Threatened Birds of Asia:
The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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TALIABU MASKED-OWL
Tyto nigrobrunnea

Critical □ —
Endangered □ B1+2b,c,e; C2b
Vulnerable □ D1

This inconspicuous and extremely poorly known forest owl is judged to qualify for Endangered because it has a very small range, and hence presumably a very small population, both of which are undergoing continuing declines on the single island it is known to inhabit.

DISTRIBUTION The type- and only specimen of the Taliabu Masked-owl was taken on Taliabu in the Sula Islands, but no precise locality was specified (Neumann 1939, K. D. Bishop 1989); at that time the species was suspected to occur throughout the Sula Islands (Neumann 1939). Records are from:

**INDONESIA** Taliabu unspecified locality, October 1938 (Neumann 1939); Tubang, north-eastern Taliabu, one, October 1991 (Stones et al. 1997).

POPULATION This species is virtually unknown and the islands it inhabits are themselves rather little studied ornithologically. It is presumed to be scarce (del Hoyo et al. 1999) and has been asserted as “extremely rare” (König et al. 1999).

ECOLOGY Habitat The species is presumed to inhabit rainforest (del Hoyo et al. 1999). The habitat of the 1991 sighting was logged forest, the bird being observed at night on a logging track (Stones et al. 1997) at c.150–200 m elevation (P. Davidson verbally 2000).

Food There is no information, but the diet is probably similar to the species’s congeners (König et al. 1999), and would therefore consist of small mammals.

Breeding There is no information.

THREATS The Taliabu Masked-owl is one of two threatened members of the suite of eight bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Banggai and Sula Islands Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Sujatnika et al. (1995) and Stattersfield et al. (1998). The assertion that the “entire island group” of the Sulas “has been parcelled out in commercial timber concessions” (K. D. Bishop 1989) is close to accurate: most of the island’s forest below 800 m is designated for commercial logging (Davidson et al. 1993), with three concessions, covering 1,460 km², in operation on Taliabu (2,900 km²) since 1969, targeting the dipterocarps Shorea selandica and S. koordersii (Petocz et al. 1997).
C. Trainor *in litt.* 2001). The effects of habitat degradation on this species are entirely unknown (Davidson *et al.* 1993)

**MEASURES TAKEN** None is known.

**MEASURES PROPOSED** A reserve of 700 km² (24% of the entire island) is proposed for Taliabu’s central mountains (FAO 1981–1982, K. D. Bishop 1989, Jepson 1996); its original boundary was maintained by, e.g., RePPProT (1989) but slightly altered (so that land below 600 m is excluded) by Petocz *et al.* (1997), who called for further surveys to determine the appropriateness of this revision. A region of the same area in “East Taliabu” was identified as offering the best chance for the future protection of the Sula Islands’ endemic avifauna, including the near-threatened Sula Megapode *Megapodius bernsteini* (Indrawan *et al.* 1992).

A study of the ecology of this owl has been called for (König *et al.* 1999), and in the first instance this should focus on determining the appropriateness of the proposed protected area for the species. It is important to be sure that this is not chiefly or exclusively a bird of lower-lying forest.