

Directory of Important Bird Areas in China (Mainland): Key Sites for Conservation

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IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS IN TAIWAN

- LAND AREA: 36,188 km²
- HUMAN POPULATION: 22,092,000 (610 per km²)
- NUMBER OF IBAS: 53
- TOTAL AREA OF IBAS: 6,806 km²
- STATUS OF IBAS: 11 protected; 17 partially protected; 25 unprotected



Only one of the more than 15 endemic bird species in Taiwan is globally threatened, Taiwan Bulbul *Pycnonotus taivanus*. The other endemic species could escape extinction because of effective protection, including Swinhoe's Pheasant *Lophura swinhoii*, photographed at Mount Yushan in central Taiwan. (PHOTO: CARRIE MA KA-WAI)

KEY HABITATS AND BIRDS

- The forests of Taiwan support 15 or more endemic species, most of which are found at mid and high altitude in the mountains in the centre of the island (*Biome AS07: Sino-Himalayan temperate forest*, *Biome AS08: Sino-Himalayan subtropical forest* and *EBA 149: Taiwan*), and another two restricted-range species occur on the offshore island of Lanyu (*SA 093: Lanyu*). Several of Taiwan's endemic birds were listed as globally threatened until the late 1980s because of a combination of habitat loss and hunting, including two pheasant species (Swinhoe's Pheasant *Lophura swinhoii* and Mikado Pheasant *Syrnaticus mikado*), but the situation has improved because of increased public awareness and more effective conservation measures. Only one of the Taiwan's endemic birds is now globally threatened, Taiwan Bulbul *Pycnonotus taivanus*, principally because of hybridisation with Chinese Bulbul *P. sinensis*.
- There are many coastal and freshwater wetlands in the lowlands of Taiwan, especially on the western coastal plain. Many of these are under great pressure from development and other threats, but they support important passage and wintering populations of waterbirds, most notably about half of the world population of the threatened Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* and large numbers of Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi*.

- Until the discovery of another breeding colony in Zhejiang Province, mainland China in summer 2004, the only known breeding site of the Critically Endangered Chinese Crested-tern *Sterna bernsteini* was on the Matsu (Mazu) Dao islands, which are off the coast of Fujian Province (mainland China) but under the administration of Taipei. There are important seabird colonies on some other offshore islands, notably the Penghu (Pescadores) islands, although the numbers of nesting birds have fallen substantially there since the nineteenth century.

CONSERVATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM

Several laws and regulations are relevant to the conservation of IBAs in Taiwan. The National Park Law (amended August 1983) is designed to protect natural areas, and wild animals and plants, in order to provide educational, recreational and research opportunities for the public. The Cultural Heritage Conservation Law (amended February 2000) specifies that important natural and cultural landscapes be designated as protected areas. The Wildlife Conservation Law (amended February 2004) was enacted to conserve species and maintain natural ecosystems. The Forest Law (amended January 2004) protects forest resources for the public and to produce revenue. Other laws relevant to site conservation are: Statute for Forest Recreation Areas; Demands of the Forest Law to Administer and Manage Natural Forests and Regulations of the Establishment and Management of Taiwan Province; Government National Forests; Regulations for Conservation of Hillside; Fishery Law; Law of Tap Water; and Statute for National Scenic Areas.

Six government departments have responsibilities for wildlife conservation and site protection. The Council of Agriculture (COA) administers several of the regulations listed above, including the Cultural Heritage Conservation Law and the Wildlife Conservation Law. The Construction and Planning Administration, Ministry of Interior Affairs also has responsibilities to prevent damage to natural areas. The Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Communication and Transport is in charge of ecological preservation in scenic areas. The Environmental Protection Administration is in charge of the enforcement of the Environmental Impact Assessment Law and pollution control.

Protected areas cover a total of 7,300 km² (c.20%) of the land area of Taiwan. There are six national parks (c.9% of land area), managed by the Construction and Planning Administration under the National Park Law. Sixteen wildlife refuges and 30 major wildlife habitats (c.8.8%) are managed by the COA under the Wildlife Conservation Law, and 19 nature reserves (c.1.8%) are managed by the COA under the Cultural Heritage Conservation Law. Eight small forest reserves (c.0.01%) are managed by Taiwan Forest Bureau, COA under the Forest Law.

OVERVIEW OF THE INVENTORY

- The 53 IBAs in Taiwan include nine containing mid and high elevation forest, nine in low and mid elevation forest, 28 wetlands and seven offshore islands. Thirty IBAs support threatened species, 17 have restricted-range species, 16 have biomerestricted species and 30 qualify as IBAs because they hold large congregations of waterbirds, seabirds or migratory birds-of-prey.
- Chiku and Sitsao (IBAs 27 and 29) at the Tsengwen estuary are globally outstanding because they regularly support almost half of the world population of Black-faced Spoonbill.

CONSERVATION ISSUES

- Of Taiwan's 53 IBAs, 11 (21%) are wholly within protected areas, 17 (32%) are partially within protected areas, and 25 (47%) are unprotected. Unprotected IBAs which might be considered for designation as new protected areas include Dapingding and Hsutsuo Harbor (IBA 6), Kaomei Wetlands (IBA 11), Aogu Wetlands (IBA 21), Yungan (IBA 30), Lanyu (IBA 39) and Litzechien (IBA 45).
- The main threats to IBAs in Taiwan are the destruction of wetlands in coastal areas by large development projects; damage to the integrity of habitats by road construction; pressures from tourism; pollution; encroachment onto hillsides for agriculture; and introduced species, including dogs and cats on Lanyu and escaped cagebirds that compete or hybridise with native birds (for example Hwamei *Garrulax canorus* from the mainland hybridise with the Taiwan subspecies). Chinese Bulbul is native to some parts of Taiwan, but it is spreading into the range of, and hybridising with, the endemic Taiwan Bulbul as a result of habitat modification and the release of cage birds for religious purposes.

SOURCES OF IBA DATA

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