



## CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

For Immediate Release: September 29, 2004

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### **Protection Sought for Imperiled African Antelopes**

**Trophy Hunting, War, Habitat Destruction Threatens Survival of "Unicorn"  
and Two Other Rare Antelope Species**

Washington, D.C.-The Center for Biological Diversity (Tucson, Arizona) and Friends of Animals (Darien, Conn) filed a lawsuit yesterday in Federal Court against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for failing to take action to protect three extremely rare North African antelope species under the Endangered Species Act (The Act).

In 1991, the FWS proposed to list under The Act three highly imperiled North African antelope species: the addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*), scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*), and dama gazelle (*Gazella dama*). The scimitar-horned oryx resembles a unicorn and is believed to be the origin of modern human's belief in unicorns.

The Act requires the FWS to publish in the Federal Register a final rule listing a species as an endangered or threatened species within one-year of the date of the proposed rule. The FWS has never published this rule, making it more than 10 years overdue in taking final action to protect these rare antelopes. The Act covers domestic and foreign endangered species. A listing of a foreign species would restrict trophy hunting by U.S. citizens in Africa and increase U.S. government funding, research and assistance for the species.

Currently, the Bush Administration is attempting a highly controversial rule change in the interpretation of The Act that would allow for continued international trophy hunting and importation of endangered species.

On June 9, 2002, the Center for Biological Diversity filed a formal Notice of Intent to Sue for the government's failure to take the legally mandated actions and list the three antelopes under The Act. The FWS agreed that it would take action without CBD filing a lawsuit, but later reneged on that agreement, necessitating the filing of the lawsuit.

The lawsuit was filed in Federal District Court in Washington, D.C. The case number is 1:04-CV-1660 and is assigned to Judge Henry Kennedy.

The plaintiffs are represented in the case by Jay Tutchton of the Center for Biological Diversity's Environmental Clinical Partnership with the University of Denver and Matt Kenna of Kenna and Hickcox of Durango, Colorado.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Scimitar-Horned Oryx (*Oryx dammah*), Addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*), and Dama Gazelle (*Gazella dama*) all occur in desert or semidesert habitat of the Sahara and Sahel regions of North Africa. All have declined drastically in recent decades through habitat deterioration and excessive hunting.

O. dammah is a large, rather heavy antelope, standing about 47 inches at the shoulder and weighing around 450 pounds. It is generally pale in color, but the neck and chest are dark reddish brown. The horns curve back in an arc and are up to 50 inches long. A. nasomaculatus is smaller and more chunky, standing about 42 inches at the shoulder and weighing

around 220 pounds. It has an overall grayish white color and its horns twist in a spiral up to 43 inches long. *G. dama* is usually smaller and is much more slender, having a shoulder height of about 39 inches and a weight around 160 pounds. The upper parts of its body are mostly reddish brown, while the head, rump, and underparts are white. Its horns curve back and up, but reach a length of only about 17 inches. The females of all three species resemble the males, but have somewhat less prominently developed horns.

The Scimitar-Horned Oryx originally occurred in two bands of semidesert habitat to the north and south of the central Sahara. The northern range extended from Morocco and Western Sahara to Egypt, the southern from Senegal to Sudan. The Addax was found continuously through both true desert and semidesert zones from Western Sahara and Mauritania to Egypt and Sudan. The Dama Gazelle ranged across desert and semidesert country from southern Morocco and Senegal to central Sudan.