

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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FLORES MONARCH
Monarcha sacerdotum



Critical —

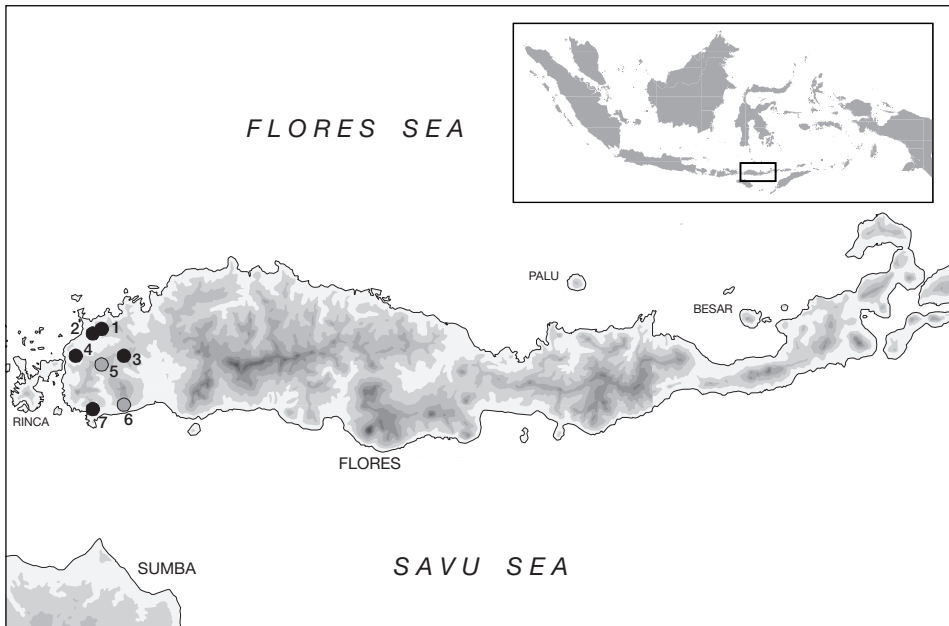
Endangered B1+2b,c,e

Vulnerable A1c; A2c; C1

This striking forest bird qualifies as Endangered because its very small range is suffering severe fragmentation and diminution as a consequence of rampant habitat loss and degradation on Flores.

DISTRIBUTION The Flores Monarch is endemic to the western eighth of the island of Flores, Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Records are from:

■ **INDONESIA** *Flores Golo Bilas* (Nggorang Bowosie), 300–450 m, September 1997 (Pilgrim *et al.* 1997, 2000, C. Trainor *in litt.* 1999); **Wangkung** at Ceras (Nggorang Bowosie), 500 m, September 1997 (Pilgrim *et al.* 1997, 2000); **Puarlolo** (Mbeliling), east (in the more certain case 33 km) of Labuhanbajo on the Ruteng road, August 1993 (probably) and November 1994 (definitely) (Butchart *et al.* 1996), August 1997 (B. F. King verbally 1997), 1998 (C. Trainor *in litt.* 1999) and, along the Potawangka road, August 1999 (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 1999), also including Bambor at the Puarlolo telecommunications station, August 1997 (Chartier and Chartier 1997), August 1999 (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 2000); **Cereng** (Mbeliling), 610 m, at Dangka Pat, September 1977 (Schmutz 1977), May 1978 (Schmutz 1978), 1998 (C. Trainor *in litt.* 1999); **Paku** (Mbeliling), 400–900 m, July 1975 (see Remarks 1) and March



The distribution of Flores Monarch *Monarcha sacerdotum*: (1) Golo Bilas; (2) Wangkung; (3) Puarlolo; (4) Cereng; (5) Paku; (6) Sesok; (7) Tanjung Kerita Mese.

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

1976 (Schmutz 1977) and June 1978 (Schmutz 1978); **Sesok** (Sano Nggoang, 10 km east of Paku/Mbeliling: C. Trainor *in litt.* 1999), 800–1,000 m, July and September 1971 (Mees 1973, Schmutz 1977); **Tanjung Kerita Mese** (Mbeliling) at Mata Wae Ndae, 350–970 m, August/September 1993 (Butchart *et al.* 1996).

Calls very like this species were heard on Gunung Ndeki, but may have come from the closely related Spectacled Monarch *Monarcha trivirgatus*, which is known from this site (Verhoeve undated, Butchart *et al.* 1996). There is a report of the species in Ruteng Nature Recreation Park (NRP), 1,000 m, 1994 (King 1995), but this is regarded as unconfirmed and improbable (C. Trainor *in litt.* 1999).

POPULATION The species was recently described as “extremely local” and “extremely rare” based on records at a single site during fieldwork in 1993, when however a very tentative density of 2.3 (± 0.8) birds per hectare was estimated (Butchart *et al.* 1996; see Remarks 2). Schmutz (1978) wrote of distinguishing at least three different groups of birds in a small piece of forest, mentioning that once two birds were singing 100 m apart. In 1998 fieldwork found the species frequent and one of the commonest bird species at Puarlolo (c.10 contacts involving 1–6 birds in three hours), frequent at Cereng, and uncommon at Golo Bilas and Paku; its abundance decreases in habitats below c.400 m and in moist deciduous forest, and it is absent from dry forest (C. Trainor *in litt.* 1999).

ECOLOGY Habitat This flycatcher has the smallest range and narrowest habitat requirements of any bird species of conservation importance on Flores. In 1993 at Tanjung Kerita Mese most birds were recorded in primary semi-evergreen rainforest at 700–900 m, suggesting an intolerance of both moist deciduous monsoon forest (below this band) and lower montane forest (above) (Butchart *et al.* 1996); however, in 1997 an immature was observed in moist deciduous forest (Pilgrim *et al.* 1997), and the species is reported (but confirmation is needed) from 1,000 m in Ruteng NRP (King 1995). On the Labuhanbajo–Ruteng road, November 1994, birds (three) were in damp areas within old secondary forest (Butchart *et al.* 1996). Although it is claimed there have been no records from degraded habitat (Butchart *et al.* 1996), Schmutz (1978) heard a bird singing in a flock at the edge of open bushland, and F. R. Lambert (*in litt.* 1999) saw birds in a considerably disturbed stream valley, and subsequently Pilgrim *et al.* (1997) and R. Drijvers (*in litt.* 1999) found some birds in partially degraded habitat. The plausible notion that some mutual exclusion based on elevation might occur with Spectacled Monarch (Mees 1973) has found some support (Butchart *et al.* 1996, Pilgrim *et al.* 1997), and where Flores Monarch is absent Spectacled Monarch reaches equally high (e.g. 800 m at Gunung Egon in the east, 950 m on Gunung Inerie: R. Drijvers, C. Trainor *in litt.* 1999). Flores Monarchs usually stay at around 12–20 m in the subcanopy, but feed as low as 3 m from the ground (Pilgrim *et al.* 2000).

Food Birds often occur in mixed-species flocks, with up to five birds per flock (Butchart *et al.* 1996; also Schmutz 1977). They feed by flycatching and by gleaning insects from foliage; when not in a mixed flock, they often sit motionless for extended periods (Pilgrim *et al.* 2000). Food passed to a fledgling included insects resembling a caterpillar, a lacewing and a cricket (Butchart *et al.* 1996).

Breeding In late August many calling individuals suggested territoriality, although birds also joined mixed flocks; at this time a recently fledged young was observed being fed by an adult, and two days later an immature was netted with an adult, and other immatures were seen (Butchart *et al.* 1996; see also *Oriental Bird Club Bull.* 18: 42). A juvenile being fed by an adult was again seen in August (1997) (Chartier and Chartier 1997). The type specimen (male), taken in late September, had very large gonads; immatures have been seen in mid-September (Schmutz 1977, Pilgrim *et al.* 1997) but also one in May (Schmutz 1978).

THREATS There is high pressure on primary semi-evergreen rainforest in Flores, with conversion to plantations and fragmentation through road building (Butchart *et al.* 1996, C. Trainor *in litt.* 1999). The extensive area of lowland moist deciduous forest at Golo Bilas, also important for Flores Hanging-parrot *Loriculus flosculus* and Flores Crow *Corvus florensis* (see relevant accounts), is currently being cleared for firewood and light construction (Pilgrim *et al.* 1997) and for agriculture (R. F. A. Grimmett *in litt.* 2001). The forest near Labuhanbajo is also now being heavily cut-over: in one 5 km stretch of road through what was, in the mid-1990s, primary forest, 24 chainsaws were seen or heard in operation on one day in August 1999 (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 1999).

The Flores Monarch is one of (now) five threatened members of the suite of 17 bird species that are entirely restricted to the “Northern Nusa Tenggara Endemic Bird Area”, threats and conservation measures in which are profiled by Sujatnika *et al.* (1995) and Stattersfield *et al.* (1998).

MEASURES TAKEN The targeting of this species for study in the project by Butchart *et al.* (1996) was an important first step. The presence of the species in Ruteng NRP would be valuable if true—more information is needed on its status there than its mere listing in King (1995)—but all the evidence points to its absence from this site (C. Trainor *in litt.* 1999).

MEASURES PROPOSED The Flores Monarch is sympatric with Flores Hanging-parrot at Tanjung Kerita Mese (Mbeliling) proposed protected area; the preparation and implementation of a forest conservation plan for this area would represent a major step for the conservation of the region’s biodiversity, and, following the determination of the precise extent of appropriate habitat (primary semi-evergreen forest) in the Mata Wae Ndae part of this area, its effective protection is “an urgent priority if this species is not to go extinct” (Butchart *et al.* 1996, Trainor 2000, Trainor *et al.* 2000; see Measures Proposed under Flores Hanging-parrot). This area is adjacent to the type locality at Sesok (Sano Nggoang), which also merits protection, not least because of the presence there of the plant *Boholia nematostylis*, previously known only from Bohol in the Philippines; and at the two sites there are c.10 further plant species new to science, emphasising the huge importance of both (Schmutz 1977, Trainor *et al.* 2000). Conservation of certain intact stretches of forest at Nggorang Bowosie would clearly also be highly beneficial to this and other of the island’s avian endemics (C. Trainor *in litt.* 1999).

REMARKS (1) The specimen (in RMNH) is actually dated 25 June 1975. (2) The account in Coates and Bishop (1997) draws, like Butchart *et al.* (1996), on Butchart *et al.* (1993). Doubtless because Butchart *et al.* (1993) referred to “many individuals... calling” Coates and Bishop (1997) described this species as “locally moderately common”. This inference may be entirely accurate, but it clearly results in a divergent notion of abundance from those quoted from Butchart *et al.* (1996).