

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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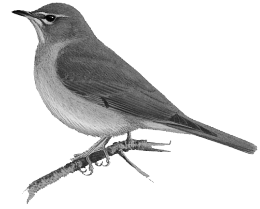
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GREY-SIDED THRUSH

Turdus feae

Critical —
Endangered —
Vulnerable C1



This thrush qualifies as Vulnerable because it has a small, declining population as a result of deforestation in its breeding and wintering grounds.

DISTRIBUTION The Grey-sided Thrush (see Remarks 1) breeds in the mountains of northern China, with non-breeding records from north-east India, Myanmar, north-west Thailand and Laos. Assessment of sight records requires slight caution because of possible identification pitfalls (see Remarks 2).

■ **CHINA** ■ **MAINLAND CHINA** The species is recorded from Shanxi, Hebei and Beijing, where it probably breeds, and there is a recent sighting from Shandong. Records (by province and municipality) are as follows:

■ **Shanxi Pangquanguo National Nature Reserve**, one heard and one seen, May–June 1985 (King 1987b, B. F. King *in litt.* 1987), pair behaving as if near a nest, June 1991 (M. Käll *per* P. Alström *in litt.* 1993, 1999), three, including one building a nest, June 1995 (Holt 1995, P. Holt *in litt.* 1999);

■ **Hebei Dongling** (Eastern Tombs, Eastern Emperor Graves, Tungling), February, June, July and September 1930 (eleven specimens in ASCN and ZMB), breeding in forest at c.1,000 m, but on migration recorded in the lowlands with other *Turdus* species (Shaw 1937); **Lao Ling Nature Reserve** (Old Peak), Qinhuangdao city, pair nesting, late May 1993 (P. R. Colston *per* P. Alström *in litt.* 1993), one, May 1994 (Regulus Travel 1994), one singing and one building a nest, May 1995 (P. Alström, U. Olsson and D. Zetterström *in litt.* 2000), two pairs, May 1996 (P. Alström, U. Olsson and D. Zetterström *in litt.* 2000), one, May 1999 (A. Holcombe *in litt.* 1999), at least three breeding pairs, 1993–1999 (P. Holt *in litt.* 1999; also Williams 1995, MacKinnon *et al.* 1996); **Qilihai**, c.40 km south of Beidaihe, one, May 1993 (D. Jardine *in litt.* 1999), one, May 1994 (B. Johansson *in litt.* 1999), one, May 1995 (P. Holt *in litt.* 1999); **Laoyujian**, near Shijiutuo (“Happy island”), one, May 1996 (P. Holt *in litt.* 1999); **Shijiutuo** (“Happy island”), south of Beidaihe, two, May 1994 (Regulus Travel 1994, C. G. Cederlund *in litt.* 1999), one, May 1996 (Earlybird 1996), up to two, May 1997 (Drijvers 1997, Mauro 1997, P. Holt *in litt.* 1999), one, May 1998 (P. Holt *n litt.* 1999);

■ **Beijing Baihuashan Nature Reserve**, Mentougou county, ten birds and three nests collected and “a few pairs breed”, summer 1974–1983 (Cai Qikan 1988), mist-netted and banded at Xiaolongmen Forestry Station, May 1999 (Song Jie 1999); **Fangshan**, undated (Cheng Tso-hsin 1987);

■ **Shandong Qingdao**, one, March 1994 (D. Holden *in litt.* 1999).

■ **HONG KONG** There was an unconfirmed report (which was not accepted by the HKBWS records committee) from Kop Tong, Wu Kau Tang, in November 1992 (SC; see Viney *et al.* 1994).

■ **INDIA** This species is a non-breeding visitor (but see Remarks 3) to hills in north-east India south of the Brahmaputra. Mention of the species for Tamil Nadu and Nepal (Ali and Ripley 1968–1998) is in error. Records are as follows:

■ **West Bengal Lava**, 4 km along road to Kalimpong, one, May 1999 (A. Prasad *in litt.* 1999);

■ **Assam** Hungrum (Hungroom), North Cachar, 1,900 m, reportedly shot undated (Baker 1894–1901), this record being treated here as unconfirmed given Baker’s (1922–1930) contribution of highly inaccurate information about this species (see Remarks 3); **Hemeo peak** (sometimes misspelled “Hemes Peak”), North Cachar hills, pre-1873 (Godwin-Austen 1876c, Hume 1888, specimen in BMNH,);

■ **Meghalaya Mawiyngkhung** (Mawryngkneng), Khasia hills, November 1951 (female in FMNH), December 1953 (male in FMNH); **Shillong**, October 1877 (Hume 1888, two specimens in BMNH [three listed by Whistler ms]); **Cherrapunji**, undated (Hume 1888);

■ **Nagaland** regular in the Naga hills, winter 1872–1873, with one collected at 3,050 m on **Japvo peak**, January 1873 (Godwin-Austen 1874b; also Hume 1888);

■ **Manipur** eastern hills of Manipur, and thus somewhere in the region of **Phalel**, three specimens listed from pre-1881 (Hume 1888), although curiously none of these were found stored in museum collections.

There are unconfirmed reports from Dumpep, Shillong, Cherrapunji and unspecified localities in the Khasia hills of Meghalaya, based upon 16 clutches taken in 1900–1930 that are stored in BMNH (but see Remarks 3).

■ **MYANMAR** The species has been recorded from Mount Victoria, the Southern Shan States, Karenni (Kayah state) and Tenasserim (Smythies 1986). Wickham (1929–1930)



The distribution of Grey-sided Thrush *Turdus feae*: (1) Pangquanguo National Nature Reserve; (2) Dongling; (3) Lao Ling Nature Reserve; (4) Qilihai; (5) Laoyujian; (6) Shijiutuo; (7) Baihuashan Nature Reserve; (8) Fangshan; (9) Qingdao; (10) Lava; (11) Hemeo peak; (12) Mawiyngkhung; (13) Shillong; (14) Cherrapunji; (15) Japvo peak; (16) Phalel; (17) Mindat; (18) Mount Victoria; (19) Loi Maw; (20) Karenni; (21) Mulayit Taung; (22) Doi Pha Hom Pok; (23) Doi Suthep-Pui National Park; (24) Doi Inthanon National Park; (25) Omygyo Wildlife Sanctuary; (26) Kaeng Krachan National Park; (27) Nam Mon.

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

suggested that it was resident in Myanmar, although this claim was presumably based on the almost certainly erroneous breeding record given below (see Remarks 3): **Mindat**, two, April 1995 (Robson *et al.* 1998); **Mount Victoria**, Natma Taung National Park, 2,000 m, March 1904 (two specimens in BMNH), six, March–April 1995 (Robson *et al.* 1998); **Loi Maw**, Shan States, April 1899 (Rippon 1901, male in AMNH), 1,800 m, April 1902 (Bingham 1903), on the basis of which it is listed for the Southern Shan States (Stanford and Ticehurst 1938–1939, Smythies 1986); **Karenni** (Kayah state), 1,500 m, January 1874 (Wardlaw Ramsay 1875, 1877, male in BMNH; also Oates 1883); **Mulayit taung** (Mt Mooleyit), one with “huge flocks” of Eye-browed Thrushes *Turdus obscurus*, 1,500 m, January 1877 (Hume and Davison 1878, female in BMNH), and at “Plapoo”, 1,200–1,400 m, March 1887 (Salvadori 1888a,b, female in MSNG; also Oates 1883).

A clutch of three eggs (in NMS) labelled as taken in Tenasserim, May 1907, is believed to be almost certainly erroneous (see Remarks 3).

■ **THAILAND** The species is a winter visitor to north-west Thailand, where small numbers are found most years at favoured sites, although it is surprising that there are no records from some of the other high mountains, e.g. Doi Ang Khang. Records are as follows: **Doi Pha Hom Pok**, April 1999 (*Bird Conserv. Soc. Thailand Bull.* 16, 8 [1999]: 15); Doi Suthep, **Doi Suthep-Pui National Park**, Chiang Mai province, one, December 1981 (P. D. Round *in litt.* 1999), one near Doi Pui, February 1983 (I. Lewis *in litt.* 1999), two, 1,100 m, February 1984, one, April 1989 (G. Watola *per* P. D. Round *in litt.* 1998), one at ‘km 16’ on Doi Suthep, December 1985 (C. F. Mann *in litt.* 1999), one on Doi Suthep, February 1991 (R. Koeppl *in litt.* 1999), 2–3 individuals, February 1997 (R. Kanjanavanich *per* P. D. Round *in litt.* 1998), three at the summit of Doi Pui, February 1998 (*Bird Conserv. Soc. Thailand Bull.* 15, 7 [1998]: 14–15); **Doi Inthanon National Park**, Chiang Mai province, November 1964 (King 1966, female in USNM), subsequently almost annually in December–April, from the summit (2,550 m) down to c.1,600 m, usually one or two individuals but sometimes up to five (Round 1983a, many observers verbally and *in litt.*), 2–10 individuals along the Mae Chem road, January–February 2000 (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 2000); **Omygoy Wildlife Sanctuary** (Om Koi, Doi Mon Chong), at least three birds with Eye-browed Thrushes, March 1982 (P. D. Round *in litt.* 1983); **Kaeng Krachan National Park**, one, December 1999–February 2000 (*Bird Conserv. Soc. Thailand Bull.* 17, 2 [2000]: 14, K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 2000).

■ **LAOS** The species is known by a single record: **Nam Mon**, Khammouane, in or adjacent to Nakai-Nam Theun NBCA (depending on which boundaries are used: J. W. Duckworth *in litt.* 1999), adult and first winter, February 1995 (Thewlis *et al.* 1998).

POPULATION There is very little information available on the population of this species from the breeding grounds in China, where there are records from a handful of sites, mostly involving a small number of individuals (see Distribution). In the non-breeding range this species was “frequently noticed” in the Naga hills, India, winter 1872–1873 (Godwin-Austen 1874b; also Hume 1888). On the basis of this early report it was considered to be “not rare” in winter in north-east India (Ali and Ripley 1968–1998), but there is only one recent record from there. Much of its historical range (particularly the Naga and Manipur hills) is mostly very difficult of access, however, and this is probably one factor underlying the dearth of records. In Myanmar, it was thought to be a “rare straggler during the cold season” to Tenasserim, where small numbers have been found on Mulayit, vastly outnumbered by Eye-browed Thrushes (Hume and Davison 1878). It was considered an “irregular visitor” to the whole country with remarkably few records for the north and Yunnan (China) (Stanford and Ticehurst 1938–1939). It is probably much more frequent than records suggest as a result of the infrequency with which the mountains of Myanmar have been visited by ornithologists during the past decades. Several were seen on a brief visit to the Chin hills in

the 1990s and it probably occurs regularly in small numbers in this area during winter (Robson *et al.* 1998). It is regular in northern Thailand, where there were records for at least 12 of the 16 winters preceding 1998 (P. D. Round *in litt.* 1998). Furthermore, the species is almost certainly much more widespread than the records would indicate, given the small area of northern Thailand frequented by ornithologists, and it is presumably a fairly frequent and widespread visitor to the montane zone of the north-west (P. D. Round *in litt.* 1999). However, it is apparently becoming progressively more difficult to find in Thailand (*Bird Conserv. Soc. Thailand Bull.* 12, 4 [1995]: 14–15), perhaps indicating an overall decline. Its status as a winter visitor to Laos is poorly known, but the fact that none has been seen in markets suggests that it cannot be very numerous (J. W. Duckworth *in litt.* 1999). Given the relatively small number of recent records and its apparently low population density, this species could have a small total population, and it is likely to have declined because of habitat loss.

ECOLOGY Habitat The breeding range of Grey-sided Thrush in north-east China appears to correspond to a band of temperate deciduous oak forest and coniferous forest which extends through the mountains of Shanxi to the mountains north of Beijing and northern Hebei, and westwards into central Shaanxi (where, however, this species is not yet recorded) (see Hou 1979; also Stattersfield *et al.* 1998). During an ecological study at Baihuashan Nature Reserve in the years 1974–1983, it was found in dense forest and bushes at altitudes between 1,500 and 1,900 m, with three nests found at 1,700–1,800 m (Cai Qikan 1988). However, Shaw (1937) reported that it “breeds in forest at c.1,000 m”. It winters in evergreen forest (Ali and Ripley 1968–1998, King *et al.* 1975, Lekagul and Round 1991), including both open and dense forest in Thailand (P. D. Round *in litt.* 1998). In this season, it is mostly recorded between about 1,500 and 2,600 m (see Distribution), but there is a record from as low as 520–540 m in Laos (Duckworth *et al.* 1998b) which, being in February, is unlikely to have involved migrating birds. At this time of year, it is usually found in flocks, often in company with Eye-browed Thrushes (Hume and Davison 1878, Ali and Ripley 1968–1998, Lekagul and Round 1991), and in Thailand this is “almost always” the case (P. D. Round *in litt.* 1998). The individual at Lava, West Bengal, was in a clearing in forest near groups of Striated Bulbuls *Pycnonotus striatus* and White-collared Blackbirds *T. albocinctus* (A. Prasad *in litt.* 1999). The wintering individuals in Laos were on “crumbling stream banks” in degraded riverside forest, alongside Japanese Thrushes *T. cardis*, Eye-browed Thrushes and many Scaly Thrushes *Zosterdauma* and Eurasian Blackbirds *T. merula* (Duckworth *et al.* 1998b, J. W. Duckworth *in litt.* 1999).

Food Its diet mainly comprises insects and berries (Ali and Ripley 1968–1998). Baker (1922–1930) reported small black spiders and wild strawberries in the stomach of a bird (but see Remarks 3). In Thailand, it has been observed feeding both on the ground and arboreally on fruit and insects, and it has also been seen in a flowering tree, *Acrocarpus fraxinifolius*, apparently taking nectar (P. D. Round *in litt.* 1998). The stomachs of four recently fledged young contained mainly insects and some berries and seeds (Cai Qikan 1988).

Breeding At Baihuashan Nature Reserve males arrive and establish territories in early May, before the females, and courtship behaviour lasts for a few days, after which the males stop singing; birds collect wet mud and clay by streams for use as nesting material, for about 10–12 days before the eggs are laid (Cai Qikan 1988). Three nests were collected between 1,700 and 1,800 m; two of them, found on 27 June and 8 July, contained clutches of four eggs, and one found on 4 July had four juveniles which had already left the nest and were perched by it (Cai Qikan 1988). Two of the nests were c.1.5 m above the ground in “liudaomu” trees, and the third was c.1.0 m above the ground in a “mountain willow”, and all three were bowl-shaped, made with straws, roots and plant-fibres glued to branches with clay and mud, and built in dense vegetation in south-facing locations; both males and females incubate the eggs, and the chicks hatch in about 14 days and stay in the nest for another 12–14 days (Cai

Qikan 1988). At Dongling the species nested in small trees or bushes in forest at c.1,000 m; the clutch size was five eggs (Shaw 1937).

Migration The Grey-sided Thrush is a long-distance migrant that breeds in the mountains of northern China (but see Remarks 3) and winters in north-east India and South-East Asia. It has been recorded on the breeding grounds in north-east China between early May (Cai Qikan 1988) and September (specimens in ZMB), although there are records from Dongling in Hebei in February (specimen in ASCN) and Qingdao in Shandong in March (D. Holden *in litt.* 1999). It arrives in its winter quarters in north-east India at the end of October (earliest on 21 October) and remains until early April (Ali and Ripley 1968–1998). The earliest record in Thailand is 24 November (King 1966) and the latest is 13 April (A. B. van den Berg *per* P. D. Round *in litt.* 1998), both from Doi Inthanon. Numbers are thought to increase from late December onwards suggesting that, along with other thrushes, there may be intermediate stop-off points on migration, gradually filtering southwards to northern Thailand by late winter (P. D. Round *in litt.* 1998). Baker (1907b, 1922–1930) speculated that the species was resident in the Khasia hills in India, and Wickham (1929–1930) pronounced this species “a resident of the Burmese hills”, but both of these statements were based on highly suspect breeding records (see Remarks 3).

THREATS The Grey-sided Thrush is one of two bird species that are entirely restricted as breeding birds to the “Shanxi Mountains Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Stattersfield *et al.* (1998).

Habitat loss This species is threatened by the continuing loss and fragmentation of its habitat in both its breeding and non-breeding ranges. *China* Its breeding range in north-east China is in one of the most densely populated regions in the world, and most of the natural forest has been cleared or modified as a result of demands for agricultural land and timber (see Smil 1984, Table 1). The natural habitats within its range are now highly fragmented, and its populations are probably scattered and isolated, and therefore vulnerable to further forest loss and other pressures; however, the four nature reserves established for the conservation of Brown Eared-pheasant *Crossoptilon mantchuricum*, which may prove to be important also for this species, are generally well protected (see the account for that species for more detail on threats to these reserves) (Zhang Zhengwang *in litt.* 1997). *India* Details of forest loss in north-east India are given in the equivalent section under Pale-capped Pigeon *Columba punicea*. *Myanmar* Agricultural encroachment and forest fires are thought to be a threat to the species and the habitat it utilises (Khin Ma Ma Thwin *in litt.* 1997). *Thailand* Forests at lower elevations on Doi Inthanon are being gradually eroded by shifting agriculture and wood collection, but at the altitudes generally frequented by this species they appear secure (but see under Hunting below) (Round 1988a). In many reserves, disastrous encroachment or gradual erosion, along with destruction of forests by cultivation and the

Province	Habitat	Original	Remaining	%	Protected	%
Shanxi	deciduous broadleaf forest	85,097	17,201	20	190	0.2
Shanxi	temperate coniferous forest	9,727	8,754	90	22	0.2
Hebei	deciduous broadleaf forest	65,868	10,335	16	606	0.9
Hebei	temperate coniferous forest	4,276	1,283	30	92	2.2

Table 1. Changes in the extent of natural habitats within this species's range in northern China. The data in this table are reproduced from MacKinnon *et al.* (1996), and show the estimated areas (both original and remaining in km²) of presumably suitable habitats within this species's known range, and the area of each habitat estimated within existing protected areas. However, it is important to note that this only gives an indication of the extent of reduction of presumed habitats, as there is no information on the time-scale over which they have been lost, and this species does not necessarily occur throughout each habitat in each province.

burning of the understorey (which reduces tree species diversity, canopy height and density, and consequently bird species diversity) are all threats to be dealt with (Round and Treesucon 1986b). *Laos* The site of the wintering record in Laos is in or adjacent to the inundation zone of the proposed Nam Theun 2 dam, although the species may well be only a rare winter visitor there (Duckworth *et al.* 1998b).

Trade *China* Capture for the wild bird trade may be a problem, as two birds said to have been caught in Beijing were found in the market there in May 1999 (Wang Ning and Song Jie 2000).

Hunting Details of hunting pressure in montane areas of north-east India and Myanmar are in the equivalent section under Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*. *Thailand* “Patrolling of forests in parks or sanctuaries is, at present, the exception rather than the rule, so that the poaching problem in Thailand’s protected areas is almost entirely out of control” (Round 1988a). *Laos* Thrushes at fruiting trees are specifically sought by hunters in Laos, and sold into the local food trade (J. W. Duckworth *in litt.* 1999).

MEASURES TAKEN **Legislation** The Grey-sided Thrush receives legal protection in Thailand.

Protected areas *China* It has been recorded in several protected areas in its breeding range in China—Pangquangou National Nature Reserve in Shanxi (105 km², forests apparently in good condition), Lao Ling Nature Reserve in Hebei (64 km², apparently some quite good areas of forest) and Baihuashan Nature Reserve in Beijing (17 km², forests apparently in quite good condition, but tiny and southern slopes damaged)—and there are several other protected areas in Shanxi and Hebei where it could occur, notably the other reserves established for the conservation of Brown Eared-pheasant (see Distribution; sizes and condition from MacKinnon *et al.* 1996). *Myanmar* The Mount Victoria area in Myanmar is protected within Natma Taung National Park (Khin Ma Ma Thwin *in litt.* 1997). *Thailand* In Thailand, this species is recorded from three protected areas: Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, Doi Inthanon National Park, and Omygoy Wildlife Sanctuary (see Distribution). *Laos* The single record in Laos is from in or adjacent to Nakai-Nam Theun NBCA (see Distribution).

MEASURES PROPOSED **Legislation** *China* Grey-sided Thrush should be listed as is a nationally protected species in China. *Laos* Further measures should be taken to prevent the harvesting of birds in NBCAs (J. W. Duckworth *in litt.* 1999).

Habitat protection *China* MacKinnon *et al.* (1996) made the following recommendations for the protected areas where this species has been recorded in China: at Pangquangou National Nature Reserve, greatly extend, especially from its southern boundary; at Lao Ling Nature Reserve, strengthen protection from fire and hunting; at Baihuashan Nature Reserve, manage as a protection forest. **Wintering range** Measures proposed for the protection of montane forests in the wintering range can be found in the equivalent section under Rufous-necked Hornbill.

Research *China* This species occurs in several protected areas, and surveys are required to assess its abundance in them and to establish whether it occurs in any of the other protected areas in or near to its known range, including: in Shanxi, Luyashan Nature Reserve (215 km², forests apparently in good condition), Wulushan Nature Reserve (144 km², forests apparently in good condition); in Hebei, Xiaowutaishan Nature Reserve (226 km², forests apparently in quite good condition) (protected areas size and condition from MacKinnon *et al.* 1996). The overall aim of these surveys should be to assess the effectiveness of the existing reserves in conserving this species, and therefore to determine whether there is a need to extend the boundaries of any of them to include additional areas of forest, whether measures are necessary at some sites to rehabilitate and restore suitable habitat, and whether some new protected

areas need to be established. Further ecological studies are required to establish the breeding habitat requirements and altitudinal range of Grey-sided Thrush, with the aim of developing appropriate forest management regimes in the nature reserves where it occurs. The first phase of such studies has been initiated in the Dongling mountains, Beijing municipality, China (see *Oriental Bird Club Bull.* 32 [2000]: 9). *Wintering range* Further research is required in north-east India and Myanmar to establish the current status and distribution of the species.

REMARKS (1) The species was initially incorporated with Pale Thrush *Turdus pallidus* (Blyth 1875), until separated by Salvadori (1888a,b). Early literature is thus slightly confusing, with the species being listed, for example, as *Turdulus pallens* by Godwin-Austen (1874b) and *Turdus pallidus* by Hume and Davidson (1878), and being christened *T. subpallidus* by Hume (1888) a little after Salvadori's description. The *T. subobscura* described by Salvadori (1889) from Taho, Karenni (and which he incorrectly suggested might be the same as Wardlaw Ramsay's bird from that state), is nothing more than Eye-browed Thrush *T. obscurus* (see Peters 1931–1987). (2) The identification of this species (particularly of first-year birds) is not always straightforward, as it is very similar to pale, washed-out individuals of Eye-browed Thrush *T. obscurus*, especially in dim light when the warmer coloration of the latter species is less apparent (see, e.g., Robson 2000). (3) Reports of this species breeding in India and Myanmar are found in the literature (e.g., Baker 1907b, Wickham 1929–1930) and eggs purportedly from these portions of its range are stored in museum collections (BMNH and NMS). These are presumably the result of a misidentification given the known breeding range of the species (Whistler ms, BMNH egg catalogue) and they are not accepted here. Baker (1922–1930) confidently described the behaviour of this species from north-east India (implying that he had found many nests: "all those I have seen"), listed the stomach contents of specimens that he had dissected and stated that it is "not migratory". The fact that this long-distance migrant almost certainly breeds no closer than northern China (and, moreover, that there is no similar species breeding in north-east India upon which to explain the mistake), coupled with the fact that none of his specimens are preserved (or at best are preserved with labels detached in a museum in Bulgaria), seriously undermines the authenticity of Baker's data from north India (see Remarks 2 under Grey-crowned Prinia *Prinia cinereocapilla*). There is also a clutch of eggs (in BMNH) attributed to this species from "Japan", collected in June 1900, but the identification or the locality must be presumed erroneous.