

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

Editors

N. J. COLLAR (Editor-in-chief),
A. V. ANDREEV, S. CHAN, M. J. CROSBY, S. SUBRAMANYA and J. A. TOBIAS

Maps by

RUDYANTO and M. J. CROSBY

Principal compilers and data contributors

■ **BANGLADESH** P. Thompson ■ **BHUTAN** R. Pradhan; C. Inskipp, T. Inskipp ■ **CAMBODIA** Sun Huan; C. M. Poole ■ **CHINA** ■ **MAINLAND CHINA** Zheng Guangmei; Ding Changqing, Gao Wei, Gao Yuren, Li Fulai, Liu Naifa, Ma Zhijun, the late Tan Yaokuang, Wang Qishan, Xu Weishu, Yang Lan, Yu Zhiwei, Zhang Zhengwang. ■ **HONG KONG** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (BirdLife Affiliate); H. F. Cheung; F. N. Y. Lock, C. K. W. Ma, Y. T. Yu. ■ **TAIWAN** Wild Bird Federation of Taiwan (BirdLife Partner); L. Liu Severinghaus; Chang Chin-lung, Chiang Ming-liang, Fang Woei-horng, Ho Yi-hsian, Hwang Kwang-yin, Lin Wei-yuan, Lin Wen-horn, Lo Hung-ren, Sha Chian-chung, Yau Cheng-teh. ■ **INDIA** Bombay Natural History Society (BirdLife Partner Designate) and Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History; L. Vijayan and V. S. Vijayan; S. Balachandran, R. Bhargava, P. C. Bhattacharjee, S. Bhupathy, A. Chaudhury, P. Gole, S. A. Hussain, R. Kaul, U. Lachungpa, R. Naroji, S. Pandey, A. Pittie, V. Prakash, A. Rahmani, P. Saikia, R. Sankaran, P. Singh, R. Sugathan, Zafar-ul Islam ■ **INDONESIA** BirdLife International Indonesia Country Programme; Ria Saryanthi; D. Agista, S. van Balen, Y. Cahyadin, R. F. A. Grimmett, F. R. Lambert, M. Poulsen, Rudyanto, I. Setiawan, C. Trainor ■ **JAPAN** Wild Bird Society of Japan (BirdLife Partner); Y. Fujimaki; Y. Kanai, H. Morioka, K. Ono, H. Uchida, M. Ueta, N. Yanagisawa ■ **KOREA** ■ **NORTH KOREA** Pak U-il; Chong Jong-ryol, Rim Chuyon. ■ **SOUTH KOREA** Lee Woo-shin; Han Sang-hoon, Kim Jin-han, Lee Ki-sup, Park Jin-young ■ **LAOS** K. Khounbolin; W. J. Duckworth ■ **MALAYSIA** Malaysian Nature Society (BirdLife Partner); K. Kumar; G. Noramly, M. J. Kohler ■ **MONGOLIA** D. Batdelger; A. Bräunlich, N. Tseveenmyadag ■ **MYANMAR** Khin Ma Ma Thwin ■ **NEPAL** Bird Conservation Nepal (BirdLife Affiliate); H. S. Baral; C. Inskipp, T. P. Inskipp ■ **PAKISTAN** Ornithological Society of Pakistan (BirdLife Affiliate) ■ **PHILIPPINES** Haribon Foundation for Conservation of Natural Resources (BirdLife Partner); N. A. D. Mallari, B. R. Tabaranza, Jr. ■ **RUSSIA** Russian Bird Conservation Union (BirdLife Partner Designate); A. V. Andreev; A. G. Degtyarev, V. G. Degtyarev, V. A. Dugintsov, N. N. Gerasimov, Yu. N. Gerasimov, N. I. Germogenov, O. A. Goroshko, A. V. Kondrat'ev, Yu. V. Labutin, N. M. Litvinenko, Yu. N. Nazarov, V. A. Nechaev, V. I. Perfil'ev, R. V. Ryabtsev, Yu. V. Shibaev, S. G. Surmach, E. E. Tkachenko, O. P. Val'chuk, B. A. Voronov. ■ **SINGAPORE** The Nature Society (Singapore) (BirdLife Partner); Lim Kim Seng ■ **SRI LANKA** Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (BirdLife Affiliate); S. Kotagama; S. Aryaprema, S. Corea, J. P. G. Jones, U. Fernando, R. Perera, M. Siriwardhane, K. Weerakoon ■ **THAILAND** Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BirdLife Partner); U. Treesucon; R. Jugmongkol, V. Kongthong, P. Poonswad, P. D. Round, S. Supparatvikorn ■ **VIETNAM** BirdLife International Vietnam Country Programme; Nguyen Cu; J. C. Eames, A. W. Tordoff, Le Trong Trai, Nguyen Duc Tu.

With contributions from: S. H. M. Butchart, D. S. Butler (maps), P. Davidson, J. C. Lowen, G. C. L. Dutson, N. B. Peet, T. Vetta (maps), J. M. Villasper (maps), M. G. Wilson

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Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge, CB3 0NA, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 1223 277318 Fax: +44 1223 277200 Email: birdlife@birdlife.org.uk

Internet: www.birdlife.net

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BLACK-CROWNED BARWING

Actinodura sodangorum



Critical —

Endangered —

Vulnerable B1+2a,b,c,d,e; C1

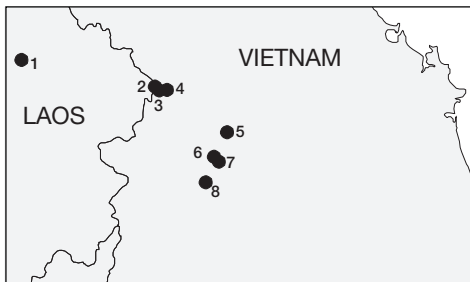
This species is known only from two areas and is assumed to have a small range and population. Although its habitat requirements are uncertain, there has been widespread habitat loss and degradation across its projected range and it is inferred to be undergoing a continuing decline. These factors qualify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

THREATS Habitat loss It has been postulated that records from Laos might involve birds dispersing during the non-breeding season, and that the species might have more restricted habitat preferences in the breeding season (J. W. Duckworth *in litt.* 1999), thus making it more susceptible to habitat alteration than might otherwise be supposed. Forest clearance has had a profound affect in Vietnam, and to a lesser degree in Laos (see Threats under Crested Argus *Rheinardia ocellata*), and continues to reduce habitat availability in the range of this species. During fieldwork at Ngoc Linh (Kon Tum) Nature Reserve in 1998, recently burned patches of secondary forest were present around the site, and forest in part of the reserve had recently been cleared for shifting cultivation (Eames *et al.* 1999b). The extent of forest cover within this protected area apparently declined from 511.3 km² in 1976 to 429.5 km² in 1995 (before the reserve was established), while outside its boundaries apparently suitable habitat still exists but is threatened by shifting cultivation (Eames *et al.* 1999b). Furthermore, the planned National Highway 2, linking Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, will bisect Ngoc Linh (Kon Tum) Nature Reserve, facilitating human settlement and associated forest clearance and degradation (Eames *et al.* 1999b, A. W. Tordoff verbally 2000). In the Ngoc Linh (Quang Nam) proposed nature reserve, where the species is predicted to occur, forest cover declined by only 2% in the period 1989–1998, reflecting the sustainable agricultural practices of the local ethnic minority communities (Tordoff *et al.* 2000).

MEASURES TAKEN An “investment plan” prepared by the BirdLife International Vietnam Programme and the Forest Inventory and Planning Institute (FIPI) was approved by the Vietnamese government in 1999, thereby establishing Ngoc Linh (Kon Tum) Nature Reserve: this new protected area is now the subject of a GEF project by the BirdLife International Vietnam Programme in collaboration with the Kon Tum provincial authorities (A. W. Tordoff *in litt.* 2000). A feasibility study for the establishment of Ngoc Linh (Quang Nam) proposed

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 km² to 414.2 km², 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 km² (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.