

## Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii* at Hanbury Hall Worcestershire

Nicki Farmer

Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii* is listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as Vulnerable. It is native to parts of central and eastern China where it has declined due to over hunting and habitat loss. It has been introduced to parts of Europe including France, the Czech Republic and occasionally in the UK (IUCN website). The first Reeves's Pheasant to be brought to the UK was presented by John Reeves to the Zoological Society of London in 1831, and despite many releases over the years this bird has failed to become established in Britain or Ireland (Lever 2009).

One morning in late November 2021 there was a strange bird-call that I didn't recognise, coming from the gardens of Hanbury Hall. I managed to track down the owner of the call standing on the wall to the side of the Bothy (01).



01. Male Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii* showing long tail, with wall measurement (still from video). Hanbury Hall. November 2021. Nicki Farmer.

It was a pheasant but this one had a white head and a black eye mask characteristic of the Reeves's Pheasant. I have occasionally been lucky to see these birds, but usually as individuals. However, on this occasion the calling bird was not alone as there were two others in the field just behind the gate (02), so that explained why there was so much noise.

This striking bird has the longest tail of all the pheasants, reaching 200cms or more in older birds. According to various internet sources (eg. 'Birdfact' and 'OpticsMag' websites) the tail of the male bird grows back each year after moulting, on average 30cm (12 inches) longer than the previous year. By measuring the wall in the

photograph (01) I calculated the calling bird to have a tail length of well over 80cms, so it could have been three years old. No references are available for the annual increase in tail lengths as quoted on the websites but Muller & Seibert (1966) give details of the moult process in Reeves's Pheasants.



02. Younger male Reeves's Pheasants at Hanbury Hall November 2021. Nicki Farmer.



03. A male Reeves's Pheasant continued to be seen well into March 2022. Nicki Farmer.

Although these birds will almost certainly have been released by the local shoot it could be that this particular bird has survived in the Hanbury area for three years. These handsome pheasants can live for around nine years so hopefully we'll see more of him in the future.

One Reeves's was seen again a couple more times at the end March 2022 (03).

### References

- Birdfact website. Available at: <https://birdfact.com/birds/reevess-pheasant> [Accessed 07.04.21].  
 IUCN website. Available at: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/22679346/131873938#assessment-information> [Accessed 07.04.21].  
 OpticsMag website. Available at: <https://opticsmag.com/reevess-pheasant/> [Accessed 18.04.22].  
 Lever, C. 2009. *The Naturalized Animals of Britain & Ireland*. New Holland Publishers (UK) Ltd.  
 Mueller, C.F. & Seibert, H.C. 1966. Wing & tail molt in the Reeves Pheasant. *The Ohio Journal of Science* 66(5): 489.

### Images

01. Reeves's Pheasant *Syrnaticus reevesii* showing long tail. Hanbury Hall November 2021. Nicki Farmer.  
 02. Younger Reeves's Pheasants at Hanbury Hall November 2021. Nicki Farmer.  
 03. A male Reeves's Pheasant continued to be seen through March 2022. Nicki Farmer.