

# Threatened Birds of Asia:

## The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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## PHILIPPINE LEAFBIRD

### *Chloropsis flavipennis*

Critical  —

Endangered  —

Vulnerable  A1c; A2c; C1; C2a



*This lowland forest species qualifies as Vulnerable because it has a small population, known recently from just two sites and assumed to be severely fragmented, and is undergoing a rapid reduction as a result of habitat loss.*

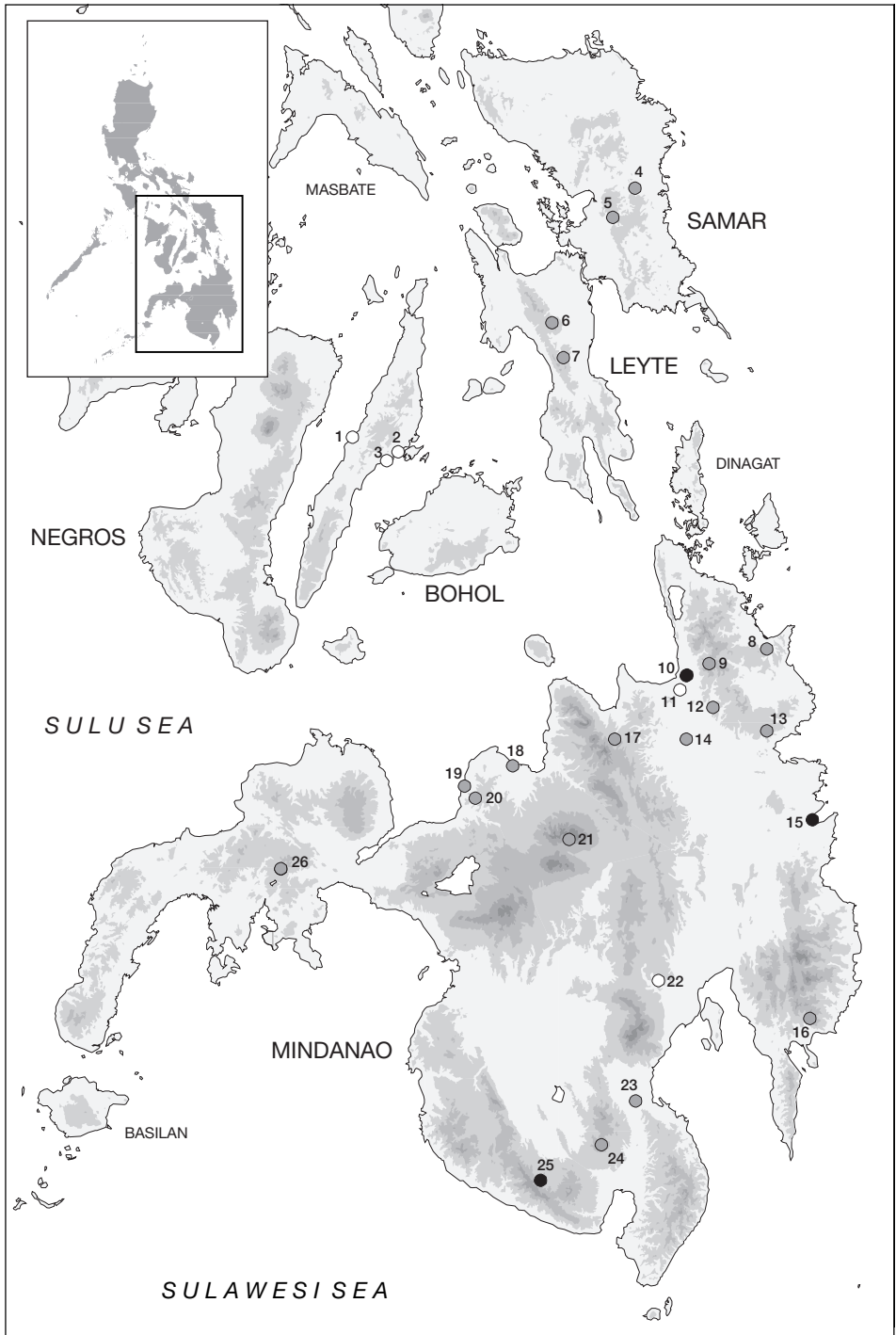
**DISTRIBUTION** The Philippine Leafbird is a monotypic species (see Remarks 1) endemic to the Philippines, recorded from four islands—Samar (previously unpublished), Leyte, Cebu and Mindanao—although it is believed already extinct on Cebu. Records are (north to south) from:

■ **PHILIPPINES** *Samar* **San Rafael**, Taft, May 1970 (two specimens in PNM); **Buluan**, Calbiga, April 1969 (female in PNM);

*Leyte* **Mt Lobi** at Dagami, Patok, July and August 1961 (Meyer de Schauensee and duPont 1962; four specimens in DMNH), and at Ma-alngon, Buri, Burauen, 600–750 m, May 1964 (six specimens in DMNH, USNM; also Ripley and Rabor 1968, Parkes 1973); **Mt Kabalanti-an** at Paniniklan, 240–300 m, June 1964 (male in USNM; also Parkes 1973), and at Bulog Peak, Mahaplag, 300–360 m, June 1964 (male in DMNH);

*Cebu* **Toledo**, June and July 1892 and October 1906 (13 specimens in CM, USNM and ZMB; also McGregor 1907c); within c.20 km of **Cebu City**, April 1877 (Tweeddale 1877a); **Mojon**, November 1920 (Baud 1976);

*Mindanao (eastern)* **Mt Hilong-hilong** at Siwod, 900–1,200 m, April 1963 (specimen each in DMNH, USNM; also Ripley and Rabor 1968), at Balangbalang, 150–300 m, April 1963 (two males in USNM), and at Bondo-an, 450–750 m, May 1963 (female in DMNH); **Agay** near Cabadbaran, year unknown (Salomonsen 1953; material in ZMC: M. Heegaard *in litt.* 1989); **Diatagon**, Mt Diwata Range, Lianga, within the Lianga Bay Logging Company concession area, 200 m, May 1975 (BRT); **Sumile** at 100–500 m, November–December 1976 (Sanguila and Tabaranza 1979); **Limatok**, Maguinda, at 400–600 m, November–December 1976 (Sanguila and Tabaranza 1979); **Sibahay**, Lanuza, Surigao del Sur, from sea-level to 300 m, May 1963 (female in USNM; also Ripley and Rabor 1968); **Bislig** at the PICOP concession, currently (Fisher mss, Gibbs 1984, many recent observers *in litt.* 1990s), including nine birds in both primary and secondary forest, January 1993 (Evans *et al.* 1993a), six in January 1995 (W. Simpson *in litt.* 1997) and eight in February 1996 (P. A. J. Morris *in litt.* 1996); **Mt Mayo** at Unloh, 970–1,270 m, June 1965 (two specimens in USNM; also Ripley and Rabor 1968); (*central*) **Butuan**, October 1907 (McGregor 1909); **Mt Kapiagan**, Misamis Oriental, May 1963 (male in PNM); **Manticao** at Camp Dunque, May 1968 (two males in FMNH, USNM), and at Mainit, Misamis Oriental, March, April and June 1968 (five specimens in FMNH, UMMZ, UPLB) and January 1969 (male in DMNH), this last at 600–700 m; **Opol**, Malibato, May and June 1968 (specimen each in DMNH, FMNH, USNM); **Tu-od**, Gingoog, Misamis Oriental, September 1951 (five specimens in ZMC: M. Heegaard *in litt.* 1989), at Civoleg, 985 m, July 1961 (male in DMNH; also Meyer de Schauensee and duPont 1962); **Mt Kitanglad** at Malaybalay, October 1951 (two specimens in ZMC: M. Heegaard *in litt.* 1989); near **Davao**, September 1922 (McGregor 1927); **Kibawalan**, Malalag, Davao province, 360–670 m, December 1963 (female in DMNH); **Mt Matutum** at Tupi, 750–1,050 m, June 1966 (two specimens in USNM); **Lake Sebu** at Sitio Siete, January 1994 (P. A. J.



Morris *in litt.* 1996); (*eastern*) **Mt Sugarloaf** at Tandasag Hill and Tumindog Hill, Midsalip, 600–900 m, May 1969 (six specimens in AMNH, FMNH).

**POPULATION** Historically this species was considered rare in the only islands where it had been found (McGregor 1909–1910), and at Toledo on Cebu, September–November 1906, “only six specimens” were obtained and the species “was very rare” (McGregor 1907c). More recently it was described as uncommon but secretive (Dickinson *et al.* 1991). Numbers are not really known, but based on the evidence under Distribution the situation is not propitious: there are only two sites on Mindanao (Bislig and Lake Sebu) at which the species has been seen since 1980; there has been no record from Samar since 1970 or Leyte (despite a recent survey by Curio 1993) since 1964; and on Cebu the species is seemingly but not certainly extinct, with the last record apparently in 1920 (Dickinson *et al.* 1991).

**ECOLOGY Habitat** The Philippine Leafbird is found only in forest (F. S. Bourns and D. C. Worcester in McGregor 1909–1910), frequenting high trees (Delacour and Mayr 1946), this last perhaps being based on McGregor’s (1907c) record of Cebu birds being “observed in the leafy tops of trees near streams”. Recent information suggests that the bird also occurs in forest edge, secondary forest and degraded habitat (Dickinson *et al.* 1991, Evans *et al.* 1993a, R. J. Timmins *in litt.* 1997). The specimen taken at Mt Diwata, Diatagon, was in a remnant lowland dipterocarp forest (BRT), and the importance of lowland forest for this species may be considerable: although Dickinson *et al.* (1991) gave its elevational range as “sea level to at least 1,500 m”, there seems to be no record from higher than 1,270 m (Mt Mayo) and only two other records over 1,000 m (1,200 m on Mt Hilong-hilong, 1,050 m on Mt Matutum), and even these appear to represent upper limits on the collector’s estimates of his native workers’ movements during the day: if only lower limits of all specimens are allowed, then all records are from below 970 m. The absence of records from the lower slopes of Mt Apo (and the sole record from Mt Kitanglad) are notable, as is the fall-off in records from east to west on Mindanao.

**Food** There appears to be no information.

**Breeding** The breeding record of the species on Cebu was in June (McGregor 1909–1910), on Leyte August (Ripley and Rabor 1968). Six museum specimens are labelled with gonad condition: two with testes slightly enlarged in April and May, three with testes enlarged in April, May and June, and one with active ovaries in May (but the great majority of specimens were collected in these months, so that the situation at other times of year remains unknown).

**Migration** Movements in this species must be highly local at best.

**THREATS** The major threat to the Philippine Leafbird is the widespread and continuing habitat destruction within its range (Collar *et al.* 1994). The near-total clearance of forest from Cebu will have accounted for the probable loss of the species there (see Threats under Cebu Flowerpecker *Dicaeum quadricolor*). If the species is confined largely or exclusively to forest below 1,000 m, then it must now be in difficulty, and this would help explain the dearth of recent records from both Leyte and Mindanao. At Bislig on the latter island, 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). It is not clear

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**The distribution of Philippine Leafbird *Chloropsis flavipennis* (map opposite; sequence not as in text):**

(1) Toledo; (2) Cebu City; (3) Mojon; (4) San Rafael; (5) Buluan; (6) Mt Lobi; (7) Mt Kabalanti-an; (8) Sibahay; (9) Mt Hilong-hilong; (10) Agay; (11) Butuan; (12) Sumile; (13) Diatagon; (14) Limatok; (15) Bislig; (16) Mt Mayo; (17) Mt Kapiagan; (18) Opol; (19) Manticao; (20) Tu-od; (21) Mt Kitanglad; (22) Davao; (23) Kibawalan; (24) Mt Matutum; (25) Lake Sebu; (26) Mt Sugarloaf.

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

what proportion of forest has been lost on Samar and Leyte, where mining applications are a severe potential threat (NADM), but PEWG (1996), using 1989 DENR statistics, credited them with possessing as little as 433 km<sup>2</sup> of old-growth dipterocarp, although other sources judged their forest cover considerably higher (see Threats *Habitat loss* for Samar and Leyte under Philippine Eagle *Pithecopaga jefferyi*).

**MEASURES TAKEN** One area supporting a population of this species is currently a CPPAP site (Mt Kitanglad on Mindanao; see Appendix). In addition, Mt Matutum receives FPE funding for conservation-related activities (see Appendix). Some protection may be conferred by the watershed reserve at Mt Hilong-hilong.

**MEASURES PROPOSED** The species is known from six unprotected “key sites” (Mt Lobi range on Leyte; Mts Diwata, Sugarloaf, Mayo, Matutum and Three Kings on Mindanao; see Appendix) and these deserve formal designation, at least in part, under the NIPAS process. Any conservation strategy for Mindanao should consider the distributions and requirements of several other threatened species heavily reliant on the island’s forests (see equivalent section under Blue-capped Kingfisher *Actenoides hombroni*). In particular the Mt Diwata range in Surigao del Sur still supports relatively good forest cover and is likely to be a stronghold of many endemic or near-endemic forest birds.

**REMARKS** (1) Dickinson *et al.* (1991) noted that the subspecies *Chloropsis flavipennis mindanensis* was recognised by duPont (1971) but not by Ripley and Rabor (1968) or Parkes (1973).