

The Future for Gurney's Pitta Conservation in Myanmar

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The sundaic forests of southern Tanintharyi Region contain the largest remaining areas of evergreen wet forest in mainland South-east Asia and, outside of Thailand, all the remaining habitat of Gurney's pitta. Not long after rediscovering the Gurney's pitta there in 2002, BirdLife International and the Myanmar BirdLife partner, BANCA, have been advocating the establishment of Lenya Proposed National Park to full protected area status with an extension to cover a greater extent of lowland forest. However there have been numerous challenges with pushing this establishment, not least an insurgent conflict in the area. With the recent government reforms (and signs of potential peace), there are increased opportunities for conservation, but also increased threats to the lowland forest and habitat of the Gurney's pitta, most notably commercial plantations (especially oil palm) and logging. Thanintharyi Region is now receiving unprecedented attention from the international conservation community and the opportunity needs to be taken to secure the future for the Gurney's pitta and its lowland forests.