

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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PESQUET'S PARROT

Psittrichas fulgidus

Critical —

Endangered —

Vulnerable A1b,c,d; A2b,c,d



Although this species is classified as Vulnerable on the basis of a rapid population decline over 60 years (= three generations) in response to much habitat loss, this decline is unquantified and may be more severe than inferred here.

DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION Pesquet's Parrot is patchily distributed across the mountains of Papua (formerly Irian Jaya), **Indonesia**, and **Papua New Guinea**, having historically and recently been extirpated from large areas, especially in Papua New Guinea (Coates 1985, Beehler *et al.* 1986, K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 1994, Mack and Wright 1998). It is generally rare and seen in small numbers, and has shown recent rapid declines in some areas such as Ok Tedi (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 1994, Gregory 1995a). The only population estimate is based on two pairs inhabiting 14 km² at Crater mountain, from which extrapolation suggests a total population of 21,000 pairs, but this may be an overestimate as the Crater mountain birds sometimes foraged elsewhere, the species is atypically common at this site and it is absent from many hunted areas (Mack and Wright 1998). Conversely, it may be an underestimate by not accounting for substantial populations at lower altitudes (B. M. Beehler *in litt.* 2000).

ECOLOGY It is restricted to hill and lower montane forest (Mack and Wright 1998, B. M. Beehler *in litt.* 2000). At lower altitudes it appears to occur only in hills and at the base of mountains (Burrows 1995, Mack 1998, B. M. Beehler *in litt.* 2000). It is an extremely specialised frugivore, feeding only on a very few species of fig, and is probably seasonally nomadic; it nests in large hollow trees and may have a lifespan of 20–40 years (Mack and Wright 1998).

THREATS The major threat is hunting for feathers (Coates 1985, Beehler *et al.* 1986, Mack and Wright 1998), which are used for ornamentation, particularly in ceremonial head-dresses, in much of the Papua New Guinea Highlands and, in some areas, for skins, which are used as bride prices (Schmid 1993). Demand is increasing as the population grows and takes more interest in shows and cultural events; and although demand is generally lower in Papua, birds are also hunted for the cagebird trade and meat (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 1994). Nestlings are captured by felling trees or enlarging nest cavities, and the scarcity of suitable nest sites could become a limiting factor (Mack and Wright 1998).

MEASURES TAKEN The Crater mountain study produced conservation recommendations (Mack and Wright 1998).

MEASURES PROPOSED • Conduct surveys to improve accuracy of population estimate. • Research the species's basic ecology, especially any feeding specialism. • Research the feather trade. • Monitor numbers at surveyed sites such as Crater mountain. • Monitor numbers traded domestically and internationally. • Control transport of threatened species on domestic flights. • Run an education programme targeting tourists who buy feathers and artefacts. • Investigate suitability of a programme to substitute artificial or dyed feathers (Beehler *et al.* 1986).