

# 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. Supparatvirkorn ■ **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

**Recommended citation**

BirdLife International (2001) *Threatened birds of Asia: the BirdLife International Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.

© 2001 BirdLife International

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)

BirdLife International is a UK-registered charity

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrical, chemical, mechanical, optical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

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](mailto:nhbs@nhbs.co.uk)  
Internet: [www.nhbs.com/services/birdlife.html](http://www.nhbs.com/services/birdlife.html)

The presentation of material in this book and the geographical designations employed do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of BirdLife International concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

## GREEN-BILLED COUCAL

### *Centropus chlororhynchos*



Critical  —  
Endangered  —  
Vulnerable  B1+2a,b,c,d,e; C1; C2a

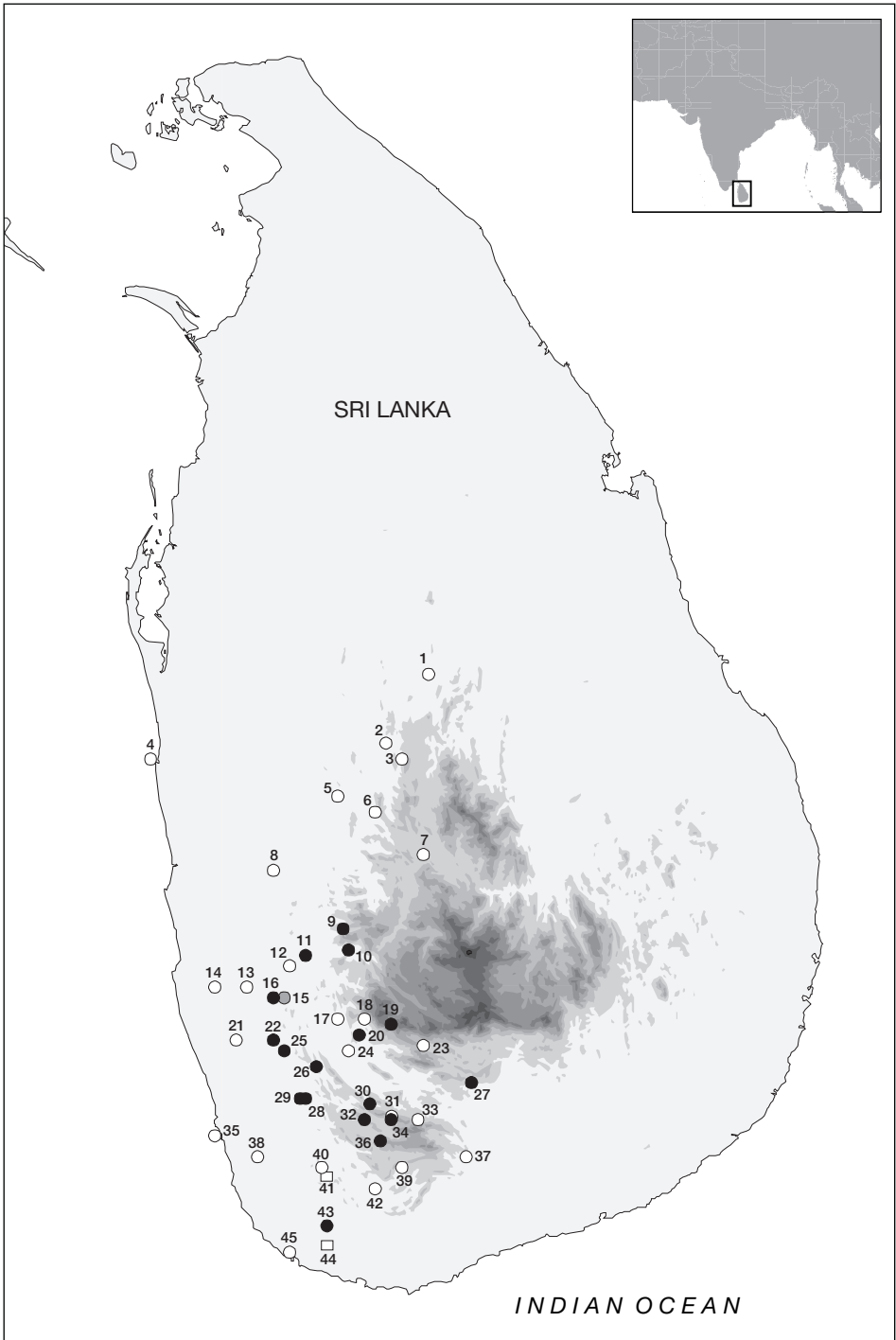
*This coucal has a small, declining, severely fragmented population and range as a result of the destruction and degradation of humid forest. It therefore qualifies as Vulnerable.*

**DISTRIBUTION** The Green-billed Coucal (see Remarks 1) is now confined to the lowland rainforests (below c.760 m) of the wet zone in the south-west of Sri Lanka, although it formerly also occurred further north, in riverine forests in the intermediate zone (Legge 1880). Its forest habitat is now highly fragmented within its small range (see Threats). Records (arranged approximately from north to south) are as follows:

■ **SRI LANKA** **Dambulla**, undated (Legge 1880); **Kimbulwana** (Kimbulana Oya), undated (Legge 1880); **Ambokka** hill range, undated (Legge 1880); **Deduru Oya**, undated (Legge 1880); **Kurunegala**, and between Kurunegala and Anuradhapura, undated (Legge 1880); **Puswella** (Pusiwella), December 1865 (female in BMNH); **Kandy**, June 1882 (male in BMNH), January 1894 (male in SMF), and in the “Kandy hills”, undated (Legge 1880); **Ambepussa**, “common”, undated (Legge 1880); **Amanawala Ampane**, one, 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997); **Kitulgala**, September 1980 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1980), January–February 1988 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* January 1988, February 1988, Hoffmann 1989b), undated (Wijesinghe *et al.* 1997, *Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997) and down to the present (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001); Thimbiripola, **Dehiowita**, August 1997 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* August 1997) and down to the present (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001); **Avissawella** road, undated (Layard 1853–1854; also Phillips 1953); **Hanwella**, undated (Layard 1853–1854, Legge 1880); near **Pore**, undated (Legge 1880); **Kalatuwawa**, December 1956 (two specimens in MCZ); **Labugama** reservoir area, near Colombo, undated (Ranasinghe 1982), one bird seen twice, February 1981 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* February 1981), one in 1981 (H. Jensen *in litt.* 1986), undated (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997) and down to the present (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001); **Kuruwita** forest, near Ratnapura, August 1876 (Legge 1880, male in BMNH); **Palabaddala** (Pallabaddoola), 750 m, undated (Legge 1880); **Peak Wilderness Sanctuary**, undated (Legge 1880), May–October 1995 (Ranawana and Bambaradeniya 1998); **Gilimale** (Gillemarlay), August 1894 (Ripley 1946, female in AMNH), July 1983 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* August 1983) and suspected down to the present (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001; but see Population); **Horana** (Horena), undated (Legge 1880); **Ingiriya Forest Reserve** (Bodhinagala), one, 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997), regularly observed from 1990 to the present (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001); **Rassagala**, Balangoda, April 1926 (female in BMNH),

**The distribution of Green-billed Coucal *Centropus chlororhynchos* (map opposite):** (1) Dambulla; (2) Kimbulwana; (3) Ambokka; (4) Deduru Oya; (5) Kurunegala; (6) Puswella; (7) Kandy; (8) Ambepussa; (9) Amanawala Ampane; (10) Kitulgala; (11) Dehiowita; (12) Avissawella; (13) Hanwella; (14) Pore; (15) Kalatuwawa; (16) Labugama; (17) Kuruwita; (18) Palabaddala; (19) Peak Wilderness Sanctuary; (20) Gilimale; (21) Horana; (22) Ingiriya Forest Reserve; (23) Rassagala; (24) Ratnapura; (25) Delmella; (26) Ayagama; (27) Hataramune; (28) Morapitiya; (29) Neluketiya Mukalana; (30) Delwala; (31) Dolekanda; (32) Kudumiriya; (33) Rakwana; (34) Walankanda Forest Reserve; (35) Bentota Ganga; (36) Sinharaja Forest Reserve; (37) Panamure; (38) Uragaha; (39) Deniyaya; (40) Hinedun-Pattu hills; (41) Kanneliya; (42) Morawaka; (43) Nakiyadeniya; (44) Kottawa Forest Reserve; (45) Galle.

○ Historical (pre-1950) ● Fairly recent (1950–1979) ● Recent (1980–present) □ Undated



collected in Balangoda, August 1894 (male in AMNH); **Ratnapura**, March 1874, April 1874, 1888 (seven specimens in BMNH and YPM), August 1910 (male in NMGC); **Delmella** Yatagampitiya, one, 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997); **Ayagama**, one, 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997); **Hataramune**, Tatnapura district, one, 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997); **Morapitiya** forest reserve, December 1987 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* December 1987), December 1989 (Hoffmann 1989b), at “Morapitiya Runakanda”, one, 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997) and down to the present (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001); **Neluketiya Mukalana**, two, 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997); **Delwala** forest, 200–750 m, July–September 1997 (Jones *et al.* 1998); **Dolekanda** (Dolookanda), undated (Legge 1880); **Kudumiriya** forest, one, 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997), 350–750 m, up to 10, July–September 1997 (Jones *et al.* 1998); **Rakwana**, January 1906 (female in NMGC); **Walankanda Forest Reserve**, 400–1,100 m, July–September 1997 (Jones *et al.* 1998); **Bentota Ganga** river, undated (Legge 1880); **Sinharaja Forest Reserve**, undated (Legge 1880), with many records down to the present (Wijesinghe 1999, D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001, many observers *in litt.*); **Panamure** (Panamura), August 1913 (two specimens in NMGC); **Uragaha**, October 1936 (female in BMNH); **Deniyaya** (Deniya), undated (Legge 1880); **Hinedun-Pattu hills** (Hinidum Paththu hills), undated (Legge 1880); **Kanneliya**, undated (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997); “coffee districts” of **Morawaka** (Morawak Korale), undated (Legge 1880); **Nakiyadeniya**, one, 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997); **Kottawa Forest Reserve**, undated (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997); **Galle-Kottawa** “jungle”, undated (Legge 1880); Dombagaskanda Forest Reserve (untraced), “a fair number present”, c.1990 (Ranasinghe and Ratnayake 1992); Vellihallure (untraced), one, 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997); “Thangamalai plains” (untraced, but possibly Tangamalai Sanctuary), 1,000 m, January 1993 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* January 1993).

Other records are from: Talahena, Negombo Lagoon, April 1989 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* April 1989), now considered a definite misidentification (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001); Colombo, where apparently observed for several days in 1968 (G. H. Manley *in litt.* 2000) but more likely to be Greater Coucal *C. sinensis* (with an unusually light-coloured bill) given the distance from the nearest confirmed records and the absence of records from remaining (surveyed) forest patches in between (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001).

**POPULATION** There is little information on the population of this species, which has been recorded in small numbers at many sites (see Distribution). In the late nineteenth century, it existed “in considerable numbers throughout the tract of country which it inhabits” (Legge 1880), and in the early twentieth century it was described as “not uncommon” (Baker 1921–1930) and “fairly common wherever the wet-zone forest was spared by the axe” (Henry 1955). However, it has declined significantly because of the reduction and fragmentation of the wet-zone forests (see Threats), and it has recently been described as “rare and local” (Hoffmann 1984), “very rare” (Kotagama and Fernando 1994) and “rare and endangered” (Wijesinghe 1994). R. L. Fleming Jr. (1977), based on his observation of its extremely specialised habitat requirements (see Ecology), concluded that it may be “one of the rarest birds in Sri Lanka, not to speak of Asia” (see also Hoffmann 1989a). Hoffmann (1986b) judged that it “may be present in only a few hundred pairs”. It seems to have disappeared from some areas where it was formerly found (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 1999) although a call in January 2000, probably of this species, indicates that it may survive in Gilimale forest (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001). During a major survey of over 200 forest sites in Sri Lanka in 1991–1996 it was recorded in 12 forests (IUCN/WCMC 1997). Given its small range and the reduction in the area of its forest habitat, it is unlikely that it currently numbers more than a few thousand individuals.

**ECOLOGY Habitat** All accounts point to the species being rather specialised in its habitat requirements. In particular, it seems to be associated with the bamboo *Ochlandra stridula*, which grows in swampy areas—the Sinhala name for this bamboo *bata aetikukula* (“coucal

bamboo”) reinforcing this relationship (Wijesinghe 1999). Legge (1880) noted that it is found in “tangled thickets, underwood in forests and on the banks of rivers, dense bamboo jungle (to which it is especially partial), rattan cane-brakes, and such like”. Most authors stress the species’s apparent requirement for undisturbed forest with dense undergrowth, often of bamboo or dwarf bamboo (e.g. Ali and Ripley 1968–1998, R. L. Fleming Jr. 1977, Banks and Banks 1980, Ranasinghe and Ratnayake 1992, Kotagama and Fernando 1994), and Henry (1955) stated that it “shows no sign of being able to adjust itself to new conditions”. However, it was recorded from patches of abandoned slash-and-burn agriculture in Kudumiriya forest, although the area was surrounded by primary forest and was far from current human disturbance (Jones *et al.* 1998). It is also regularly observed in secondary forest with bamboo growth in Ingiriya Forest Reserve (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 1999, G. de Silva Wijeyeratne *in litt.* 1999), and it was seen at Kitugala in “a mixture of typical wet zone village gardens with their high and low tree and bush cover (Coffee, Coconut, Areca), weeds, and patches of uncultivated land” with “no bamboo anywhere” (Hoffmann 1989b). If thus seems that it lives in disturbed areas (especially tangled and tree-lined river banks) in or adjoining wet forests (such areas typically having dense undergrowth) (Hoffmann 1989b, D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001). It is mainly restricted to below 760 m (e.g. Hoffmann 1984, Kotagama and Fernando 1994), although there is a recent report from the Thangamalai Plains at c.1,000 m (*Ceylon Bird Club News* January 1993).

**Food** This coucal is omnivorous, taking beetles, spiders, snails and grasshoppers (Legge 1880), also termites (Henry 1955), fruit, frogs, snakes, moths, lizards, and worms (Wijesinghe 1999).

**Breeding** It has been reported to breed in the first half of the year (January to July) (Legge 1880, Baker 1921–1930, Wait 1931, Ali and Ripley 1968–1998, P. J. Hines *in litt.* 1998), but Wijesinghe (1999) followed a nesting cycle where nest-building commenced in October and the single chick fledged in mid-December, and also noted a recent fledgling in September, suggesting the species does not have a well-defined breeding season. Both nests found by Wijesinghe (1999) were made in a *Wendlandia bicuspidata* tree in forest-edge habitat, and “bata” bamboo leaves were used in their construction. The clutch size is 2–3 (Henry 1955).

**THREATS** The Green-billed Coucal is one of (now) seven threatened members of the suite of 23 bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Sri Lanka Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Stattersfield *et al.* (1998).

**Habitat loss** The main threat to this species is the clearance and degradation of its forest habitat, which has already caused its range to decrease markedly during this century (Hoffmann 1984, 1989b, Kotagama 1994); a general survey of forest loss in Sri Lanka is made in the equivalent section under Red-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus*. Given its strong reliance on primary habitat in the lowlands below 760 m (and its presumed inability to move between isolated blocks of forest), this coucal is particularly vulnerable to habitat loss and fragmentation (R. L. Fleming Jr. 1977, Hoffmann 1984, Kotagama and Fernando 1994), and susceptible to genetic isolation as forest fragmentation increases (Jones *et al.* 1998). A high proportion of the remaining forests are now included in national parks and sanctuaries, but many of these areas have been reported to be generally neglected and unprotected, and some important bird sanctuaries have suffered severe degradation (Hoffmann 1996). For example, Ingiriya Forest Reserve (Bodhinagala) has been known to support a good population of this species, but declines have probably been caused by the peripheral clearance of undergrowth which pushes birds deeper into the forest (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 1999, 2001).

**Increased competition** It has been suggested that competition with the Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* (a bird of open habitats: see, e.g., Henry 1955) in logged and disturbed

areas may be contributing to the decline of the Green-billed Coucal, but these two species usually occupy different niches in disturbed areas, although they occasionally overlap when feeding (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 1999, 2001).

**MEASURES TAKEN** *Legislation, habitat protection, research* A brief review is made in the equivalent section under Red-faced Malkoha.

*Protected areas* This coucal occurs in several national parks and forest reserves, most notably Sinharaja National Heritage Wilderness Area, a World Heritage Site which is actively protected under the jurisdiction of the Forest Department (IUCN/WCMC 1997).

**MEASURES PROPOSED** *Habitat protection, protected areas* A brief review is made in the equivalent section under Red-faced Malkoha.

*Research* The distribution, abundance and ecology of this scarce and elusive species are generally poorly known (Wijesinghe 1999, see Population and Ecology), and further research is therefore required. It has distinctive calls (Wijesinghe 1999), which could be used to help detect it during surveys and censuses. Ecological studies are recommended to establish whether it is subject to competitive exclusion by the Greater Coucal in areas where the forest has been disturbed (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 1999, see Threats), and to improve understanding of its habitat requirements (particularly its relationship to bamboo: see Ecology) and hence the most appropriate forest management regimes for its conservation. Despite the wealth of data generated by the National Conservation Review in 1991–1996, much more detailed and wide-ranging surveys will be required to plan and monitor the management of individual conservation forests once they are established (IUCN/WCMC 1997).

**REMARKS** (1) Most works give the specific epithet for this taxon as *chlororhynchus*, but the original spelling was *chlororhynchos* (Blyth 1849–1952), and this should be preserved (Wijesinghe 1994, 1999).