

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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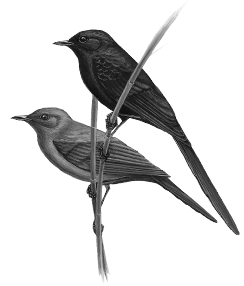
BLACK SHAMA

Copsychus cebuensis

Critical —

Endangered B1+2a,b,c,d,e; C2a

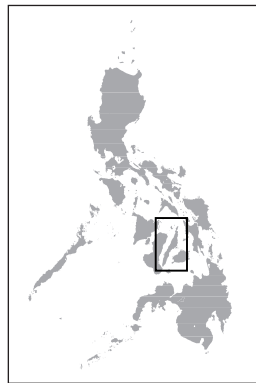
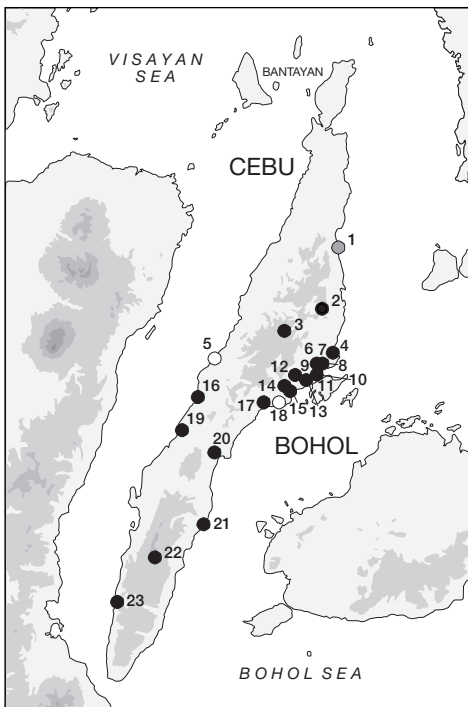
Vulnerable A1c; D2



This species qualifies as Endangered on account of its very small range and population, both of which are continuing to decline. In addition, it suffers severe fragmentation owing to extreme pressure on the few remaining, already highly degraded tracts of forest that still support subpopulations.

DISTRIBUTION The Black Shama (see Remarks 1) is endemic to Cebu in the Philippines, with the following records chiefly (and, where no source is given, exclusively) taken from Magsalay (1993), as follows:

■ **PHILIPPINES** *Cebu* **Catmon**, March 1959 (male in DMNH); **Danlag**, recently; **Tabunan** in Central Cebu National Park, currently (also Dutson *et al.* 1993, many observers); **Lilo-an**, recently (also Dutson *et al.* 1993); **Toledo**, June 1892 (three in CM, USNM), September–November 1906 (McGregor 1907c) and specifically Camp 7, June 1966 (specimen in USCMC); a cluster of sites sharing virtually identical coordinates, namely **Casili** (also a female in CMNH from April 1991, Jensen and Hornskov 1992, D. Allen *in litt.* 1993, Hornbuckle 1994, P. A. J. Morris *in litt.* 1997), **Kabangahan**, **Sacsac**, **Tolotolo** and **Tumilhao**, all recently and all in



The distribution of Black Shama *Copsychus cebuensis*: (1) Catmon; (2) Danlag; (3) Tabunan; (4) Lilo-an; (5) Toledo; (6) Casili; (7) Kabangahan; (8) Sacsac; (9) Tolotolo; (10) Tumilhao; (11) Cubacub; (12) Guadalupe; (13) Guba; (14) Buhisan; (15) Cantipla; (16) Pinamungahan; (17) Minglanilla; (18) Mojon; (19) Kawasan; (20) Carcar; (21) Argao; (22) Mantalungon; (23) Malabayoc.
○ Historical (pre-1950) ● Fairly recent (1950–1979)
● Recent (1980–present)

Consolacion; **Cubacub** (Kubakob), Mandaue City, recently; **Guadalupe**, recently; **Guba**, recently; **Buhisan** (including the dam, July 1956: male in FMNH, also Rabor 1959), recently; **Cantipla**, Cebu City, recently; **Pinamungahan**, recently; **Minglanilla**, recently; **Mojon**, November 1920 (Baud 1976); **Kawasan**, Badian, recently; between **Barili** and **Carcar**, about March 1888 (Bourns and Worcester 1894); **Argao**, recently; **Mantalungon**, Dalaguete, recently; **Malabuyoc**, April 1995 (A. T. L. Dans and J. C. T. Gonzalez verbally 1996). One locality, **Banguran**, August 1963 (male in UPLB), is untraced.

POPULATION A century ago the Black Shama was described as “very rare” on Cebu (Bourns and Worcester 1894, F. S. Bourns and D. C. Worcester in McGregor 1909–1910), and as the rarest of the Philippine shamas, with a very low population (Hachisuka 1936). By the end of the 1960s, based on the results of a decade of sporadic fieldwork reported on a decade earlier (Rabor 1959), it was regarded as “the only survivor of the ten endemic birds on Cebu” and (once again) “very...rare” (Gonzales and Alcala 1969). It is now known to survive in a considerable number of localities (see Distribution), but in rather small numbers at each, e.g. sightings are usually of one to five individuals (Magsalay 1993, A. T. L. Dans and J. C. T. Gonzalez verbally 1996). The single largest population appears to be that at Casili, Consolacion, consisting of around 50 birds in about c.10 km² of fragmented scrub forest and bamboo thicket (Dutson *et al.* 1993).

ECOLOGY Habitat The Black Shama is assumed originally to have inhabited primary forest (Rabor 1959). In the late nineteenth century it was “invariably found in the forest and in dense thickets close to the ground” (F. S. Bourns and D. C. Worcester in McGregor 1909–1910). Today, except for the tiny fragment of forest at Tabunan (see Measures Proposed), only the thickets appear to remain: it occupies a variety of secondary habitats such as scrub and cut-over forests, plantations, undergrowth of secondary tracts along steep ravines, and bamboo groves (Gonzales and Rees 1988, Dickinson *et al.* 1991, Magsalay 1993, Brooks *et al.* 1995a, W. Simpson *in litt.* 1997), generally characterised by Rabor (1959) as “dense second growth mixed with thickets”.

Food Small black beetles were in the stomach of the female collected in April 1991 (specimen in CMNH).

Breeding The breeding biology of the species is largely unknown. There have been breeding records from June (McGregor 1909–1910, Magsalay 1985), while a female from April (in CMNH) was about to lay, a male from July (in FMNH, from Buhisan Dam, this being the bird reported without clear locality by Rabor 1959) had enlarged testes, a female from June (in USNM) was juvenile and a male in October was immature (McGregor 1907c); it is now confirmed that the breeding season extends from February to September (Magsalay 1993).

Migration This species is doubtless highly sedentary.

THREATS The deforestation of Cebu is almost total (see Threats under Cebu Flowerpecker *Dicaeum quadricolor*), and even highly degraded secondary habitats of the type utilised by the Black Shama are very few and under considerable pressure (Brooks *et al.* 1995a). The area of 10 km² holding 50 birds near Casili is greatly threatened by a nearby housing subdivision development, which had by 1992 already caused the loss of land holding two families of shamas totalling seven birds (Dutson *et al.* 1993).

MEASURES TAKEN A study of the distribution and population of the Black Shama in the period 1982–1985 was funded by the New York Zoological Society; further work was funded by the Wild Bird Society of Japan (P. M. Magsalay verbally 1996). An awareness and conservation campaign for the species was conducted in the 1980s over the radio and in local newspapers (Magsalay 1993). Although the remaining forest in Tabunan (a “key site;” see

Appendix) lies within the boundaries of the Central Cebu National Park, this affords it little if any protection (Evans *et al.* 1993a).

MEASURES PROPOSED The conservation of Tabunan is being addressed (see under Cebu Flowerpecker), but the site near Casili clearly also merits active management. The cessation of further clearance of what little habitat that remains is imperative. Despite the work undertaken through the 1980s and early 1990s, there are virtually no published data that can assist the planning of appropriate management of the species and the improvement of its populations. If such data do not exist, renewed studies will be needed to generate them, using marked individuals and addressing such matters as breeding and feeding habitat selection, food, territory size and breeding success within different habitats, survival and dispersal of offspring, capacity for colonisation, predation pressures, and resource partitioning (or its lack) with the sympatric Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*. Moreover, intensive census work to determine the size of subpopulations on the island is essential. These initiatives can run parallel to practical steps to persuade landholders to allow existing habitat to remain and, in certain cases (hopefully), to begin extending habitat cover so as to increase local carrying capacity.

REMARKS (1) The Black Shama has in the past been treated as a race of the White-vented Shama *C. niger*, endemic to the Philippines in Palawan and adjacent islands (e.g. Ripley 1964, Rand 1970b, Gruson 1976). A comparative vocal and behavioural study would perhaps shed light on this postulated proximity.