

# Threatened Birds of Asia:

## The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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## FLAME-TEMPLED BABBLER

### *Dasycrotapha speciosa*

Critical  —

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

Vulnerable  A1c; A2c; C1; C2a; D2

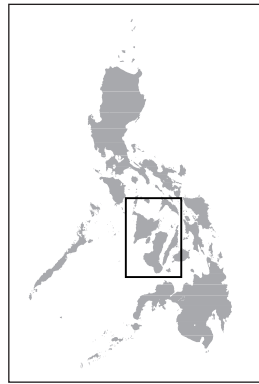
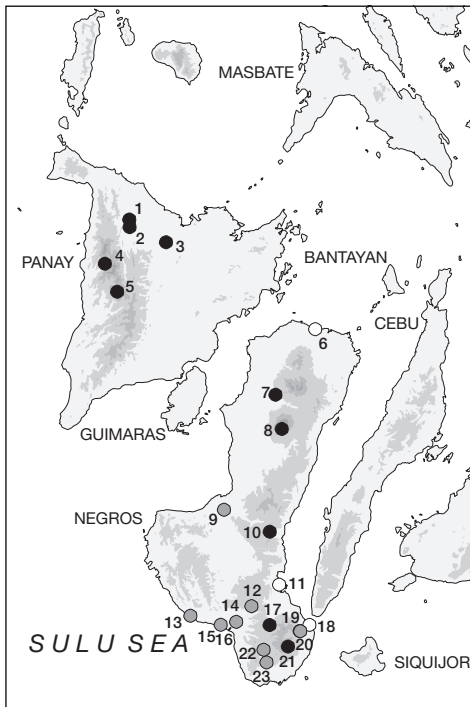


*This lowland forest species qualifies as Endangered because it has a very small, severely fragmented, declining occupied range. It is estimated that perhaps just 10% of remaining forest on the two islands where it occurs (c.144 km<sup>2</sup>) is below 1,000 m. Despite its tolerance of secondary growth, unremitting habitat clearance could lead to its extinction in the near future.*

**DISTRIBUTION** The Flame-templed Babbler (see Remarks 1) is endemic to Panay (where first reported, without localities but with an indication of likely subspecific difference, in Dickinson *et al.* 1991; see Remarks 2) and Negros in the Philippines. Records for the species are as follows:

■ **PHILIPPINES** *Panay* **Madalag**, Aklan, February 1993 (NADM); **Panipiason**, Aklan, February 1993 (NADM); **Jamindan**, Sibacao, Aklan, March 1987 (three specimens in CMNH); **Mt Maabubo**, 800 m, February 1993 (NADM); **Mt Baloy**, Iloilo, 1,000 m, February 1987 (male in CMNH);

*Negros* **Cadiz**, February–March 1909 (McGregor 1911; four males in AMNH, MCZ, USNM); **Patag**, near Mt Mandalagan, 600–650 m, August 1991 (Brooks *et al.* 1992, Evans *et al.* 1993a); **Mt Canlaon**, April–May 1953 (Ripley and Rabor 1956) and January 1990



#### The distribution of Flame-templed Babbler

***Dasycrotapha speciosa***: (1) Madalag; (2) Panipiason; (3) Jamindan; (4) Mt Maabubo; (5) Mt Baloy; (6) Cadiz; (7) Patag; (8) Mt Canlaon; (9) Pinagtubaan; (10) Ban-ban; (11) Pagyabunan; (12) Amio; (13) Basay; (14) Hinubungan; (15) Balangbang; (16) Naliong; (17) Lake Balinsasayao; (18) Sibulan; (19) Malindon; (20) San Antonio; (21) Mt Talinis; (22) Tampaga; (23) Nagoro.

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

(Lambert 1993c), including Masalog, 600 m, Pula, 970–1,050 m, May 1953 (nine specimens in AMNH, ANSP, YPM), and Mambucal, May 1987 (Jensen and Hornskov 1992), 750–1,050 m, August 1991 (Brooks *et al.* 1992), at c.800 m, March–April 1994 (Davidson ms), and above 850 m, January 1997 (B. Gee *in litt.* 1997); **Pinagtubaan**, Oringao, Kabankalan, 330 m, March 1974 (two females in DMNH); **Ban-ban**, 600–800 m, August 1991 (Brooks *et al.* 1992); **Pagyabunan**, Bais, 300 m, May 1949 (four specimens in FMNH; also Rand 1951); **Amio** at Karahaan, May 1948 (two females in FMNH; also Rand 1951), at Ugdangan, May 1948 (male in FMNH; also Rand 1951), and at Pamo-at, December 1953 (two specimens in AMNH, DMNH); **Basay**, Bayawan, December 1959 (13 specimens in AMNH, FMNH, YPM, ZMH), specifically at Kansan-a, 75–150 m, December 1964 (female in UPLB); **Hinubungan**, Santa Catalina, December 1949 (at 150–300 m), December 1951 and December 1953 (14 specimens in AMNH, FMNH, MCZ, YPM; also Rand 1951); **Balangbang** and **Naliong**, both Tolong, 450–600 m, April and May 1950 (12 specimens in FMNH, MCZ, UPD); **Lake Balinsasayao**, 900 m, June 1949 (two females in FMNH; also Rand 1951), March 1954 (female in ZMH) and December 1956 (female in AMNH), January 1977 to July 1978 (Alcala and Carumbana 1980), June 1982 and June 1984 (Erickson and Heideman 1983; four specimens in UMMZ); **Sibulan**, 140 m, March 1888 (male in MNHN); **San Antonio**, February and March 1888 (six specimens in AMNH, BMNH); **Malindon**, San Antonio, Sibulan, 850–1,000 m, December 1953 (male in DMNH); **Mt Talinis** at Luzuriaga (sometimes qualified as at Camp Lookout), 750–1,180 m, December 1952, August 1954, January 1956 and January 1957 (12 specimens in AMNH, ANSP, USNM, YPM), including Valencia, the type locality, August 1877 (Tweeddale 1878b,c, Dickinson *et al.* 1991), above which the species was common in secondary forest in 1991–1992 (Pa-alan 1993), also 600 m, March 1993 (D. Allen *in litt.* 1993) and at Casa Roro, 1994 (Hornbuckle 1994); **Tampaga**, Siaton, January 1957 (two specimens in AMNH); **Nagoro**, Siaton, 600–750 m, March 1967 (three specimens in DMNH), and Siaton area, 1964–1966, where 34 birds were ringed (McClure and Leelavit 1972). The species was considered likely to persist in the lower fringes of forest on Mt Mandalagan, although it was not found during brief surveys there (discounting the more distant Patag) in 1991 (Brooks *et al.* 1992, Evans *et al.* 1993b); it may also be present in forest patches around Mt Silay (Brooks *et al.* 1992).

**POPULATION** The Flame-templed Babbler used to be fairly common and widespread (Dickinson *et al.* 1991) but it is now generally uncommon (Lambert 1993c) and declining (Brooks *et al.* 1992).

**Panay** The species is apparently very uncommon on the island, and/or very patchy: it was not found within degraded and secondary lowland forest at four sites (R. J. Timmins *in litt.* 1997), and the dearth of records suggests that a large proportion of the island is unsuitable for the species (NADM).

**Negros** Work in 1991 on Mt Canlaon yielded a (“highly approximate”) density of 22 birds per km<sup>2</sup> (Brooks *et al.* 1992; see also Evans *et al.* 1993a), but very little (only a few square kilometres of) primary habitat now exists (G. C. L. Dutton *in litt.* 1996); 78 *D. speciosa* bird-days were recorded in Mambucal, Patag and Ban-ban, and a further four birds were captured in mist-nets. Although no birds were recorded by Brooks *et al.* (1992) at Guintubdan or on Mt Talinis, where most forest surveyed was above the species’s altitudinal range, an area of secondary forest on Mt Talinis was found by Pa-alan (1993) in which the species was common. In 1991 birds also went unrecorded at Balinsasayao, although Erickson and Heideman (1983) trapped them there nine times in 7,254 net-hours (Brooks *et al.* 1992, Evans *et al.* 1993a).

**ECOLOGY Habitat** The Flame-templed Babbler was formerly fairly common in lowland (below 1,000 m) forest, forest edge and second growth across Negros (Dickinson *et al.* 1991).

It seems that the bird depends on forest with thick undergrowth, and its highest densities on Negros in 1991 were in the thick undergrowth of degraded secondary forest around the village of Patag (Brooks *et al.* 1992). It is, however, possibly a bird of mid-montane forest (Brooks *et al.* 1992, NADM): it might occur above 1,000 m in suitable habitat, since (judging from observations from 1983–1991) its altitudinal range at Mambucal appears to have followed the forest-edge habitat up the mountain (Evans *et al.* 1993a). However, the forest structure changes markedly at Mambucal at 1,000–1,200 m and it is unlikely that the species can survive any higher than this (Evans *et al.* 1993a); the highest record is from Luzuriaga at 1,180 m (see Distribution). Birds stay in deep cover, in the lower strata up to around 8 m, and are unobtrusive unless singing (Brooks *et al.* 1992, also Evans *et al.* 1993a, Lambert 1993c, FMNH label data). Birds at Mt Canlaon in March–April 1994 were in the lower/middle storey of low secondary growth (Davidson ms).

**Food** Birds often occur in mixed-species flocks, e.g. with fantails *Rhipidura*, leaf-warblers *Phylloscopus* and tailorbirds *Orthotomus* (C. R. Robson *in litt.* 1997; see also Ripley and Rabor 1956), foraging in undergrowth and in understory bushes and trees or in dense growths of vines and ferns on larger trees (Brooks *et al.* 1992, Evans *et al.* 1993a). One observation was of a pair feeding in fairly slow, methodical fashion among trapped leaves c.6 m up (C. R. Robson *in litt.* 1997). Food has been recorded as “insects” and “large insects” (AMNH, BMNH, MCZ label data).

**Breeding** Specimens (in AMNH, ANSP, FMNH) annotated as in breeding condition are dated December (three males), April (two males), May (three males, one female) and August (one male). At least some birds on Mt Canlaon, April–May, were in breeding condition (Ripley and Rabor 1956). Birds at Mambucal were paired and highly territorial in late March and early April (C. R. Robson *in litt.* 1997). Of birds trapped at Mambucal in August, one was a juvenile and two were adults with a brood patch (Evans *et al.* 1993a). A male taken in December at Hinubangan was immature (MCZ label data).

**Migration** There is no evidence of any seasonal or other movement.

**THREATS** Continuing forest destruction is the major issue (Collar *et al.* 1994). Very little primary forest is left at low altitudes on Negros (although there is certainly more remaining on Panay: Curio *et al.* in prep.), and even second growth is being cleared at such a rapid rate that, despite the species’s ability to survive in some heavily degraded forest, it has been claimed that habitat clearance “will lead to the extinction of [*D.*] *speciosa* in the near future” (Brooks *et al.* 1992, Evans *et al.* 1993a). Such a view needs to be taken seriously, although it may well be that some areas of forest, notably on Panay, will yet prove to hold relatively healthy populations.

**MEASURES TAKEN** The Flame-templed Babbler occurs on Mt Canlaon, which is a CPPAP site (see Appendix P and account under Visayan Wrinkled Hornbill *Aceros waldeni*). It is also found on the Mts Baloy/Madja-as range on Panay (covering the Mt Baloy and Mts Madja-as/Hantod-tubig “key sites”, which form part of the proposed Central Panay Mountains National Park) and the Mt Talinis/Twin Lakes area on Negros (covering the Eastern Cuernos de Negros and Lake Balinsasayao “key sites”), which are proposed for FPE funding (see Appendix).

**MEASURES PROPOSED** Apart from the areas targeted for conservation above, the species occurs (on the basis of the record from Patag) in one additional “key site” (Mts Silay/Mandalagan on Negros; see Appendix) and, at least in part, this area, embraced by the unprotected North Negros Forest Reserve, deserves formal designation under the NIPAS process. In addition, as long ago as 1980 it was proposed that the remaining forested areas of southern Negros be closed to logging to protect the remaining wildlife (and the Balinsasayao

area declared a forest reserve and wildlife sanctuary), moves argued as necessary for the ecosystem to fulfil “other human needs such as recreation and scientific studies”, and indeed more ecological research in the area was then urged (Alcala and Carumbana 1980). Further surveys are required to identify suitable forests to conserve in southern Panay (Y. de Soye verbally 1996). Appropriate conservation strategies for the forests and threatened birds of the Western Visayas are discussed more fully under Visayan Wrinkled Hornbill.

**REMARKS** (1) When first discovered, the distinctiveness of this bird, christened in English the “Beautiful Roughtemple” (McGregor 1909–1910), appeared to justify its own genus, *Dasyrotapha*, although it was duly merged in *Stachyris*. The generic separateness of the bird is, however, supported not only by its distinctive plumage but also by its distinctive vocalisations, reminiscent of an *Alcippe* or *Leiothrix* and markedly different from other Philippine members of the (so-called) *Stachyris* babblers (C. R. Robson *in litt.* 1997). This, therefore, like *Micromacronus* and *Mimizuku*, is one of only a few Philippine endemic avian species that is maintained in its own genus. (2) F. S. Bourns and D. C. Worcester reported being confident of having seen this species on Panay (McGregor 1909–1910), but all certain records appear to be post-1986. Hachisuka (1936) clearly slipped when he wrote that this species was confined as far as is known to Panay.