

**PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF SPECIES ON THE APPENDICES OF THE
CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF
WILD ANIMALS**

- A. PROPOSAL:** Listing the entire population of *Acrocephalus sorghophilus* on Appendix I
- B. PROPONENT:** Government of the Philippines
- C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT:**

1. Taxon

- 1.1 Classis:** Aves
- 1.2 Ordo:** Passeriformes
- 1.3 Familia** Sylviidae
- 1.4 Species:** *Acrocephalus sorghophilus*
- 1.5 Common name(s):** Streaked Reed-warbler; Speckled Reed Warbler

2. Biological data

2.1 Distribution

The entire population of the species is migratory. The breeding grounds are currently not known. They are presumed to lie in northeast China, with the provinces of Liaoning and Hebei having been suggested as possible locations. There is a single record of a male singing during the breeding season at Muraviovka, in the Amur region of far-eastern Russia; but follow-up surveys did not find any birds at the location. Winters in the Philippines, where it is local and uncommon; there are regular records from the Candaba wetlands and from Dalton Pass, both on the island of Luzon. It was also recorded once from Lake Baao, Camarines Sur also in Luzon.

2.2 Population

The population is estimated to be in the range 2,500 to 9,999 and decreasing. Because of the inferred small size of the population and the decrease that has been observed, the species is listed as Vulnerable by IUCN. Sightings of the species in the Philippines indicated a steep decline from 1980 to 2005. The species was not sighted in an April 2008 expedition to Candaba.

2.3 Habitat

The habitat on the breeding grounds is not known. In the Philippines in winter, it occurs in reed and grass marsh, often near water. On migration, it has been recorded from a marsh and from millet crops.

2.4 Migrations

The species has been recorded on migration in the (possible breeding) provinces of Liaoning and Hebei, and in Hubei, Jiangsu, Fujian and Beijing provinces in eastern China, as well as on the island of Taiwan (from where there are eight confirmed records). Spring passage in China is from late May to early June, and autumn passage from late August to early September. All records in the Philippines are from September to June.

3. **Threat data**

3.1 Direct threat

No direct threats to the birds, their nests or eggs are known.

3.2 Habitat destruction

This is considered likely to be the chief cause of the species decline. Loss of and damage to wetlands is occurring throughout its known range, and is considered likely to be an existing (or, at least, potential) threat to the unknown breeding grounds. On the wintering grounds, wetlands have been modified, for instance, by conversion to rice-cultivation, which results in draining in the crucial period of December and January. Reedbeds have been fragmented, including at the most important wintering site known for the species, and reduced in area by drainage, settlement and development (for instance, poultry-processing factories).

3.3 Indirect threat

The possible effects of climate change are unknown.

3.4 Threats connected especially with migrations

None known. As a nocturnal migrant, the bird is potentially vulnerable to collision with tall, illuminated structures, the number of which is rapidly growing along its flyway. Trapping migratory birds during moonless nights with the use of lights and nets is practiced at Dalton Pass. Two (2) specimens of the species preserved in liquid were seen by S. Pasicolan when she visited the site in 1988. The trapping of migratory birds at Dalton Pass has somehow abated but it could not be completely stopped due to poverty.

3.5 National and international utilisation

There appears to be no directed catch for the species but is anyway trapped together with other species and perhaps utilized as food.

4. **Protection status and needs**

4.1 National protection status

The species is not currently listed as protected in China or the Philippines, and such protection is highly desirable.

4.2 International protection status

As a member of the Muscicapidae *sensu lato*, the species is included on Appendix II of CMS. However, no CMS Agreements or other international initiatives currently cover or confer protection on the species.

4.3 Additional protection needs

Formal protection of wetlands where the species is known to occur is highly desirable. All the Range States are Parties to the Ramsar Convention. Despite uncertainties over the precise range of the species, it seems sure that the various current Ramsar designations in China and Russia cannot be contributing significantly to the conservation of this species. This species is totally reliant on the wetlands of the Philippines for its survival. Significant opportunities exist to further the bird's conservation in the country, in particular by the protection of wetlands and the management of their water levels. The best-known site of importance for the species at Candaba has been suggested as a Ramsar site, and educational material has been prepared. Ramsar designation, and the designation of the site under the National Integrated Protected Area System should be considered by the Philippine government. Further research is needed to investigate other suitable areas of marshland in the Philippines, to see if they hold the species, and would benefit from protection, management and designation. A ringing (banding) programme at Dalton Pass would also be of great value. Research work is desirable in China to discover the preferred breeding habitat, and the best breeding sites. This will enable an analysis of threats to the bird at the northern end of its flyway.

5. **Range States¹**

China, PHILIPPINES, Russian Federation.

6. **Comments from Range States**

7. **Additional remarks**

The genus *Acrocephalus* responds well to the technique of tape-playback, and use of this technique as part of planned research effort may well help detect the presence of this species.

8. **References**

- BirdLife International (2000) *Threatened Birds of the World*. Barcelona and Cambridge, UK: Lynx Edicions and BirdLife International.
- BirdLife International (2001) *Threatened Birds of Asia*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.
- BirdLife International (2003) *Saving Asia's Threatened Birds: a guide for government and civil society*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.
- BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/species/index.html> accessed 19th June 2008
- Philip Round. personal communication.
- Simplicia Pasicolan. personal communication.
- Timothy H. Fisher, personal communication.

¹ CMS Parties in capitals.

