

Tanintharyi Conservation Programme (TCP)



GURNEY'S PITTA STRATEGIC PLAN AND 2018 ANNUAL WORKPLAN

GOALS AND ACTIONS TO PROTECT THE TANINTHARYI REGION ENDEMIC GURNEY'S PITTA AND ITS HABITAT

GURNEY'S PITTA WORKING GROUP
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The Gurney's Pitta Working Group	The GPWG is an informal coalition of government, non-government, private sector and community groups and individuals dedicated to the protection of the Globally Critically Endangered Gurney's Pitta <i>Hydrornis gurneyi</i> . Current members are listed in the report.
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Cover images	<p>Front: Gurney's Pitta (male) in Lenya. Credit: Nay Myo Shwe /FFI (2017).</p> <p>Rear: FFI stock photo. Credit: Fauna & Flora International.</p>
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BANCA	Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association
CF	Community Forestry
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
DNP	Department of National Parks
FD	Forest Department
FFI	Fauna &Flora International
HCV	High Conservation Values
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature

KFD	Kawthulai Forest Department
KMUTT	King Mongkuk's University of Technology Thonburi, Bangkok
MBNS	Myanmar Bird and Nature Society
MoHT	Ministry of Hotel and Tourism
MONREC	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation
NTFP	Non -Timber Forest Products
VCGs	Village Conservation Groups

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gurney's Pitta (*Hydrornis gurneyi*) Strategic Planning meeting was carried out in Sagawa Hall, Diamond Tower, Yangon, Myanmar, on 8 August, 2017. During this session, participants set short-term goals and actions for the conservation of the species over the next five years (2018-2022), with a view to annual review. Previously to the workshop session itself, meeting participants were asked to prepare a list of key issues they believed the Gurney's Pitta should be addressing over the next five years, which were incorporated in the subsequent discussions. The facilitator was Nay Myo Shwe, coordinator of Tanintharyi Conservation Program, FFI, as well as PhD candidate at the Conservation Ecology Program (King Mongkut University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand) who has been investigating the status and ranging behavior of Gurney's Pitta.

Currently none of the remaining habitat of the species is estimated at 656 km², and has declined by 81% over the past 14 years (Shwe et al, *in press*), but the species has not form of specific legal protection and no species action plan has ever been prepared for it. The species appears to be restricted to Sundaic lowland forest below 150 m and 10% slope inclination – a habitat type which has been particularly targeted for cultivation of cash crops, especially oil palm. The species formerly occupied this habitat type through southern Thailand, but expansion of lowland agriculture has left it restricted to small pockets of southern Myanmar. At this stage, any protection of remaining forest is important, whether under the government protected areas system or some other model, such as community forestry, an Indigenous Community Conserved Area (ICCA) or Man and Biosphere Reserve (MAB).

To prepare this strategy and workplan, the participants were requested to ask themselves “What issues regarding on Gurney Pitta should be address in order to be more effective in terms of the species and its habitat conservation?” Facilitators reviewed all suggested issues and combined them into issue categories, defining the meeting dynamics. The results are presented using the broad categories identified by the participants.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Species description



Gurney's Pitta male (left) and female (right) in hand during radio collaring: Credit; Nay Myo Shwe (FFI)

Other English Names: Black-breasted Pitta

Length 21cm (8.3 in).

MALE: Forehead, forecrown, side of head and hind-neck collar black. Crown from above eye to nape and hind neck glistening blue, feathers elongated into a distant crest. Upperparts plain warm brown, longest upper tail-coverts shining blue . Primaries dark brown, inner feathers edged pale grey-blue near tip, a small white area near base of primaries 7–10 visible from below on extended wing. Secondaries dark brown broadly edged with same warm brown as upperparts. Wing-coverts warm brown except blackish-brown primary coverts. Under wing-coverts black with white spots. Chin dusky, throat off-white, gradually becoming orange-yellow. Middle of hind breast and belly black, upper breast and flanks orange-yellow, the last with black bars (great variation). Thighs whitish with pale brown admixed. Under tail-coverts black, longest tipped blue. Tail long and a little graduated, upperside black broadly edged blue, undertail blackish.

FEMALE: As male, but top of head, nape, and hind neck plain yellow-buff often finely edged black on forehead. Lores yellow buff, ear-coverts black with orange-brown shafts. Upperparts like male. Chin and throat off-white, rest of underparts very variable barred black and buffish to rufous-buffish, middle of hind breast and belly unbarred. Tail a little duller blue than male and with a green wash.

JUVENILE: Dull dark brown, with golden ochre stripes on top of head and nape, the stripes wider on nape. Ear-coverts blackish-brown with pale buffish streaks. Upperparts duller brown than adult with some buffish shaft streaks on mantle. Wings dull brown edged rufous-brown on tertials. Upper tail-coverts brown finely edged blue. Chin and throat dirty white. Breast dark brown with buffy streaks. Rest of underparts fulvous and dirty white. Tail dull blue.

1.2 Habitat and distribution

The species is mostly found in primary and old secondary well wetted semi-evergreen lowland forest (Collar et al 1986) below 150m (Gretton et al. 1993) with a slope lower than 10 degree (Eames et al 2005) in south Tanintharyi, between 7° to 12° North (Eames et al., 2005; Donald et al., 2014). The species inhabit primarily close canopy forest

with an under storey of rattans, native trees, and palms (Round 1992) and a preference for small streams or gulleys nearby (Gretton et al. 1993).

First discovered in Myanmar (Burma) in 1875 (Hume 1875) and later reported also in Thailand in 1875 or 1877 (Hume and Davison 1878). Not recorded since 1952, the species was later rediscovered in southern Thailand in June 1986 when a nesting pair was found in a 1.6 km² forest fragment with a canopy dominated by *Dipterocarpus* sp. trees, and an under storey of bamboo *Dendrocalamus* sp., palms (*Licuala peltata*, *Licuala spinosa* and *Salacca rumphii*) (Round and Treesucon 1986). Unfortunately, due to the lack of an effective legal protection plan of their remaining habitat, approximately 30 km² of extreme lowland forest, the Thai population was reported to be “functionally extinct” by 2013-2014 when only three related individuals were found (Round 2014).

Later in May 2003, the species was rediscovered in the Tanintharyi, southern most Myanmar, where it was first described more than a century ago (Eames et al 2005). The survey was conducted along the trans-Tanintharyi highway and all location where within 2 km from the forest edge which might explain why birds were encountered in logged primary and secondary forest (Eames et al 2005) rather than in their preferred primarily close canopy forest. Following that survey a total of five strongholds were define covering a total area of 1,431 km² (Eames et al 2005).

Between 2008 and 2009 a detailed survey was carried out on 575 points with the species detected at 101 points. Unfortunately, the survey could not have been carried out on a systematic way, due to security issues in the area, but run along small roads and tracks. This might have influenced the habitat preference recorded showing a preference for regenerating forest, as for the 2003 survey (Donald et al 2009).

A second extended survey was carried out between 2010 and 2012 when 1,337 points were visited with the species recorded at 147 points. The survey also detected the species at 291m elevation. Using a maximum elevation occupied by the species ranging between 250 and 300m a niche envelope modelling (MaxEnt) was used to estimate the remaining habitat to be of 3,379 km² (Donald et al 2014). Although much smaller than the 24,700 reported by Birdlife International (2017), this figure might still be rather wide, overestimated mostly due to the elevation extension to 300 m. The few animals detected above 150m (3.6% of the total sample of 147 detection) might be transient dispersing individuals (Shwe et al in press).

1.3 Threats

The direct threats to the species are relatively limited. The key reason for its decline has been the almost total clearance of lowland forest in southern Myanmar and peninsular Thailand through clear-felling for timber, unofficial logging and conversion to croplands, fruit orchards, coffee, rubber in Thailand and oil-palm and betel nut plantations mainly in Myanmar.

1.4 Conservation status

Recently, in 2016, the 147 location with species detection reported by Donald et al (2014) have been re-surveyed to confirm the species presence. Overall only 41 points were found to be still covered with forest and having the species inhaling them, the other locations have been lost mostly to large scale palm oil plantation and, in a smaller proportion, to small land conversion by farmers (Shwe et al in press).

Since 1999 at least 4000 km² of the Taninthayi lowland forest has been converted to oil palm plantations as part of a government plan for national self-sufficiency in edible oils (Baskett 2015). Over the past 17 years at least

80% of the lowland close canopy pristine forest (below 150 m with a slope lower than 10 degree) has been lost (Shwe et al in press), resulting in the disappearance of 3 of the five strongholds reported by Eames et al (2005).

Species is listed under CITES Appendix I. Conservation status was change from Critically Endangered to Endangered in 2008 after rediscovered in Myanmar. Based on current situation, strongly urge a change in the Gurney's Pitta current threat status from Endangered to Critically Endangered. Strict vigilance is required to ensure the species does not lose any further ground to habitat conversion and does not reach a point where its remaining population is no longer viable.

2. STRATEGIC PLAN

2.1 Vision

To secure a viable population of Gurney's Pitta in Myanmar and protect its ecosystem.

2.2 Goal

To avoid Gurney's Pitta species extinction from the world.

2.3 Objectives and justification

- To identify threats to the species and its ecosystem
- To classify survey gap and population assessment for the species
- To identify short term and long term management plan for the species survival
- To formulate and practice community base conservation

2.4 Rationale

Habitat protection

Over the past two decades the suitable lowland habitat for Gurney's Pitta has strongly declined mostly due to the fast expansion of oil palm plantation by private companies, and to a smaller extension by private plantation for betel nut, unsustainable shifting cultivation practice, and illegal logging for local and commercial used. Also, incompetent resettlement practice by local communities inside proposed Protected Areas could be a long term impact on suitable habitat of Gurney's Pitta and other biodiversity. Besides, weakness of CF implementation in some area is reflecting in habitat degradation for the species. In the end, the NTFP collection inside natural forest play a role in the species' disturbance.

Hunting

Hunting pressure in the area is higher than other areas in general. The main target for hunters are pangolin, ungulates, primates and Red whiskered Bulbul, White-rumped Shama, Helmented Hornbill, and Hill Myna. Mostly hunter utilize snare, funnel nets for multi ground dwelling species, steel trap and handmade gun. Although for different reason both Myanmar hunter and Thai hunter play a part in this hunting issue, with Myanmar hunters mainly focusing on subsistence hunting while Thai hunters focus mainly in commercial and "sport" hunting. However, what might affect Gurney's pitta is hunting for local consumption and subsistence which currently does directly target this species so far but prospective in future. And majority of communities known Gurney's Pitta is important.

Research and monitoring

Population estimation on species in the range is necessary. Most of recorded are in general and need proper estimation by systematic survey. To assess the current populations size and monitor future populations trend. Small population do trough inbreeding and easy to extinct. Lack of information on breeding success and not knowing about natural predator in the area. Therefore, need to understand about nest survival rate and nest success in the area.

To enable spatial planning for oil palm/plantation development, to identify key areas for the species and to investigate the impact of patchiness.

To understand how the species move within their micro-habitat and how they disperse within the same habitat patch and between patches. Define minimum habitat patch size for viable populations. Define the minimum corridor size for patches connectivity and how they survive in higher elevation and degraded habitat.

Livelihood and community base conservation

Community base tourism development is one of major target in MoHT, in Myanmar. Therefore, need to give awareness to MoHT first, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, so that MoHT can encourage the internal Ministries such as Ministry of Defense Ministry of Home Affairs regarding on travel permit for tourists. The ministries need to work together to promote the area too. Perhaps MONREC and MoHT can collaborate together. Current solution, best to collaborate with FFI as a main contact person as for the moment. The MBNS/BANCA/FFI as a national organization request the government (such as MONREC) for the awareness is likely to be more effective than the group of profit business companies requesting the Government (Proposed site Yadana Bon village and, Chaung Nauk Pyan and surroundings).

Awareness and communication

Main driver of deforestation is conversion of habitat to agriculture intensify such as oil palm and rubber plantation. Currently, stop for new expansion but need to keep following. Besides, local expansion is gradually increase in the area.

Fundraising

Fund is limitation for single species and less interest for Gurney's Pitta. If fund is available can protect not only Gurney's Pitta but also other low land species in the area and protect ecosystem as well.

3. WORKPLAN (2018)

The following list of actions is an overview of the priorities that were identified for 2018. The Goals are long-term, while the activities are annual.

Objective / Action	Activities	Who?	When?	Where?
Research and monitoring				
<i>Goal: Provide strong scientific basis for conservation actions and regular updates to GP Working Group and other stakeholders on species and habitat status, and to review impacts of previous actions and reassess priorities at least annually</i>				
Habitat monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual GIS-based updates on habitat extent 	FFI	2018	•
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baselines for key areas prepared with drone mapping 	FFI	2018	Lenya and Ywahilu
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular reporting of forest encroachment to authorities 	FFI & all NGOs	Every year	•
Population monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bi-annual surveys with multiple stakeholders 	FFI+BANCA+Wahplaw+KFD+ VCGs	2018-2020	All remaining habitat
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring by birding/ecotourism groups on selected sites 	FFI+tour companies	2018	Phayatan+Chaung nauk Pyan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village Conservation Groups/SMART patrols 	FFI+VCGs	2018-2022	Respective areas
Population ecology and breeding success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct distance sampling in selected locations; Yatanaporn and Chaung Nauk Pyan 	FFI+VCGs	2018-2019	Phayatan, 1020 mountain and around
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and regularly monitor nests during breeding season (around Yatanaporn) 	FFI+VCGs	2018-2019	Phayatan areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Radio collaring and tracking to understand seasonal movements and micro-habitat needs 	FFI+ VCGs	2018-2019	Phayatan areas
Implementation monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual GP working group meeting following each annual survey and habitat reassessment (eg, May/Jun) 	All team	2018-2022	Targeted All remaining habitat
Habitat protection				
<i>Goal: Ensure the is no further loss of Gurney's Pitta habitat, focusing on the known ranges and corridors around Chaung Nauk Pyan, Yatanaporn, Tae Phyu and western Tagyet RF</i>				
Large scale agro-industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct landscape HCV assessment along Mawtaung Road for corridor planning Conduct community HCV assessment in Chaung Nauk Pyan and Yatanaporn villages Provide species records/data on request to EIA companies Introduce EMP and EIA standards for the oil palm sector (with OMM) 	All team	2018-2020	Whole landscape in TNI
Medium-scale agriculture (rubber and betel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erect signboard to avoid land encroachment inside Reserve forest 	FD + KFD and FFI	2018-2010	Mainly in main road and surrounding
Small-holder agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install agro forestry practice in Gurney's Pitta habitat area 	FD, KFD and all orgs	2018-	Chang Nauk Pyan+

Objective / Action	Activities	Who?	When?	Where?
			2022	Yadanaporn
Sustainable forest management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Forest Management (CF) needs to be targeted to GP habitat, particularly in areas of important remnant populations/forest corridors 	FD+FFI+KFD	2018-2022	Chaung Nauk Pyan
Palm oil plantation engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Left remaining forest patch and corridor in plantation concession area 	FD+FFI+oil plan companies	2018-2020	Yuzuna, Htoo, Agro Atro, South Dagon
New village establishment	Make assessment before village expansion	FD+FFI _ relevant depts.	2018-2019	Ywahilu
Hunting protection				
<i>Goal: Illuminate accidental death through capture in drift nets and snares, and monitor incidents of capture for the pet trade to ensure it does not escalate into a significant threat</i>				
Community Conservation Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build capacity of the Kawthulaie Forest Department to protect Gurney's Pitta habitat through the gazettement of Karen conservation areas in Lenya and Ngawun Reserved Forests. 	FFI, Wawplaw, KFD	2018-2022	Lenya, Nga Woun RF
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and expand village conservation groups to protect Gurney's habitat 	KFD, Wawplaw, FFI	2018-2019	Yadanaborn village, villages along the Lenya River, Chaung Chi
Population management				
<i>Goal: Ensure populations at imminent risk of extirpation are removed before they are lost</i>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with plantation companies to identify remaining Gurney's Pitta habitat inside their concession and secure HCV protection within their concession. 	FFI, Wawplaw	2018-2020	Yuzuna, Htoo, Agro Atro, South Dagon
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocation of Gurney's pitta in areas immediately under threat from legal conversion to suitable safe habitat. (FFI?) ad hoc any time if needed 	FFI+FD+ all relevant agencies	2018-2022	Yuzuna, Htoo, Agro Atro, South Dagon
Tourism and awareness				
<i>Goal: Raise the profile of the species as a Tanintharyi Region flagship, indicator of sustainable development and source of pride and income for the region, the tourism sector and communities</i>				
Community outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple awareness materials and outreach plan to incentivize community participation 	FD+KFD+FFI+ Wawplaw	2018-2019	All communities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise the profile of the species regionally so it becomes recognized as the 'Tanintharyi Regional Symbol' 	FFI, national media	2018 (July, August)	Dawei (Chief Minister, Dept of Tourism)
	Establish village guardian model?	FFI	2018	Yadanaporn
Further develop an appropriate community tourism model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train communities to provide appropriate guiding, transport and camp facilities 	SST, WATT, Travel experts co., ltd. VCGs	2018-2019	Yatanaporn, CNP and Nan Taung
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign agreements between bird groups and communities to facilitate tourists (FFI facilitate) 	Tour companies +communities	2018-2019	Yadanaporn+ Chaung Nauk Pyan

Objective / Action	Activities	Who?	When?	Where?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure appropriate benefit sharing for local community (agreement ceremony) 	FFI+tour companies+ community	2018	Myeik

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No	Name	Department / Organization	Group
Group 1. Legal protection and species conservation (habitat loss, hunting, protection, etc)			
1	Daw Thin Thin Yu	FD (Forest Department)	1
2	Saw Nha Wha	KFD. Tanintharyi	1
3	Dr. Thein Aung	MBNS (chair)	1
4	Saw Moses	Ornithologist	1
5	Saw Marle Brando	Wahplaw Wildlife Watch	1
6	Min Ye Htun	Wahplaw Wildlife Watch	1
7	Saw Soe Aung	FFI	1
Group 2. Monitoring and survey (population estimation, habitat viability, ecology etc.,)			
8	Dr Tommaso Savini	KMUTT, Thailand	2
9	U Thet Zaw Naing	WCS	2
10	Dr. Niti Sukumal	KMUTT, Thailand	2
11	Dr. Somying	DNP, Thailand	2
12	Mr. Carl Reeder	FFI	2
13	Dr. Steven Brown	FFI	2
Group 3. Livelihood and community conservation (eco-tourism, livelihood support etc.,)			
14	U Moe Aung	Travel Expert Travel & Tour	3
15	U Ye Min Aung	Travel Expert Travel & Tour	3
16	Thiri Htin Hla	Wildbird Adventure Travel & Tour (WATT)	3
17	U Saw Hla Chit	Supreme Service Team (SST Tourism)	3
18	U Myint Lwin	Ideal travel Land Company	3
19	U Kyaw Htun	River Mekong Travel Company	3
20	U Nyan Lin		3
Group 4. Awareness, communication and Fund raising (EE to regional Gov, EE in community level, and fund??)			
21	U Lay Win	Ornithologist	4
22	Daw Thiridawei Aung	BANCA	4
23	Mr. Mark Grindley	FFI	4
24	Mr. Frank Momberg	FFI	4
25	U Aung Lin	FFI	4
26	U Aung Ko Lin	FFI	4
27	U Nay Myo Shwe	FFI	-
28	U Naing Lwin Htoo	FFI (supporting)	-
29	U Soe Thiha	FFI (supporting)	-

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR
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