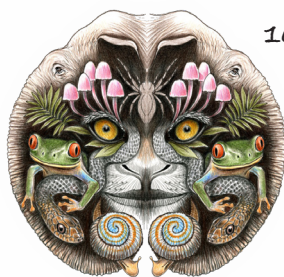


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Cover: A Warty Hammer Orchid *Drakaea livida* gets pollinated by a male thynnine wasp through 'sexual deception' — a colour pencil reproduction of photos by ron_n_beths (flickr.com) and Rod Peakall; Water colour reproduction of Flame Lily *Gloriosa superba* — photo by Passakoran_14; and a bag worm and its architectural genius (source unknown). Art work by Pannagarsi G.



Recent records of endemic bird White-faced Partridge *Arborophila orientalis* (Horsfield, 1821) in Meru Betiri National Park, Indonesia

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Abstract: The ecological records of the White-faced Partridge *Arborophila orientalis* in Meru Betiri National Park (MBNP) are extremely scant. Recently, camera trap monitoring has revealed the presence of this endemic bird in three different areas at MBNP: Malangsari (09 August 2018; 28 August 2018; 28 November 2018), Sumberpacet (17 November 2018), and Rajegwesi (18 October 2021). The White-faced Partridge was found in MBNP's highland regions, at elevations ranging 446–960 m and on slopes inclining 21.13–53.61%. Furthermore, it was located under high-density forest cover, as indicated by a normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) ranging 0.67–0.72. It was observed solitary or in groups (four individuals per frame), participating in activities such as self-grooming and foraging on the forest floor, and crossing forest ground. We conclude that our report is remarkable in terms of the distribution and habitat characteristics of the White-faced Partridge in the MBNP, which is critical information for developing conservation strategies for this endemic species in their refuge.

Keywords: Camera trap, dense forest, distribution, forest floor, highlands, steeper terrain.

The White-faced Partridge *Arborophila orientalis* (Horsfield, 1821) is an endemic bird species to the East Java highlands, Indonesia (Fuller et al. 2000), and categorized as 'Vulnerable' (VU B1 ab(ii,iii,v)) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Red List (Birdlife International 2024). It has a highly restricted range, confined to the mountains of eastern Java (van Ballen 1992; Fuller et al. 2000). Reports indicate that, White-faced Partridge resides in montane forests at elevations of 500–2,200 m (van Ballen 1992; McGowan et al. 1995), but usually above 1,000 m (Fuller et al. 2000). Currently, this partridge is recorded in three separate geographic areas, i.e., Yang Highland (van Ballen 1992; McGowan et al. 1995; Fuller et al. 2000), Ijen Mountain (van Ballen 1992; Mittermeier et al. 2014; Siddiq et al. 2023a), and Meru Betiri National Park based on old records (Seidensticker et al. 1980; van Ballen 1992).

In Meru Betiri National Park (MBNP), the ecological record of the White-faced Partridge remains poorly documented. Its last scientific report was by Seidensticker et al. (1980), which was in the tropical primary forest, though the details of this report is unclear. Their occurrence in the highland forests makes it tough to detect and monitor by MBNP staff. Additionally, MBNP features a wide range of slopes (0–283 %), predominantly in steeper categories (Siddiq

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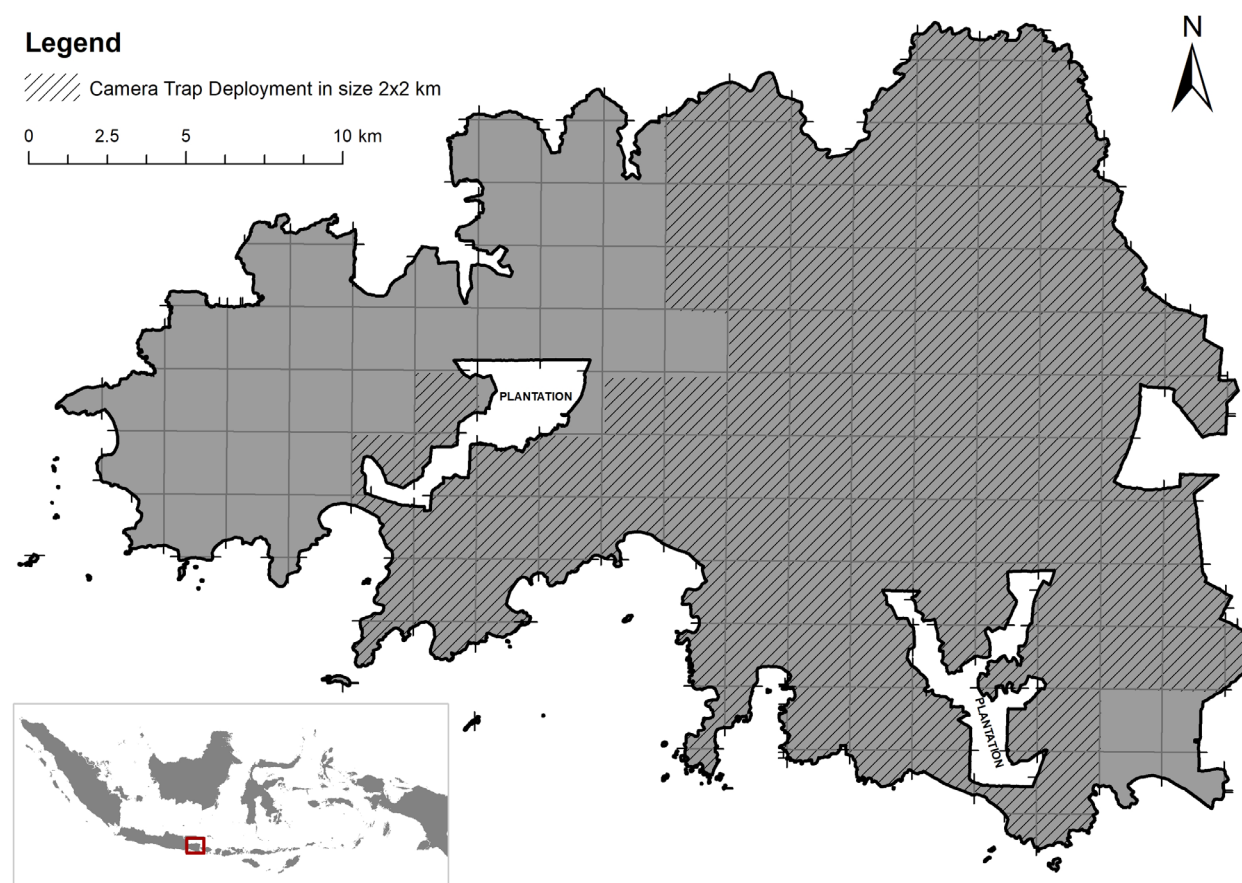


Image 1. Camera trap deployment in the Meru Betiri National Park, Indonesia.

et al. 2023b), which further complicates efforts to survey for this species. Generally, this endemic species inhabits tropical montane forests, preferring dense interior forest areas (BirdLife International 2024). As a Phasianidae species, the White-faced Partridge has limited flight capabilities, and primarily forages on the forest floor (Taufiqurrahman et al. 2022). Therefore, to effectively detect and capture this ground-dwelling species, appropriate methods, such as camera traps, are required.

Since 2017, MBNP has extensively deployed camera traps to inventory and monitor wildlife species. Camera traps, equipped with motion, and thermal sensors (Molloy 2018), are a highly effective tool for detecting ground-dwelling species (Thunhikorn et al. 2016). This camera has been proven to record several species of ground-dwelling birds, such as Green Peafowl *Pavo muticus*, and Junglefowl *Gallus* sp. in Alas Purwo National Park, Ujung Kulon National Park, and Meru Betiri National Park (Ariyanto et al. 2024). In addition, based on camera trap data from 2018 and 2021, we confirm the recent records of the endemic bird White-

facd Partridge in MBNP. This confirms the existence of this endemic species in the MBNP and also reveals its local distribution.

Camera trap deployment

Meru Betiri National Park, located in the eastern expanse of Java Island, Indonesia, encompasses an area of 52,626.04 ha (Image 1). Administratively, it is stratified into three management sectors: Sarongan, comprising the Karangtambak, Rajegwesi, and Sukamade resorts; Kalibaru, comprising the Baban, Malangsari, and Sumberpacet resorts; and Ambulu, comprising the Wonoasri, Sanenrejo, Andongrejo, and Bandalit resorts. According to Syarief (2018), the park harbours five distinctive natural ecosystems, namely lowland rainforest, coastal forest, brackish forest, swamp forest, and rheophyte vegetation. Furthermore, the park exhibits diverse geological, and land cover attributes, with an altitudinal gradient ranging 0–1,185 m, slopes varying 0–283 %, and a NDVI spanning -0.36–0.81 (Siddiq et al. 2023b).

The monitoring of wildlife at MBNP utilizing camera

traps was conducted from 2017–2023 across 111 grids, each measuring 2 x 2 km (Image 1). The primary objective of this surveillance was to detect the presence of the Javan Leopard and its prey species. Nevertheless, the camera traps also inadvertently documented other terrestrial species, such as the White-faced Partridge. Each camera trap was strategically deployed within the grids, positioned approximately 20–40 cm above ground level, and operated continuously for 3–4 months, capturing both photographs, and videos.

RESULTS

The White-faced Partridge was documented in three distinct locations at MBNP: Malangsari (09 August 2018; 28 August 2018; 28 November 2018), Sumberpacet (17 November 2018), and Rajegwesi (18 October 2021) (Table 1). The species was recognized as the White-faced Partridge based on its stocky build, grey color, and short legs (Image 2). The body size is smaller and rounder than that of the Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*, another sympatric Phasianidae species found in the MBNP (Image 3). Another prominent feature is a white forehead, cheeks, and throat (Image 2). The encounters were during the day, including morning (065430 h and 082432 h), and afternoon (1333 h, 133844 h, 144256 h, 151034 h, and 163622 h).

The White-faced Partridge was recorded in the highland regions of MBNP, at elevations ranging 446–960 m (Image 4), and on slopes with inclinations ranging 21.13–53.61 % (Image 5). Furthermore, it was occupied in high-density forest cover, as reflected by an NDVI ranging 0.67–0.72 (Image 6). In the photographs, this endemic species was recorded solitary or in groups (four individuals per frame), engaging in activities such as self-grooming, foraging on the forest floor, and crossing forest ground (Image 2).

DISCUSSION

This finding constitutes a noteworthy rediscovery of the White-faced Partridge in MBNP, which had its last scientific record around 40 years ago (Seidensticker et al. 1980). These recent records are essential for determining the occurrence and range of this elusive species in MBNP. First, the altitudinal range of the White-faced Partridge in MBNP, particularly at Rajegwesi (446 m), exposes a new lower elevation record. A slightly different report with prior references that noted its low elevation range of 500 m (van Ballen 1992; McGowan et al. 1995), and more recent observations reporting a minimum range of 600 m (BirdLife International 2024). According to this report, the elevation range of the White-faced Partridge is approximately 446–2,200 m.

Another notable habitat characteristic of the White-faced Partridge in MBNP is the steepness of the terrain it occupies (21.13–53.61 %). This may reveal an important predictor for analyzing this species' habitat preference, although further research is needed to support this hypothesis. Probably, steep terrains frequently provide unique microhabitats, such as colder temperatures, and certain vegetation types, which are critical for the White-faced Partridge's feeding, nesting, and sheltering requirements. Furthermore, steep slopes are usually linked with extensive forest cover, which corresponds to the high NDVI values seen in these partridge habitats (0.67–0.72). According to Jiang et al. (2006), an NDVI value more than 0.4 indicates a dense forest with a mix of plants, huge trees, and broad canopies. Furthermore, Taufiqurrahman et al. (2022), suggest that this species is frequently found in places dominated by Dipterocarpaceae trees, implying a possible biological link with specific forest compositions.

Ultimately, we encourage further research to appraise the ecology of the White-faced Partridge in MBNP, including population estimates, and habitat suitability models. The findings will support the MBNP

Table 1. The occurrence of White-faced Partridge in Meru Betiri National Park, Indonesia.

	Resort: Coordinate	Altitude (m)	Slope (%)	NDVI	Date	Time
1	Malangsari: -8.432° S, 113.852° E	960	21.13	0.68	09.viii.2018	0654 h
					28.viii.2018	1333 h
						1338 h
					28.xi.2018	1636 h
2	Rajegwesi: -8.524° S, 113.930° E	446	53.61	0.67	17.xi.2018	0824 h
3	Sumberpacet: -8.446474° S, 113.884460° E	610	40.03	0.72	18.x.2021	1442 h
						1510 h

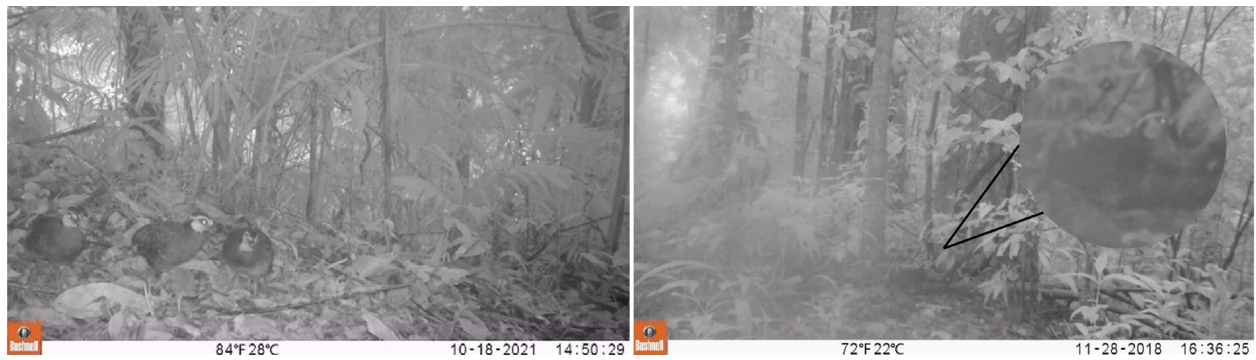


Image 2. Photographs of the White-faced Partridge in the MBNP.



Image 3. Photographs of the Red Junglefowl in the MBNP as a sympatric Phasianidae species.

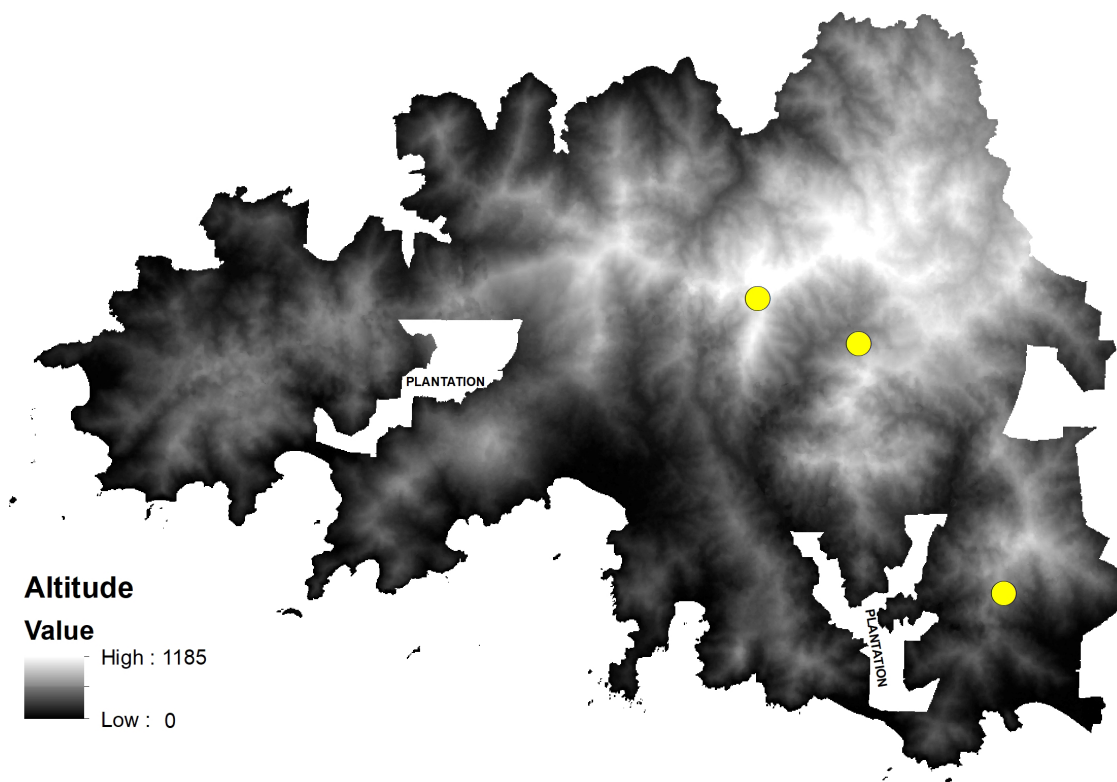


Image 4. The occurrence of White-faced Partridge (yellow dots) in the MBNP based on the altitude map.

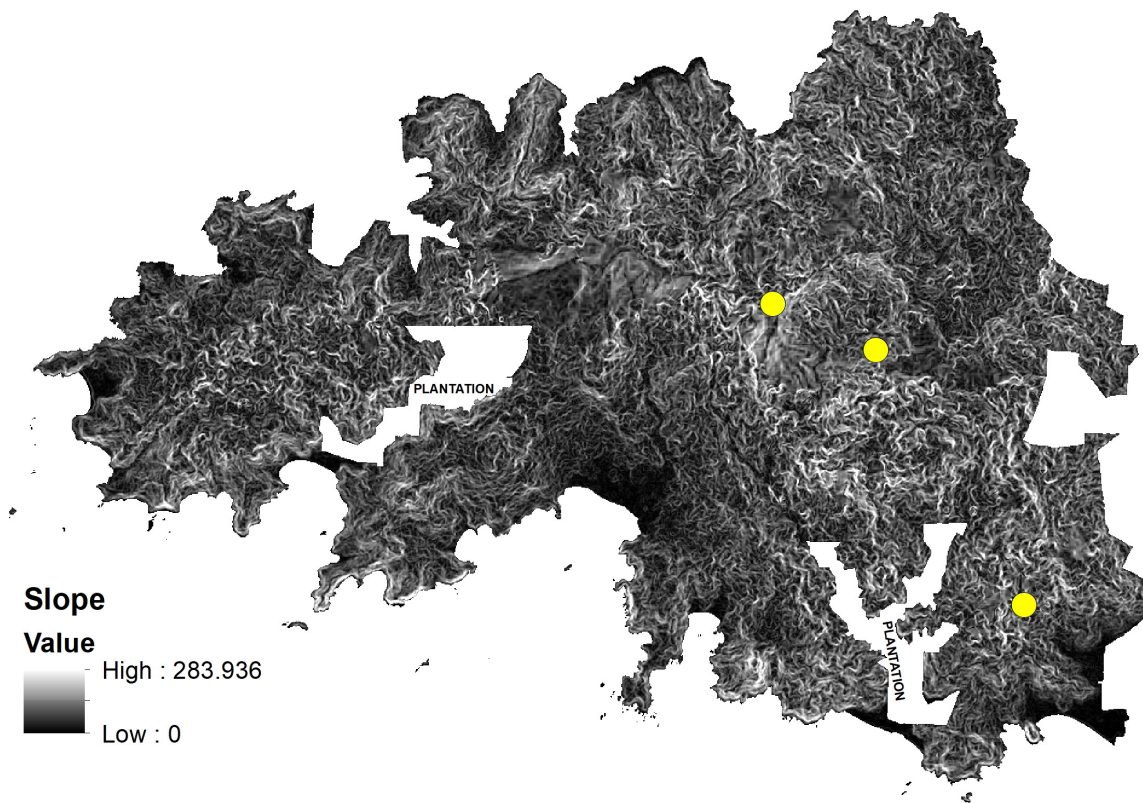


Image 5. The occurrence of White-faced Partridge (yellow dots) in the MBNP based on the slope map.

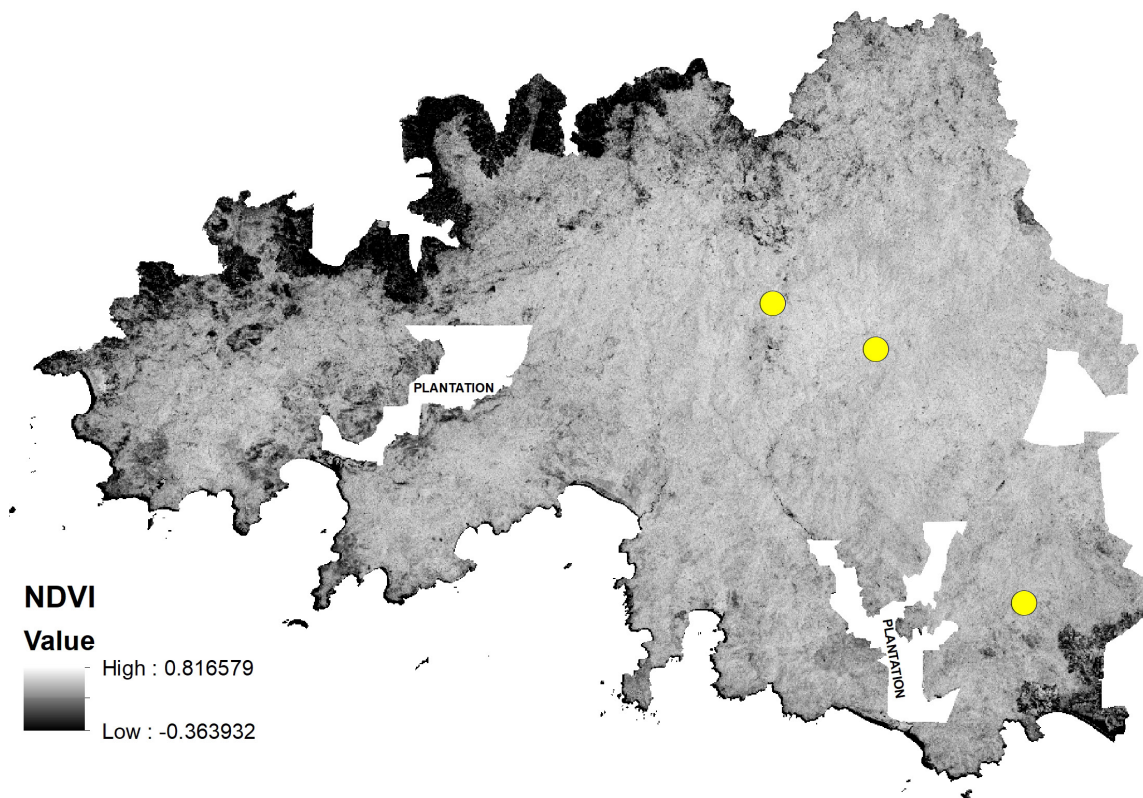


Image 6. The occurrence of White-faced Partridge (yellow dots) in the MBNP based on the NDVI map.

management as the primary conservation authority in designing and implementing appropriate conservation strategies for the White-faced Partridge. Moreover, this bird species is a potential target for poaching and trading as it has been traded in the Java-Bali bird market for 27 years (Nijman 2022). As previously stated, the White-faced Partridge is an endemic species that is restricted to the East Java highlands (Iyang Argopuro, Ijen Mountains, and Meru Betiri National Park). Thus, an ecological report on this species is critical. Our findings, in particular the occurrence of White-faced Partridge in three distinct regions at MBNP, could provide essential preliminary information.

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