

# Taita Thrush (*Turdus helleri*)

## Thrushes

The **Taita Thrush** (*Turdus helleri*), also known as **Taita Olive Thrush** or **Heller's Ground Thrush**, is a critically endangered bird from the family of [thrushes](#) (Turdidae), endemic to the Taita Hills in Kenya.



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## Description

The Taita Thrush was previously classified as subspecies of the [Olive Thrush](#) (*Turdus olivaceus*), but it is regarded as distinct species since 1985. It reaches a length between 20 to 22 centimetres. Head, breast and upperparts are colored darkly. The underparts are white and the flanks have a rufous hue. The eyes and the bill exhibit a pale orange coloration. It was named after zoologist Edmund Heller (1875 -1939) a workmate of the American ornithologist Edgar Alexander Mearns (1856 - 1916) who described this species scientifically in 1913.

## Distribution

The Taita Thrush is restricted to four severely fragmented forest parcels in the Taita Hills in Kenya. These are Mbololo with circa 200 ha, Ngangao with circa 92 ha, Chawia with circa 50 ha and Yale with 2 ha.

## Ecology

It is restricted to montane moist forests. Though its natural habitat where it is occurred was severely logged in the past it is avoided forests with secondary growth, shrub vegetation, and cultivated areas. Despite of extensive research only a very few migrations were determined between the fragmented populations.

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