airport, may facilitate collection for the international trade (Robinson *in litt.*, 2006).

Saudi Arabia

Status:

Although listed as a range State for *U. benti*, Anderson (*in litt.*, 2005), Papenfuss (*in litt.*, 2006) and Robinson (*in litt.*, 2006) note that the species may in fact not extend as far north as Saudi Arabia.

Management and trade:

No exports of this species have been recorded originating from Saudi Arabia and therefore trade is of Least Concern.

Yemen

Status:

The species' range is believed to be restricted to the southern coastal region, extending up to and beyond the border with Oman (Anderson *in litt.*, 2005).

Management and trade:

Yemen has been the predominant exporter of *U. benti*, with nearly 7,000 (all wild) reported as exported in the period 1994 to 2003. Reported trade varied from year to year, with highest levels, of around 1,700 individuals, in 1996, 1999 and 2001. Some years, including 2003, have seen zero exports. Far larger numbers of specimens were reported as imported into the USA than were reported exported to the USA by Yemen. All specimens traded during this period were imported into the USA, from where many were re-exported. In addition the export of 601 specimens of *Uromastyx spp.* was recorded from Yemen in 1997.

The legal status of *U. benti* in Yemen is unknown. No information was available on whether non-detriment findings for this species have been made and, if so, what these were based on.

Although no accurate or up to date figures are available on the population of *U. benti* in Yemen, as noted above the population plausibly numbers several hundred thousand individuals at minimum. It would therefore seem unlikely that offtake to supply the recorded level of export has a detrimental effect on wild populations, with trade from this country is therefore considered of Least Concern.

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