

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
Internet: www.nhbs.com/services/birdlife.html

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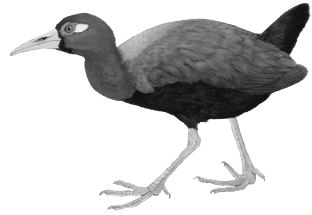
TALAUD RAIL

Gymnocyrex talaudensis

Critical —

Endangered B1+2b,c,d,e; C2b

Vulnerable D2

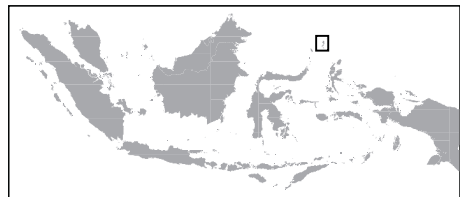
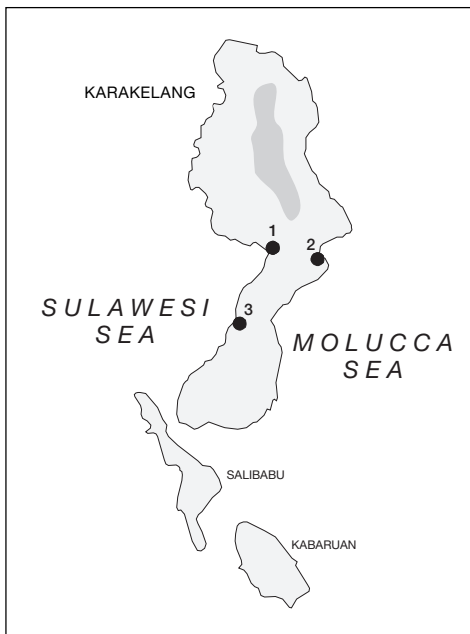


This recently described species occupies a very small range wherein it is known from less than five locations and its population is thus likely to be low. Given evidence of continuing habitat loss and degradation, it qualifies as Endangered.

DISTRIBUTION The Talaud Rail (see Remarks 1) is known only from the island of Karakelang, largest of the Talaud Islands north of Sulawesi, Indonesia, and is almost certainly endemic to the archipelago. From interviews with local people it appears that the species is fairly widespread on the island but not on any other in the group (J. C. Wardill verbally 2000). Specific records are from:

■ **INDONESIA** *Karakelang* south of **Beo**, March 1997 (Lambert 1998b); **Rainis**, under 100 m, September 1996 (Lambert 1998b); **Tarohan**, August 1996 (Lambert 1998b).

POPULATION Interviews with local people gave the initial impression that this new species was “not uncommon” in appropriate habitat, and thus it was believed not to be in danger but perhaps best classified as Data Deficient (Lambert 1998b). The species is extremely elusive, with no sign found during five months of fieldwork in 1999, but interviews with local people revealed that they know it fairly well and have stories about it (J. C. Wardill verbally 2000). Nevertheless, in the three years since its discovery it has only been seen once, and it might be



The distribution of Talaud Rail *Gymnocyrex talaudensis*: (1) Beo; (2) Rainis; (3) Tarohan.

● Recent (1980–present)

better to assume that its total numbers are low and possibly under an unidentified threat (F. R. Lambert *in litt.* 1999)—in which regard it is worth noting that a bus driver at the type locality reported seeing the species cross the road there often, but nowhere else on the island (Lambert 1998b).

ECOLOGY *Habitat* Long wet grassland patches and rank vegetation at the edge of forest appear to be favoured by the bird; within 150 m of the site of its discovery there was also littoral swamp forest, small remnant patches of forest, two permanent marshy areas, several streams and wet roadside ditches with lush grass (Lambert 1998b).

Food The stomach of the type specimen contained small fragments of snail shell and apparently a small beetle (Lambert 1998b).

Breeding There is no information.

THREATS In 1996 Karakelang still retained “a diversity and abundance of wetland habitats, in particular rank grasslands bordering forest” (Lambert 1998b). Although pressure from trapping for food exists, it was generally judged to be low, and other threats, such as future land-use changes (agricultural development, transmigration) and rat predation, were judged to be putative only at that stage (Lambert 1998b); but subsequently the lack of records has suggested that an unidentified pressure may exist (see Population). The Karakelang Hunting Reserve, where it is likely that this species occurs, is threatened with clearance for agriculture, small-scale local logging, unsustainable hunting and commercial mineral and timber extraction, although mainly at low levels at present (Wardill *et al.* 1997); a logging company took 50 ha out of the reserve in 1998 and was not prosecuted (J. C. Wardill *in litt.* 1999).

The Talaud Rail is one of (now) seven threatened members of the suite of (now) 10 bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Sangihe and Talaud Endemic Bird Area” (see Remarks 6 under Caerulean Paradise-flycatcher *Eutrichomyias rowleyi*), threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Sujatnika *et al.* (1995) and Stattersfield *et al.* (1998).

MEASURES TAKEN On Talaud some 35,779 ha of forested land is supposed to have some form of protected status (Riley 1997a), most importantly the 21,800 ha Karakelang Hunting Reserve (Wardill *et al.* 1997).

MEASURES PROPOSED Searches of the other islands in the Talaud group, Salibabu and Kabaruan, would be appropriate, as the species might occur there (Lambert 1998b); moreover, searches within the Karakelang Hunting Reserve are clearly called for (the needs for this area are given in the equivalent section under Red-and-blue Lory *Eos histrio*). Bird tourism to the Sangihe–Talaud islands, particularly in the wake of recent discoveries and rediscoveries, will hopefully support current initiatives to secure the islands’ key habitats (Wardill and Riley 1999).

REMARKS (1) This new species is most closely related to the Bare-eyed Rail *Gymnocyrex plumbeiventris* of the North Moluccas (Maluku) and New Guinea, but also shows affinities to also threatened Blue-faced Rail *G. rosenbergii* of Sulawesi (Lambert 1998b; also Taylor 1998). It was the second new species to be found on the island during 1996, the other being the Talaud Bush-hen *Amaurornis magnirostris* (Lambert 1998a).