

Birds in Peril

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The natural ecosystems of Sri Lanka have undergone drastic changes over the past century. Every major habitat has been altered while some have totally collapsed due to population expansion and increasing human activities. The unprecedented increase in unplanned development activities has in turn caused severe pressure on the biodiversity of Sri Lanka. Species are vital links of the ecosystem performing essential ecosystem services and consequently their loss will result in erosion of ecosystem health which in turn have a major impact on human well being. The root cause of this rapid environmental change is very simple; it is the cumulative effect of 2 million people inhabiting an island, 65,000Km² in area.

In 2007 national redlist, prepared by the IUCN in collaboration with Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources was launched bringing the current extinction crisis into the national spotlight. For the first time in Sri Lanka, the nationally threatened species were evaluated using IUCN Global Red List categories and criteria. The IUCN Global Red List Criteria used for evaluation of the status of indigenous species in Sri Lanka included population reduction, restricted geographical range, small population size and decline, and very small or restricted population. Most species were evaluated using their geographic range (Extent of Occurrence and Area of Occupancy) due to lack of information on their population size or trends in population change. Under this classification system a species is considered as nationally threatened, if it is listed under any of the three categories, Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), or Vulnerable (VU).

Although birds can fly above all of us, they cannot escape the current extinction crisis. The 2007 national redlist of species has revealed that a total of 46 (10 CR, 15 EN & 21 VU) indigenous bird species have been found to be threatened. Out of these, 16 are endemic to Sri Lanka.

Few of these species are featured in this Photo essay.



Sri Lanka Blue Magpie (*Urocissa ornata*)

Kashmir flycatcher (*Ficedula subrubra*) belongs to the family Muscicapidae. This insectivorous bird is a resident in India/Pakistan and a regular winter visitor to Sri Lanka. Kashmir flycatcher is not considered as a nationally threatened bird, as 2007 national Redlist did not assess migratory birds. However, this species is categorized as 'Vulnerable' in the 2007 global threatened list and Sri Lanka is under obligation to protect Kashmir Flycatcher as the country is a signatory of the Convention of Migratory Species.

Status: Vulnerable (VU)

Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) is the tallest bird in Sri Lanka. Black-necked Stork is listed as a Critically Endangered species as their population is restricted to less than ten individuals in Sri Lanka, even though it is a widespread breeding resident in Southern Asian region. The birds are restricted to southern and eastern dry zone lagoon systems of Sri Lanka where its range is confined to Yala, Bundala, and Kumana National Parks. In spite of its low population size, this species can easily be observed in these lagoon systems.

Status: Criticality Endangered (CR)

Sri Lanka Blue Magpie (*Urocissa ornate*) is restricted to lowland rain forests and sub montane forests. It can be found in an altitudinal range between 400 m to 1000 m above sea level. Forest fragmentation has been identified as the major threat to Sri Lanka Blue Magpie.

Status: Vulnerable (VU) - Endemic

Oriental bay owl (*Phodilus badius*) is completely nocturnal and can be found throughout South Asia. It has a heart-shaped face with earlike extensions. Like most of its relatives, Oriental Bay Owl feeds mainly on rodents, frogs, lizards, geckos and large insects.

Status: Endangered (EN)

Scaly thrush (*Zoothera dauma*) breeds in wet zone and montane forests in Sri Lanka, mainly in south-eastern part of the island. The Sri Lankan race of Scaly Thrush is particularly distinctive, being smaller, long-billed with rufous under parts, and recently declared as an endemic species. Forest fragmentation has been identified as the major threat to Scaly thrush.

Status: Endangered (EN) - Endemic

Yellow-crowned woodpecker (*Dendrocopos mahraffensis*) inhabits the dry zone of Sri Lanka. This

species is common in the arid areas in the north-western coastal strip and in southern coastal districts. It also occurs in Uva basin as well.

Status: Vulnerable (VU)

Laser Adjutant's (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) distribution is restricted to the lowland dry and intermediate zone. Hunting and loss of wetland habitat are the major threats to this species.

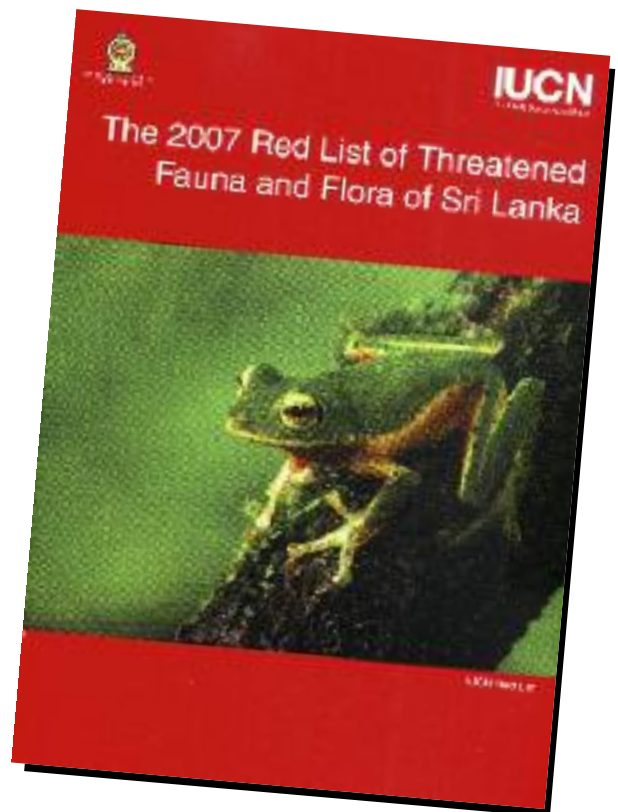
Status: Vulnerable (VU)

Sri Lanka Yellow-eared Bulbul (*Pycnonotus penicillatus*) can be found above an altitude of 1000m. Forest fragmentation is identified as the major threat to Sri Lanka Yellow-eared Bulbul.

Status: Vulnerable (VU) - Endemic

Sri Lanka Dull Blue Flycatcher (*Eumyias sordida*) is restricted to forests in the higher altitudes of the central hills and can be found above an altitude of 1500 m above sea level. Forest fragmentation is identified as the major threat to Sri Lanka Dusky Blue Flycatcher.

Status: Vulnerable (VU) - Endemic



Siyoth



Kashmir flycatcher (*Ficedula subrubra*)

Siyoth



Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*)

Siyoth



Oriental bay owl (*Phodilus badius*)

Siyoth



Sri Lanka Scaly thrush (Zosterops Imbricata)

Siyoth



Yellow crown woodpecker (*Dendrocopos maharattensis*)

Siyoth



Lesser adjutant's (*Leptoptilos javanicus*)

Siyoth



Sri Lanka Yellow-eared Bulbul (*Pycnonotus penicillatus*)

Siyoth



Sri Lanka Dull Blue Flycatcher (*Eumyias sordida*)