

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

Editors

N. J. COLLAR (Editor-in-chief),
A. V. ANDREEV, S. CHAN, M. J. CROSBY, S. SUBRAMANYA and J. A. TOBIAS

Maps by

RUDYANTO and M. J. CROSBY

Principal compilers and data contributors

■ **BANGLADESH** P. Thompson ■ **BHUTAN** R. Pradhan; C. Inskipp, T. Inskipp ■ **CAMBODIA** Sun Huan; C. M. Poole ■ **CHINA** ■ **MAINLAND CHINA** Zheng Guangmei; Ding Changqing, Gao Wei, Gao Yuren, Li Fulai, Liu Naifa, Ma Zhijun, the late Tan Yaokuang, Wang Qishan, Xu Weishu, Yang Lan, Yu Zhiwei, Zhang Zhengwang. ■ **HONG KONG** Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (BirdLife Affiliate); H. F. Cheung; F. N. Y. Lock, C. K. W. Ma, Y. T. Yu. ■ **TAIWAN** Wild Bird Federation of Taiwan (BirdLife Partner); L. Liu Severinghaus; Chang Chin-lung, Chiang Ming-liang, Fang Woei-horng, Ho Yi-hsian, Hwang Kwang-yin, Lin Wei-yuan, Lin Wen-horn, Lo Hung-ren, Sha Chian-chung, Yau Cheng-teh. ■ **INDIA** Bombay Natural History Society (BirdLife Partner Designate) and Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History; L. Vijayan and V. S. Vijayan; S. Balachandran, R. Bhargava, P. C. Bhattacharjee, S. Bhupathy, A. Chaudhury, P. Gole, S. A. Hussain, R. Kaul, U. Lachungpa, R. Naroji, S. Pandey, A. Pittie, V. Prakash, A. Rahmani, P. Saikia, R. Sankaran, P. Singh, R. Sugathan, Zafar-ul Islam ■ **INDONESIA** BirdLife International Indonesia Country Programme; Ria Saryanthi; D. Agista, S. van Balen, Y. Cahyadin, R. F. A. Grimmett, F. R. Lambert, M. Poulsen, Rudyanto, I. Setiawan, C. Trainor ■ **JAPAN** Wild Bird Society of Japan (BirdLife Partner); Y. Fujimaki; Y. Kanai, H. Morioka, K. Ono, H. Uchida, M. Ueta, N. Yanagisawa ■ **KOREA** ■ **NORTH KOREA** Pak U-il; Chong Jong-ryol, Rim Chuyon. ■ **SOUTH KOREA** Lee Woo-shin; Han Sang-hoon, Kim Jin-han, Lee Ki-sup, Park Jin-young ■ **LAOS** K. Khounbolin; W. J. Duckworth ■ **MALAYSIA** Malaysian Nature Society (BirdLife Partner); K. Kumar; G. Noramly, M. J. Kohler ■ **MONGOLIA** D. Batdelger; A. Bräunlich, N. Tseveenmyadag ■ **MYANMAR** Khin Ma Ma Thwin ■ **NEPAL** Bird Conservation Nepal (BirdLife Affiliate); H. S. Baral; C. Inskipp, T. P. Inskipp ■ **PAKISTAN** Ornithological Society of Pakistan (BirdLife Affiliate) ■ **PHILIPPINES** Haribon Foundation for Conservation of Natural Resources (BirdLife Partner); N. A. D. Mallari, B. R. Tabaranza, Jr. ■ **RUSSIA** Russian Bird Conservation Union (BirdLife Partner Designate); A. V. Andreev; A. G. Degtyarev, V. G. Degtyarev, V. A. Dugintsov, N. N. Gerasimov, Yu. N. Gerasimov, N. I. Germogenov, O. A. Goroshko, A. V. Kondrat'ev, Yu. V. Labutin, N. M. Litvinenko, Yu. N. Nazarov, V. A. Nechaev, V. I. Perfil'ev, R. V. Ryabtsev, Yu. V. Shibaev, S. G. Surmach, E. E. Tkachenko, O. P. Val'chuk, B. A. Voronov. ■ **SINGAPORE** The Nature Society (Singapore) (BirdLife Partner); Lim Kim Seng ■ **SRI LANKA** Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (BirdLife Affiliate); S. Kotagama; S. Aryaprema, S. Corea, J. P. G. Jones, U. Fernando, R. Perera, M. Siriwardhane, K. Weerakoon ■ **THAILAND** Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BirdLife Partner); U. Treesucon; R. Jugmongkol, V. Kongthong, P. Poonswad, P. D. Round, S. Supparatvikorn ■ **VIETNAM** BirdLife International Vietnam Country Programme; Nguyen Cu; J. C. Eames, A. W. Tordoff, Le Trong Trai, Nguyen Duc Tu.

With contributions from: S. H. M. Butchart, D. S. Butler (maps), P. Davidson, J. C. Lowen, G. C. L. Dutson, N. B. Peet, T. Vetta (maps), J. M. Villasper (maps), M. G. Wilson

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Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge, CB3 0NA, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 1223 277318 Fax: +44 1223 277200 Email: birdlife@birdlife.org.uk

Internet: www.birdlife.net

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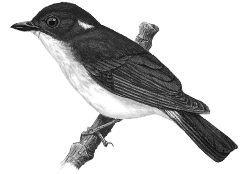
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LITTLE SLATY FLYCATCHER

Ficedula basilanica



Critical —

Endangered —

Vulnerable **A1c; A2c; C1; C2a**

This flycatcher is believed to be undergoing a rapid decline because of widespread lowland forest loss, such that it has a small, severely fragmented remaining population, which qualifies it as Vulnerable.

DISTRIBUTION The Little Slaty Flycatcher is endemic to the Philippines, where it occurs in two races on five islands: *samarensis* on Samar and Leyte, and *basilanica* on Dinagat, Mindanao and Basilan. There are considerable identification problems with this species, and sight records should perhaps be treated with a degree of provisionality; indeed, observations including birds at 1,200 m on Mt Kitanglad in October 1991 and Lake Sebu in January 1993 (Evans *et al.* 1993a) have now been withdrawn (G. C. L. Dutton *in litt.* 1996, C. R. Robson *in litt.* 1997). Records (north to south) are from:

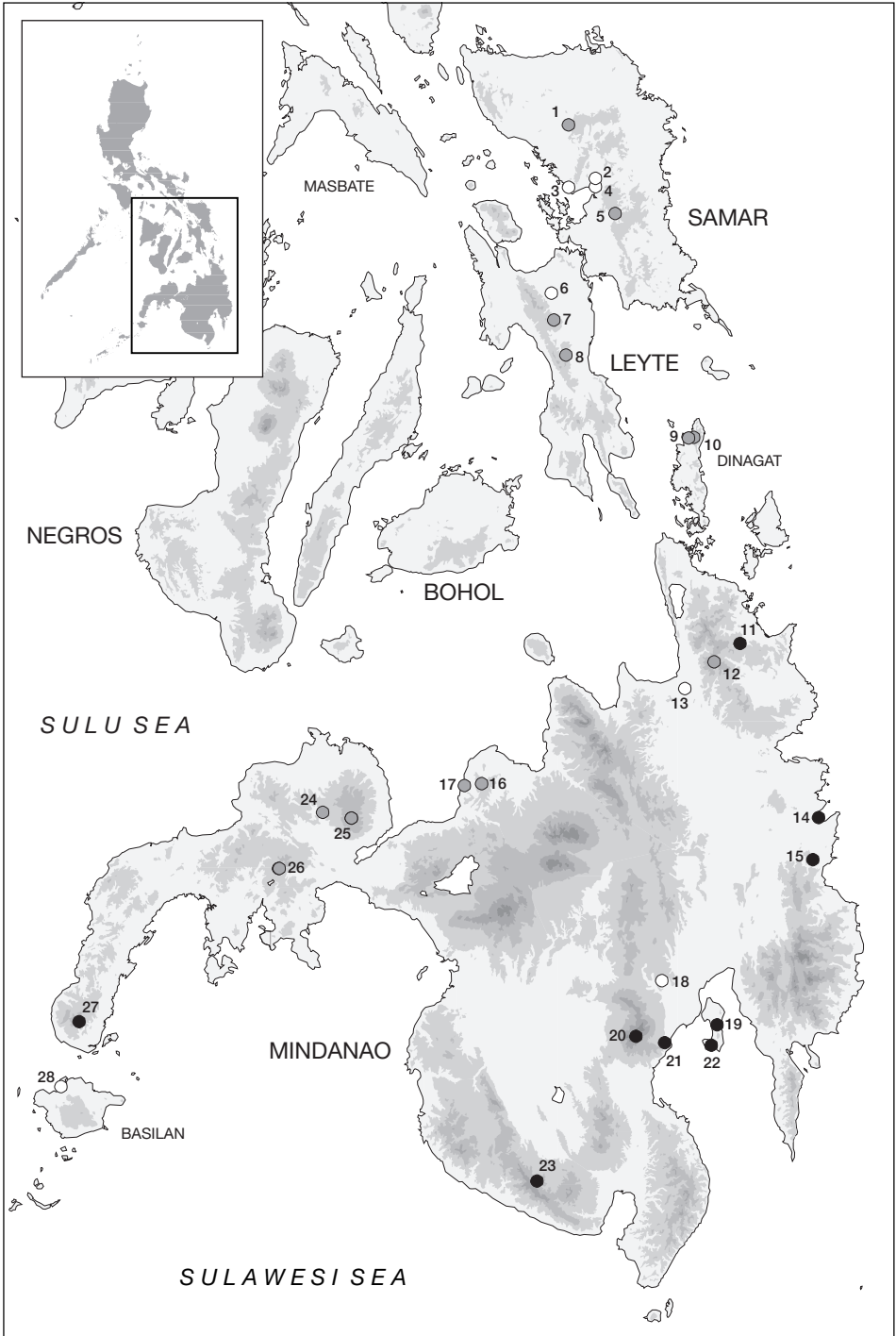
■ **PHILIPPINES Samar Matuguinao** at 100–400 m, April 1957 (Rand and Rabor 1960; five specimens in FMNH, UPLB, one specifying San Isidro), and May 1970 (male in UPLB); **Bonga**, June 1896 (female in AMNH); **Catbalogan**, August 1892 (Dickinson *et al.* 1991); **Paranas**, June 1896 (two specimens in BMNH; Bourns and Worcester 1894); **Buluang**, Calbiga, April 1969 (female in PNM);

Leyte mountains of the north, apparently around **Jaro**, 300 m, August 1896 (male in AMNH; see Remarks 1); **Mt Lobi** at Tambis, 300–700 m, May 1964, and Ma-alngon, Buri, 600–750 m, May and June 1964, and **Mt Kabalanti-an** at Bulog Peak, Mahaplag, 450–600 m, July 1964 (five specimens in DMNH, FMNH; Parkes 1973);

Dinagat **Balitbiton** and **Omasang**, both in Loreto in April 1972 (two males in DMNH; also duPont and Rabor 1973b);

Mindanao (eastern) **Malibho** in the Puyat logging concession, San Vicente, Carmen, May 1993 (four specimens in CMNH); **Mt Hilong-hilong** at Balangbalang, Cabadbaran, 150–300 m, April 1963, and at Bondo-an, 450–750 m, May 1963 (three specimens in FMNH); **Bislig** at the PICOP Concession, March 1991 (N. J. Redman *in litt.* 1996), February 1996 (P. A. J. Morris *in litt.* 1996), August 1997 (D. Allen verbally 1997); **Mt Tingoy**, 1.1 km east and 1 km south of the peak, above Magsim creek on PICOP road SJA, May 1994 (three specimens in CMNH); (*central*) **Butuan**, September 1907 (McGregor 1909); **Tagbalogo**, Na-awan, June 1969 and January 1971 (two males in DMNH); **Manticao** at Mahayahay, 600–700 m, June 1969 (male in DMNH) and at Mainit, May 1968 (male in FMNH); near **Davao**, August 1889 (Blasius 1890); **Samal** and **Talicon** Islands, Davao City, April 1995 (P. Ong and R. Altamirano verbally 1995); **Mt Apo**, 1993 (N. Bostock verbally 1993), including Baracatan, March 1983 (Clarke 1983), February and March 1987 (Jensen and Hornskov 1992), March 1990 (Greensmith 1990); **Metondo**, March 1983 (Clarke 1983); **Lake Sebu** at Sitio Siete, c.1,000 m, December 1994 (W. Simpson *in litt.* 1997), February 1997 (F. Verbelen *in litt.* 1997); (*western*) **Diway**, Mt Dapiak, April 1952 (male in FMNH); **Mt Malindang** at Gumay, 820–900 m, May 1956 (male in FMNH; also Rand and Rabor 1960); **Mt Sugarloaf** at Tandasag Hill, Diak, Midsalip, May 1969 (male each in DMNH, FMNH); **Baluno**, Zamboanga City watershed and on Mt Ranchong, May–June 1993 (five males in PNM);

Basilan **Isabela**, probably 1874 (female in UMMZ; also Sharpe 1877), August and September 1891 (specimens in CM, USNM).



POPULATION Characterised as rare (Dickinson *et al.* 1991), this flycatcher has never been recorded in anything but small numbers. It was “very rare” on Mt Malindang in 1956 (Rand and Rabor 1960), and on Dinagat in 1971, and the two specimens collected there were the only representatives of the species met with during the entire four weeks of collecting (duPont and Rabor 1973b). Nevertheless, the fact that mist-netting at two localities in eastern Mindanao yielded seven specimens apparently in as many days (CMNH register data) indicates that birds may still be patchily frequent in particular habitat and, as noted below, that this is a highly unobtrusive creature, of the type that mist-netting often shows to be commoner than observational work alone would show; in this regard it is worth noting that Hachisuka (1931–1935), perhaps based on his own experience, called it “fairly common on Mindanao and Basilan”, and (Hachisuka 1936) “probably not rare, but... difficult to collect”. Whitehead (1899a) called it scarce.

ECOLOGY Habitat Little Slaty Flycatchers are denizens of the understorey (“tangled undergrowth... [of] thick dark forests”: Whitehead 1899a) of lowland forest and second growth up to 1,150 m (Dickinson *et al.* 1991); in fact the highest elevation identified under Distribution is 1,200 m (Lake Sebu). The testimony of F. S. Bourns and D. C. Worcester (in McGregor 1909–1910) is explicit that the species is “found on the ground in the forest” (for nominate *basilanica*) and “close to, or on, the ground in dense thickets in the deep woods” (race *samarensis*), and five J. B. Steere specimens from Basilan, November 1874 (in AMNH, BMNH), are labelled “on ground”, “ground bird”, “ground stones and logs”, “living on ground”. At PICOP in 1991 the species was found in limestone karst forest (N. J. Redman *in litt.* 1996). At Mt Tingoy, Mindanao, where three birds were collected in three days, the habitat was selectively logged advanced second growth (CMNH register data). On Mt Malindang it “preferred the dense undergrowth of original forest, staying in the dark, deeply shaded places, perching on branches not very far from the ground”, and on Samar it was found “only among the lower branches of the lowest story and undergrowth of dense original forest” (Rand and Rabor 1960). The birds on Dinagat were discovered among branches of low trees in deeply shaded and dark sites of original dipterocarp forest, and the quiet and secretive habits of this bird, as well as its preference for perching on branches close to the ground and the forest floor, make it difficult to discover, except by sheer chance (duPont and Rabor 1973b).

Food One Steere specimen (in AMNH) is labelled: “food beetles & co”.

Breeding Two Samar males, April, had enlarged testes, and three males from Mindanao in April, May and June also had enlarged testes (DMNH and FMNH label data; also Rand and Rabor 1960). A nest with two fresh eggs, found on Samar in June, was “a remarkably frail structure... made of roots and lined with broad leaves [and was] well concealed, being placed close to the ground in a heap of forest-drift near some rocks” (Ogilvie-Grant and Whitehead 1898; see Remarks 2). A bird from Mt Tingoy, Mindanao, May, was immature, having the “lips orange” (CMNH register data), suggesting only recent independence; another immature (in CM) is dated September.

Migration There is no information on any movements made by this species; as a near-terrestrial bird it may be very short-winged and unlikely to undertake any significant movements.

The distribution of Little Slaty Flycatcher *Ficedula basilanica* (map opposite; sequence not as in text):

(1) Matuguinao; (2) Bonga; (3) Catbalogan; (4) Paranas; (5) Buluan; (6) Jaro; (7) Mt Lobi; (8) Mt Kabalanti-an; (9) Balitbiton; (10) Omasdang; (11) Malibho; (12) Mt Hilong-hilong; (13) Butuan; (14) Bislig; (15) Mt Tingoy; (16) Tagbalogo; (17) Manticao; (18) Davao; (19) Samal; (20) Mt Apo; (21) Metondo; (22) Talicod; (23) Lake Sebu; (24) Diway; (25) Mt Malindang NP; (26) Mt Sugarloaf; (27) Baluno; (28) Isabela.

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

THREATS Extensive and continuing forest destruction is clearly an extreme danger to this species, which is seemingly confined below the 1,000 m contour (see Distribution). Of the various sites in Mindanao, Samal Island is due for conversion to a golf course (P. Ong verbally 1997), while at Bislig 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). The deliberate conflagration of forests on Mindanao—associated with insurgency—is a problem, particularly on the Zamboanga Peninsula (D. Allen verbally 1997). It is not clear 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 km² of old-growth dipterocarp, although other sources of information put their forest cover considerably higher (see Threats *Habitat loss* for Samar and Leyte under Philippine Eagle *Pithecophaga jefferyi*). In northern Dinagat the problem is compounded by chromite mining operations involving about five companies (NADM).

MEASURES TAKEN Mt Apo Natural Park is a CPPAP site and Mt Malindang National Park is a NIPAP site (see Appendix). Dinagat Island (the relevant “key site” being Kambinlio/Redondo) has been selected as one of the priority sites for FPE funding of conservation-related activities (see Appendix). Some protection may be afforded by the watershed reserve at Mt Hilong-hilong.

MEASURES PROPOSED Apart from the areas targeted for conservation above, the species is known from five “key sites” (Mt Lobi range on Leyte; Mts Diwata, Dapiak and Three Kings on Mindanao; Central Basilan; see Appendix) and these deserve formal designation, at least in part, under the NIPAS process. Records are exclusively historical (pre-1900) from several of these areas and, in these cases, it is important to initiate new fieldwork to clarify the current status of this flycatcher. Taping of the song and use of playback probably offers the most efficient means of determining its status.

REMARKS (1) This is a J. Whitehead specimen and it appears from various sources that his work in northern Leyte was done in or near Jaro (see Remarks 7 under Philippine Eagle *Pithecophaga jefferyi*). (2) McGregor (1909–1910) quoted “Grant” as saying that a female was “shot from a nest with four eggs”, but the passage has not been traced.