

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

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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

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TAWITAWI BROWN-DOVE

Phapitreron cinereiceps

Critical ■ A2c

Endangered □ A1c,d; B1+2a,b,c,d,e; C1; C2b

Vulnerable □ D1; D2

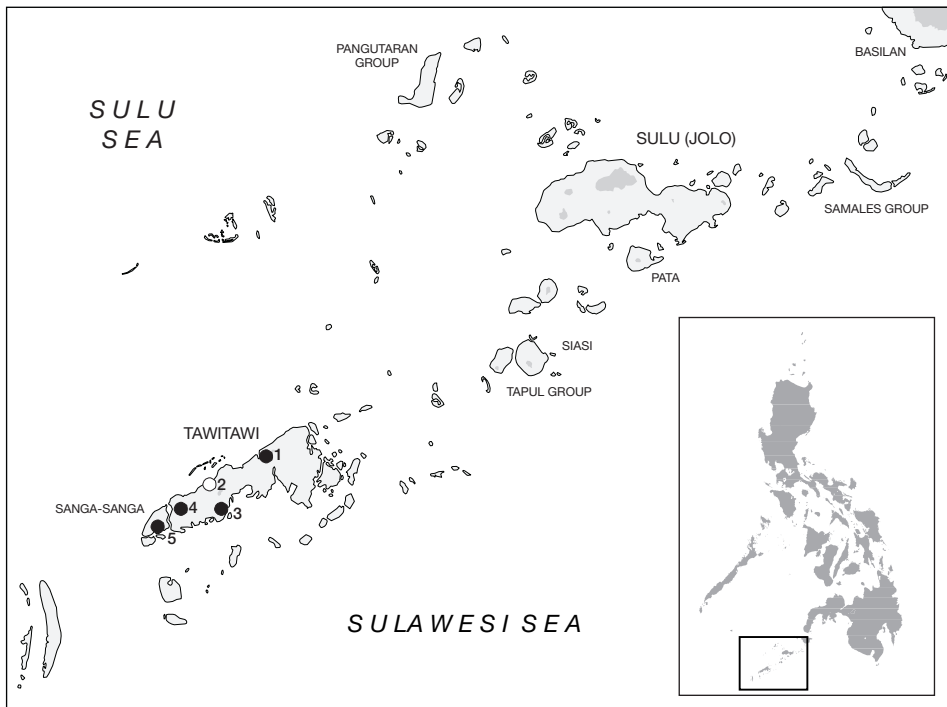


This recently recognised species qualifies as Critical. It is predicted to undergo an extremely rapid population reduction in the immediate future based on a decline in the extent and quality of the remaining tiny fragments of forest within its very small range.

DISTRIBUTION The Tawitawi Brown-dove (see Remarks 1) is endemic to the 630 km² island of Tawitawi (and adjacent Sanga-sanga) in the Sulu archipelago, Philippines, with records as follows:

■ **PHILIPPINES** *Tawitawi* **Languyan** at Marang-marang, April 1991 (male in CMNH); **Tataan**, October and November 1891 (Dickinson *et al.* 1991; two specimens in USNM); **Lubbuk**, north of Balimbing, December 1996 (Allen 1998); **Tarawakan**, north-west of Batu-batu, May and December 1996 (Dutson *et al.* 1996, Allen 1998);

Sanga-sanga **Balabek** (forest) near Lakit-lakit, around 1987 (Krupa and Buck 1988; see Remarks 2).



The distribution of Tawitawi Brown-dove *Phapitreron cinereiceps*: (1) Languyan; (2) Tataan; (3) Lubbuk; (4) Tarawakan; (5) Balabek.

○ Historical (pre-1950) ● Recent (1980–present)

POPULATION The population size of this brown-dove is not known but in recent years it has been assumed to be extremely small (Collar *et al.* 1994). However, the species was common at Tarawakan in May 1996 and is apparently shy, far more often heard (and then more seasonally) than seen, so it may not in fact be as rare as feared (D. Allen *in litt.* 1997).

ECOLOGY *Habitat* The species inhabits (or inhabited: see Threats) lowland forest on Sanga-sanga (Krupa and Buck 1988) and the specimen collected on Tawitawi in 1991 was in beach mangroves with a mix of early original growth and selectively logged forest (CMNH register data). However, on the latter island it is unlikely to be altitudinally restricted, except that the maximum elevation there is only around 500 m (D. Allen verbally 1997).

Food The only information appears to be that the 1991 Tawitawi specimen had “balete” (fig) fruit in its stomach (CMNH register data).

Breeding Nothing is known.

Migration Nothing is known, but on an island as small as Tawitawi seasonal movements, if any, must be slight.

THREATS The Tawitawi Brown-dove is highly threatened by forest destruction coupled with intensive and uncontrolled hunting (see Threats under Sulu Hornbill *Anthracoceros montani* and Sulu Bleeding-heart *Gallicolumba menagei*). Observers in around 1987 and September 1991 considered that “extensive forest still exists” on Tawitawi (Krupa and Buck 1988, Lambert 1993c), but such forest (as seen from the air) appears actually to be young secondary growth (almost all trees are currently below 20 cm in diameter at breast height), and logging of the few remaining areas with large trees—almost entirely confined to rugged and mountainous areas—appears to be unsustainable and soon to be followed by uncontrolled settlement and full conversion to agriculture as the island develops and malaria is eradicated (D. Allen *in litt.* 1996, 1997). There is no primary forest now left on Sanga-sanga, only some heavily degraded areas of low forest (G. C. L. Dutson *in litt.* 1996, D. Allen verbally 1997). During the martial law years in the 1970s the shooting of various animals by military and paramilitary groups could have caused a substantial decrease of the brown-dove population (as reported for Sulu Bleeding-heart: Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995).

MEASURES TAKEN The c.300 ha forest at Tarawakan appears to receive some protection through its association with an agricultural college (D. Allen *in litt.* 1997), but the lack of other protected areas in the range of this species is an omission which needs urgently to be addressed. Tawitawi is a “key site” and its coastal areas have been proposed as a recipient of FPE funding (see Appendix). In 1997, Mindanao State University (Tawitawi) and the Haribon Foundation commenced collaboration on an awareness campaign on Tawitawi, focusing on the conservation of terrestrial biodiversity (NADM).

MEASURES PROPOSED There is an urgent need to protect the remaining patches of forest in Tawitawi and nearby islands by means of an integrated development plan (D. Allen *in litt.* 1997). Any conservation strategy for the area must consider the requirements of other threatened species occupying similar ranges (see equivalent section under Sulu Hornbill). As part of such a strategy, an intensive survey to locate further sites for this species and Sulu Bleeding-heart is urgently required to assess their real conservation status and determine their ecology. Conservation awareness programmes targeting local people on the Sulu and Tawitawi archipelagos should be continued and expanded if possible.

REMARKS (1) The form *cinereiceps* does not differ from *P. brunneiceps* in its “redder hindneck” (*contra* del Hoyo *et al.* 1997) but possesses a matt grey crown, more olive back, rusty not vinous-grey belly, brown not buff vent, and grey not buff undertail-coverts (as

judged from CMNH 91B2583), and on this basis merits specific recognition from *P. brunneiceps* (see relevant account), with which it has in recent years (despite Manuel 1936a) been united under the name “Dark-eared Brown-dove” (the detailed original descriptions of both forms are adjacent in Bourns and Worcester 1894). It is arguably more distinct from *brunneiceps* than *brunneiceps* is from Amethyst Brown-dove *P. amethystina*, the latter only being recognised as representatives of separate species when their sympatry on Mt McKinley, Mindanao, was noted (Dickinson *et al.* 1991). Rand (1970b) stated that on Mindanao *cinereiceps* (i.e. *brunneiceps*) and *amethystina* both occur from 900 to 1,350 m, but that only the latter was found at altitudes above this; there may thus be a partial difference in altitudinal preference. (2) The account by Krupa and Buck (1988), apart from lacking a date, is ambiguous about the locality involved in this record, since their title refers to Tawitawi while the landbirds mentioned in the article seem (and are here assumed) all to have been recorded at Balabek Forest, Sanga-sanga.