

## THE SILVER PHEASANT



The Silver Pheasant, *Lophura nycthemera*, is found in mountainous forest areas of mainland South-east Asia, eastern and southern China. There are introduced populations in Hawaii and in various locations on the United States mainland. The male is black and white, and the female mainly brown. Both sexes have a bare red face and red legs (the latter separating it from the greyish-legged Kalij Pheasant). It is common in aviculture throughout the world, and remains common in the wild, but some subspecies (notably *whiteheadi* from Hainan, *engelbachi* from southern Laos, and *annamensis* from southern Vietnam) are rare and threatened.

The Silver Pheasant was placed in the genus *Phasianus* when described by Linnaeus in 1758. However, today all major authorities place the Silver Pheasant in the genus *Lophura*. This pheasant is closely related to the Kalij Pheasant, *Lophura leucomelanos*, with which it will hybridise.

It is a relatively large pheasant, with males of the largest subspecies having a total length of 120 - 125cm (47-49 inches), including a tail of up to 75cm (39 inches), while the males of the smallest subspecies barely reach 70cm (27.5 inches) in total length, including a tail of about 30cm (12 inches). Females of all subspecies are significantly smaller than their respective males, with the largest only being about 70cm (27.5 inches) in total length.



Photo: "VLiberali"

Males of the larger northern subspecies, have the upper-parts and tail white (although most feathers have some black markings), the under-parts and crest are glossy bluish-black. The males of the more southerly subspecies have greyer upper-parts and tail with extensive black markings, which makes them appear far darker than their northern counterparts. Full adult male plumage is reached in the second year.

Females are brownish-grey and shorter-tailed than the males. Females of some subspecies have whitish underparts strongly patterned with black, and in the case of subspecies *whiteheadi* this extends to the upper mantle.

The Silver Pheasant is evaluated as "Least Concern" on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia