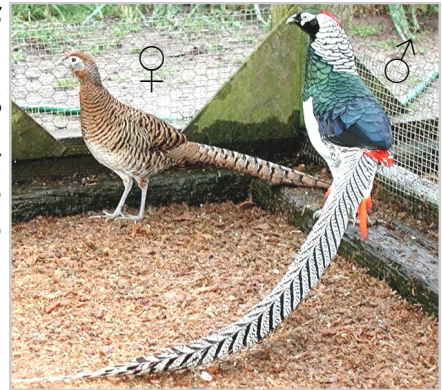


## LADY AMHERST'S PHEASANT

Lady Amherst's Pheasant, *Chrysolophus amherstiae*, belongs to the order Galliformes and the family Phasianidae. The name commemorates Sarah, Countess Amherst, wife of William Pitt Amherst, Governor General of Bengal, who was responsible for sending the first specimen of the bird to London in 1828.



The natural range of this species is south western China and Myanmar, but it has been introduced elsewhere, and has established a self-supporting, but now declining, feral population, based on Bedfordshire in the United Kingdom.

The adult male Amherst's is 100-120cm (39-47 inches) in length, with the tail being 80cm (31½ inches) of the total length. An adult male is unmistakable with its black and silver head, long grey tail and rump, and red, blue, white and yellow body plumage. The barred silver "cape" can be raised in display. The male has a gruff call in the breeding season.



FEMALE COMMON PHEASANT  
*Phasianus colchicus*  
Photo: Gary Noon

The female is much duller than the male, being mottled brown all over, similar to that of the female Common Pheasant but with finer barring. A female Golden Pheasant is very similar, but has a lighter head and less well defined underparts.

The most closely related species is the Golden Pheasant, with which they will readily interbreed in captivity.

Even though the male is striking in appearance, Lady Amherst's Pheasants are very difficult to see in their natural habitat of dense, dark forests with an understory of thick undergrowth. Consequently, little is known of their behaviour in the wild.

Amherst's are ground-feeders, their diet predominantly consisting of grain, leaves and invertebrates. They can fly, but prefer to run; if startled they suddenly burst rapidly upwards with a very distinctive wing sound.



Amherst X Golden. In a pure Lady Amherst's Pheasant, the red crest would begin well back on the head, not at the beak, and the belly would have no red.

Photo: Georges Jansoone

Widespread throughout its large range, the Lady Amherst's Pheasant is evaluated as "Least Concern" on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia

