

Lost cuckoo breaks its silence

February 26 2007

A team of biologists with the New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) have recorded for the first time the call of the extremely rare Sumatran ground cuckoo, found only on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia.

The bird was captured by a trapper and handed over to WCS biologists, who recorded the bird's call while it nursed an injured foot. Once fully recovered, the bird will be released back into the wild.

Known only by a handful of specimens collected over the past century, the Sumatran ground cuckoo is considered to be one of the world's rarest, most secretive birds, and is restricted to Sumatra's deep jungles and rainforests. In fact, ornithologists believed the bird was extinct until 1997, when a single individual was briefly seen. Last year a second bird was photographed by a remote camera trap. It is now believed to be critically endangered. Until now, however, no one knew the bird's call – a key field diagnostic ornithologists use to identify birds that live in forest. According to WCS, having a recording of the bird's call will also make it easier for biologists to locate other individuals, and to possibly evaluate the bird's total population.

"We were extremely lucky to have recorded the bird's unique call," said Firdaus Rahman, of WCS's Indonesia Program. "Our team will use the recording to hopefully locate other Sumatran ground cuckoos, and to eventually secure their protection."

The recoded call can best be described as a pair of sharp screams. It is

unknown at this point whether the bird has additional vocalizations.

Sumatran ground cuckoos are relatively large birds (half a meter long) with long tails. It has green plumage with a black crown and green bill, and striking blue facial markings.

The Wildlife Conservation Society operates a field conservation projects throughout Indonesia, and works with local partners to safeguard this archipelago's amazing wildlife, many of which are found nowhere else on earth.

The WCS project to relocate the Sumatran Ground Cuckoo was supported by the Swedish 300 Club Foundation for Bird Protection. Their Chairman, Henrik Lind, adds "We are delighted with the result of this work and we hope it highlights the need to support such work into the future".

Source: Wildlife Conservation Society

Citation: Lost cuckoo breaks its silence (2007, February 26) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-02-lost-cuckoo-silence.html>

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