

# 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](mailto:birdlife@birdlife.org.uk)

Internet: [www.birdlife.net](http://www.birdlife.net)

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## SULAWESI EARED-NIGHTJAR

### *Eurostopodus diabolicus*

Critical  —  
Endangered  —  
Vulnerable  C1; C2a



*Continuing deforestation in the range of this poorly known species suggests that its population, which appears to be small and locally distributed, continues to decline. As such it meets the thresholds for Vulnerable.*

**DISTRIBUTION** The Sulawesi (or Satanic) Eared-nightjar (see Remarks 1) has been recorded from mountain ranges in North and Central Sulawesi, but is perhaps distributed throughout the entire island in suitable habitat. Records are from:

■ **INDONESIA Sulawesi** ■ **North Sulawesi Kumarsot** (type locality), 250 m, foot of Gunung Klabat, Minahassa Peninsula, March 1931 (Stresemann 1931, Stresemann and Heinrich 1939–1941); **Panua Nature Reserve**, May 2000 (J. Riley *in litt.* 2000); ■ **Central Sulawesi Lore Lindu National Park** at Gunung Nokilalaki, 1,000 m, and Gunung Rorekatimbu, 1,735 m, May 1996 (Bishop and Diamond 1997; see Remarks 2), July 1998 and January 1999 (I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999), at Danau Taming, December 1998 (I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999) and on the Anaso trail, July 1999 (C. Bell *in litt.* 1999) and (four birds heard and one seen) September 1999 (M. Gelang *per P.* Alström *in litt.* 2000).

Unconfirmed records are from: (*North Sulawesi*) Tangkoko-DuaSudara Nature Reserve, Minahassa, undated (White and Bruce 1986), this record very possibly pertaining to Sulawesi Nightjar *Caprimulgus celebensis* (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 2000); (*Central Sulawesi*) Lore Lindu National Park, along a road at 1,700 m, Donggala, July 1993 (King 1994; see Remarks 2); (*South Sulawesi*) an alluvial area at the east end of Lake Matano, 250 m, near Soroako town, Palopo county, September 1979 (Holmes and Wood 1980); (*Buton*) hills above Maligano, 250–280 m, 1994–1996 (Catterall undated), although the birds in question were subsequently thought more likely to have been female Large-tailed Nightjars *C. macrurus* (Baltzer undated; see Remarks 3).

Altogether it seems fairly likely that the species occurs on all the higher forested mountains between Klabat and Lore Lindu (J. C. Wardill *in litt.* 1999, I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999). In fact it might occur throughout all the mountain ranges of Sulawesi (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 2000). (The focus on mountains as potential new sites reflects the fact that very little lowland forest remains in Sulawesi: see Threats.)

**POPULATION** The species is presumably very thinly distributed and more widespread than the few records suggest; although it must have suffered from loss of habitat at lower altitudes, its discovery in montane forest within Lore Lindu National Park suggests that it may be moderately numerous and secure there (Bishop and Diamond 1997). In this park two different pairs were found along the main road at Danau Taming, with a third pair near the turn-off to Anaso, December 1998, suggesting that indeed the species is likely to prove commoner than once speculated (I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999).

**ECOLOGY Habitat** The type specimen was flushed from thick rattan undergrowth in the interior of tropical lowland evergreen rainforest, on a hill at 250 m (Stresemann and Heinrich 1939–1941). The species may also occur in tropical lower montane rainforest, as a bird seen perched at 0.5 m along road through forest at 1,700 m in Lore Lindu may have been this species

(King 1994). The records in 1996 came from (a) primary hill forest at 1,000 m and (b) “primary montane forest that had been selectively logged” at 1,735 m (Bishop and Diamond 1997).

**Food** There is no information, but clearly nocturnal flying insects such as moths are likely to be the main if not exclusive prey.

**Breeding** The type specimen was a female with an enlarged ovary, March (Stresemann 1931). A nest found in mid-May 2000 at Panua Nature Reserve consisted of two large dried leaves drawn together on the ground with a single egg laid on top of them, positioned in an exposed area on a ridge-top surrounded by dense rattan thickets amidst slightly disturbed lowland forest (J. Riley *in litt.* 2000).



**The distribution of Sulawesi Eared-nightjar *Eurostopodus diabolicus*:** (1) Kumarsot; (2) Panua Nature Reserve; (3) Lore Lindu National Park.

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

**THREATS** The Sulawesi Eared-nightjar is one of (at least) five threatened members of the suite of 42 bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Sulawesi Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Sujatnika *et al.* (1995) and Stattersfield *et al.* (1998). It must be threatened at lower elevations by deforestation, which is prevalent everywhere and extensive on the Minahassa Peninsula (RePPPProT 1990); evidence of the rate of forest loss in lowland Sulawesi is presented in Threats under Blue-faced Rail *Gymnocrex rosenbergii*. Although the species may be moderately secure in more montane areas, better evidence of its ecology and status is needed.

**MEASURES TAKEN** The species occurs in Lore Lindu National Park, a key site for birds in Sulawesi which also holds the threatened Maleo *Macrocephalon maleo*, Snoring Rail *Aramidopsis plateni*, Blue-faced Rail *Gymnocrex rosenbergii* and Sulawesi Golden Owl *Tyto inexpectata* (see relevant accounts). Panua Nature Reserve was created in 1938 for the conservation of the Maleo (see relevant account), but it is heavily disturbed in the southern coastal sections as a result of small-scale logging, encroachment and gold-mining, and although the north is in better condition it too is suffering from selective logging and disturbance from rattan collectors (J. Riley *in litt.* 2000).

**MEASURES PROPOSED** Gunung Klabat holds Blue-faced Rail and Sulawesi Eared-nightjar; this volcano is still largely forested from 400 to 2,000 m (*contra* Bishop and Diamond 1997), and its 56 km<sup>2</sup> of protection forest is a proposed wildlife reserve (SvB, J. C. Wardill *in litt.* 1999). Endeavours to survey the island for the species—which is an imperative, as indicated under Threats—would be greatly facilitated by a knowledge of its voice (see Remarks 1).

**REMARKS** (1) The species owes its English and specific scientific name to the local belief that its call, described as “plip plop”, recalling water dripping at a one-second interval, was the sound of the bird taking out a person’s eyes (Holmes and Wood 1980). This was not, however, the call heard in association with the sightings in 1996 (Bishop and Diamond 1997). (2) The rediscovery of this species in 1996 was at a site only 0.5 km from the tentative observation made in 1993 (B. F. King verbally 1998). (3) However, this tentative attribution was made without commenting on the fact that Large-tailed Nightjar is unknown from Sulawesi and its satellite islands (see, e.g., Coates and Bishop 1997, Cleere 1998).