

# 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 **Nature**Bureau, 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](mailto:nhbs@nhbs.co.uk)  
Internet: [www.nhbs.com/services/birdlife.html](http://www.nhbs.com/services/birdlife.html)

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## TALIABU MASKED-OWL

### *Tyto nigrobrunnea*

Critical  —

Endangered  B1+2b,c,e; C2b

Vulnerable  D1



*This inconspicuous and extremely poorly known forest owl is judged to qualify for Endangered because it has a very small range, and hence presumably a very small population, both of which are undergoing continuing declines on the single island it is known to inhabit.*

**DISTRIBUTION** The type- and only specimen of the Taliabu Masked-owl was taken on Taliabu in the Sula Islands, but no precise locality was specified (Neumann 1939, K. D. Bishop 1989); at that time the species was suspected to occur throughout the Sula Islands (Neumann 1939). Records are from:

■ **INDONESIA** Taliabu unspecified locality, October 1938 (Neumann 1939); **Tubang**, north-eastern Taliabu, one, October 1991 (Stones *et al.* 1997).

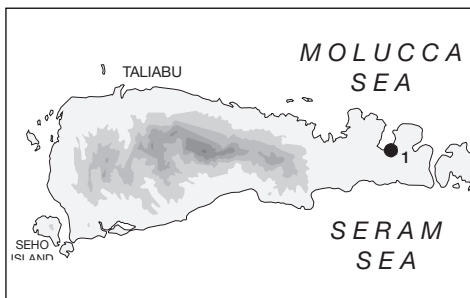
**POPULATION** This species is virtually unknown and the islands it inhabits are themselves rather little studied ornithologically. It is presumed to be scarce (del Hoyo *et al.* 1999) and has been asserted as “extremely rare” (König *et al.* 1999).

**ECOLOGY** *Habitat* The species is presumed to inhabit rainforest (del Hoyo *et al.* 1999). The habitat of the 1991 sighting was logged forest, the bird being observed at night on a logging track (Stones *et al.* 1997) at c.150–200 m elevation (P. Davidson verbally 2000).

*Food* There is no information, but the diet is probably similar to the species’s congeners (König *et al.* 1999), and would therefore consist of small mammals.

*Breeding* There is no information.

**THREATS** The Taliabu Masked-owl is one of two threatened members of the suite of eight bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Banggai and Sula Islands Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Sujatnika *et al.* (1995) and Stattersfield *et al.* (1998). The assertion that the “entire island group” of the Sulas “has been parcelled out in commercial timber concessions” (K. D. Bishop 1989) is close to accurate: most of the island’s forest below 800 m is designated for commercial logging (Davidson *et al.* 1993), with three concessions, covering 1,460 km<sup>2</sup>, in operation on Taliabu (2,900 km<sup>2</sup>) since 1969, targeting the dipterocarps *Shorea selandica* and *S. koordersii* (Petocz *et al.* 1997,



The distribution of Taliabu Masked-owl *Tyto nigrobrunnea*: (1) Tubang.

● Recent (1980–present)

C. Trainor *in litt.* 2001). The effects of habitat degradation on this species are entirely unknown (Davidson *et al.* 1993)

**MEASURES TAKEN** None is known.

**MEASURES PROPOSED** A reserve of 700 km<sup>2</sup> (24% of the entire island) is proposed for Taliabu's central mountains (FAO 1981–1982, K. D. Bishop 1989, Jepson 1996); its original boundary was maintained by, e.g., RePPProT (1989) but slightly altered (so that land below 600 m is excluded) by Petocz *et al.* (1997), who called for further surveys to determine the appropriateness of this revision. A region of the same area in “East Taliabu” was identified as offering the best chance for the future protection of the Sula Islands' endemic avifauna, including the near-threatened Sula Megapode *Megapodius bernsteini* (Indrawan *et al.* 1992).

A study of the ecology of this owl has been called for (König *et al.* 1999), and in the first instance this should focus on determining the appropriateness of the proposed protected area for the species. It is important to be sure that this is not chiefly or exclusively a bird of lower-lying forest.