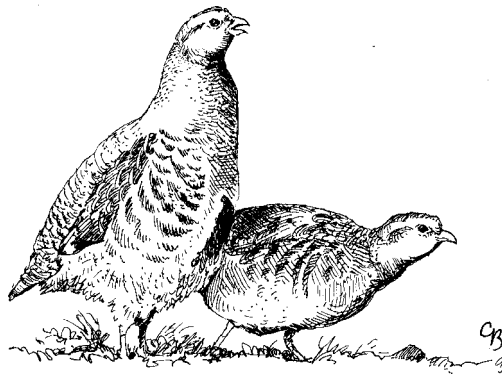


## **Management Statement**

### **Italian Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix italica***



**Final Draft, December 1999**

**Prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the  
European Commission**

# **Management Statement for the Italian Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix italica***

**Compilers:** Gianni Palumbo (LIPU/BirdLife Italy) & Umberto Gallo-Orsi (BirdLife International)

**Contributors:**

Alessandro Andreotti (INFS, Italy)

Carlo Matteucci (Servizio Fauna e Flora, Provincia di Forlì- Cesena, Italy),

Valter Trocchi (INFS, Italy)

**Timetable**

Date of first draft: 31<sup>st</sup> July 1999

Date of submission of final draft: 31<sup>st</sup> December 1999

**Reviews**

This management statement should be reviewed and updated every five years. An emergency review will be undertaken if sudden major environmental changes, liable to affect the population, occur within the species range.

**Geographical scope**

The action plan needs active implementation throughout Italy.

## **Current status**

The Italian subspecies of the Grey Partridge (*Perdix p. italica*) was described at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from a limited number of museum specimens. Subsequently, its taxonomic validity has been questioned (Violani *et al* 1988). The present document is based on two assumptions: i) the subspecies is valid and ii) some genetically pure populations remain. There is a strong need to verify both assumptions.

### **1.1 Distribution**

The subspecies' historic range included most of Italy from the alpine valleys to Calabria. In 1983, a survey identified 14 sites supporting the species, thirteen of which were in the northern part of the country (mostly below 400 m asl).

### **1.2 Population and trend**

Throughout Europe the species has declined dramatically since World War II (Potts 1986). This continues in Italy despite large-scale releases of birds for hunting, which originate from captivity or have been imported from Denmark and Eastern Europe. Only a few self-sustaining populations exist and even the largest (12000 individual in autumn [Matteucci & Toso 1985, 1985a]) has decreased drastically since the early 1990s.

### **1.3 Habitat requirements**

In Italy, the remaining self-sustaining populations of Grey Partridge can be found only in protected areas below 500 m asl, with winter cereals, hedgerows and fallow land. It can be found also in wine yards and orchards, but avoids woods. According to recent research, suitable habitat for the species is widely available, but lack of native wild birds prevents population expansion into historic areas (Matteucci 1999).

### **1.4 Conservation status**

*Perdix perdix* is considered Vulnerable in Europe due to recent widespread declines, and is classified as SPEC 3 (Tucker & Heath 1994). It is also listed in the Annexes II/1 and III/1 of the Birds Directive, and Annex II of the Bern Convention. Despite this, the species is included in the list of game species in the Italian National Hunting Law (n. 157/92).

The Italian subspecies (*P.p. italica*) is listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, while the new red list of breeding birds in Italy considers it extinct (LIPU & WWF 1999).

### **1.5 Recorded key sites for the sub-species by country.**

Large areas of the Apennine foothills in the Emilia Romagna region remain suitable for the species.

## **Threats and limiting factors**

### **Intraspecific hybridisation**

The origin of birds used in restocking programmes is unclear but often, or almost always, individuals come from Denmark or Eastern Europe (Toso *in litt*). It is believed that this practice does not produce or maintain viable populations of the Grey Partridge within Italy.

Hybridisation with birds introduced in restocking programmes has eroded the genetic integrity of the endemic subspecies. Owing partly to this, Mateucci & Toso (1984) stated that *Perdix p. italica* is virtually extinct.

Importance: critical

### **Habitat loss and degradation**

As in large parts of Europe, agriculture intensification, especially the removal of hedgerows, has resulted in dramatic habitat loss.

Importance: high

### **Pesticide use**

Along with the loss of suitable nest sites and cover, the use of herbicides and insecticides has reduced food availability for both chicks and adults.

Importance: high

### **Unsustainable hunting pressure**

The last self-sustaining populations of the species are all located in protected areas. Populations outside these areas continue to decline, despite large-scale restocking programmes.

Importance: high

## **Aims and objectives**

### **Aims**

In the short term, the aim is to maintain the current population and distribution of *Perdix p. italica*. In the long term, the aim is to promote population increase and expansion.

### **Objectives:**

#### **1. Policy and legislation**

##### *1.1 To promote agricultural practices that are compatible with the species*

Agro-environmental Schemes (Reg. CEE 2078/92) should be implemented by regional authorities in areas suitable for *Perdix p. italica*. These should include the reduction of insecticide and herbicide use, and the conservation and creation of hedgerows.

Priority: High  
Time-scale: Short/ partially ongoing

##### *1.2. To review current management of the species*

Restocking with non-native birds has failed to produce viable populations, but has resulted in the dramatic reduction (and possible extinction) of the native Italian population.

1.2.1. The Grey Partridge should be removed from the game list until further information is collected on taxonomy, population size, distribution and limiting factors.

Priority: High  
Time-scale: Short

1.2.2. Reintroduction and restocking programmes should be terminated.

Only reintroduction of birds belonging to the native Italian genotype should be considered, but as yet these are not held in captivity.

Priority: High  
Time-scale: Short

#### **2. Species and habitat protection**

##### *2.1. To temporarily ban hunting of the species*

The fact that the only self-sustaining populations of the species are found inside protected areas is a clear indication that hunting pressure is not sustainable. Recovery of populations outside these areas is only possible through a temporary hunting ban.

Priority: High  
Time-scale: Short

#### *2.2. To conserve and increase available habitat*

Reduction of pesticide and herbicide use, and hedgerow conservation and restoration, are essential for the recovery of this species. This can be achieved partly by funds available to Ambiti Territoriali di Caccia (local hunting management bodies).

Priority; High  
Time-scale: Short/ partially ongoing

#### *2.3 To create new protected areas for the species*

Priority: High  
Time-scale: Short

### **3. Monitoring and research**

#### *3.1 Research on the distribution, population size, trends and limiting factors of native Italian populations*

Priority: Medium  
Time-scale: Short

#### *3.2 DNA analysis on the taxonomy of *P.p. italica**

Priority: Medium  
Time-scale: Short

## References

- LIPU & WWF (eds).1999. Nuova lista rossa degli uccelli nidificanti in Italia. Riv. It. Orn. 69: 3-44
- Matteucci C.& Toso S. 1985. Note sulla distribuzione e status della Starna in Italia. In: Dessì-Fulgeri F. & Mingozzi T. (eds.) *Biologia dei Galliformi*. Università della Calabria, Cosenza: 29-34
- Matteucci C. & Toso S. 1985a. Densità, dinamica e fattori limitanti della popolazione di starne del territorio di bonifica del Mezzano. In: Fasola M. (ed.) *Atti III Conv. It. Ornitologia*, Salice Terme: 27-30.
- Matteucci C. 1999. La Starna. In: Toso S., Gellini S., Benassi M.C. & Zanni M.L. (eds.) *Carta delle Vocazioni Faunistiche della regione Emilia Romagna*. Assessorato Agricoltura Regione Emilia Romagna:59-77
- Potts G.R. 1986. *The partridge. Pesticides, predation and conservation*. Collins Professional Books, London. 274 pp.
- Tucker, G. M. and Heath, M. F. (1994) *Birds in Europe: their conservation status*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International (BirdLife Conservation Series No. 3).
- Violani C.G., Fedrigo A. & Massa R. 1988. A reevaluation of the systematic status of the Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix italica*, Hartert). *Bull. Brit. Ornith. Cl.*, 108:22-27.