Threatened Birds of Asia:
The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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BIAK SCOPS-OWL

Otus beccarii



Critical ☐ —
Endangered ■ B1 + 2b,c,e
Vulnerable ☐ C1; C2a

There are very few records of this species, classified as Endangered on the basis of its apparent rarity and restriction to tall lowland forest, which is severely fragmented and declining. However, it may prove more widespread and common, requiring reclassification as Vulnerable.

DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION The Biak Scops-owl is endemic to the twin islands of Biak–Supiori in Geelvink Bay, Papua (formerly Irian Jaya), **Indonesia (**Mayr and Meyer de Schauensee 1939, Marshall 1978, del Hoyo *et al.* 1999, König *et al*. 1999). Its status is unclear, as it is nocturnal with poorly known calls, and was only recently considered a separate species. A 1973 survey of the island found only one pair (S. D. Ripley in Clark and Mikkola 1989), it was not recorded during three 1990s visits to Biak (Gibbs 1993, Poulsen and Frolander 1994, Eastwood 1996), and just one was heard in and around Biak-Utara Reserve in 1997 (S. van Balen and B. M. Beehler *in litt*. 2000). However two were heard one morning in 1995 (M. van Beirs *in litt.* 2000), and the species was suspected to be fairly widespread in moderate numbers in 1982, based on vocalisations and local reports, although not actually observed (Bishop 1982).

ECOLOGY It inhabits forest, including partially logged forest, up to at least 300 m (Bishop 1982, del Hoyo *et al.* 1999, S. van Balen and B. M. Beehler *in litt*. 2000, M. van Beirs *in litt.* 2000), including coastal swamp forest bounded by heavily forested limestone cliffs (Marshall 1978). It may be intolerant of habitat degradation, given the absence of records from heavily logged or degraded forest.

THREATS Large areas of forest on Biak have been destroyed or damaged by logging and subsistence farming, particularly in the southern plains, and the remainder is under pressure (Bishop 1982, K. D. Bishop *in litt*. 1996, D. A. Holmes *in litt.* 2000). However, Supiori possesses much virtually impenetrable forest on steep limestone which is likely to be safe from clearance (Bishop 1982).

MEASURES TAKEN There are two protected areas on the islands, Biak-Utara (110 km^2) and Pulau Supiori (420 km^2) Nature Reserves (Sujatnika *et al.* 1995).

MEASURES PROPOSED • Identify and record the species's vocalisations to aid detection. • Conduct surveys on both Biak and Supiori, using tape playback, to establish its current distribution, population status and habitat requirements. • Investigate further its taxonomic status and relationship to other *Otus* species. • Afford formal protection to key sites supporting the species, as appropriate.