

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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LARGE-BILLED BLUE-FLYCATCHER

Cyornis caerulatus



Critical —

Endangered —

Vulnerable **A1c; A2c**

This species qualifies as Vulnerable because it is restricted to low-lying forest in a region where this habitat-type is being cleared and degraded, such that rapid and continuing population declines are inferred.

DISTRIBUTION The Large-billed Blue-flycatcher is endemic to Borneo (Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia) and Sumatra, and on Borneo occurs in two weakly marked forms, nominate *caerulatus* in the north and east, and race *rufifrons* in the west (Sarawak) and perhaps the south-west of the island (Chasen and Kloss 1929, 1930; see Remarks 1). An examination of the map generated from the following records indicates a distribution heavily clustered in the northern quarter of Borneo; as with the Short-toed Coucal *Centropus rectunguis*, which possesses a somewhat similar concentration of records, it is difficult to believe this is an artefact of field effort, and it may well be that the species is distributed much more patchily, or its density is much lower, in most of Kalimantan and indeed Sumatra as a result of unidentified ecological factors such as competition. Records (see Remarks 2, 3) are from:

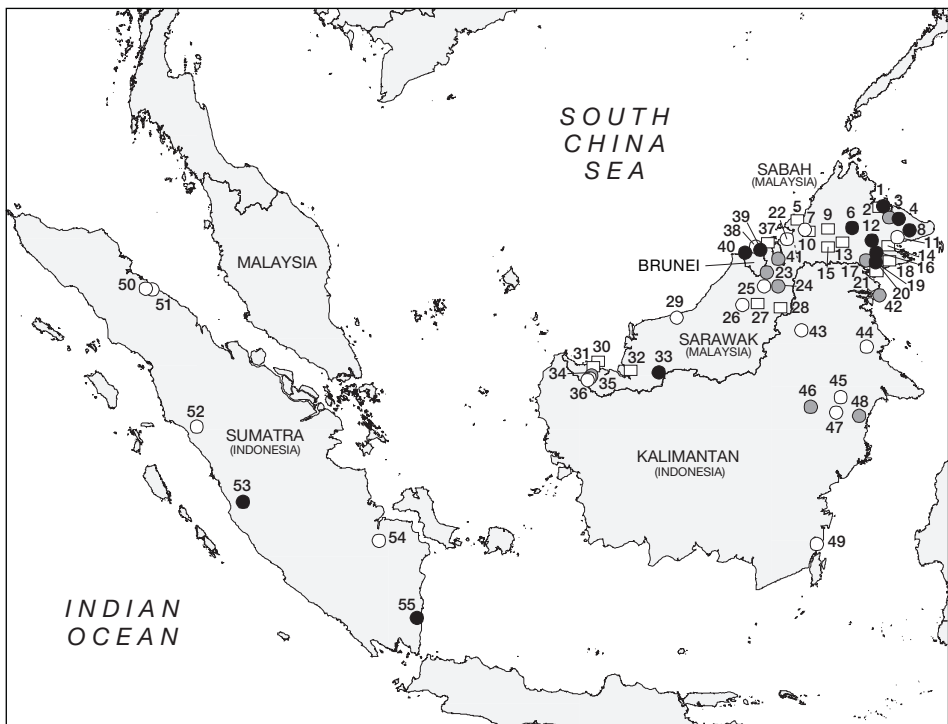
■ **MALAYSIA** ■ **Sabah Kabili-Sepilok Forest Reserve**, occasionally seen in the 1970s (de Silva 1981), March 1984 (Smith 1984), May 1987 (Lomosse and Lomosse 1987); **Betotan** (Bettotan, Garinomo, Ulu Dusun), July/August 1927 (Chasen and Kloss, 1929, 1930), undated (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Gomanton** (Gomantong), 15 m, April 1956 (two males in BMNH); **Uncle Tan's Jungle Camp**, September/October 1991 (Verbelen 1991), June 1998 (I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999); **Mawau** (Ulu Mawau), undated (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Imbak river**, July 1982 (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Rayoh**, 60 m, April 1928 (Chasen and Kloss 1930; male in USNM); **Tabin Wildlife Reserve**, September/October 1988 (Goh *et al.* 1989); **Ulu Tiulon**, undated (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Makaniton**, undated (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Sapagaya river** (or Sapugaya river), November 1887 (specimen in AMNH), December 1891 (male in BMNH); **Danum Valley Conservation Area**, July 1986 (Smith 1986), June 1998 (I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999), including Ulu Segama Forest Reserve and the Bole river, between May 1989 and October 1990 (Lambert 1992); **Maliau**, undated (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Madai**, undated (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Sapulut**, undated (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Kalabakan Forest Reserve**, May–July 1982 (Mitra and Sheldon 1993); 20 km north of **Kalabakan**, 200 m, November 1962 (two specimens in USNM; also Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Quoin hill**, undated (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Brumas**, March–April 1977 and May–June 1982 (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Tawau hills**, undated (Sheldon *et al.* in press); **Sebatik** (Sibatik), undated (Sheldon *et al.* in press) and near the coast, August of an unspecified year, c.1960 (Smythies 1963);

■ **Sarawak Lawas river**, before 1901 (specimen in BMNH); Gunung Mulu, presumably in what is now **Gunung Mulu National Park**, March 1898 (specimen in BMNH), April–May 1978 (Wells *et al.* 1978); **Kubaaan river**, Tutoh, 400–600 m, February 1965 (Fogden 1976); base of **Gunung Song**, Baram, October 1891 (two specimens in BMNH); **Gunung Dulit**, 300–800 m, at “L. Saking, R. Koyan”, and at River Tinjar, October 1932 (three specimens in BMNH); **Gunung Kalulong**, February of an unspecified year (male in BMNH); **Lio Matu**, undated (Chasen and Kloss 1929); **Balingian**, February and March 1903 (two specimens in AMNH; also, as “Balinean”, in Chasen and Kloss 1929); **Bako National Park**, undated (Sreedharan 1987); **Kuching**, undated (Chasen and Kloss 1929; see Remarks 3); **Saribas**,

undated (Chasen and Kloss 1929); **Lanjak Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary**, “uncommon resident”, two males caught in mist-nets, September 1981 (Kavanagh 1981); **Semengo Forest Reserve**, 20 km north of Kuching, October 1964–November 1965 (Fogden 1976); **Gunung Penrissen**, elevation unknown, December 1889 (Everett 1891, Smythies 1957; see Deignan 1947); near **Gunung Tegora**, before 1878 (specimen in BMNH); Sungai Lenian (untraced), Baram, August 1919 (male in BMNH);

■ **BRUNEI** Bandar Seri Begawan, undated (Mann 1987); **Tutong river**, April 1898 (specimen in BMNH); **Lamunin**, June 1984 (Counsell 1986); **Seria**, October 1989 (Mann 1991); **Ulu Temburong National Park** (see Measures Taken), 1978 (Mann 1987);

■ **INDONESIA** Kalimantan ■ **East Kalimantan Pulau Bunyu**, Tarakan, May 1969 (male in MZB); **Peleben**, at the junction of the Kajan and Bahau rivers, mid-July/mid-October 1935 (Stresemann 1938a); **Sungai Segah**, in one case labelled alternatively as Sungai Makari,



The distribution of Large-billed Blue-flycatcher *Cyornis caerulatus*: (1) Kabili-Sepilok Forest Reserve; (2) Betotan; (3) Gomanton; (4) Uncle Tan’s Jungle Camp; (5) Mawau; (6) Imbak river; (7) Rayoh; (8) Tabin Wildlife Reserve; (9) Ulu Tiulon; (10) Makaniton; (11) Sapagaya river; (12) Danum Valley Conservation Area; (13) Maliau; (14) Madai; (15) Sapulut; (16) Kalabakan Forest Reserve; (17) Kalabakan; (18) Quoin hill; (19) Brumas; (20) Tawau hills; (21) Sebatik; (22) Lawas river; (23) Gunung Mulu National Park; (24) Kubaan river; (25) Gunung Song; (26) Gunung Dulit; (27) Gunung Kalulong; (28) Lio Matu; (29) Balingian; (30) Bako National Park; (31) Kuching; (32) Saribas; (33) Lanjak Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary; (34) Semengo Forest Reserve; (35) Gunung Penrissen; (36) Gunung Tegora; (37) Bandar Seri Begawan; (38) Tutong river; (39) Lamunin; (40) Seria; (41) Ulu Temburong National Park; (42) Pulau Bunyu; (43) Peleben; (44) Sungai Segah; (45) Sungai Merah; (46) Sungai Bengen; (47) Sungai Telen; (48) Kutai National Park; (49) Klumpang bay; (50) Langkat; (51) Batangkuis; (52) Ophir; (53) Kerinci-Seblat National Park; (54) Palembang; (55) Way Kambas National Park.

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

October–November 1912 (three specimens in USNM); “Marah”, i.e. **Sungai Merah**, November 1925 (female in MZB; also Chasen and Kloss 1929); **Sungai Bengen** (Bengin), August–November 1956 (four specimens in MZB; see Remarks 4); **Sungai Telen** at Long Hut, August 1925 (two males in MZB; also Chasen and Kloss 1929, Kloss 1930a), and at Long Petah, September–October 1925 (seven specimens in MZB; also Chasen and Kloss 1929, Kloss 1930a); **Kutai National Park**, “uncommon”, July–September 1974 (Pearson 1975), with specimens from this area prior to 1930 (Chasen and Kloss 1930); Mitgoan (untraced), eastern Borneo, May 1941 (two specimens in MZB); ■ **South Kalimantan Klumpang bay**, March 1908 (female in USNM);

Sumatra ■ **North Sumatra Langkat** on Sungai Tasik, October–December 1919 (Junge 1933, van Marle and Voous 1988); **Batangkuis**, Deli, April 1915 (de Beaufort and de Bussy 1919, Junge 1933; see Remarks 5); (WEST), **Ophir** districts at Muara Kiawai, between 1913 and 1917 (Robinson and Kloss 1924, Junge 1933); ■ **Bengkulu Kerinci-Seblat National Park** at Gunung Kerinci, one male, June 1991, “at lowest forest” (Heath 1991, Holmes 1996); ■ **South Sumatra Palembang**, undated (Stresemann 1925); ■ **Lampung west of Way Kambas National Park**, one pair, June 1989 (Lewis *et al.* 1989).

POPULATION In Sabah, Borneo, the species is “resident and common in the lowlands usually outside the [coastal] habitat of [Mangrove Blue-flycatcher] *Muscicapa rufigrastra* but occasionally overlapping it” (Gore 1968; also Sheldon *et al.* in press). It was regular in Danum Valley, June 1998 (I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999). In Sarawak it was judged common (defined as “seen regularly in small numbers”) at Tutoh, in early 1965 (Fogden 1976). In Brunei it was found to be very common near the Temburong river in 1978, but is otherwise virtually (see Distribution) unknown from the country (Vowles and Vowles 1997). On Sumatra there have been few records (van Marle and Voous 1988) and apparently only two recent (post-1980) ones (see Distribution).

Given the habitat of this species, it must have undergone a steep decline in numbers in the past few decades; the fact that one of only two recent records on Sumatra was “at the lowest forest on Gn Kerinci” (Holmes 1996) is perhaps the best explanation of why observations have been so sparse on the island—there is so little level lowland forest remaining (see Threats).

ECOLOGY Habitat This is a bird of lowland primary forest, occupying the mid-strata (Pearson 1975); it ranges from sea-level to 500 m (Sheldon *et al.* in press). A study in Ulu Segama (Danum Valley) found that it was fairly common in unlogged forest but that mistnet captures and observations dropped to zero in selectively logged forest (Lambert 1992). At Gunung Mulu it replaces the riparian Malaysian Blue-flycatcher *Cyornis turcosa* in the forest interior (Wells *et al.* 1978); there is one record from the coast near (but evidently not in) mangroves (Smythies 1963).

Food There is no direct information, but this species doubtless takes small invertebrates, mostly winged insects. How it separates ecologically from its congeners, and what the significance is of its slightly larger bill, remain to be clarified.

Breeding Breeding-condition birds have been taken in Sabah in February–July (Sheldon *et al.* in press). Two of three birds taken in October, Sarawak, were judged to have part-developed gonads, as was one of two taken in April, Sabah (BMNH label data). Three birds from the Sungai Merah and Sungai Telen, East Kalimantan, October/November, appear to be 2–3 months old (specimens in MZB), and a juvenile was taken in the period mid-July to mid-October (Stresemann 1938a).

THREATS Deforestation in the Sundaic lowlands—biologically one of the most diverse biomes of the world—has proceeded at catastrophic speed in the past few decades, seriously

compromising the future of every one of the uncountable multitude of primary-forest life-forms in the region, including that of this particular species, even inside key protected areas (for an outline of the crisis, see Threats under Crestless Fireback *Lophura erythrophthalma*).

Although probably not a serious threat, it is worth noting that *Cyornis* flycatchers are occasionally seen in captivity in Java, and appear to be highly prized; at least two birds seen in captivity in 1999 and 2000 were thought to be this species (R. F. A. Grimmett *in litt.* 2000).

MEASURES TAKEN Although legally protected in Sabah, the only real conservation this species has experienced is through protected areas (in which category “forest reserves” do not fall). It has been recorded from: *Sabah* Danum Valley Conservation Area and Tabin Wildlife Reserve; *Sarawak* Gunung Mulu and Bako National Parks, and Lanjak–Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary; *Brunei* Ulu Temburong National Park (= Batu Apoi National Park) (see Dawn 1993); *Kalimantan* Kutai National Park and *Sumatra* Kerinci-Seblat National Park and possibly also Way Kambas National Park (see Distribution).

MEASURES PROPOSED Urgent concerted survey of and conservation effort for major tracts of extreme lowland primary forest in the Sundaic region is called for in the equivalent section under Crestless Fireback.

The ecology of the Large-billed Blue-flycatcher needs to be clarified through studies of population density, breeding success, feeding patterns, dispersal and survival in a number of carefully evaluated primary and secondary habitats, with particular emphasis on its separation from congeners on Borneo. The results of this work will allow for improved reserve design and habitat management in all future efforts to secure viable populations of the species.

Investigation of the trade in *Cyornis* flycatchers in Java and elsewhere in Indonesia would be helpful in determining whether any serious threat is posed from this quarter.

REMARKS (1) Smythies and Davison (1999) treated the race in question as *nigrogularis*. Clements (2000) recognised the population on Sumatra under the name *albiventer*. (2) One record is from an unknown country: Sungai Ritan, February 1914 (male in USNM). (3) The type locality is “Sambarajan” in southern Borneo, 1845 (*vide* Stresemann 1925, Smythies 1957). This has not been traced, but seems fairly likely to be Samarahan near Kuching, Sarawak (see map for Short-toed Coucal *Centropus rectunguis*). There is, however, the lesser possibility that it is Sungai Sampanahan in South Kalimantan (see map for Sunda Nightjar *Caprimulgus concretus*). (4) A locality called Gunung Sari, August 1956 (two males in MZB), is untraced even to province, but is presumably near Sungai Bengen, given the coincidence of the dates of the specimens in question. (5) Eggs “presumed to be this species” are registered from Deli-Serdang, Sumatra (van Marle and Voous 1988).