

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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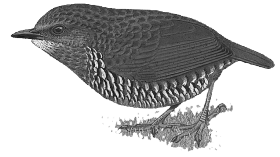
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RUSTY-THROATED WREN-BABBLER

Spelaornis badeigularis



Critical —

Endangered —

Vulnerable B1+2a,b,c,e; C1; C2b; D2

This species, known from only a single specimen at one site, is inferred to have a small, declining range and population as a result of deforestation. These factors qualify it as Vulnerable.

DISTRIBUTION The Rusty-throated Wren-babbler (see Remarks 1) is known only from the type specimen taken in the Mishmi hills, north-east India, although it probably occurs over a larger area in the region (Ali and Ripley 1968–1998). The only confirmed record is from:

■ **INDIA** ■ *Arunachal Pradesh Dreyi*, Mishmi hills, January 1947 (Ripley 1948, Ali and Ripley 1948, 1968–1998).

POPULATION Nothing is known about the current population of this species, although it is presumed to occur throughout the Mishmi hills (Ali and Ripley 1948). Ornithological research has been scant in its range until recently, but the fact that no sightings have been reported suggests that it is possibly very scarce and localised. Conversely, members of the



The distribution of Rusty-throated Wren-babbler *Spelaornis badeigularis*: (1) Dreyi.

○ Historical (pre-1950)

genus *Spelaeornis* are notoriously elusive unless their vocalisations are learnt (e.g. Grimmett *et al.* 1998, Robson 2000), a trait which may instead underlie the paucity of records.

ECOLOGY Habitat The female type specimen was taken in subtropical wet forest in winter at 1,600 m (Ali and Ripley 1968–1998). This is presumably a typical wren-babbler with shy and skulking habits similar to those of Rufous-throated *S. caudatus* (Ali and Ripley 1948, 1968–1998).

Food It is insectivorous (Ali and Ripley 1968–1998).

Breeding There is no information.

THREATS The Rusty-throated Wren-babbler is one of nine threatened members of the suite of 19 bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Eastern Himalayas Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Stattersfield *et al.* (1998). The likely habitat of the species (i.e. subtropical forest) in the Dibang and Lohit districts in the southern Mishmi hills is disappearing owing to timber extraction (P. Singh verbally 1997). A review of forest loss in Arunachal Pradesh is provided in Threats under Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*.

MEASURES TAKEN None is known, although the species is perhaps likely to occur in Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary in the Mishmi hills, and possibly nearby in Arunachal Pradesh at sites such as Mouling National Park.

MEASURES PROPOSED There is an urgent need to survey the Dibang and Lohit districts to clarify whether the species occurs in existing protected areas, and to identify further potential areas for protection within its likely range (P. Singh verbally 1997). The type locality needs to be revisited and the nearest surviving area of subtropical wet forest surveyed at the appropriate altitude (c.1,500 m).

REMARKS (1) The distinctiveness at species level of this taxon was reaffirmed in Ali and Ripley (1968–1998), where its longer, stronger tarsus was noted for the first time.