

**PROPOSAL FOR THE 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 griseldis* on Appendix I
- B. PROPONENT:** Government of Kenya.
- C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT:**

1. Taxon

- 1.1 Class:** Aves
- 1.2 Order:** Passeriformes
- 1.3 Family:** Muscicapidae
- 1.4 Genus/species/subspecies:** *Acrocephalus griseldis*
- 1.5 Common name:** Basra Reed Warbler

2. Biological data

2.1 Distribution

Breeds in southeast Iraq on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, and probably also in southwest Iran. Migrates to eastern Africa, where it winters in Sudan, Ethiopia, south Somalia, southeast Kenya, east Tanzania and Mozambique. There are less frequent records for Malawi, South Africa and Uganda. On migration, it passes through Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (where it may possibly breed).

2.2 Population

The population is estimated at 2,500 – 10,000 and is believed to show a decreasing trend. Although the bird may still be common in the breeding habitat that remains, there has been massive loss of wetland habitat within its breeding range since the 1950s. The maximum area of suitable habitat that is estimated to remain within the main Mesopotamian marshlands is 759 km² (c.7% of the original marshland area, as of the mid-1970s). At Ngulia ringing-station (Kenya), the average decadal ringing total for this species has been declining over the last three decades relative to the average decadal total for all Palearctic passerine migrants (by c.20% per decade). This suggests that a decline of up to 70-80% may have taken place since the 1970s.

2.3 Habitat

Occurs in aquatic vegetation growing in or around shallow fresh or brackish water, still or flowing, mostly in large, dense reedbeds. On migration and when wintering, it is found in thickets and moist undergrowth, as well as in more dry, bushy habitats.

2.4 Migrations

Reaches its Kenyan wintering sites from early December, leaving again in late March and early April. May make rapid, unbroken flights on its return to the breeding grounds.

3. Threat data

3.1 Direct threats

The main threat to the species is undoubtedly habitat destruction, particularly on the breeding grounds.

3.2 Habitat destruction

Since the 1950s, there has been considerable loss of its breeding habitat due to large-scale hydrological projects. From 1980-1988, warfare resulted in extensive damage to the breeding reedbeds. In the 1980s and 1990s, the construction of upstream dams and hydrological engineering works caused the drying up of large areas of wetland. Improvement in access to the region, with consequent increases in settlement, has resulted in increased disturbance and water pollution. By 2000 these and related problems had combined to reduce the area of the main Mesopotamian marshes to 1,294 km². By April 2003, a further third of this area had been drained, leaving a maximum of 759 km² of wetland extant. The amount of suitable reedbed habitat within this wetland area is probably significantly smaller. Wetland habitats are also under pressure throughout its migration and wintering range.

3.3 Indirect threats

Lack of knowledge of the exact breeding grounds, and to some extent of its stopover and wintering sites.

3.4 Threats connected especially with migrations

None known.

3.5 National and international utilisation

There appears to be little or no utilisation of the species.

4. **Protection status and needs**

4.1 National protection status

There are few published data on national protection status. In Kenya, the species has no special protection but is covered under the Wildlife Act. It is presumed that, as a species that is not utilised, and not considered a pest, this bird is likely to be given general protection in those countries that have enacted legislation. It should now be added, as appropriate, to such appendices as cover endangered species.

4.2 International protection status

The species is listed by IUCN as Endangered. It appears on Appendix II of CMS (under Muscicapidae *sensu lato*).

4.3 Additional protection needs

None known.

5. **Range States¹**

Ethiopia, Iraq, KENYA, Kuwait, Malawi, Mozambique, SAUDI ARABIA, SOMALIA, SOUTH AFRICA, Sudan, UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, and UGANDA. Probably also in Iran.

6. **Comments from Range States**

Kenya: Annual ringing has been undertaken at the major staging area for this species over the past three decades. Ringing programmes should be initiated in other Range States.

¹ CMS Parties in capitals.

7. Additional remarks

Monitoring programmes for the species should be encouraged within the Range States.

8. References

- BirdLife International (2000) *Threatened Birds of the World*. Barcelona and Cambridge, UK: Lynx Edicions and BirdLife International.
- BirdLife web site <http://www.birdlife.net/datazone/index/xxxx.html>: accessed 1 June 05.
- Urban, Fry and Keith (1997) *The Birds of Africa* Vol. V, Academic Press, San Diego and London.

