

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

A.PROPOSAL: Listing of the Whitewinged Flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi* in Appendix I and in Appendix II

B.PROPONENT: The Government of the Republic of South Africa.

C.SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1.Taxon

- 1.1. Class: Aves
1.2. Order: Gruiformes
1.3. Family: Rallidae
1.4. Genus & Species: Whitewinged Flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi* (Gurney, 1877).
1.5 Common names:
English: Whitewinged Flufftail
Spanish: Polluela Especulada
French:
German: Weissflugel-Zwergralle

2.Biological data

2.1.Distribution

Northeastern and southern Africa.

2.2.Population

No estimates of overall population are available. Maxima 22-29 birds counted at four sites in South Africa, 1990-1992 (Taylor 1994); probably 10-20 pairs present at one site in Ethiopia, August 1996 (P.B. Taylor unpublished MS). Although it is undoubtedly rare, there is no direct evidence of a decrease.

2.3.Habitat

Seasonally to permanently flooded palustrine wetland vegetation. Breeding habitat (Ethiopia) ephemeral to temporary seasonally inundated grassy marsh and sedge meadow, vegetation height 20-50 cm. Nonbreeding habitat (South Africa) variable, including hygrophilous grassland, sedge meadow, sedge beds and reedbeds; vegetation height 50-200 cm; substrate moist, or flooded to a depth of 70 cm (Taylor 1994).

2.4.Migrations

The species is certainly migratory or nomadic across international boundaries, and is possibly a regular long-distance migrant. The lack of subspecific variation between South African and Ethiopian specimens may indicate gene exchange as a result of extensive, regular or irruptive, movements. At present known to breed only in Ethiopia but may also breed in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

3.Threat data

3.1.Direct threats

None known.

3.2. Habitat destruction

The greatest threats to this rare and poorly known species are posed by continuing loss of habitat through trampling and overgrazing by domestic stock, the cutting of vegetation for domestic use and fodder (Ethiopia), and the damming, drainage, reclamation and cultivation of wetlands. Its breeding habitat is seasonal, occurs at wetland edges and in shallowly flooded areas, and is more susceptible to damage than are more permanent, deeply inundated, nonbreeding habitats.

3.3. Indirect threats

Loss of habitat as in 3.2; also disturbance and habitat damage as a result of the activities of wildfowling (Ethiopia) and birdwatchers (South Africa; potentially Ethiopia).

3.4. Threats connected with migration

Fragmentation and destruction of suitable habitat.

3.5. Utilization

None known.

4. **Protection status and needs**

4.1. National protection status

Fully protected by provincial conservation ordinances in South Africa. Apparently not legally protected in Ethiopia, but religious taboos prevent it being killed or molested by local people.

4.2. International protection status

not listed in CITES Appendices. Classified as 'endangered' by BirdLife International.

4.3. Additional protection needs

Conservation of large and small permanent and ephemeral palustrine wetlands, including those down to 2 ha in extent.

5. **Range States**

a: Ethiopia (BM), South Africa (BM), Zambia (V), Zimbabwe (V or BM), sound records from Rwanda are unacceptable (Brooke 1984; Dowsett-Lemaire 1990; Dowsett 1993; Taylor 1994, 1996).

a : BM=Breeding migrant, V=Vagrant

7. **Additional remarks**

As a result of habitat loss the future of this species in Ethiopia is extremely precarious. Urgent action should be taken to protect existing potential breeding sites and to manage other sites to recreate suitable conditions for breeding. Detailed surveys of the bird's distribution and status in Ethiopia and South Africa, and searches for breeding sites in South Africa and Zimbabwe, should be undertaken as soon as possible.

8. References

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