

## BIRD TO WATCH

# Significant recent sightings of Large Green Pigeon *Treron capellei*

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## Introduction

The Large Green Pigeon *Treron capellei* was once widely distributed across Sumatra, the Thai-Malay Peninsula and Borneo and was locally very common, but serious declines have taken place and it is now scarce and very local (BirdLife International 2012). There are no recent records from Myanmar or Java, and it is close to extinction in Thailand (BirdLife International 2001). It is classified as Vulnerable due to its dependence on low-lying forest, a habitat which is being cleared and degraded at such a rate that rapid and continuing population declines are suspected (BirdLife International 2012). We report here on several records of significant numbers of Large Green Pigeons across its range between 2006 and 2011.

## Observations

In May 2006, more than 40 Large Green Pigeons were seen by JE in a fruiting tree with two

**Plate 1.** Male Large Green Pigeon *Treron capellei* in dead tree, Muara Wahau sub-district, East Kalimantan, Borneo, 6 November 2011.



Binturong (Asian Bearcat) *Arctictis binturong* in Way Kanan, Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra. This may be the largest group recorded in Sumatra. In Taman Negara NP, Pahang, Peninsular Malaysia between 2007 and 2009, JE and other observers regularly saw flocks of 20–30 birds around the forest edge, often roosting on bare trees. In May 2009, at least 50 birds were observed by JE in a huge fruiting tree, along with other green pigeons and hornbills, at the Danum Valley Field Centre complex, Sabah. In addition, occasional groups of 20–30 were seen there between 2007 and 2010 (D. E. Edwards pers. comm.).

On 30–31 March 2011, JSU observed up to 25 Large Green Pigeons at a logging concession in Melawi district, West Kalimantan province, at about 200 m. The birds were seen at the edge of secondary forest, on an *Albizia* tree. At 17h30 on 6 November 2011, while carrying out fieldwork for a bird survey in the remaining forest in the Muara Wahau sub-

**Plate 2.** A group of Large Green Pigeons in a Tualong *Koompassia excelsa* tree, Muara Wahau sub-district, East Kalimantan, Borneo, 6 November 2011.





**Plate 3.** The Tualang *Koompassia excelsa* where the Large Green Pigeons roosted, Muara Wahau sub-district, East Kalimantan, Borneo, 6 November 2011.

district, East Kalimantan (1.29°N 116.77°E), at about 70 m, MI, WP and AA observed at least 48 Large Green Pigeons resting in large (up to 30 m) Tualang *Koompassia excelsa* trees (Plates 2 & 3), on the edge of secondary forest bordering an oil palm plantation (Plate 4). The birds were seen to be preening before roosting together in a smaller, 15 m high tree. Despite their close proximity to the oil palm plantation, many large trees remain because the local villagers believe that cutting them down will bring a major storm or other disaster to their village. This last observation is one of the largest records of the species during recent decades. In the early twentieth century, flocks of 200–300 birds were reported as normal in Peninsular Malaysia but it is now regarded as a rare resident there (BirdLife International 2001). The most recent large flocks reported from Peninsular Malaysia were 12–25 birds coming to a *Ficus* tree regularly monitored in Kuala Lompat near the Kerau Wildlife Reserve, Pahang, between March 1984 and October 1986 (BirdLife International 2001). The species was not recorded during recent surveys in Kalimantan (e.g. Meier 2005, Brickle *et al.* 2010, Sheldon *et al.* 2010) or only in small numbers (Slik & van Balen 2006, Wielstra & Pieterse 2009, Wielstra *et al.* 2011, Woxvold & Noske 2011). The recent records of 48 birds in East Kalimantan and 25 in West Kalimantan are therefore significant. An additional record of at least 50 birds in Sabah on May 2009 shows that Borneo potentially still has a sizeable population. The regular observation in Peninsular Malaysia of flocks of 20–40 birds in Taman Negara NP (at both the Kuala Tahan and Merapoh entrances, with a



**Plate 4.** A typical example of residual secondary forest bordering an oil palm plantation; habitat in which Large Green Pigeons *Treron capellei* are found in Muara Wahau sub-district, East Kalimantan, Borneo, 6 November 2011.

maximum of 70 in 2003 at Merapoh), regularly up to 60 over the past 10 years at the Belum-Temengor Forest Complex, Kedah, and a maximum of 27 at Ulu Mudah, Kedah, shows that sizeable populations may also persist inside large national parks in the Thai-Malay Peninsula.

### Conclusion

Populations of the large-fruited tree species favoured by the Large Green Pigeon—an extreme dietary specialist, potentially vulnerable to large fluctuations in its food supply—are likely to be reduced to extremely low densities as a result of the combined impact of deforestation in the Sundaic lowlands and selective (often illegal) logging which targets all remaining stands of valuable timber including *Ficus* trees (BirdLife International 2012).

The occurrence of Large Green Pigeons at the edge of secondary forest bordering oil palm plantations is therefore interesting. There is also a report that the species has been observed near oil palm plantations at Penajam, East Kalimantan (Imanudin *in litt.* 2011). It is therefore possibly tolerant of secondary forest bordering large-scale oil palm plantations if there is still sufficient availability of food in the forest and there also remain at least some tall trees such as *Koompassia excelsa*. It is important for the conservation of the Large Green Pigeon that comprehensive surveys are conducted to establish its current distribution and status, to gather data on its movements and ecological requirements, and lobby for reduced logging of lowland forests throughout its range (BirdLife International 2012).

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