

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

Editors

N. J. COLLAR (Editor-in-chief),
A. V. ANDREEV, S. CHAN, M. J. CROSBY, S. SUBRAMANYA and J. A. TOBIAS

Maps by

RUDYANTO and M. J. CROSBY

Principal compilers and data contributors

■ **BANGLADESH** P. Thompson ■ **BHUTAN** R. Pradhan; C. Inskipp, T. Inskipp ■ **CAMBODIA** Sun Huan; C. M. Poole ■ **CHINA** ■ **MAINLAND CHINA** Zheng Guangmei; Ding Changqing, Gao Wei, Gao Yuren, Li Fulai, Liu Naifa, Ma Zhijun, the late Tan Yaokuang, Wang Qishan, Xu Weishu, Yang Lan, Yu Zhiwei, Zhang Zhengwang. ■ **HONG KONG** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (BirdLife Affiliate); H. F. Cheung; F. N. Y. Lock, C. K. W. Ma, Y. T. Yu. ■ **TAIWAN** Wild Bird Federation of Taiwan (BirdLife Partner); L. Liu Severinghaus; Chang Chin-lung, Chiang Ming-liang, Fang Woei-horng, Ho Yi-hsian, Hwang Kwang-yin, Lin Wei-yuan, Lin Wen-horn, Lo Hung-ren, Sha Chian-chung, Yau Cheng-teh. ■ **INDIA** Bombay Natural History Society (BirdLife Partner Designate) and Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History; L. Vijayan and V. S. Vijayan; S. Balachandran, R. Bhargava, P. C. Bhattacharjee, S. Bhupathy, A. Chaudhury, P. Gole, S. A. Hussain, R. Kaul, U. Lachungpa, R. Naroji, S. Pandey, A. Pittie, V. Prakash, A. Rahmani, P. Saikia, R. Sankaran, P. Singh, R. Sugathan, Zafar-ul Islam ■ **INDONESIA** BirdLife International Indonesia Country Programme; Ria Saryanthi; D. Agista, S. van Balen, Y. Cahyadin, R. F. A. Grimmett, F. R. Lambert, M. Poulsen, Rudyanto, I. Setiawan, C. Trainor ■ **JAPAN** Wild Bird Society of Japan (BirdLife Partner); Y. Fujimaki; Y. Kanai, H. Morioka, K. Ono, H. Uchida, M. Ueta, N. Yanagisawa ■ **KOREA** ■ **NORTH KOREA** Pak U-il; Chong Jong-ryol, Rim Chuyon. ■ **SOUTH KOREA** Lee Woo-shin; Han Sang-hoon, Kim Jin-han, Lee Ki-sup, Park Jin-young ■ **LAOS** K. Khounbolin; W. J. Duckworth ■ **MALAYSIA** Malaysian Nature Society (BirdLife Partner); K. Kumar; G. Noramly, M. J. Kohler ■ **MONGOLIA** D. Batdelger; A. Bräunlich, N. Tseveenmyadag ■ **MYANMAR** Khin Ma Ma Thwin ■ **NEPAL** Bird Conservation Nepal (BirdLife Affiliate); H. S. Baral; C. Inskipp, T. P. Inskipp ■ **PAKISTAN** Ornithological Society of Pakistan (BirdLife Affiliate) ■ **PHILIPPINES** Haribon Foundation for Conservation of Natural Resources (BirdLife Partner); N. A. D. Mallari, B. R. Tabaranza, Jr. ■ **RUSSIA** Russian Bird Conservation Union (BirdLife Partner Designate); A. V. Andreev; A. G. Degtyarev, V. G. Degtyarev, V. A. Dugintsov, N. N. Gerasimov, Yu. N. Gerasimov, N. I. Germogenov, O. A. Goroshko, A. V. Kondrat'ev, Yu. V. Labutin, N. M. Litvinenko, Yu. N. Nazarov, V. A. Nechaev, V. I. Perfil'ev, R. V. Ryabtsev, Yu. V. Shibaev, S. G. Surmach, E. E. Tkachenko, O. P. Val'chuk, B. A. Voronov. ■ **SINGAPORE** The Nature Society (Singapore) (BirdLife Partner); Lim Kim Seng ■ **SRI LANKA** Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (BirdLife Affiliate); S. Kotagama; S. Aryaprema, S. Corea, J. P. G. Jones, U. Fernando, R. Perera, M. Siriwardhane, K. Weerakoon ■ **THAILAND** Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BirdLife Partner); U. Treesucon; R. Jugmongkol, V. Kongthong, P. Poonswad, P. D. Round, S. Supparatvirkorn ■ **VIETNAM** BirdLife International Vietnam Country Programme; Nguyen Cu; J. C. Eames, A. W. Tordoff, Le Trong Trai, Nguyen Duc Tu.

With contributions from: S. H. M. Butchart, D. S. Butler (maps), P. Davidson, J. C. Lowen, G. C. L. Dutson, N. B. Peet, T. Vetta (maps), J. M. Villasper (maps), M. G. Wilson

Recommended citation

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

© 2001 BirdLife International

Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge, CB3 0NA, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 1223 277318 Fax: +44 1223 277200 Email: birdlife@birdlife.org.uk

Internet: www.birdlife.net

BirdLife International is a UK-registered charity

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrical, chemical, mechanical, optical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

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

The presentation of material in this book and the geographical designations employed do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of BirdLife International concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

RED-FACED MALKOHA

Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus

Critical ☐ —
Endangered ☐ —
Vulnerable ☒ C1



This species qualifies as Vulnerable because it has a small, declining population as a result of loss and degradation of its forest habitat.

DISTRIBUTION The Red-faced Malkoha is found mainly in the lowland rainforests of the wet zone in south-west Sri Lanka, although it is also recorded elsewhere on the island from some riverine forests of the intermediate and dry zones (see Hoffmann 1996), and there have been unconfirmed reports from southern India (see Remarks 1). In the nineteenth century, it was found in “most of the forests and heavily-clad jungles of the low country” (Legge 1880), but its range is now much reduced and highly fragmented (see Threats). Records (arranged approximately from north to south) are as follows:

■ **SRI LANKA Trincomalee**, undated (Legge 1874); **Anuradhapura**, undated (Legge 1874); Accelerated Mahaweli Programme area, here presumed to be **Mahaweli Ganga Forest Reserve**, undated (Kotagama 1985); Wasgomuwa Oya, one at **Wasgomuwa Lot 1**, early 1990s (IUCN/WCMC 1997), recently recorded (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997), and in fact with an isolated population in Wasgomuwa National Park (Hoffmann 1996); **Maduru Oya National Park**, undated (IUCN 1990); **Kurunegala**, undated (Legge 1871); **Heen Ganga**, north of Hasalaka, undated (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997), with an isolated population still extant along this river (Hoffmann 1996); **Dambookke**, July 1866 (two males in BMNH); **Friars Hood** forests, Eastern Province, October 1875 (Legge 1880, female in BMNH); **Beddegama** (Badegama), undated (Legge 1874); **Kandy**, undated (Legge 1880); **Negombo**, undated (Legge 1871); **Senanayake Samudra Sanctuary**, undated (IUCN 1990); **Inginiyagala**, June 1960 (male in FMNH); **Bibile**, undated (Legge 1880); **Gal Oya National Park**, January/February 1977 (R. L. Fleming Jr. 1977), undated (IUCN 1990); **Heneratgodā**, undated (Legge 1871); **Cocoawatte** (or Cocowatla), September 1894 (female in SMF), August–September 1895 (three specimens in BMNH); **Kitulgala**, February 1981 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* 1981), undated (Ranasinghe 1982), May 1992 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* May 1992), January 1993 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* January 1993), undated (Wijeyeratne *et al.* 1997); **Mahara**, May 1869 (male in AMNH); **Avissawella** (Awissawella), Western Province, August 1876 (male in BMNH); **Passara**, November 1940 (male in NMGC); Lahugala, presumably in **Lahagula Kitulana Sanctuary**, January/February 1977 (R. L. Fleming Jr. 1977), undated (Kotagama *et al.* 1989, *Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997), with an isolated population still extant (Hoffmann 1996); **Haputale** (Hapotala), Uva Province, undated (Wait 1931), 1,540 m, August 1950 (female in BMNH); **Tangamalai Sanctuary**, undated (Ranasinghe 1982); **Peak Wilderness Sanctuary**, undated (IUCN 1990), May–October 1997 (Ranawana and Bambaradeniya 1998); **Rygamkorale** (Raigamkorale), April 1895 (female in BMNH), 1906 (female in BNHS); **Yudaganawa**, on Mahaweli Ganga, undated (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997); **Lemastota** hills, undated (Legge 1880); **Wellawaya**, October 1938 (male in NMGC); **Dumbara**, undated (Legge 1880); **Nilgala**, Uva, 300 m, February 1937 (two males in NMGC), 300 m, two specimens collected, March 1939, shot from a fruit tree (Whistler 1944, specimen in BMNH); **Ratnapura**, January 1866, February 1874, March 1874, December 1878 (eight specimens in BMNH), July 1914 (male in NMGC); **Balangoda** (or Bulongoma), April 1866 (male in BMNH), February 1906, March 1914 and December 1920 (four specimens in BNHS, NMGC); **Pinten** (or Bintenne),

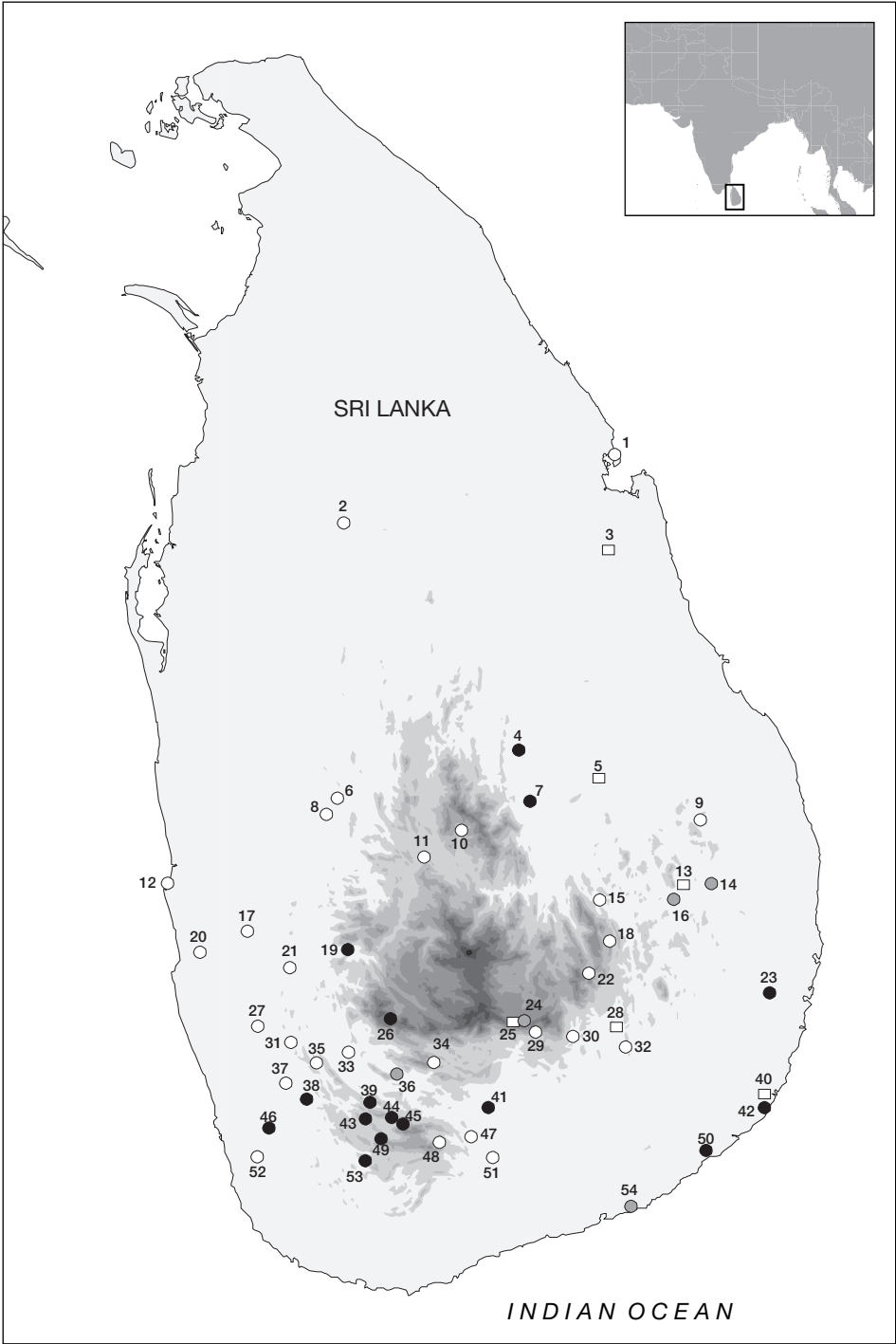
January 1889 (male in SMNB); **Pelmadulla** (Pelmaduda) district, 150 m, August 1944 (Ripley 1946, two specimens in USNM), September 1950 (male in NMGC); **Madola**, February 1933 (male in NMGC); **Morapitiya**, to date (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001); **Delwala**, tail feathers found, July–September 1997 (Jones *et al.* 1998); **Kumana**, undated (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997); **Uda Walawe National Park**, February 1987 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* February 1987); **Kumbukkan Oya**, undated (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997), with an isolated population still extant along this river (Hoffmann 1996); **Kudumiriya** forest, 350–750 m, July–September 1997 (Jones *et al.* 1998); **Walankanda Forest Reserve**, 400–1,100 m, July–September 1997 (Jones *et al.* 1998); **Botiyatenna**, Rakwana, 900 m, January 1986 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* January 1986); **Yagirala**, one in the period 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997); **Timbulketiya**, February and March 1934 (three specimens in NMGC); **Kolonna**, March 1934 (female in NMGC); **Sinharaja Forest Reserve**, 1977 (R. L. Fleming Jr. 1977), many records down to the present (many observers *in litt.* 1997–2000); in or near to Yala East National Park (Ruhuna National Park), at **Yala**, one, April 1983 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* 1983), at Menik Ganga, undated (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997), at Suwandan Ara, undated (*Ceylon Bird Club News* September 1997), with an isolated population still extant along the Menik Ganga river (Hoffmann 1996); **Embilipitiya**, South Province, 60 m, February 1944 (two specimens collected in USNM); **Uragaha**, April 1935 (male in NMGC), 60–120 m, October 1936 (Whistler 1944, male in BMNH), October 1938 (female in NMGC); **Dellawa**, two in the period 1991–1996 (IUCN/WCMC 1997); **Tellula**, August 1965 (specimen in FMNH); Bandiyamulla (untraced), South Province, December 1871 (two specimens in BMNH); Puhupoladaviya (untraced), January 1955 (female in NMGC); Bellanbandipelessa (untraced), August 1956 (male in NMGC), November 1957 (specimen in NMGC); Samanawewa area (untraced), November 1988 (*Ceylon Bird Club News* November 1988), undated (Karunaratne 1992); “Diacne” (untraced), January 1889 (specimen in RMNH); “Pau Colom” (untraced), North-east Province, January 1873 (male in BMNH).

There is also a recent unconfirmed report from Gilimale (Ranasinghe and Fernando 1994), whence, however, there are no other records despite frequent visits by birdwatchers (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001).

POPULATION In the late nineteenth century this species was relatively widespread on Sri Lanka, where it was found “sparingly” but was “far more numerous” in the Eastern Province than western, northern and southern districts; the jungle village inhabitants of the northern and eastern regions identified it without hesitation and said that it was “not uncommon” (Legge 1880). However, it appears to have declined in both range and abundance, for although Wait (1931) described it as “not uncommon in the wilder stretches of forests”, Phillips (1953) found it “very locally, in small numbers”, and Henry (1955) suggested that it “must be considered definitely a scarce bird”, and stated that since the late nineteenth century it had “seriously declined throughout its former haunts”. It has recently been described as “scarce” (Banks and

The distribution of Red-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus* (map opposite): (1) Trincomalee; (2) Anuradhapura; (3) Mahaweli Ganga Forest Reserve; (4) Wasgomuwa; (5) Maduru Oya National Park; (6) Kurunegala; (7) Heen Ganga; (8) Dambookke; (9) Friars Hood; (10) Beddegama; (11) Kandy; (12) Negombo; (13) Senanayake Samudra Sanctuary; (14) Inginiyagala; (15) Bibile; (16) Gal Oya National Park; (17) Heneratgoda; (18) Cocoawatte; (19) Kitulgala; (20) Mahara; (21) Avissawella; (22) Passara; (23) Lahugala Kitulana Sanctuary; (24) Haputale; (25) Tangamalai Sanctuary; (26) Peak Wilderness Sanctuary; (27) Rygamkorale; (28) Yudaganawa; (29) Lemastota; (30) Wellawaya; (31) Dumbura; (32) Nilgala; (33) Ratnapura; (34) Balangoda; (35) Pintenue; (36) Pelmadulla; (37) Madola; (38) Morapitiya; (39) Delwala; (40) Kumana; (41) Uda Walawe National Park; (42) Kumbukkan Oya; (43) Kudumiriya; (44) Walankanda Forest Reserve; (45) Botiyatenna; (46) Yagirala; (47) Timbulketiya; (48) Kolonna; (49) Sinharaja Forest Reserve; (50) Yala; (51) Embilipitiya; (52) Uragaha; (53) Dellawa; (54) Tellula.

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



Banks 1980, Hoffmann 1984, Wijesinghe 1994) and “rare” (Karunaratne 1992, Kotagama and Fernando 1994). During a survey of three wet-zone lowland forests in 1997, only three birds were seen in nine weeks of fieldwork, and none of the local people questioned (who lived close to areas of tall humid forest and were knowledgeable about the birds of the area) was familiar with the species (Jones *et al.* 1998, J. P. G. Jones *in litt.* 1999). During a major survey of over 200 forest sites in Sri Lanka in 1991–1996, this species was recorded in only three forests (IUCN/WCMC 1997). Given the reduction in its range and in the area of its forest habitat, it is unlikely that it currently numbers more than a few thousand individuals.

ECOLOGY Habitat The main habitat requirement of this species appears to be tall, undisturbed, heavy forest with dense tangled undergrowth (Legge 1880, Fuller and Erritzøe 1997). It is usually seen in the tops of tall trees in relatively dense forest (Ranawana and Bambaradeniya 1998), but it also descends almost to the ground, especially where the undergrowth is thick (D. Warakagoda *in* Fuller and Erritzøe 1997). Its restriction to tall forests may be linked to its weak flight, which means that it requires high vantage points to allow it to cover long distances by gliding (Baker 1921–1930, Henry 1953). During a recent survey, all records were in primary forest (Jones *et al.* 1998), and it is seldom found near cultivation (Wait 1931, Ali and Ripley 1968–1998). It is mainly confined to the moist forests of the wet zone, but a few scattered colonies also occur in riverine forests in the dry zone (Henry 1955, Hoffmann 1984). It has been reported to occur from sea-level to 1,700 m (Ali and Ripley 1968–1998), but even in the past records above 920 m were rare (Lewis 1898). The highest definite record appears to be at 1,540 m at Haputale (BMNH label data; also Henry 1955), but it probably no longer occurs at such high altitudes (Henry 1955). Many contemporary observers have not observed this species at high elevation, and it has been suggested that fragmentation of formerly continuous forest has denied it access to the highlands (G. de Silva *in* Fuller and Erritzøe 1997), where it possibly is (or was) a seasonal altitudinal migrant (Fuller and Erritzøe 1997).

Food It has been reported to feed almost exclusively on fruit, including berries, which are devoured whole, although the remains of small insects were found in the stomachs of specimens (Legge 1880, Henry 1955). More recent observations suggest that it regularly feeds on insects, caterpillars, etc., in the canopy (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001). It generally plucks its food from the vegetation (Ranawana and Bambaradeniya 1998). It usually lives in pairs and, although it is generally seen foraging solitarily, the partner is normally somewhere in the canopy nearby; pairs regularly join mixed-species foraging flocks (D. Warakagoda *in litt.* 2001), but groups of up to nine have been reported (Fuller and Erritzøe 1997).

Breeding Birds breed from January to May (Baker 1921–1930, Henry 1955, Lushington undated) but, based on gonadal development—e.g. a female found in breeding condition in August (Ripley 1946)—they may also do so in August–September (Henry 1955, Ali and Ripley 1968–1998). The nests, which are shallow saucers made of grass, roots and twigs, have been found in high bushes in forest with thick undergrowth, and usually contain 2–3 eggs (Henry 1955). Both parents take an active part in feeding the young (Lewis 1898).

Migration It may make some seasonal altitudinal movements, as some birds recorded at “a considerable altitude” in the Lemastota hills may have been dry-season visitors from the Wellawaya-Korale forests (Legge 1880). It has been suggested that the fragmentation of formerly continuous forest has recently denied it access to the highlands (G. de Silva *in* Fuller and Erritzøe 1997).

THREATS The Red-faced Malkoha is one of (now) seven threatened members of the suite of 23 bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Sri Lanka Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Stattersfield *et al.* (1998).

Habitat loss The Red-faced Malkoha has declined substantially because of deforestation (Hoffmann 1984, Kotagama 1994). Since it is mainly confined to the forest canopy it is

particularly badly affected by selective logging (Kotagama 1994). Natural closed-canopy forests on the island were reduced in extent from 29,000 km² (44% of the land area) in 1956 to 16,590 km² (27%) in 1980, and to an estimated 12,260 km² (19%) by 1983, of which only 1,440 km² was rainforest (Collins *et al.* 1991). However, another study estimated that a total of 15,828 km² (23.9% of the land area) of closed-canopy natural forest remained in 1992 (Legg and Jewell 1995), but only 9% forest cover is estimated to remain in the wet zone (IUCN/WCMC 1997). The main causes of the loss and degradation of natural forest on Sri Lanka have been logging, fuelwood-gathering (mainly for domestic use but also for the brickmaking industry), clearance of forest for permanent agriculture, replacement of natural forests by tree plantations, mining for gem stones, urbanisation and fire (Collins *et al.* 1991). For the most part, the law protecting the remaining wet-zone forests is quite effective (IUCN/WCMC 1997), but encroachment of human populations into forest patches continues to threaten the integrity of many sites and to increase habitat fragmentation (NEAP 1998–2001). A high proportion of the remaining forests are now included in national parks and sanctuaries, but many of these areas have been generally neglected and unprotected, and some important bird sanctuaries have suffered severe degradation (Hoffmann 1996).

Hunting In the past, this malkoha was considered a delicacy by local people (Legge 1880), and hunting was thought to be a threat (Henry 1955, Hoffmann 1984). However, it is unlikely to be a serious problem today owing to the high cost of ammunition, the strict gun controls wrought by the security situation, and cultural traditions against killing animals (G. de Silva Wijeyeratne *in litt.* 1999, K. Weerakoon verbally 2000; see Fuller and Erritzøe 1997).

MEASURES TAKEN **Legislation** The 1993 amendment of the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance of 1938 (Act No. 49) grants protection to all Sri Lankan birds (apart from agricultural pests), and it is therefore illegal to kill this species or to keep it in captivity.

Habitat protection The protection of substantial areas of primary lowland rainforest in the wet zone is essential for the survival of this species (see Threats). Following concerns that the existing conservation laws were proving to be ineffective, a moratorium was passed in 1990 to protect all wet-zone forests from logging (IUCN/WCMC 1997).

Protected areas This species occurs in several national parks and forest reserves, including Sinharaja National Heritage Wilderness Area, a World Heritage Site which is actively protected under the jurisdiction of the Forest Department (IUCN/WCMC 1997), Gal Oya National Park, Senanayake Samudra Sanctuary, Uda Walawe National Park and Peak Wilderness Sanctuary (see Distribution).

Research A major survey of over 200 forest sites in Sri Lanka in 1991–1996 helped both to improve understanding of the distribution of this species and other endemic wildlife, and to define a national system of conservation forests that fully represents forest biodiversity (and protects watersheds and meets cultural, economic and social needs) (IUCN/WCMC 1997).

MEASURES PROPOSED **Habitat protection** It has been recommended that the current ban on the logging of wet-zone forests should be maintained for the foreseeable future (IUCN/WCMC 1997). The National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP 1998–2001) makes recommendations for managing forests into the next millennium, including: providing seed and subsidies to the owners of home gardens to encourage them to plant local timber, fruit and medicinal plants (to reduce unauthorised commercial exploitation of forests); promoting programmes to create awareness of the destruction of biological resources; and improving the enforcement capabilities of the forest department.

Protected areas Sri Lanka has an extensive system of protected areas covering over 14% of its total land area, but this system is least extensive in the wet zone, and therefore does not cover up to 15% of the species diversity of the island (IUCN/WCMC 1997). An optimum

system of conservation forests (reserved for biodiversity conservation and research), covering 7.8% of the total land area, has been proposed, including virtually all remaining forests in the wet zone (IUCN/WCMC 1997). The designation and effective management of these conservation forests would play a vital role in the conservation of the Red-faced Malkoha.

Research Ecological studies are recommended to establish the precise habitat requirements of this species, to improve understanding of why it has declined so sharply, and the habitat management that is required to improve its status at the sites where it survives. A study to test the hypothesis that it is a seasonal altitudinal migrant is also required (Fuller and Erritzøe 1997). Despite the wealth of data generated by the National Conservation Review in 1991–1996, much more detailed and wide-ranging surveys will be required to plan and monitor the management of individual conservation forests once they are established (IUCN/WCMC 1997).

REMARKS (1) There have been reported sightings of this species in the southern Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala (Baker 1932–1935, Biddulph 1956, Ali and Ripley 1968–1998), with a recent report from Coorg (Nanda 1996). However, since no specimen has been obtained, and the details published on all the sightings in India are inconclusive, most authorities treat this species as endemic to Sri Lanka (Tirimanna 1981, Hoffmann 1996, Stattersfield *et al.* 1998).