Current conservation status of Nahan's Francolin in Uganda

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Effective planning for the conservation of threatened species in Africa

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This paper outlines the components of a participatory process for deciding on and presenting the targets and actions required for the conservation of threatened species. The process involves action required before, during and after the participatory stakeholder workshop. Particular emphasis is placed on the components of the stakeholder workshop and the role that each component contributes to developing a species action plan. The need to involve representatives from all stakeholder groups with an interest in the species and habitat being discussed is highlighted. By involving all stakeholders, maximum information is gained and used to decide on the best course of action needed to conserve a species. A further benefit is that stakeholders take ownership of the final product and this substantially improves implementation of the agreed conservation actions. The primary actions required before the stakeholder workshop are stakeholder analyses to determine who should be contributing to the stakeholder workshop, and the compilation and dissemination of background information to all stakeholders. The workshop involves four main components. The first is a review of the background information with discussion to identify the gaps in knowledge and capture information from stakeholders not yet published. The second is a thorough analysis of the threats facing the species, as well as the linkages between threats. This results in stakeholders ultimately agreeing and understanding the same threats in the same manner. The third is using the threat analyses to compile actions and targets that should be undertaken and achieved in order to improve the conservation status of a species by reducing or eliminating the threats to the species and its habitat. It is during this stage that stakeholders also agree which actions they have the mandate or ability to undertake and that the conservation of a threatened species and its habitat is a team effort requiring inputs from all stakeholders. The final step is to agree on what, who, how and when implementation of the action plan will be monitored and evaluated. The immediate priority after the workshop is to complete compilation and publication of the action plan, with continued input from all stakeholders. The process was developed by the BirdLife International Africa partnership, with technical and financial support from the RSPB and UK Darwin Initiative. The process has to date been used to prepare eight international and 16 national species action plans for birds and mammals. The process is highly suited to all forms of conservation planning for species.

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We studied one of the world's most threatened Galliformes, Nahan's Francolin (*Francolinus nahani*). A forest-specialist partridge, it is now found globally in less than 10 forest fragments in Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and is listed as globally Endangered. While habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation have undoubtedly contributed to its current plight, there is debate about the importance of direct human exploitation, although it is known to occur. Here we present data on the spatial patterns of hunting pressure and habitat change at the three Ugandan sites for the species, and relate these to population densities and habitat selectivity by the birds. We show how hunting pressure and habitat change affect francolin populations, and we present a model of future change. In addition to re-surveying previously worked forest compartments for monitoring purposes, we investigated, for the first time, forest patches of various sizes and degrees of connectivity around the main forest blocks. Using this information, we describe the spatial structure of francolin populations and attempt to understand how long term changes in the size and shape of habitat fragments will affect this species. We identify Mabira Forest Reserve as an important priority for the future conservation of Nahan's Francolin, and highlight the fact that the forest has declined in area by about 30% in the last few decades. During our fieldwork, we observed rampant illegal habitat degradation and destruction in Mabira. Furthermore, efforts to install a conservation NGO in the communities surrounding the reserve have recently faltered for financial reasons. We discuss possible approaches to securing the long-term conservation of Mabira Forest in the light of recent changes in Ugandan forestry policy. We also present a coherent global strategy for future conservation and research work on this threatened species.