the BSC, necessarily been based on the strength of the signals that individual characters are presumed to send. All my system seeks to do is render this process more consistent and open, and by requiring multiple characters to be involved (something part-shared with Helbig *et al.* 2002) I believe this better equates with or provides real surrogacy for the way the birds themselves must make decisions about each other as possible partners; hence I regard it as consonant with the BSC. I am glad Peterson and Moyle recognise the intention to be 'simple and operational'. In many cases the more detailed scientific studies that we would all like, whether biological, ecological or genetic in nature, are likely to be a long time coming. Meanwhile, there is a pressing need for rapid, pragmatic, even-handed and intelligible taxonomic evaluations in the face of overwhelming conservation challenges in many parts of the world, and I hope that my system may prove to be of service to this end.

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N. J. Collar, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, U.K. Email: nigel.collar@birdlife.org

Rallus mirificus and *Mimizuku gurneyi* deleted from the avifauna of Samar, Philippines

D. N. S. ALLEN and N. J. COLLAR

Collar *et al.* (1999) and BirdLife International (2001) gave range extensions to the island of Samar, Philippines, of Brown-banded Rail *Rallus mirificus* and Giant Scops Owl *Mimizuku gurneyi* based on single specimens of each deposited in the Philippine National Museum (PNM). Both these specimens were collected in 1959 at the Samar Institute of Technology, Catarman (the rail in April, the owl in May), both were considerable range extensions, and both proved to be unique records for Samar. These records were accepted by BirdLife International (2000), which published a map for the owl shading in all Samar; and a draft of the rail entry in Collar *et al.* (1999) was made available to Taylor (1998), who mentioned and mapped the Samar record, describing it as a vagrant there.

Speculation about the validity of these records led us individually and coincidentally to reconsider the specimen evidence, with separate visits to PNM in April 2007 to examine the rail (DNSA) and the owl (NJC). In both cases we conclude that misidentifications have occurred based in part on the fact that neither bird is fully grown.

Brown-banded Rail *Rallus mirificus* (actually Slaty-breasted Rail *Gallirallus striatus*)

During a visit in August 1999 to PNM to look at various bird specimens DNSA noted that one of the 18 *Rallus mirificus* in the collection was rather distinct. This specimen, PNM 5972, was from Samar and had originally been labelled as *Rallus striatus* (now known as *Gallirallus striatus*). It is a male collected by G. L. Alcasid and T. Oane at the Samar Institute of Technology on 28 April 1959 (although the label appears to show 1989). However, this name has been crossed out by an unknown hand, and the name *Rallus mirificus* added in pencil. Sure that the original identification was correct, DNSA took photos of the bills of the *R. mirificus* specimens for later reference. Following the publication of the Samar record by Collar *et al.* (1999), DNSA contacted NJC about the specimen, but did not have a chance to look more closely at it until April 2007.

According to the captions to Plate 13 in Kennedy *et al.* (2000), *G. striatus* differs from *R. mirificus* in being larger (averaging 243 mm *vs* 218 mm in total length) and by having 'chestnut on crown and neck only, and upperparts more heavily spotted or barred with white', while immature *G. striatus striatus* is similar to the adult but is 'darker, lacking spots and chestnut on upperparts'. Kennedy *et al.* (2000:77) added for *R. mirificus* that 'inconspicuous buff barring on upperparts [is] confined to wings'. Taylor (1998) also referred to a different head pattern and the less extensive barring on the underparts. The Samar specimen is of the same size as the other *R. mirificus* specimens and thus much smaller than typical *G. striatus*. However, it differs in a number of features: the bill is more parallel-sided and is expanded vertically near the tip, whereas the bills of *R. mirificus* have a broader base, taper evenly to the tip and are slightly longer; the remiges have white V-shaped spots that form narrow bars on the primaries, while specimens of *R. mirificus* have plain, unmarked primaries, with pale barring mostly restricted to the coverts; the crown and neck are brown

rather than the rufous-chestnut of most *R. mirificus*; the back and mantle are also brown, streaked darker, and lack the chestnut wash of *R. mirificus*.

These features, together with its small size, presumably led to the re-identification of the Samar bird as *R. mirificus*, perhaps by someone unfamiliar with the characters of immature *G. striatus striatus*. It is worth noting here that two of the correctly identified *R. mirificus* specimens had themselves originally been labelled as *G. striatus striatus*. However, in a number of major features the Samar bird is much more similar to immature (and perhaps not fully grown) *G. striatus striatus*, and should be regarded as such.

Giant Scops Owl *Mimizuku gurneyi* (actually Philippine Eagle Owl *Bubo philippensis*)

In the 'Remarks' section of their entry for this species, Collar *et al*. (1999) reported 'The specimen from Samar is very much larger than birds from Mindanao (to the extent that it was originally labelled as *Bubo philippensis* and only re-identified in the late 1960s by J. T. Marshall), and must represent an undescribed taxon.' Label data on this bird were taken by NJC in April 1996 and subsequently incorporated into Collar *et al*. (1999), and a small series of photographs taken at the same time were later forwarded to E. C. Dickinson and thence to R. S. Kennedy for their more expert consideration; fortuitously this all happened too late for inclusion in Kennedy *et al*. (2000), and in fact no further steps were taken to consider the identity of the specimen.

The specimen in question, PNM 6035, bears three labels, on all of which it is identified as '*Bubo mindanensis*' (i.e. *Bubo philippensis mindanensis*), with various versions of the core information that it is a female collected by Alcasid and Oane at SIT (Samar Institute of Technology) on 21 May 1959. However, the third and perhaps most recent label, with 'Philippine National Museum—American Museum of Natural History' printed across the top, has a handwritten pencil emendation to the name *Bubo mindanensis* reading '*Mimizuku gurneyi* JTM '71'. In April 1996 NJC assumed that 'JTM' was Joe T. Marshall, who certainly visited the Philippines at very roughly this time (although conceivably the skin was at one time in the USA as the print on the third label indicates a formal link with New York), and that his identification—given his relevant expertise, most notably established by Marshall (1978)—was correct.

According to Kennedy *et al*. (2000), nominate *B. philippensis* is smaller and more rufous above than the southern form *mindanensis*. PNM has only one unequivocal *B. philippensis*, a nominate bird from Luzon. PNM 6035 is decidedly smaller than this bird, but decidedly larger than the PNM sample of *Mimizuku gurneyi*. Four *Mimizuku* in PNM and one in the Natural History Museum, Tring (BMNH), have bill mean 34 (range 31–37) mm, tarsus 50 (48–51) mm, wing 227 (218–239) mm, tail 119 (114–125) mm, the single *Bubo p. philippensis* in PNM and seven (all nominate) in BMNH have bill mean 48 (45–52), tarsus 72 (67–78), wing 331 (302–345), tail 191 (174–203), and PNM 6035 has bill 40, tarsus 64, wing 260, tail 148. The feet and claws of PNM 6035 are only slightly less powerful than in *Bubo* but much more so than in *Mimizuku*. The bill is wider-based (less laterally compressed) than in *Mimizuku*. Everything therefore points to PNM 6035 being a four-fifths-grown Philippine Eagle Owl *Bubo philippensis* (IUCN status Vulnerable), the juvenile plumage of which is unknown (Holt *et al*. 1999, König *et al*. 1999, Kennedy *et al*. 2000); Samar is already established as within the range of the species (Collar *et al*. 1999). However, following the breeding of Philippine Eagle Owls in captivity (Warburton 2006, 2007) we defer publication of descriptions of this plumage until fuller evidence can be assembled; this might also validate or contradict the assumption here that PNM 6035 is a *B. philippensis*.

CONCLUSION

Both *Rallus mirificus* and *Mimizuku gurneyi* are of conservation concern, the former being Data Deficient and the latter Vulnerable under the IUCN criteria (BirdLife International 2001), and this re-identification of specimens from Samar reduces the number of islands from which they are known, suggesting that their circumstances are somewhat more straitened than was hitherto believed. On the other hand, evidence of *Bubo philippensis* breeding on Samar was to be expected, so this record does little to improve the species's global conservation status. While the value of museum specimens to threatened species status evaluation remains undiminished (Collar and Rudyanto 2003), this incident certainly emphasises the need for closer scrutiny of identifications on labels before range extensions of this type are accepted. To be fair, however, what was mistakenly being trusted in both these instances was the pencilled emendations rather than the formal catalogue identifications, which still apply to both specimens.

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D. N. S. Allen, 97 Sussex Way, London N7 6RU, U.K.
N. J. Collar, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, U.K. Email: nigel.collar@birdlife.org

Birds of Jagdishpur Reservoir, Nepal

HEM SAGAR BARAL

Jagdishpur Reservoir is the largest reservoir in Nepal (at 2.25 km^2) and is considered to be among the most important wetland sites in the country (Bhandari 1998, HMGN/MFSC 2002). In 2003, Jagdishpur was designated a Ramsar site. Despite it being listed as a key wetland, not much is known about its birds or other fauna. The reservoir and its surrounds are believed to provide important habitat for resident, wintering and passage migrant wetland birds. A total of 37 wetland-dependent bird species was found in four visits (DNPWC and IUCN 2003) and five globally threatened species have been recorded including the Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* (Baral and Inskipp 2005). Other fauna recorded here include the globally threatened smooth-coated otter *Lutrogale perspicillata* and 25 species of fish (DNPWC and IUCN 2003).

The 2003 National Wetland Policy of Nepal encourages the biological inventory of important wetlands sites in Nepal and the use of such information for the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands (HMGN/MFSC 2003). Ornithological surveys and conservation awareness programmes for local communities have been recommended as high priority for the conservation of Jagdishpur (Baral and Inskipp 2005). Following these recommendations, I carried out surveys in 2005–2006 to gather baseline information on avifauna of the site, and to propose conservation measures.

STUDY AREA

Jagdishpur Reservoir (27°35′N 83°05′E, Fig. 1) lies at an elevation of 197 m in the Kapilvastu District of Lumbini Zone, southwest Nepal. This irrigation reservoir was constructed over the location of Jakhira Lake and surrounding agricultural land in the early 1970s. A rock-

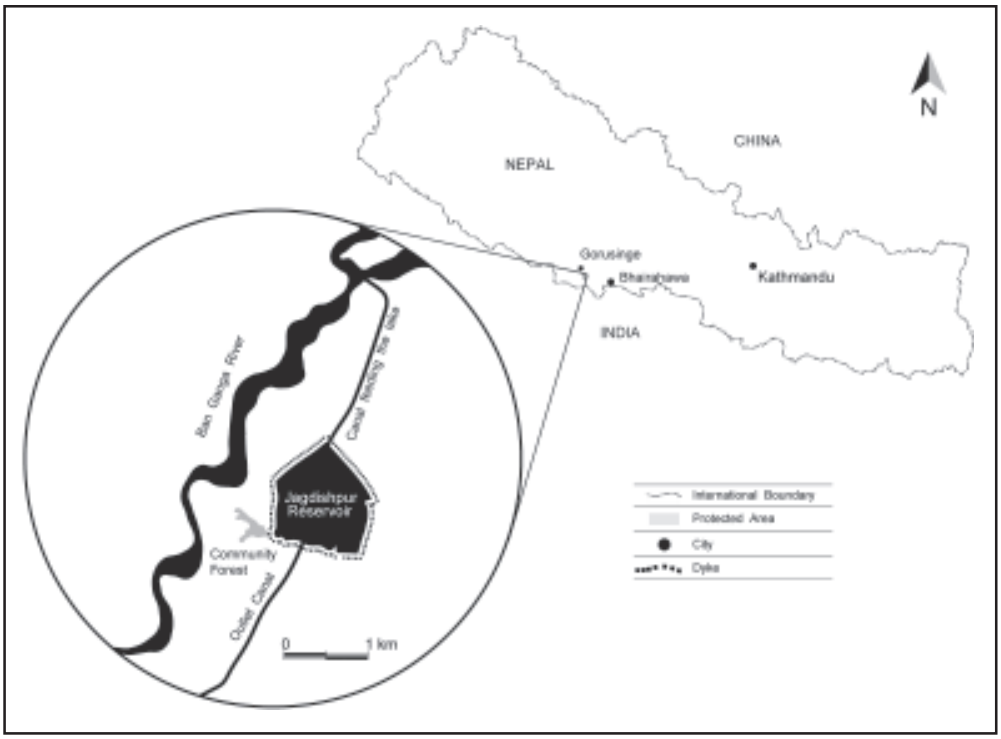

Figure 1. Location and rough map of Jagdishpur Reservoir, Kapilvastu District, Nepal.