

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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PURPLE DOLLARBIRD

Eurystomus azureus

Critical —
Endangered —
Vulnerable C1



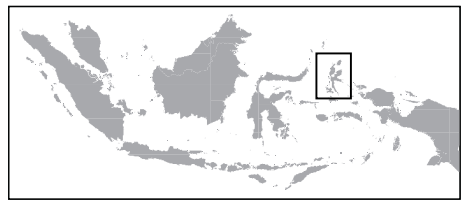
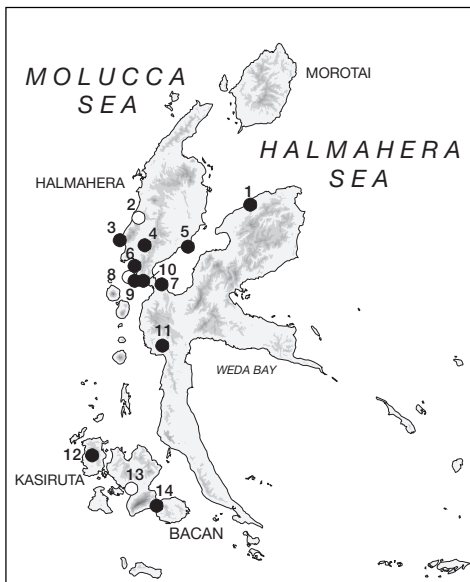
This species is classified as Vulnerable because it is assumed to have a small population, which is likely to be suffering continuing declines as a result of habitat loss and degradation.

DISTRIBUTION The Purple Dollarbird or Azure Roller (see Remarks 1) is endemic to the North Moluccas, Indonesia, where it is known with certainty from Halmahera, Kasiruta and Bacan. Records are from:

■ **INDONESIA Halmahera Labilabi**, July 1998 (I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999); **Gunung Gamkonora**, May 1931 (male in AMNH); **Peot**, July 1983 (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 2000); a major forest clearing 30 km north-east of **Sidangoli**, December 1995 (C. Donald *in litt.* 1999); **Kao** (Teluk Kao road), August 1999 (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 1999); **Matui**, September 1995, September and October 1996 (J. O. Gjershaug and N. Rov *in litt.* 1999); **Pasir Putih**, Jailolo district, March–May 1981 and January 1985 (five specimens in USNM); **Bessa**, November 1862 (Schlegel 1862–1873); **Domato**, July 1987 (Lambert and Yong 1989); **Kali Batu Putih**, 250 m, October 1988 (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 2000), March 1989 (Gibbs 1990), October 1992 (B. Gee *in litt.* 1999), June 1993 (P. Shepherd *in litt.* 1999), September 1995 (J. O. Gjershaug and N. Rov *in litt.* 1999), December 1995 (C. Donald *in litt.* 1999), July 1999 (C. Bell *in litt.* 1999); **Hijrah**, May 1999 (D. Agista *in litt.* 1999);

Kasiruta no locality, 465 m, November 1991 (Lambert 1994a);

Bacan unspecified localities but throughout (“widely distributed”), October–November 1991 (Lambert 1994a); **Labuha**, March 1941 (two specimens in MZB); **Wayaua**, May 1953



The distribution of Purple Dollarbird

Eurystomus azureus: (1) Labilabi; (2) Gunung Gamkonora; (3) Peot; (4) 30 north of Sidangoli; (5) Kao; (6) Matui; (7) Pasir Putih; (8) Bessa; (9) Domato; (10) Kali Batu Putih; (11) Hijrah; (12) Kasiruta; (13) Labuha; (14) Wayaua.

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

(female in MZB), and at Jati Maluku timber base camp, May 1983 (male in RMNH), June 1985 (female in RMNH).

There are also records attributed to Ternate and Tidore (Peters 1931–1987, van Bemmelen 1948, White and Bruce 1986, Fry *et al.* 1992, Coates and Bishop 1997), but the basis for these has not been traced—Salvadori (1880–1882) gave Bacan and Halmahera, Ripley (1942) merely Bacan—and accordingly Ternate and Tidore are treated here as provisional.

POPULATION The species has been judged possibly uncommon (White and Bruce 1986), and plainly stated as such (Fry *et al.* 1992, Coates and Bishop 1997). On Bacan it was widespread but uncommon in 1991 (Lambert 1994a). However, fieldwork on Halmahera in the mid-1990s resulted in so few records, some or even the majority of which may have concerned the Common Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* (MKP), that it may better now be considered rare: visiting birdwatchers used to find it easily at Tanah Putih, but it is now very rare there, and it appears to have declined significantly throughout the island (MKP). In the 1,060 km² of protection forest targeted for conversion to the Lolobata Wildlife Reserve on the north-east peninsula of Halmahera in late 1994 the encounter rate in censuses was too low to allow an extrapolation, the species being uncommon in all forest types at 35–160 m (Fuller undated). Habitat destruction (see Threats) must presumably be inducing a substantial decline.

ECOLOGY *Habitat* This is a resident bird of primary lowland and hill-ridge rainforest, selectively logged forest and forest edge, occasionally also adjacent coconut groves, reaching 600 m on Halmahera, 470 m on Kasiruta and 150 m on Bacan (Coates and Bishop 1997; also Lambert and Yong 1989, Fry *et al.* 1992, Lambert 1994a, Poulsen *et al.* 1999); it is not a bird of mangroves (Poulsen and Lambert 2000). Birds at Wayaua, Bacan, were on the edge of forest by cultivation, in one case at 50 m, in another on a hill slope (RMNH label data); and elsewhere on the island the species was also observed at primary forest edge but also in selectively logged forest (Lambert 1994a). However, its apparent decline in recent years suggests that, despite its use of clearings, it may be highly sensitive to too much disturbance of lowland forest (MKP). It is replaced in cultivated areas by the Common Dollarbird (Fuller undated).

Food Flying insects are the staple diet, seized during a sallying flight as in the Common Dollarbird (Coates and Bishop 1997). The stomachs of two birds from Bacan contained beetles, in one case buprestids (RMNH label data); two others from Bacan held beetles (MZB label data).

Breeding There are no records of breeding, but circumstantial evidence suggests it may occur mainly in the first half of the year. There is a juvenile female with a dark bill and scaly plumage dated 1 April (in USNM); a male, May, Bacan, had slightly enlarged gonads, while a June female was quiescent (RMNH label data). Observations in July–September 1994 revealed that where groups of three were encountered, one of the three was usually a juvenile (Fuller undated).

THREATS The Purple Dollarbird is one of (now) eight threatened members of the suite of 26 bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Northern Maluku Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Sujatnika *et al.* (1995) and Stattersfield *et al.* (1998).

Habitat loss Much forest in the North Moluccas is still intact; at the start of the 1990s it was reported that around 90% of the total area of Halmahera and Bacan remained forested (Lambert 1993a,b). However, these forests, particularly in lower-lying areas, are now under considerable and increasing pressure (for Halmahera see equivalent section under Sombre Kingfisher *Halcyon funebris*). The one protected area in North Maluku, on Bacan, is at risk (see Measures Taken).

MEASURES TAKEN On Bacan, Gunung Sibela Strict Nature Reserve embraces just over 100 km² of lowland forest, but is under pressure from agricultural encroachment and goldmining interests (see equivalent section under White Cockatoo *Cacatua alba*).

MEASURES PROPOSED There is a detailed recommendation for a national park embracing a total of 2,130 km² on Halmahera (see equivalent section under White Cockatoo). Gunung Gamkonora, also on Halmahera, has been recommended for wildlife sanctuary or recreation forest status (Purmiasa 1997).

REMARKS (1) This beautiful and distinctive bird has been treated as a subspecies of Common Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*, but apart from its plumage it is also larger, with a more massive bill (Mees 1965, White and Bruce 1986). Observations of Common Dollarbird breeding on the tiny Dagasuli Islands off the north-west coast of Halmahera, September 1989, reinforce the notion that the two taxa come into such close proximity when breeding that the endemic Moluccan form merits species status (Bishop 1992a).