

# Threatened Birds of Asia:

## The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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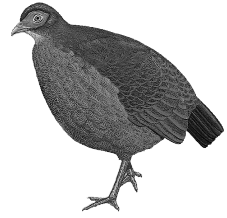
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## ACEH PHEASANT

### *Lophura hoogerwerfi*

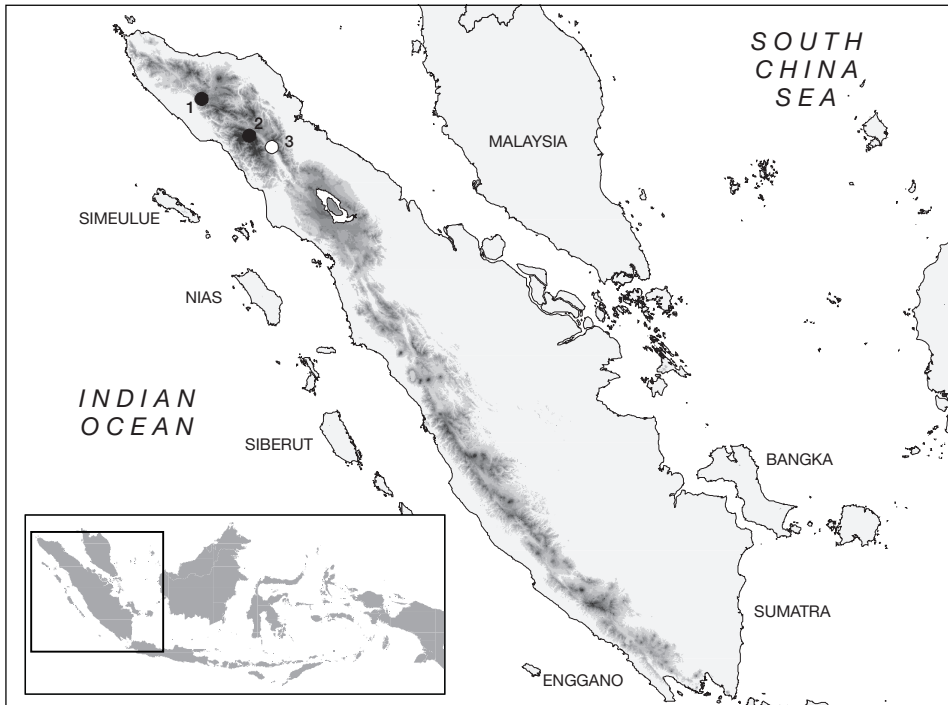
Critical  —  
Endangered  —  
Vulnerable  **C2b**



*This species qualifies as Vulnerable because it has a single, small population which is presumed to be declining owing to current rates of clearance of mid-altitude forests, combined with hunting pressure.*

**DISTRIBUTION** The Aceh, Sumatran or Hoogerwerf's Pheasant (see Remarks 1) is endemic to Sumatra, Indonesia, where it is known only from Gunung Leuser in the north of the island. Records are from:

■ **INDONESIA** *Sumatra* ■ *Aceh* above the river Jagong “in the **Beutong** region just north of the Leuser Ecosystem”, female, September 1998 (B. Long *in litt.* 1999); **Kapi plateau**, central Gunung Leuser National Park, 1,200 m, three birds (one of them male), October 1998 (R. Buij *in litt.* 2000); **Telaga Meluwak** in the Gayo Highlands (Leuser massif), 1,400 m, April 1937 (Chasen 1939b, Chasen and Hoogerwerf 1941; also van Marle and Voous 1988, van Balen and Holmes 1993), and 600 m, March 1939 (Meyer de Schauensee and Ripley 1940).



**The distribution of Aceh Pheasant *Lophura hoogerwerfi*:** (1) Beutong; (2) Kapi Plateau; (3) Telaga Meluwak.  
○ Historical (pre-1950) ● Recent (1980–present)

Birds identified as this species have been seen in the Mamas valley at 1,200–2,000 m, Gunung Leuser National Park, in at least 1979 (van Marle and Voous 1988). Two chicks possibly this species were taken at Lesten, 700 m, north-east of Pendeng, Gayo highlands, Aceh (Chasen and Hoogerwerf 1941). Birds found in markets in Medan in 1998 were said to have been trapped 25–30 km inside the eastern boundary of Gunung Leuser National Park, in the montane area along the upper Alas river, just north of Gunung Leuser itself (Sözer *et al.* ms b).

It has been assumed that the entire population of this species lies within Gunung Leuser National Park (McGowan and Garson 1995), despite the remark that “it seems unlikely that its distribution is so confined” (van Balen and Holmes 1993).

**POPULATION** There is no information. A stable population lying between 100 and 10,000 individuals has been mooted (McGowan and Garson 1995), but the ongoing decrease of area of suitable habitat, compounded in 1998–1999 by political problems in Aceh province, must already have had an effect on the total population (SvB). Nine months of fieldwork in Gunung Leuser National Park, July 1998 to April 1999, produced a single record, certainly suggesting that the population there is low and, through hunting, probably declining (R. Buij *in litt.* 2000).

**ECOLOGY Habitat** The type specimen was shot (and a male presumably of this species was seen) in jungle (presumably tropical lower and/or upper montane rainforest) bordering the mountain lake Telaga Meluwak, “feeding on the rather bare forest ground”, the general area being “hilly ground covered with heavy primary jungle, but with little undergrowth” (Chasen and Hoogerwerf 1941). Birds reported in Gunung Leuser National Park in the 1970s were on the open forest floor on relatively dry mountain slopes at 1,200–2,000 m (van Marle and Voous 1988). The party of three seen on the Kapi plateau were on a trail in dense undergrowth in submontane forest (R. Buij *in litt.* 2000).

**Food** Foraging on open ground was observed (see above), but food items were not specified.

**Breeding** A nest of birds believed to be this species was found (with two eggs) at 1,800 m in February 1979 in Gunung Leuser National Park (van Marle and Voous 1988). Two chicks that were possibly this species were taken in mid-March (Chasen and Hoogerwerf 1941).

**THREATS** Below 1,000–1,500 m on mountains within this species’s putative range, suitable habitat has shrunk dramatically owing to agricultural encroachment and large-scale timber extraction (Collar *et al.* 1994, SvB). Much illegal but industrial-scale logging is currently taking place within the boundaries of Gunung Leuser National Park, and the situation became particularly serious after mid-1998, although at present it is mainly the lowland areas that are being affected (F. Verbelen *in litt.* 1999; see also Threats under Crestless Fireback *Lophura erythrophthalma*). The political instability of the Gunung Leuser area has been a hindrance to the pursuit of evidence concerning this species (van Balen and Holmes 1993). The general plight of upland forest on Sumatra is outlined in Threats under Sumatran Ground-cuckoo *Carpococcyx viridis*.

Hunting may also be a significant negative factor (SvB), and pheasant hunting is said to be commonplace in parts of Gunung Leuser National Park, including the Kapi area where birds were most recently seen (R. Buij *in litt.* 2000). In mid-1999 the species began to show up in Medan bird market, with a total of five birds observed in August and 16 (nine females and seven males) in October; but it is not known if any of these birds were exported (C. R. Shepherd *in litt.* 2000).

Aceh Pheasant is a threatened member of the suite of 20 bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia Endemic Bird Area”, threats and

conservation measures in which are profiled by Sujatnika *et al.* (1995) and Stattersfield *et al.* (1998).

**MEASURES TAKEN** The single known and two possible localities are entirely within Gunung Leuser National Park, which embraces 9,460 km<sup>2</sup> of habitat from sea-level to almost 3,500 m (SvB); see also the equivalent section under Salvadori's Pheasant *Lophura inornata*.

**MEASURES PROPOSED** Surveys are needed to establish habitat extent and occupation, population size and additional localities of the species in adjacent areas, e.g. the Batak highlands. A further evaluation of the species's taxonomic status is highly desirable, and may now be feasible given the recent new material available (Sözer *et al.* ms b). Protection under Indonesian law and under CITES must now be required.

**REMARKS** (1) This species has been treated as a race of (and as possibly not even subspecifically separate from) Salvadori's Pheasant *Lophura inornata* (e.g. Delacour 1949, del Hoyo *et al.* 1996, Johnsgard 1999), a view regarded as plausible by Holmes (1989); the female is different in (a) lacking the buff-brown streaks of *inornata* and (b) possessing strong black vermiculations and stippling over almost the entire body (Chasen and Hoogerwerf 1941, Sözer *et al.* ms b). Photographs taken in the Mamas valley show males to be very similar to *inornata* (van Marle and Voous 1988), a fact confirmed by the recent discovery of males in a market (Sözer *et al.* ms b) and an observation on the Kapi plateau (R. Buij *in litt.* 2000). The notion that the Leuser birds might not even merit subspecific recognition is presumably based on the possibility that there is a cline in the coloration of female *inornata* throughout Sumatra. Indeed, very recently females at Gunung Kerinci have been found to exhibit considerable, possibly age-related variability, with some (apparently young) birds showing a reduction and even complete absence of pale streaking on both upperparts and underparts (I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999). However, even if this species was merged with *inornata* it would still be likely to qualify as threatened under that species (which see).