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SARAWAKIAN BIRDS LISTED IN THE RED DATA BOOK PART 2

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ABSTRACT

In "Threatened birds of Asia", published in 2001 by BirdLife International, a total of 147 Malaysian birds were listed as being under threat of extinction. This list included birds found in peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Among these are 116 birds that have been recorded in Sarawak.

Part 1 of this paper examined the evolution of the Red data lists, and the assessment procedures used to identify Malaysian species considered most at risk (Sreedharan, 2005). This second paper takes a closer look at the individual species in the three highest risk categories, Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable, to evaluate their current status and distribution in Sarawak

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INTRODUCTION

In *Threatened birds of Asia*, published in 2001 by BirdLife International, a total of 665 species, over one-fifth of all bird species in the Asian region, were listed as being under threat of extinction at one level or another.

This list included 147 birds found in peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

However, as shown in Part 1 of this paper (Sreedharan, 2005), only 116 (78.9%) of these have been recorded in Sarawak. The others are found only in peninsular Malaysia and/or in Sabah.

The birds listed are summarised, under several categories, in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Malaysian birds under threat.

	Malaysia	Sarawak
Critically Endangered	5	3
Endangered	5	3
Vulnerable	35	19
Lower Risk/Near Threatened	102	91
Totals	147	116

The current status and distribution of birds on the Sarawak list is reviewed below.

A. CRITICALLY ENDANGERED SPECIES

Of the five birds listed as Critical Endangered in Malaysia, only three have been recorded in Sarawak.

Family COLUMBIDAE

1. Silvery Pigeon *Columba argentina*

Listed as Vulnerable in *Birds To Watch 2*, now upgraded to Critically Endangered in *Threatened birds of Asia*.

Other names: Silvery Wood Pigeon, Grey Wood Pigeon.

Distribution: Found on the islands off Sumatra, the Riau and Lingga archipelagos, both in Indonesia, extending to the Malaysian islands west of Borneo.

Large numbers of this bird, and the Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor*, were once said to have been breeding on Pulau Burong, off the Batang Lupar, but have not been seen there since 1899 when 14 specimens were taken in April (Smythies, 1957).

There has been no subsequent record from Sarawak. The only record from mainland Borneo is of one collected at Pontianak in 1826.

There are very few reliable recent records since it is difficult to distinguish this bird from the Pied Imperial Pigeon with which it frequently associates.

During a survey of Talang Talang Island (1° 55' N, 109° 46' E) between 18 Feb. to 27 Mar. 1997, roosting flocks of Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor* were regularly seen.

Flock of twenty to forty of these birds flew in from the general direction of Sematan, daily from between 18:30 to 18:45. They wheeled around the island and quickly split up into small groups of ones and twos before swooping up to find roosts under cover of tall trees.

Four flocks of sixty, twenty, forty and seventy birds were seen flying on a south-westerly course to the mainland, to a point roughly south of Gunung Poi at 07:30 on 5th March. Single birds were frequently seen feeding on low bushes at the edges of the island just before dusk.

Despite a particular and sustained effort, no trace of the Silvery Pigeon *Columba argentina* was detected amongst these *D. bicolor* flocks.

Current Status in Sarawak: Probably locally extinct.

Family LARIDAE

2. Chinese Crested Tern *Sterna bernsteini*

Listed as Critically Endangered in both *Birds To Watch 2* and in *Threatened birds of Asia*.

Other names: Chinese Lesser Crested Tern.

Distribution: Breeds on the east coast of China north to Shantung though the exact location remains unknown. The latest reports are of 10 to 12 adult birds seen on 3 July 2004 on two separate islets off Matsu Island in Taiwan, and about 20 birds found breeding amidst about 4000 Great Crested Terns in the summer of 2004 in Zhejiang and Fujian provinces of mainland China.

Non-breeding birds have been seen in the Philippines, East Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. There are unconfirmed sightings from Cambodia, Singapore and off Borneo.

Historical records have it as a race of Great Crested Tern *S. bergii* or Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis*. It was formerly listed as *Sterna zimmermanni* (Smythies, 1968).

It has been collected twice at Buntal, once in 1890, and again in 1913, but the skin is missing (Smythies, 1968). Another, in breeding plumage, was collected before 1891 in the Baram but was listed as a form of Great Crested Tern *S. bergii* (Smythies, 1999).

Current Status in Sarawak: A rare vagrant, on islands and in coastal areas.

Family FREGATIDAE

3. Christmas Island Frigatebird *Fregata andrewsi*

Listed as Vulnerable in *Birds To Watch 2*, now upgraded to Critically Endangered in *Threatened birds of Asia*.

Other names: Andrews' Man o' War, Andrews' Frigatebird.

Distribution: It appears to breeds only on Christmas Island but, in the non-breeding season, it ranges widely, from China and Hong Kong south to Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Timor Leste, the Solomon Islands and northern Australia, and westwards to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to as far as the Kenyan coast.

There are seven undated specimens from Buntal, Santubong and Rambungan (Smythies, 1957), and an inland record in February 1958 from Bau (Smythies, 1968). 25 birds were seen at Samunsam Wildlife Sanctuary in 1986 (Collar *et al.*, 2001).

During a survey of Talang Talang Island (1° 55' N, 109° 46' E) between 18 Feb. to 27 Mar. 1997, this author saw several mixed groups of frigate birds.

Twelve frigate birds flew south at 15:00 on 19 Feb., a day of gale force winds and high seas. An hour later, about thirty birds, 25 in a group and about five stragglers, came the opposite way, headed