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FOREST NOTES AND OBSERVATION

FIRST SIGHTING OF RUFIOUS-BELLIED EAGLE *HIERAAETUS KIENERII* (E. GEOFFROY, 1835) FROM JHARKHAND, INDIA: A NOTE ON ITS DESCRIPTION AND CONSERVATION

The Rufous-bellied eagle *Hieraaetus kienerii* (E. Geoffroy, 1835) a least concern birds of Accipitridae family is fairly common resident species of humid evergreen forests of India and South-east India (Clark and Schmitt, 1993). It belongs to order Falconiformes and is bird of prey; they are at the top of food chain. In India, they are found in the Western Ghats and Himalayan region (Grimmett *et al.*, 1998). Although the distribution of these birds is well in Sri Lanka, their number is not so great (Jayaneththi, 2010). Taher (1992) sighted the birds from Trimula town of Andhra Pradesh. Recently Dutta (2015) recorded two individual from Kanger Dhara river of Kanger valley National Park in Chhattisgarh.

On 25th November, author (SKS and SX) sighted an adult Rufous-bellied eagle *Hieraaetus kienerii* at Mundu Reserve Forest (23°44'7.71"N and 84°14'00.14"E) in Palamau Tiger Reserve, while conducting an ornithological survey. The RBE was gliding and soaring over the canopy of sal forest, at about 100 meter from ground at 1430 hours. The weather was clear with

slightly windy. The topography of the area was slightly undulating. We observed the bird for about 15 minutes and took photographs for later confirmation of the species.

The field note and photographic evidence were checked with the references and identification key (Ali and Repley, 1987; Grimmett *et al.*, 2001; Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012) and confirmed the presence of species.

Sighting description

One individual was observed gliding and soaring on flight above the forest canopy by Nikon ProStaff 8x25 binocular. It appeared blackish-grey and white in colour from below. Its under parts were Chestnut brown and wing coverts contrast with the white on the throat and breast, tarsus is fully feathered, and flight feathers are thinly barred with a black edge, tail was dark.

Conservation

Although it has been placed under least concern of IUCN, in India it has been placed under Schedule I of WPA

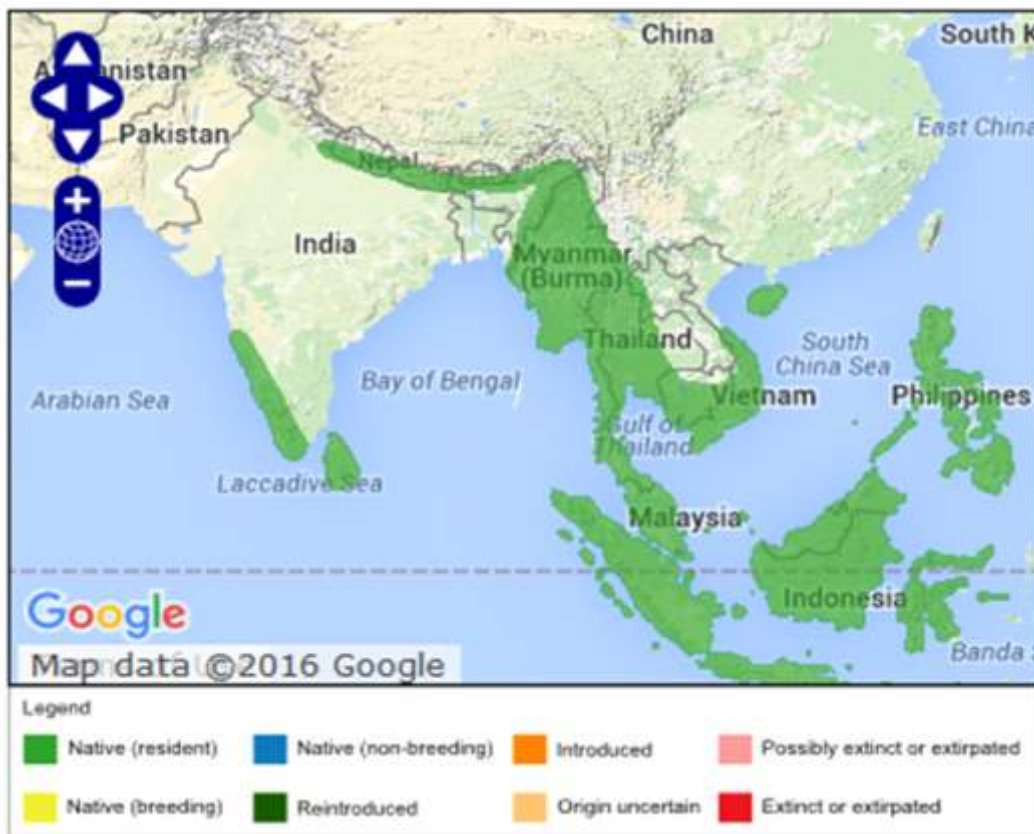


Fig. : 1 : Distribution of Rufous-bellied eagle *Hieraaetus kienerii* in India. (Source: Bird Life International)



Fig. 2 : Map showing the sighting location of Rufous-bellied eagle *Hieraaetus kienerii* at Mundu Reserve Forest in Palamau Tiger Reserve, Jharkhand.



Fig. 3 : Soaring of Rufous-bellied eagle *Hieraaetus kienerii* at Mundu Reserve Forest in Palamau Tiger Reserve, Jharkhand.

1972 since their numbers are low. Therefore it increases the chance of their becoming endangered (Jayaneththi, 2010). More effort should be made to study on status, population and current Home-range of the species for long term conservation and habitat management. In Palamau tiger reserve, habitat destruction and

modification such as rapid increase in human encroachments, agricultural intensification, and forest fire are the major threats to the species. Regular awareness campaign and trainings should be given to the front line forest staffs which will be helpful in identification and protection of the species.

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