

# Threatened Birds of Asia:

## The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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**Recommended citation**

BirdLife International (2001) *Threatened birds of Asia: the BirdLife International Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.

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ISBN 0 946888 42 6 (Part A)

ISBN 0 946888 43 4 (Part B)

ISBN 0 946888 44 2 (Set)

British Library-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

First published 2001 by BirdLife International

Designed and produced by the **Nature**Bureau, 36 Kingfisher Court, Hambridge Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5SJ, United Kingdom

Available from the Natural History Book Service Ltd, 2–3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5XN, UK. Tel: +44 1803 865913 Fax: +44 1803 865280 Email [nhbs@nhbs.co.uk](mailto:nhbs@nhbs.co.uk)  
Internet: [www.nhbs.com/services/birdlife.html](http://www.nhbs.com/services/birdlife.html)

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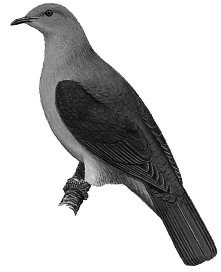
## TIMOR IMPERIAL-PIGEON

### *Ducula cineracea*

Critical  —

Endangered  B1+2b,c,d,e

Vulnerable  C1



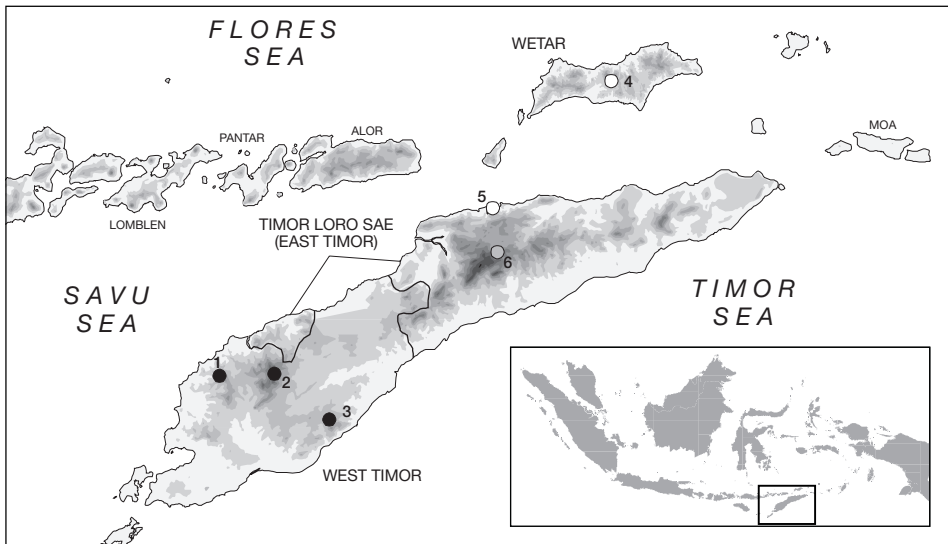
*This pigeon qualifies as Endangered because it is inferred to have a small population in its small range (four recent localities only), and is suffering severe habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, such that continuing population declines may be inferred.*

**DISTRIBUTION** The Timor Imperial-pigeon is known from West Timor and Wetar (see Remarks 1), Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, and from Timor Loro Sae (East Timor), where it is mainly confined to montane areas. Records are from:

■ **INDONESIA** *West Timor* **Gunung Timau**, foot, 1,200 m, May 1911 (Hellmayr 1914), 600–1,700 m, April–May 1999 (D. Lesmana *in litt.* 2000); **Gunung Mutis**, February/March 1932 at 1,200–2,100 m (Mayr 1944), October 1992 (N. Bostock *in litt.* 1999), October 1995 (Verbelen 1996), 1,800–1,900 m, April 1999 (D. Lesmana *in litt.* 2000); **Oenlasi** (“Oel Nasi”), 500 m, six, August 1999 (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 1999); **Mieomaffo** (untraced), October 1829 (Hellmayr 1914); *Wetar* unspecified locality, April 1901 and September 1902 (Hartert 1904);

■ **TIMOR LORO SAE (East Timor)** unspecified localities, mid-nineteenth century (Wallace 1863b); **Dili**, June and September 1885 (three specimens in SNMB); south-west of **Maubisse**, c.2,200 m, August 1972 (White and Bruce 1986).

**POPULATION** That this species is uncommon, “as there is little remaining montane forest in Timor”, was assumed by White and Bruce (1986) and asserted by Coates and Bishop



**The distribution of Timor Imperial-pigeon *Ducula cineracea*:** (1) Gunung Timau; (2) Gunung Mutis; (3) Oenlasi; (4) Wetar; (5) Dili; (6) Maubisse.

○ Historical (pre-1950) ● Fairly recent (1950–1979) ● Recent (1980–present)

(1997), also based on the low encounter rate during visits to the island by K. D. Bishop (*in litt.* 2000); earlier it was described as rare (Hellmayr 1914). It was, however, found to be at least locally common, particularly in *Eucalyptus urophylla* forest (P. Andrew in Collar *et al.* 1994). Several birds were heard and a few pairs seen in flight at Gunung Mutis, October 1995 (Verbelen 1996), suggesting a small, possibly stable population there; however, care is needed by future workers in distinguishing the species from the similar (from below) Metallic Pigeon *Columba metallica*, which is common on Mutis (R. Noske *in litt.* 1999). Extensive forest still remains on Wetar (see Population under Wetar Ground-dove *Gallicolumba hoedtii*).

**ECOLOGY Habitat** Records are for 500–2,200 m in montane forest, “montane mixed forest” and monsoon woodland (White and Bruce 1986, Coates and Bishop 1997), apparently with a preference for native eucalypt forest (see Population).

**Food** There is no information. It is speculated that the species feeds on fruits in the understorey of *E. urophylla* forests, and/or on podocarp fruits at the highest altitudes (R. Noske *in litt.* 1999).

**Breeding** Almost nothing is known. A juvenile female was among the five specimens collected at Gunung Mutis in February/March 1932 (Mayr 1944).

**THREATS** Settlement of the mountains in East Timor was already so extensive in 1931 that the forests had “entirely disappeared” and “only open eucalyptus groves without undergrowth” could be found: this was taken to explain why a montane species such as Timor Imperial-pigeon should “seem to be entirely lacking in the mountains of Portuguese Timor [=Timor Loro Sae]” (Mayr 1944; but see Distribution). If the species is, as indicated under Ecology, dependent on monsoon forest, then its numbers must certainly have been (and will continue to be) reduced by habitat loss (see equivalent section under Wetar Ground-dove, also for the considerable rate of forest loss in East Timor in the past two decades). The habitat on Gunung Mutis was not judged under great threat in 1992 (N. Bostock *in litt.* 1999), but there is now very heavy grazing by livestock inside forest at lower elevations, severely inhibiting regeneration (R. F. A. Grimmett *in litt.* 2001).

Noske (1995) mentioned that pigeons are apparently hunted extensively in Timor. Hunting may be one of the main threats to this species, since all local people know it well, “presumably” because they have eaten it (F. R. Lambert *in litt.* 1999, K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 2000).

The Timor Imperial-pigeon is one of five (but note composition now different) threatened members of the suite of 23 bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Timor and Wetar Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Sujatnika *et al.* (1995) and Stattersfield *et al.* (1998).

**MEASURES TAKEN** Gunung Mutis has been a nature reserve since 1983 (see equivalent section under Slaty Cuckoo-dove *Turacoena modesta*). Oenlasi (“Oel Nasi”) is a “forest reserve” (*Oriental Bird Club Bull.* 30 [1999]: 51), but this is probably only protection forest (R. F. A. Grimmett *in litt.* 2001).

**MEASURES PROPOSED** The need for a full survey of and comprehensive conservation strategy for Timor’s forests is emphasised in the equivalent section under Wetar Ground-dove *Gallicolumba hoedtii*, along with information on highly important proposals to protect Gunung Timau (Timor) and Gunung Arnau (Wetar).

**REMARKS** (1) The population on Wetar has been distinguished subspecifically under the name *schistacea* (Mayr 1944), but Hellmayr (1914) thought the differences likely to derive from small sample size. White and Bruce (1986) called for its confirmation.