

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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DAMAR FLYCATCHER

Ficedula henrici

Critical —
Endangered —
Vulnerable D2



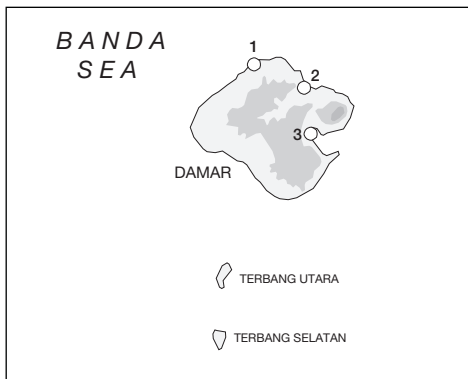
This species, although poorly known, qualifies as Vulnerable because, based on current evidence, it has a very small range, from which it is known from just three localities.

DISTRIBUTION The Damar Flycatcher (see Remarks 1) is endemic to the small island of Damar (to the north and east of Timor), southern Maluku province, Indonesia. Records are from:

■ **INDONESIA** *Damar* **Batumerah**, November 1898 (male in AMNH); **Kumur**, November 1898 (male in AMNH); **Wulur**, October, November and December 1898 (12 specimens in AMNH, BMNH, MCZ, RMNH, USNM).

POPULATION The species has not been seen since 1898, as the island has not been visited by an ornithologist since then (White and Bruce 1986, Coates and Bishop 1997; see Remarks 2). However, if nine specimens were collected on one visit there must be some expectation that it lives (or lived) at moderately good densities; the present situation will directly depend on the persistence of whatever habitat it was collected in (see below). However, the dimensions of the island are not great—"less than 10 miles in length and about five miles wide" in Hartert (1900a) but 198 km² in Monk *et al.* (1997)—so the population cannot be massive, e.g. allowing 20 birds per km² and 150 km² of appropriate habitat yields a global total of only 3,000 individuals.

ECOLOGY *Habitat* There is no information, but a *Ficedula* flycatcher would be expected to occupy the interior of forest and/or forest edge, and Hartert (1900a) included a contemporaneous description of the island as "one of the prettiest in the Eastern Archipelago, and almost entirely covered with dense forest and vegetation... only the top of the volcanic peak... which rises to about 4000 feet... [being] bare of forest growth". In fact the highest point on the island is only 869 m (Monk *et al.* 1997).



The distribution of Damar Flycatcher *Ficedula henrici*: (1) Batumerah; (2) Kumur; (3) Wulur.

○ Historical (pre-1950)

Food There is no information, but clearly small flying insects and their leaf-dwelling larvae would be probable targets.

Breeding A female juvenile was collected in December (specimen in AMNH).

THREATS In the early 1990s it was reported indirectly that “extensive forests remain on the island” (SvB in Collar *et al.* 1994), and this information has been supported by other evidence: for example, the village of Amaya in the north-west lays claim to 64 km² of the island, of which 6 km² are cultivated, 5 km² are fallow and 53 km² are dense monsoon forest on steep slopes (Monk *et al.* 1997), and a recent view of the island from a passing ferry revealed extensive forest on the slopes of the volcano (anonymous traveller *per* C. Trainor *in litt.* 2001).

Nevertheless, PHPA (1995) listed illegal timber harvesting as a threat to wildlife on Damar. Moreover, there is some evidence that the island’s volcano, Wurlali or Damar, is liable to erupt and destroy forest at some stage, with landslides and steam emissions (triggered by earthquakes near the island) prompting a local evacuation of most of the 4,000 islanders in January 1993 (C. Trainor *in litt.* 2001).

MEASURES TAKEN None is known.

MEASURES PROPOSED The Land Resources Evaluation Project of 1993 (report dated 1995), funded by the Asian Development Bank, proposed an area of 156 km² to be established as a nature reserve in order to conserve the Damar Flycatcher (C. Trainor *in litt.* 2001).

Knowledge of the species’s distribution, numbers and habitat on Damar, with an evaluation of its threats and needs (a survey to generate such data had already been planned: see Remarks 3), would give fresh impetus to the proposal for the reserve.

REMARKS (1) Hartert (1900a) repeated his description of the genus *Dammeria* for this species, but did not relate the characters involved to those of other genera, and the distinctiveness of the species has been downplayed by subsequent taxonomists. It is, nevertheless, a strikingly unusual *Ficedula*, dark blue all over with a white eyebrow and breast-patch and tiny white breast-flecking (see Coates and Bishop 1997). (2) This is therefore a remarkable case of a species which is assumed to survive and yet which was not seen, or not known to be seen, by an ornithologist or biologist for the entire period of the twentieth century. (3) T. M. Brooks and K. D. Bishop (*in litt.* 1998–1999) had been planning a survey of the island, but were unable to proceed owing to peace and order considerations following the downfall of President Suharto.