

Addressing the Parties to the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

CITES Conference of Parties COP 19, Panama | 14 – 25 November 2022

To whom it may concern

The undersigned organizations (hereby ‘we’) support –

- a) The transfer of Straw-headed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*) from Appendix II to Appendix I in accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17), Annex 1, Criteria A(i) & (ii) and C(i).
- b) Inclusion of the White-rumped Shama (*Kittacincla malabarica*) in Appendix II in accordance with Article II, paragraph 2 (a), of the Convention; found in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17), Annex 2a, paragraph B.

Both of these songbird species are heavily sought after and impacted by the international trade to supply cage birds in Southeast Asia.

White-rumped Shama

Despite White-rumped Shama having a large range, only the South Asian population is believed to be stable. Elsewhere, as documented in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species factsheet, it has “declined to near-extinction”¹. The Southeast Asian population is declining (in some parts rapidly), with local extinctions having already been documented in parts of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand as a direct result of illegal trapping for the cage bird trade. Of the 14 largely island-endemic subspecies identified for this species, nine are already listed as the highest priority for conservation action by the IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group, while almost all are impacted to some extent by illegal and unsustainable domestic and international trade. The survival of several subspecies is now dependent on direct conservation measures.

There is substantial evidence that birds from across continental Southeast Asia are now traded internationally in significant numbers to help satisfy demand. At least 615 seizures of White-rumped Shama, involving over 32,000 birds, were recorded for White-rumped Shama between 2009 and 2022², many of them (presumably) destined for international trade. Demand for the species in parts of its range is now so high that “even if a small proportion of birds [were procured from the wild...] this would represent a considerable threat to populations”¹. With accessible populations now greatly diminished in parts of the species’ range, there is a risk that trapping effort will spread to South Asia and beyond with populations sequentially targeted by trappers to compensate for extirpations elsewhere.

Given the urgent threat faced by Southeast Asian populations, and the current lack of any international protection, we strongly support the inclusion of White-rumped Shama in CITES Appendix II.

Straw-headed Bulbul

The Critically Endangered Straw-headed Bulbul is now believed to persist only in Singapore, Brunei, parts of Malaysia and remote parts of Kalimantan (and perhaps Sumatra) in Indonesia. Evidence suggests the species has declined by more than 80% over the last 15 years.³ It is believed to have been extirpated from Myanmar and Thailand, as well as parts of Malaysia (where it is now almost wholly confined to protected areas) and Indonesia, almost solely due to trapping for the cage bird trade. Highly sought after for its melodious song, demand for wild-caught birds (that are often considered superior singers) can be met at only a few locations, fuelling illegal and unsustainable international trade. With an already small population size of less than 1,700 mature individuals³, inclusion of the species in

¹ <http://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/white-rumped-shama-kittacincla-malabarica>

² <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/documents/E-CoP19-Prop-08.pdf>

³ <http://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/straw-headed-bulbul-pycnonotus-zeylanicus>

CITES Appendix I will accord the appropriate international protection that the species urgently needs to halt further declines. We strongly support the transfer to Appendix I of the Straw-headed Bulbul.

We would like to congratulate the Governments of Singapore and Malaysia on their proposed amendments to the Appendices that will be considered at the CITES COP 19. We offer our assistance in seeing the adoption of both of these proposals at the CITES CoP19. We believe this as a necessary step to conserving both these songbird species, and mitigating the adverse impacts of illegal, unregulated and unsustainable international trade. We also offer our full support and assistance in subsequent action necessary to conserve these species.

Supported by:

IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist
Group

Biodiversity And Nature Conservation
Association (Myanmar)

Bird Conservation Society of Thailand

BirdLife International

Bombay Natural History Society

European Association of Zoos and Aquaria
(EAZA)

EAZA Silent Forest Group

Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka

Lincoln Park Zoo

Malaysian Nature Society

Mandai Nature

Mandai Wildlife Group

Monitor Conservation Research Society

Nature Society (Singapore)

NatureLife Cambodia

World Wildlife Fund