

MIKADO PHEASANT



Mikado Pheasant
Syrmaticus Mikado
Photo: "Snowyowls"

The Mikado Pheasant is endemic to the mountainous regions of Taiwan, where it occupies dense shrubs, bamboo growth and grassy terrain with conifer over-story in the central and southern part of the island, from 2000 to 3200 metres above sea level.

The shiny long-tailed males of the species is up to 70cm (27.5") in body length, while the smaller and less showy females measure up to 47cm (18.5"). The long, stiff shiny tail feathers of this pheasant were used by the aboriginal Taiwanese as a head-dress decoration. The type specimen of this bird comprises just two such tail feathers obtained in 1906 by collector Walter Goodfellow from the head-dress of one of his porters.

These birds often come out into the open in either light rain or after heavy rain, when the mist conceals them. They tend to be alert, solitary, and quiet. They will tolerate humans, as long as they keep at least 10-20m (30-60 feet) away. If seriously disturbed, they slowly and cautiously seek shelter in the surrounding vegetation, rather than fluttering away in a panic. If hard pressed, they fly short distances down the mountainside. Males are territorial, with a range of 200-400m (650-1300 feet) in radius.



Mikado hen and chicks

The diet of various fruit, leaves, vegetation, seeds and invertebrates is foraged on the forest floor, and mountain trails, in a manner similar to that of chickens.

The Mikado Pheasant breeds from March to June. The nest mainly consists of dead branches, fallen leaves, dry grass and feathers, and is placed in tree holes or depressions under rocks. The average clutch is three to eight creamy-coloured eggs. The hen is solely responsible for the incubation of the egg. Incubation takes 26-28 days. The looks after the fledglings for the up to six months it takes them to be fully independent.

The wild population is only about 10,000 individuals, mainly in the Yushan National Park. Heavy hunting was a problem in the past, but is not considered a serious threat today.

The species is well established in captivity overseas, but rather inbred.

The Mikado Pheasant is evaluated as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. It is listed on Appendix I of CITES.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia