

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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VAURIE'S NIGHTJAR

Data Deficient

Caprimulgus centralasicus

DISTRIBUTION The Vaurie's Nightjar is known by a single record from the Taklimakan desert, Xinjiang, western China (see Remarks 1, 2).

■ **CHINA** ■ *Xinjiang Pishan* (Goma, Guma), female (originally identified as the nominate subspecies of Egyptian Nightjar *C. aegyptius aegyptius*) collected, 1,220 m, September 1929 (Ludlow and Kinnear 1933–1934, Vaurie 1960).

POPULATION The population of this species is unknown, but it is presumably localised and scarce given that it is known only by one record of a single individual.

ECOLOGY *Habitat* The type specimen was collected in sandy scrub-jungle at 1,220 m (Ludlow and Kinnear 1933–1934, Vaurie 1960).

Food Nothing is known, but the species presumably eats nocturnal flying insects (especially moths and beetles) like other members of its genus.

Breeding Nothing is known.

Migration The only known specimen was in active primary moult when collected (Vaurie 1960, also Cleere 1998), perhaps indicating that the species is resident in the region where it was collected.



The distribution of Vaurie's Nightjar *Caprimulgus centralasicus*: (1) Pishan.

○ Historical (pre-1950)

THREATS The Vaurie's Nightjar is the (now) one threatened member of the suite of two bird species that are entirely restricted to the "Taklimakan Desert Endemic Bird Area", threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Stattersfield *et al.* (1998).

Habitat loss There has been widespread degradation of the habitats of the Taklimakan Desert through the intensive grazing of goats and camels, extraction of fuelwood, and the conversion of huge areas to irrigated farmland (Grimmett 1991, Grimmett and Taylor 1992). In 1990, the habitats at the type locality, Guma, were found to have been irrigated and converted to agricultural land since the 1920s (Dissing *et al.* 1990; also Ludlow and Kinnear 1933–1934).

MEASURES TAKEN **Protected areas** There are several nature reserves in the Taklimakan desert which could support populations of this species, for example Arjin Shan Yeluo tuo and Talimu Nature Reserves (see MacKinnon *et al.* 1996).

Research Dissing *et al.* (1990) and others (Ma Ming verbally 1998) recently searched for this species at the type locality and elsewhere in the Taklimakan Desert, but without any success.

MEASURES PROPOSED **Legislation** Vaurie's Nightjar should be listed as a protected species in China (Liu Naifa *in litt.* 1997).

Research Further surveys should be conducted in and around the Taklimakan Desert to determine which nightjar species occur in this region (and therefore whether Vaurie's Nightjar is a valid species), including studies of vocalisations and the use of mist-nets to allow birds to be examined in the hand. If it is a valid species, the surveys should aim to establish its distribution and habitat requirements, whether it is threatened by the environmental changes that are taking place in the region, and what measures are necessary for its conservation.

REMARKS (1) Cleere (1998) questioned the validity of this species, suggesting that the single specimen may prove to be an immature of the subspecies of Eurasian Nightjar *C. europaeus plumipes* which breeds in Xinjiang. (2) A report of specimens collected at a second locality (*World Birdwatch* 15(2) [1993]: 2) was found to refer to Eurasian Nightjar (*World Birdwatch* 15(4) [1993]: 3).