

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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Recommended citation

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

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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

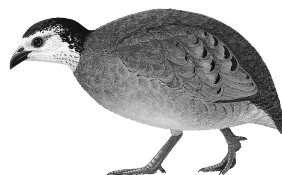
Designed and produced by the **NatureBureau**, 36 Kingfisher Court, Hambridge Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5SJ, United Kingdom

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
Internet: www.nhbs.com/services/birdlife.html

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WHITE-FACED HILL-PARTRIDGE

Arborophila orientalis



Critical ☐ —

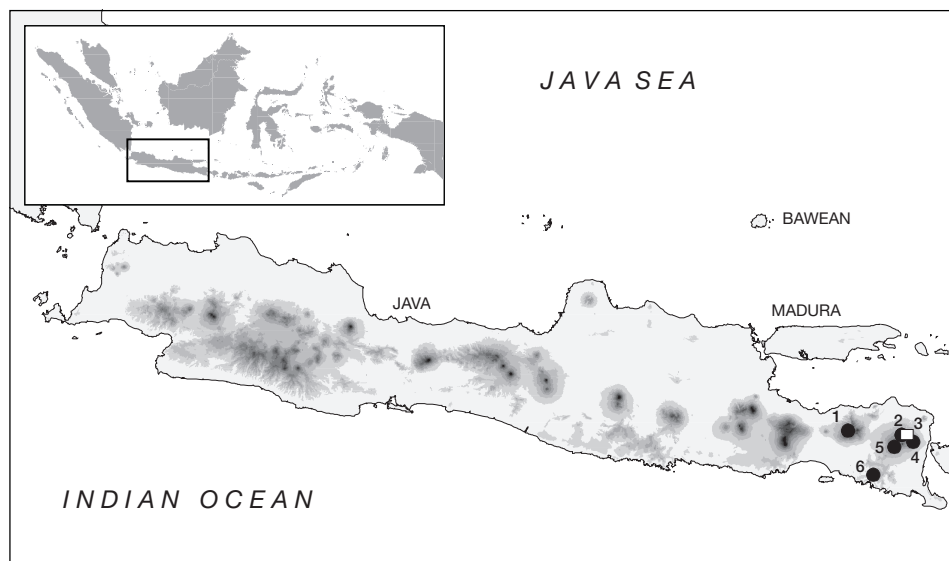
Endangered ☐ —

Vulnerable ■ A1c; A2c; B1+2b,c,e

This species is thought to be undergoing a continuing rapid decline and severe fragmentation in range and population owing to habitat loss and degradation. It is therefore classified as Vulnerable.

DISTRIBUTION The White-faced Hill-partridge (see Remarks 1) is confined to the eastern part of East Java, Indonesia, probably from the Yang Highlands eastwards, and thus in a range which historically covered only c.7,000 km² and which today covers less than 2,500 km² (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). The type locality is Blambangan, before 1821 (Peters 1931–1987), but this is a general region which includes, for example, Gunung Raung. Records are from:

■ **INDONESIA** ■ **East Java Hyang highlands**, undated (McGowan *et al.* 1995), by local report in the 1990s (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999); **Gunung Maelang** (part of Ijen Highlands), 1980s (van Balen 1992b, Mees 1996); **Gunung Ijen** at Sodong Jerok, undated (Robinson and Kloss 1924b); Ijen Highlands (van Balen 1992b, Mees 1996) at **Lijen** (undated specimen in MZB) within the Ijen Crater (Kawah Ijen Ungup-ungup) Nature Reserve, for which records stem from April 1916 (two specimens in MZB; also Robinson and Kloss 1924b), undated (McGowan *et al.* 1995); **Gunung Raung** (part of Ijen Highlands), 1980s (van Balen 1992b, Mees 1996); **Meru Betiri National Park**, 1975 and subsequently (van Balen 1992b, V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999; see Remarks 2).



The distribution of White-faced Hill-partridge *Arborophila orientalis*: (1) Hyang highlands; (2) Gunung Maelang; (3) Gunung Ijen; (4) Lijen; (5) Gunung Raung; (6) Meru Betiri National Park.

● Recent (1980–present) □ Undated

Mees (1996) assumed a wider range for *A. orientalis*, believing the line between it and Chestnut-bellied Hill-partridge *A. javanica* to lie between Gunung Liman-Wilis and Gunung Arjuno, but in fact *javanica* is present on both mountains (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). Moreover, van Balen's (1992b) record of *javanica* from Gunung Semeru-Tengger was based on local reports corresponding to the latter's plumage (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). A record from Baluran National Park (in MacKinnon 1988, MacKinnon and Phillipps 1993) is uncertain, but the species could survive in the highest parts of Gunung Baluran (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999); however, fieldworkers in the area have reported no sightings, and the forest in question is very heavily disturbed (M. Tyson and S. Hedges *per* V. Nijman *in litt.* 2000). If the species is one of montane forest, the only other area within its range is Gunung Ringgit/Beser, but this consists of forest too dry to offer suitable conditions, and field visits there have failed to record it (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999).

POPULATION The total population of this partridge has been put at 1,000–10,000 individuals, although this judgement was made at a time when the species was believed confined to two sites where suitable habitat was very limited—only a fraction of the Yang Highlands (total area 141 km²), and the 26 km² Ijen reserve (McGowan *et al.* 1995). Thus total numbers may be considerably more than the range above; on the other hand there is a steady attrition of habitat and a persistent exploitation of the species for food, indicating a probable decline, and there is an increasing danger of catastrophic population loss to uncontrolled burning.

ECOLOGY Habitat The species probably inhabits montane rainforest between 500 and 2,200 m (McGowan *et al.* 1995, V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). If it is similar in ecology to Chestnut-bellied Hill-partridge then it is likely to occur chiefly or exclusively on mountains higher than 1,700 m, favouring the interior of montane forest above 1,000 m, although possibly sometimes descending as low as 600 m (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999).

Food There is no information.

Breeding There is no information.

THREATS Habitat degradation and over-exploitation for food and the bird trade have been considered threats to this taxon (McGowan *et al.* 1995).

Habitat degradation Most forest in the Yang highlands has now been cleared (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). Elsewhere in eastern Java there is little large-scale forest conversion, but degradation and encroachment occurs along the edges of the remaining blocks, and clearance of isolated pockets remains commonplace, steadily reducing the species's habitat (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). Mismanagement of fire in the prolonged dry season has caused the loss of considerable areas and the prevention of regeneration of others, and it is very likely that this could be a major threat to habitat at any time in the future (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). Meru Betiri National Park has forest cover that is fairly continuous with the higher Gunung Ijen-Raung, but a road and railway run between them, and if these links lead to a steady cut-back of forest, and if Ijen-Raung is (as suspected) a "source" for birds in Meru Betiri, the isolation of Meru Betiri could result in a major decline in partridge numbers there (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). The Yang Highlands and putative Gunung Baluran populations are already isolated (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). The accidental spread of the coffee-shade tree *Acacia decurrens* may also represent a serious long-term problem for the integrity of the region's montane forests (Whitten *et al.* 1996: 816).

Hunting and trade Partridges on Java are commonly caught and eaten by local people (van Balen 1992b, Nijman and Sözer 1995b). Chestnut-bellied Hill-partridges are commonly seen in Javan bird markets, and occasionally Grey-breasted Partridges are also found, and this trade may have some local impact (R. Sözer verbally 2000).

MEASURES TAKEN The Yang Highlands were established as a game reserve in 1962, but this evidently had no effect in controlling hunting (van Balen *et al.* 1995); the area is reportedly 15 km² (McGowan and Garson 1995), but this presumably refers to the forest cover, not the reserve, since the latter embraces almost 150 km², most of it *Casuarina* and grassy meadows (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). In the Ijen Highlands the 26 km² Kawah Ijen Ungup-ungup Nature Reserve (“Ijen reserve”) has existed since 1920 (van Balen *et al.* 1995). Meru Betiri has been protected since 1972 and is now a national park embracing lowland forest, plantations and pastures over an area of 580 km² (van Balen *et al.* 1995). Baluran National Park covers c.250 km² (Indrawan 1995).

A captive population of some 20 birds is breeding in Belgium (R. Sözer verbally 2000).

MEASURES PROPOSED Outside the Yang Highlands reserve there are some large areas of excellent montane podocarp forest, perhaps totalling some 450 km², which are largely under the jurisdiction of Perum Perhutani (state forest agency); these merit investigation and, possibly, gazetting (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). In the Ijen Highlands Gunung Raung forests cover some 600 km², and those on Gunung Maelang some 700 km², and both merit further conservation: a reserve embracing all forest was proposed in 1982 for the mountain complex at Mt Raung (FAO 1981–1982; also Whitten *et al.* 1996: 738–739), while Gunung Maelang’s status as a hunting reserve requires reconsideration (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999). Fieldwork is needed to determine the range of this species more precisely, along with a greater understanding of its altitudinal distribution, densities and habitat tolerance (V. Nijman *in litt.* 1999).

REMARKS (1) The nominate form *orientalis* (“White-faced Hill-partridge”) is here split from the remaining races (of Grey-breasted Hill-partridge) with which it has previously been lumped, namely *sumatrana*, *rolli* and *campbelli* (this remaining complex takes the name *A. sumatrana*), owing to its isolation (with Chestnut-bellied Hill-partridge *A. javanica*—sometimes itself regarded as conspecific with both its neighbouring forms—interposing in West and Central Java) and substantial morphological differences (Mees 1996). This arrangement is supported by V. Nijman (*in litt.* 1999), who has studied the Sumatran and Javan forms of *Arborophila* (see, e.g., Nijman and Sözer 1995b). (2) It was a key proposal in McGowan *et al.* (1995) to search for the species in Meru Betiri, although in fact the evidence of its occurrence there had already been published by van Balen (1992b).