

Mrs. Hume's pheasant

Origin

Mrs. Hume's pheasant (*Syrmaticus humiae*) is a species of bird that is native to the forests of the eastern Himalayas in Southeast Asia, including parts of China, Bhutan, and Northeast India.

The species was first described by British naturalist Allan Octavian Hume in 1881, who named it after his wife Mary Anna Grindall Hume. However, the ancestor of Mrs. Hume's pheasant is thought to be the common pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), which is native to Asia and Europe.

It is believed that the common pheasant was introduced to India during the British colonial period, when it was imported as a game bird for hunting. Over time, the common pheasant interbred with other local pheasant species in the region, eventually giving rise to Mrs. Hume's pheasant as a distinct species.

The exact details of how the common pheasant arrived in India are not clear, but it is believed that the birds were brought to the region from their native range in Asia Minor and the Caucasus by British officials and nobility who enjoyed hunting them. The birds were then released into the wild and allowed to establish populations, eventually leading to their spread throughout parts of India.

Distribution and Population in India

Mrs. Hume's pheasant (*Syrmaticus humiae*) is a rare and endangered bird species that is native to the eastern

Himalayas in Southeast Asia, including parts of China, Bhutan, and Northeast India. In India, the species is mainly found in the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, but it has also been reported in neighbouring states like Manipur and Mizoram.

The population of Mrs. Hume's pheasant in India is estimated to be very small, with the exact number of individuals remaining uncertain due to limited surveys and data. However, it is believed that the species is declining in numbers due to habitat loss, hunting, and other human activities that affect its survival.

Appearance

Male Mrs. Hume's pheasants are larger than females, typically measuring about 70-85 cm in length and weighing 1.5-2 kg, while females are around 50-60 cm in length and weigh 0.8-1 kg.

Males have a distinctive appearance with their bright, iridescent blue-green head, neck, and upper back, while the rest of their body is a reddish-brown color with white spots.

Females are less colourful, with a dull brown overall coloration and some white spotting.

Lifestyle

Mrs. Hume's pheasants are primarily ground-dwelling birds, though they can fly short distances if needed. During the breeding season, males display their colorful plumage and perform elaborate courtship displays to attract females. Females lay 4-8 eggs in a nest on the ground and are responsible for incubating them and raising the chicks. The offspring of Mrs. Hume's pheasants are born after an incubation period of about 28 days. Chicks are able to leave the nest shortly after hatching and are able to fly at around

10-12 days old. They reach sexual maturity at around 2 years old.

Food Habits

Mrs. Hume's pheasants are omnivorous, feeding on a variety of foods including insects, seeds, fruits, and small mammals. They use their strong beaks to dig through leaf litter and soil in search of food.

Habitats

Mrs. Hume's pheasants inhabit dense forests in hilly and mountainous areas, typically at elevations of 1,500-3,000 meters above sea level. They prefer areas with a mix of forest types, including broadleaf and coniferous forests, and they require areas with dense undergrowth and cover.

Vulnerable Species

Mrs. Hume's pheasant (*Syrmaticus humiae*) is listed as a vulnerable species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It was first assessed as vulnerable in 1994 and has remained on the Red List since then.

Mrs. Hume's pheasant is considered vulnerable due to several threats that are impacting its population and habitat. The species' habitat is being lost and degraded due to deforestation, agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, and human settlements. This is leading to the fragmentation of its habitat and the loss of important food and nesting resources.

Mrs. Hume's pheasant is hunted and poached for its meat, feathers, and as a trophy bird. Hunting and poaching have been identified as significant threats to the species in some parts of its range.

The introduction of non-native pheasant species to the region can lead to hybridization and inbreeding with Mrs. Hume's pheasant, which can result in the loss of genetic diversity and a decline in the species' fitness.

Changes in climate and weather patterns can affect the species' habitat and food resources, leading to changes in its distribution and abundance.

Overall, the conservation status of Mrs. Hume's pheasant remains a concern, and efforts are needed to protect and conserve the species and its habitat. Conservation measures such as habitat protection, law enforcement against hunting and poaching, and community-based conservation initiatives can help to address the threats facing the species and improve its conservation status.

Protected Areas

Mrs. Hume's pheasant (*Syrnaticus humiae*) is found in several protected areas in India, which are important for the conservation of the species and its habitat. Some of the protected areas where Mrs. Hume's pheasant is known to occur.

Located in the state of West Bengal, Singalila National Park is a protected area that covers an area of 78.6 square kilometres. The park is known for its high biodiversity and is home to several threatened species, including Mrs. Hume's pheasant.

Neora Valley National Park is located in the state of West Bengal and covers an area of 88 square kilometers. The park is known for its pristine forests and high biodiversity and is home to several endangered species, including Mrs. Hume's pheasant.

Located in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, Namdapha National Park is one of the largest protected areas in India, covering

an area of 1,985 square kilometers. The park is known for its rich biodiversity and is home to several threatened and endangered species, including Mrs. Hume's pheasant.

Located in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary is a protected area that covers an area of 218 square kilometers. The sanctuary is known for its high biodiversity and is home to several threatened species, including Mrs. Hume's pheasant.

Located in the state of Sikkim, Khangchendzonga National Park is a protected area that covers an area of 849.5 square kilometers. The park is known for its high biodiversity and is home to several threatened species, including Mrs. Hume's pheasant.

These protected areas play a crucial role in the conservation of Mrs. Hume's pheasant and its habitat. They provide important breeding and nesting sites for the species and help to protect it from hunting, poaching, and habitat destruction. Additionally, they help to maintain the ecological balance of the region and provide a vital source of ecosystem services to local communities.