

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

Editors

N. J. COLLAR (Editor-in-chief),
A. V. ANDREEV, S. CHAN, M. J. CROSBY, S. SUBRAMANYA and J. A. TOBIAS

Maps by

RUDYANTO and M. J. CROSBY

Principal compilers and data contributors

■ **BANGLADESH** P. Thompson ■ **BHUTAN** R. Pradhan; C. Inskipp, T. Inskipp ■ **CAMBODIA** Sun Huan; C. M. Poole ■ **CHINA** ■ **MAINLAND CHINA** Zheng Guangmei; Ding Changqing, Gao Wei, Gao Yuren, Li Fulai, Liu Naifa, Ma Zhijun, the late Tan Yaokuang, Wang Qishan, Xu Weishu, Yang Lan, Yu Zhiwei, Zhang Zhengwang. ■ **HONG KONG** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (BirdLife Affiliate); H. F. Cheung; F. N. Y. Lock, C. K. W. Ma, Y. T. Yu. ■ **TAIWAN** Wild Bird Federation of Taiwan (BirdLife Partner); L. Liu Severinghaus; Chang Chin-lung, Chiang Ming-liang, Fang Woei-horng, Ho Yi-hsian, Hwang Kwang-yin, Lin Wei-yuan, Lin Wen-horn, Lo Hung-ren, Sha Chian-chung, Yau Cheng-teh. ■ **INDIA** Bombay Natural History Society (BirdLife Partner Designate) and Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History; L. Vijayan and V. S. Vijayan; S. Balachandran, R. Bhargava, P. C. Bhattacharjee, S. Bhupathy, A. Chaudhury, P. Gole, S. A. Hussain, R. Kaul, U. Lachungpa, R. Naroji, S. Pandey, A. Pittie, V. Prakash, A. Rahmani, P. Saikia, R. Sankaran, P. Singh, R. Sugathan, Zafar-ul Islam ■ **INDONESIA** BirdLife International Indonesia Country Programme; Ria Saryanthi; D. Agista, S. van Balen, Y. Cahyadin, R. F. A. Grimmett, F. R. Lambert, M. Poulsen, Rudyanto, I. Setiawan, C. Trainor ■ **JAPAN** Wild Bird Society of Japan (BirdLife Partner); Y. Fujimaki; Y. Kanai, H. Morioka, K. Ono, H. Uchida, M. Ueta, N. Yanagisawa ■ **KOREA** ■ **NORTH KOREA** Pak U-il; Chong Jong-ryol, Rim Chuyon. ■ **SOUTH KOREA** Lee Woo-shin; Han Sang-hoon, Kim Jin-han, Lee Ki-sup, Park Jin-young ■ **LAOS** K. Khounbolin; W. J. Duckworth ■ **MALAYSIA** Malaysian Nature Society (BirdLife Partner); K. Kumar; G. Noramly, M. J. Kohler ■ **MONGOLIA** D. Batdelger; A. Bräunlich, N. Tseveenmyadag ■ **MYANMAR** Khin Ma Ma Thwin ■ **NEPAL** Bird Conservation Nepal (BirdLife Affiliate); H. S. Baral; C. Inskipp, T. P. Inskipp ■ **PAKISTAN** Ornithological Society of Pakistan (BirdLife Affiliate) ■ **PHILIPPINES** Haribon Foundation for Conservation of Natural Resources (BirdLife Partner); N. A. D. Mallari, B. R. Tabaranza, Jr. ■ **RUSSIA** Russian Bird Conservation Union (BirdLife Partner Designate); A. V. Andreev; A. G. Degtyarev, V. G. Degtyarev, V. A. Dugintsov, N. N. Gerasimov, Yu. N. Gerasimov, N. I. Germogenov, O. A. Goroshko, A. V. Kondrat'ev, Yu. V. Labutin, N. M. Litvinenko, Yu. N. Nazarov, V. A. Nechaev, V. I. Perfil'ev, R. V. Ryabtsev, Yu. V. Shibaev, S. G. Surmach, E. E. Tkachenko, O. P. Val'chuk, B. A. Voronov. ■ **SINGAPORE** The Nature Society (Singapore) (BirdLife Partner); Lim Kim Seng ■ **SRI LANKA** Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (BirdLife Affiliate); S. Kotagama; S. Aryaprema, S. Corea, J. P. G. Jones, U. Fernando, R. Perera, M. Siriwardhane, K. Weerakoon ■ **THAILAND** Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BirdLife Partner); U. Treesucon; R. Jugmongkol, V. Kongthong, P. Poonswad, P. D. Round, S. Supparatvirkorn ■ **VIETNAM** BirdLife International Vietnam Country Programme; Nguyen Cu; J. C. Eames, A. W. Tordoff, Le Trong Trai, Nguyen Duc Tu.

With contributions from: S. H. M. Butchart, D. S. Butler (maps), P. Davidson, J. C. Lowen, G. C. L. Dutson, N. B. Peet, T. Vetta (maps), J. M. Villasper (maps), M. G. Wilson

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Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge, CB3 0NA, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 1223 277318 Fax: +44 1223 277200 Email: birdlife@birdlife.org.uk

Internet: www.birdlife.net

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BLUE-CAPPED KINGFISHER

Actenoides hombroni

Critical —

Endangered —

Vulnerable A1c; A2c; C1; C2a

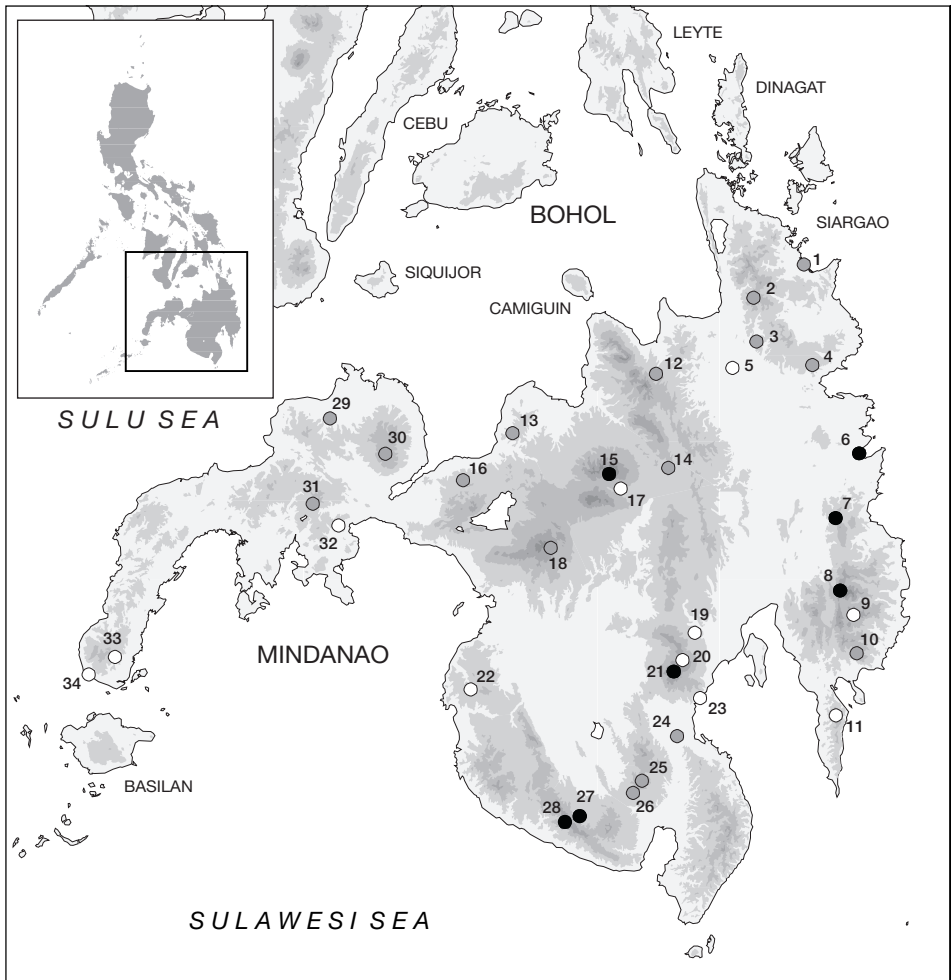


This species qualifies as Vulnerable because it has a small, fragmented population which is undergoing a rapid decline, primarily as a result of the clearance of lowland forest.

DISTRIBUTION The Blue-capped Kingfisher (see Remarks 1) is endemic to Mindanao in the Philippines. The notion that populations in the west and east of the island are separated by a gap of 100 km (see Fry and Fry 1992) seems most likely to have been an artefact of information availability. Records from the island are as follows:

■ **PHILIPPINES** *Mindanao (eastern)* “**Car–Can–Mad–Lan**”, 300–640 m, May 1963 (five specimens in DMNH, FMNH, UPLB, USNM); **Diatagon**, Mt Diwata Range, Lianga, Surigao del Sur at 500–1,000 m, April 1976 (BRT); **Mt Hilong-hilong** at the peak, 1,200–1,500 m, and at Balangbalang, Cabadbaran, 150–300 m, April 1963 (eight specimens in DMNH, UPLB, USNM; see also duPont 1976), at Agay, Cabadbaran, February 1952 (specimen in ZMC: M. Heegaard *in litt.* 1989), and at Bondo-an, 450–750 m, May 1963 (specimen each in DMNH, FMNH); **Sumile** at 100–500 m, November/December 1976 (Sanguila and Tabaranza 1979); **Bislig** at the PICOP concession, 1983 (Krupa *et al.* 1984); **Mt Pasian**, Surigao del Sur, 2.25 km north and 1 km east of the peak, PICOP road 6, May 1994 (male in CMNH); **Mt Puting Bato**, Liboton, May 1993 (specimen in CMNH); **Mt Kampalili**, Mati, March 1949 (female in PNM); **Mt Mayo** at Unloh, 970–1,600 m, at Inahanan, 1,575–1,670 m, at Limot, Davao Oriental, 150–300 m, and at the peak, 1,600–1,970 m, June 1965 (14 specimens in FMNH, UPLB, USNM); **Tumadgo Point**, March 1930 (female in DMNH); (*central*) apparently **Esperanza** on the Agusan River, October 1907 (McGregor 1909; see Remarks 2); **Mt Kapiagan** (“Kaplangan”), Misamis Oriental, May 1963 (male in PNM); **Tu-od**, Manticao, Misamis Oriental, September 1951 (two specimens in ZMC: M. Heegaard *in litt.* 1989); **Mt Kitanglad**, frequently since 1990 (Fisher mss, many observers *in litt.* 1996, 1997); **Cabanglasan**, Bukidnon, October 1951 (specimen in ZMC: M. Heegaard *in litt.* 1989); **Mt Larugan**, Bukidnon, May 1915 (female in AMNH); **Tambo**, Munai, Lanao del Norte, 450–600 m, July 1967 (two specimens in UPLB); **Mt Piapayungan** at Saronayan, Lumba-Bayabao, Lanao del Sur, 1,050–1,200 m, May 1970 (two specimens in USNM); **Burungkot**, Upi, Cotabato, January 1947 (male in PNM); **Mt Apo** at 900 m, November 1903 (male in DMNH), 1,800 m, June 1904 (male in USNM), 2,400 m, March 1905 (two specimens in BMNH from 2,400 m: Ogilvie Grant 1906), 1,200–1,230 m in February 1929 (two specimens in DMNH), at Todaya, 750 m (female in PNM), and at the Parks and Wildlife Nature Center on the east face of Mt Talomo, 1,200 m, February 1993 (female in CMNH); east slope of **Mt McKinley**, 950 m, September 1946 (male in PNM); **Santa Cruz** at Matatangan, Tagaboli, Davao City, 750 m, December 1946 (male in FMNH); **Calinan**, November 1946 (two specimens in FMNH); **Kibawalan**, Malalag, Davao province, 360–670 m, April 1964 (two specimens in UPLB, USNM); **Salot**, Palkan, Polomolok, Cotabato, February and December 1962 (four specimens in AMNH, PNM); **Lake Sebu** at Sitio Siete, Cotabato, 800–1,600 m, 1992–1997 (Evans *et al.* 1993a, many observers verbally or *in litt.* 1993–1997); **Mt Matutum**, Tupi, Cotabato, 1,730 m, February (at Tucay E-el) and March 1962 (three specimens in AMNH, PNM, UPLB), at Balisong, Kablon, Tupi, Cotabato, February 1962 (male in AMNH) and undated (male in PNM) and at Tucay E-el, January 1964 (two specimens in ZMH); **Mt Busa**, south slope at

Sitio Binati, March and April 1993 (three specimens in CMNH); (*western*) **Matam** (presumably: written “Miatan” on label), Katipunan, Zamboanga, May 1952 (female in FMNH); **Mt Malindang** at Catagan, 330 m, May 1906 (specimen in ZMB), at Masawan, 1,050–1,350 m, Gandawan, 1,200–1,670 m, Napangan, 1,670–1,880 m, Duminagat, 1,600–1,670 m, Mapitan Peak, 1,575–2,100 m, and Gumay, 800–900 m, March–May 1956 (13 specimens in FMNH and UPLB, with four others, with no geographical qualifier noted in catalogue, in YPM; see also Rand and Rabor 1960), December 1961 (female in AMNH) and January 1963 (three specimens in USNM, ZMH); **Mt Sugarloaf** at Tandasag Hill (Midsalip),



The distribution of Blue-capped Kingfisher *Actenoides hombroni* (sequence not as in text): (1) Car-Can–Mad–Lan; (2) Mt Hilong-hilong; (3) Sumile; (4) Diatagon; (5) Esperanza; (6) Bislig; (7) Mt Pasion; (8) Mt Puting Bato; (9) Mt Kampalili; (10) Mt Mayo; (11) Tumadgo Point; (12) Mt Kapiagan; (13) Tu-od; (14) Cabanglasan; (15) Mt Kitanglad; (16) Tambo; (17) Mt Larugan; (18) Mt Piapayungan; (19) Calinan; (20) Mt McKinley; (21) Mt Apo; (22) Burungkot; (23) Santa Cruz; (24) Kibawalan; (25) Mt Matutum; (26) Salot; (27) Lake Sebu; (28) Mt Busa; (29) Matam; (30) Mt Malindang National Park; (31) Mt Sugarloaf; (32) Dumalon; (33) Zamboanga; (34) Ayala.

○ Historical (pre-1950) ● Fairly recent (1950–1979) ● Recent (1980–present)

300–450 m, and at Magyo Dako (Timbaboy Head), latter being 950–1,530 m, May 1969 (three specimens in AMNH, FMNH); **Dumalon**, late 1874 (Sharpe 1877); **Ayala**, October 1887, July 1891 and March 1898 (18 specimens in AMNH, BMNH, IRSNB, UMMZ, USNM); **Zamboanga**, April 1878 (Tweeddale 1878h; three specimens in BMNH).

POPULATION The true status of this species is very hard to judge. Of two assessments, “quite common in Mindanao” (F. S. Bourns and D. C. Worcester in McGregor 1909–1910, repeated by Hachisuka 1931–1935) and “very rare” (Hachisuka 1933), Forshaw (1985) elected to agree with the former (“locally common within its restricted range”), Dickinson *et al.* (1991) with the latter (“rare resident”). The species was “not uncommon” on Mt Malindang in 1956 (Rand and Rabor 1960), but it has been considered the Philippines’ scarcest kingfisher (T. H. Fisher verbally 1997). The number of sites at which it has been recorded since 1980 is only seven, although some records will have been missed, and mist-netting in appropriate habitat in recent years has yielded six specimens (in CMNH) from four localities, three of them representing minor range extensions that strongly suggest other localities and populations remain to be discovered. Moreover, as with other *Actenoides* kingfishers, it is unobtrusive and tends to call before first light; at Lake Sebu such calls, having been traced to the caller, have shown it to be fairly common at 800–1,600 m (P. A. J. Morris *in litt.* 1996).

ECOLOGY Habitat This kingfisher is strictly a woodland form, never found in the open (F. S. Bourns and D. C. Worcester in McGregor 1909–1910). Descriptions of it as an inhabitant of “original montane forest up to 2000 m” (Dickinson *et al.* 1991) or of “undisturbed rainforest in hilly districts, mainly between 1000 and 2000 m altitude” (Forshaw 1985) are somewhat too restrictive, since (a) there are many records from lowland areas, the lowest elevation under Distribution being 100 m, and (b) there is evidence that it occurs at least occasionally in secondary and disturbed habitats (BRT, G. C. L. Dutson *in litt.* 1994, W. Simpson *in litt.* 1997). On Mt Malindang birds were found to perch in the low branches of lower-storey trees in deeply shaded parts of the forest (Rand and Rabor 1960). A breeding male collected on Mt Pasian, May, was in primary mossy forest in a saddle at the top of the mountain (CMNH register data). A curious comment was made by J. B. Steere concerning the habitat of the only specimen collected on his first expedition, “in low thick jungle which was covered every day by the sea” (Sharpe 1877), which one can only assume was mangroves. There is no other indication of any association with water except the AMNH label data below.

Food Birds eat beetles and small snails (F. S. Bourns and D. C. Worcester in McGregor 1909–1910), fish and crustacea (AMNH label data). It has also been asserted, without citation of source, that they “feed mainly on larger insects and their larvae, especially locusts, grasshoppers and beetles; small reptiles, snails and frogs also are taken” (Forshaw 1985); this list is repeated in Fry and Fry (1992).

Breeding Breeding may occur during summer from March to May as suggested by the specimens with enlarged gonads collected during this time (Rand and Rabor 1960). Three of nine birds from Mt Malindang, March/April, have gonad condition noted—two males slightly enlarged, and a female with active ovary (USNM label data)—while two more of these birds, both males, are immature, being full-sized but with markedly shorter bills. An apparently separate sample from Mt Malindang in these months included three males with enlarged gonads, “indicating breeding activities in March, April, and May” (Rand and Rabor 1960). Moreover, a female from “Car–Can–Mad–Lan”, May, held a ripe egg, while an unsexed bird from Mt Mayo, June, is immature (USNM label data). A male collected on Mt Pasian, May, possessed a brood-patch (CMNH register data). Two birds from Ayala, March, and one in October, and one from Mt Matutum, March, were immature (AMNH label data). Thus it appears that while the peak of activity may be in March–May, breeding generally extends over a broader period, perhaps January–July.

Migration There are “no records” of movements (Forshaw 1985) and the species is “doubtless sedentary” (Fry and Fry 1992).

THREATS Forest destruction throughout Mindanao, particularly at the lower elevations, has been extensive in the course of this century, with relatively little habitat remaining below 1,000 m; it is inevitable that so much loss will have had a major and continuing effect on populations of this species (Collar *et al.* 1994). At Bislig good primary forest is being clear-felled (under the PICOP logging concession) and the land planted with exotic trees for paper production (B. Gee *in litt.* 1997; also Caufield 1983). The deliberate conflagration of forests—associated with insurgency—is a problem, particularly on the Zamboanga Peninsula (D. Allen verbally 1997).

MEASURES TAKEN Mts Malindang, Kitanglad and Apo are legally protected under the NIPAS process, and conservation-related activities on Mt Matutum receive FPE funding (see Appendix). Some protection may be conferred by the watershed reserve at Mt Hilong-hilong.

MEASURES PROPOSED Apart from the areas targeted for conservation above, the species occurs at four “key sites” (Mts Diwata, Sugarloaf, Piapayungan and Mayo; see Appendix) and these deserve formal designation as protected areas, at least in part, under the NIPAS process. Several other threatened species are heavily reliant on existing and proposed protected areas on Mindanao, and any conservation strategy should consider the distributions and requirements of as many of these as possible (see Remarks 3). Moreover, there is possibly scope for a specialist study of Philippine kingfishers, with particular emphasis on the most problematic species (see equivalent section under Silvery Kingfisher *Alcedo argentata*). Further work is certainly needed in suitable habitats to assess the current distribution and conservation status of the Blue-capped Kingfisher.

REMARKS (1) DuPont (1976) separated birds in eastern Mindanao from those in the west (Zamboanga Peninsula to Cotabato) under the name *burtoni*, but Dickinson *et al.* (1991) and Fry and Fry (1992) judged the distinction too weak to merit subspecific recognition. (2) McGregor’s (1909) species accounts frequently fail to indicate locality or date, but in this instance he gives October which, from his brief introductory chronology, suggests the site involved was Esperanza. (3) Other threatened species which occur in the forests of Mindanao and in only few other existing or proposed protected areas are as follows: Mindanao Bleeding-heart *Gallicolumba criniger*, Mindanao Brown-dove *Phapitreron brunneiceps*, Giant Scops-owl *Mimizuku gurneyi*, Silvery Kingfisher *Alcedo argentata*, Mindanao Broadbill *Eurylaimus steerii*, Azure-breasted Pitta *Pitta steerii*, Philippine Leafbird *Chloropsis flavipennis*, Miniature Tit-babbler *Micromacronus leytensis* and Little Slaty Flycatcher *Ficedula basilanica*.