

wild, but it was later recategorized as Critically Endangered (T. Tarifa, 2009, *Chinchilla chinchilla*, In *Libro rojo de la fauna silvestre de vertebrados de Bolivia*, pp. 457–459, Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua, La Paz, Bolivia) based on undocumented reports by residents of peasant communities in the southern department of Potosí. Fieldwork across the highlands of Bolivia failed, however, to verify the occurrence of the species.

Overexploitation of wild chinchilla populations for their valuable pelts in the 19th and early 20th century is thought to have been the main cause of the decline of this species across its former range. The species is categorized as Endangered on the IUCN Red List. Historically broadly distributed, chinchillas inhabited the coast and the Andes of central Peru to the south through the high Andean regions of central-west Bolivia, northern Chile, and north-west Argentina. It was recently rediscovered in northern Chile (P. Valladares et al., 2014, *Animal Biodiversity and Conservation*, 37, 89–93). Although the chinchilla was previously considered extinct in Peru, there is potentially an extant population in the remote central highlands (A. Spotorno & J. Patton, 2015, Superfamily Chinchilloidea Bennet, 1833. In *Mammals of South America, Volume 2 Rodents*, eds J.L. Patton et al., pp. 762–783, The University of Chicago Press, USA).

The National Reserve of Andean Fauna “Eduardo Avaroa” is a flagship conservation unit of the Bolivian National Park system, covering the dry Puna region of southern Bolivia. The fauna of the Reserve is characterized by species adapted to the extreme conditions of the region, including the Endangered Andean mountain cat *Leopardus jacobita* and Vulnerable Andean Flamingo *Phoenicoparrus andinus*. These species and habitats are under increasing threats from tourism and climate change.

The current management plan of the Reserve does not include provisions to protect the newly found population of chinchillas and there is an urgent need to include stakeholders and policy makers in development of a long-term plan for the protection of this unique fauna, of which chinchillas are a major component. Initial contacts towards this goal are ongoing.

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## Coal mining threatens the Vulnerable aquatic warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*

The aquatic warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, is a species particularly affected by hydrological changes, including to wetland habitats. The global population of this species decreased by > 90% in the 20th century, and there are currently only 10,200–13,800 singing males, breeding in an area of 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> (BirdLife International, 2008, International Species Action Plan for the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*. Updated version, 2010). A new threat to the aquatic warbler has now arisen: potential coal mining within a few kilometres of Bubnów Marsh in Polesie National Park, Poland.

Bubnów Marsh, close to the Polish–Ukrainian–Belarus border, is one of the largest calcareous fen mires in Europe. It is a significant wetland area that survived drainage during the communist era. This marsh is protected by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, a Cross-border Biosphere Reserve (Polesie Zachodnie) and a Natura 2000 area. In 2014 389 singing males of the aquatic warbler were found in the marsh (G. Grzywaczewski, 2015, *Annales UMCS section EE*, 33, 1–12), representing 3–4% of the global population.

The Chief Geologist in Poland has approved a concession for a company that is planning construction of coal mine near Bubnów Marsh. In May 2017, during proceedings of the scientific council of Polesie National Park, a representative of the company that carried out the exploratory drilling presented the prospects for future coal mining in the vicinity of the marsh. The company plans to mine coal for c. 10 years (*Wspólnota Łęczyńska*, 4 October 2016, <http://24wspolnota.pl/+wlj8n>). Local councils and government representatives are involved in lobbying in favour of the construction of the new mine (authors, pers. obs.).

An alternative source of income in this area could be ecotourism. Polesie National Park was visited by c. 44,000 tourists in 2016 (Tourist Register of Polesie National Park, unpubl. data), and Urszulin Commune, which includes the Park, receives grants from the European Union budget for the promotion and development of tourist infrastructure. Coal mining will have a negative impact on this valuable wetland ecosystem, potentially resulting in the loss of habitats and rare species, including the aquatic warbler. Mining could also result in the reduction of tourism and a loss of income that would help improve the development of tourism and recreation.

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