Threatened Birds of Asia: The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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BLACK-CROWNED BARWING
Actinodura sodangorum

This species is known only from two areas and is assumed to have a small range and population. Although its habitat requirements are uncertain, there has been widespread habitat loss and degradation across its projected range and it is inferred to be undergoing a continuing decline. These factors qualify it as Vulnerable.

DISTRIBUTION The Black-crowned Barwing (see Remarks 1) is currently only known from the western highlands of Vietnam in Kon Tum province, and the Dakchung plateau of Laos, around 100 km to the north-west. It is probably to be found in other locations in Attapu and Xe Kong provinces of Laos and in Quang Nam province in Vietnam (Eames et al. 1999b), although few surveys have been conducted in these areas.

LAOS The species has been recorded only on the Dakchung plateau near the Vietnamese border: Ban Done Pak, Dakchung plateau, two pairs and at least two singing males, December 1997 (Showler et al. 1998b).

VIETNAM All records are from the region of Ngoc Linh (Kon Tum) Nature Reserve in the western highlands of Vietnam, as follows: Dak Bung, 1,200 m, pair, April 1998 (Eames et al. 1999b); Cong Troi, 1,500 m, pair, April 1998 (Eames et al. 1999b); Lo Xo pass, 1,000 m, pair, April 1998 (Eames et al. 1999b); Mt Ngoc Linh, Kon Tum, 1,700–2,400 m, female collected (the holotype), May 1996, male collected (the paratype), March 1998, also several sight records in 1996 and 1998 (Eames et al. 1999b); Long Hy, 1,400 m, pair, May 1998 (Eames et al. 1999b); Dak Vien, 1,700 m, pair, May 1998 (Eames et al. 1999b); Ngoc Dang, 1,600 m, pair, May 1998 (Eames et al. 1999b).

POPULATION On the Dakchung plateau of Laos, three pairs were seen in a very small area, but the species was not encountered elsewhere (Showler et al. 1998b). It may be distributed much more widely, but surveys were brief and no population estimates were made. In Vietnam the species is locally distributed in the area of Ngoc Linh (Kon Tum) Nature Reserve, but again it was not possible to estimate populations. It might also be expected to occur in Ngoc Linh (Quang Nam) proposed nature reserve in adjacent Quang Nam province. Although surveys in March–April 1999 failed to locate it this was probably because no survey work was carried out above 1,500 m (A. W. Tordoff in litt. 2000).

The distribution of Black-crowned Barwing Actinodura sodangorum: (1) Ban Done Pak; (2) Dak Bung; (3) Cong Troi; (4) Lo Xo; (5) Mt Ngoc Linh; (6) Long Hy; (7) Dak Vien; (8) Ngoc Dang.

Recent (1980–present)
ECOLOGY Habitat On the Dakchung plateau at least six were found in a small area (less than 1 km²) of tall damp grassland at 1,150 m (Showler et al. 1998b), although it is not thought to be associated with water (J. C. Eames in litt. 2000). The habitat was composed of tall (up to 4 m) Saccharum and Imperata type vegetation with occasional scattered low bushes in an area surrounded by degraded semi-evergreen and open pine Pinus woodland (Showler et al. 1998b). In Vietnam the species has been recorded between c.1,000 and 2,400 m, primarily in evergreen forest and associated secondary vegetation, mostly characterised by a canopy height of 10–15 m, with occasional 20 m trees (Eames et al. 1999b). It has also been noted in small forest fragments chequered with banana groves amid shifting cultivation and scrub on steeply sloping hillsides, and at the edge of forest clearings (Eames et al. 1999b). Most observations were in the canopy of forest, fewer in the middle storey, and it was observed only twice in scrub at forest edge (Eames et al. 1999b). The sites in Laos and Vietnam are not widely separated, and the differences in habitat recorded at each is thought to reflect restricted sampling effort and the broad habitat tolerance of the species (but see Threats) rather than any differences in its ecology in the two areas (J. C. Eames in litt. 2000). All sightings have been of single birds or pairs (Showler et al. 1998b, Eames et al. 1999b), and it was once seen associating with Black-headed Sibias Heterophasia melanoleuca (Eames et al. 1999b).

Food Individuals have often been noted in the canopy of trees amongst the leaves of smaller branches, suggesting that they may have been gleaning insects, and also around tree boles and feeding along larger moss-covered branches (Eames et al. 1999b). In all aspects of feeding behaviour it appears to be typical of its genus (Eames et al. 1999b).

Breeding No information is available.

Migration The species is apparently resident although short distance seasonal movements perhaps occur (see Threats).
nature reserve was completed in early 2000 (Tordoff et al. 2000), and an investment plan is currently being prepared (A. W. Tordoff in litt. 2000).

**MEASURES PROPOSED**

*Research* Further survey work is required in and around the known range of this poorly known bird, so that its exact distribution, status and conservation requirements can be ascertained. In particular clarification of its presence in Ngoc Linh (Quang Nam) proposed nature reserve is desirable. An investigation into habitat preferences in both Vietnam and Laos should be made, with the particular aim of identifying the breeding habitat requirements of the species in both areas (J. W. Duckworth in litt. 1999).

*Protected areas* Conservation of adequate areas of habitat for this species in Laos is required as soon as suitable sites are identified (Duckworth et al. 1999). The species might occur in Xe Sap NBCA as this area has received only very cursory investigation and falls within the potential range of the species. It should be surveyed at the earliest opportunity and effectively protected. In Vietnam it has been proposed that the area of Ngoc Linh (Kon Tum) Nature Reserve be extended from 200 km\(^2\) to 414.2 km\(^2\), and that it be further augmented by two adjacent proposed nature reserves to the east and north (Ngoc Linh [Quang Nam] and Song Thanh-Dakpring), constituting a total of more than 1,700 km\(^2\) (Le Trong Trai et al. 1999b). Ngoc Linh (Quang Nam) proposed nature reserve has been included on a list of proposed protected areas submitted to the government of Vietnam Forest Protection Department, as has Song-Thanh Dakpring proposed nature reserve, which is contiguous with Ngoc Linh (Kon Tum) to the north (FPD 1998). When all these areas are established, they should be combined and upgraded to national park status (Le Trong Trai et al. 1999b). Le Trong Trai et al. (1999b) recommended the following actions for Ngoc Linh (Kon Tum) Nature Reserve: (1) improve the reserve’s infrastructure by constructing new headquarters, building seven guard stations, demarcating the protected area boundary and improving local trails and roads; (2) implement a conservation and protection programme by hiring 42 forest guards, reforesting several areas with native species, and strengthening the ongoing government agroforestry programme; (3) instigate a scientific research programme to monitor and develop the area’s flora and fauna; (4) design and implement an environmental education and awareness campaign; (5) create an administrative structure and hiring managers and support staff. This approach basically reflects the measures required at all protected areas supporting this species.

**REMARKS**

(1) This taxon was recently described by Eames et al. (1999b), who suggested that it should be classified as Data Deficient, but a more precautionary view projects that it has a small range and small population, both of which are declining.