

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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GREEN RACQUET-TAIL

Prioniturus luconensis

Critical —

Endangered —

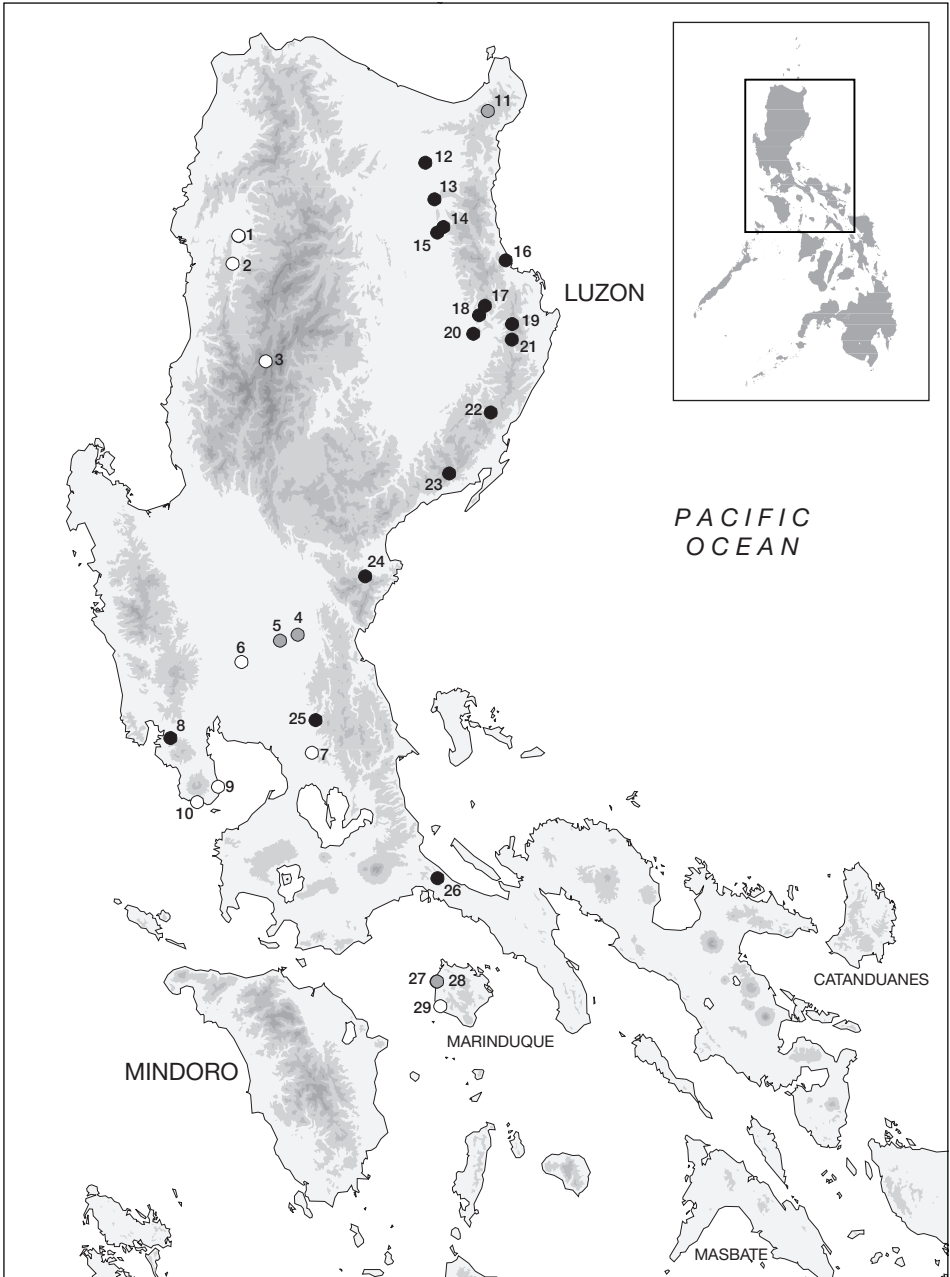
Vulnerable A1c,d; A2c,d; C1; C2a



This species is undergoing a continuing rapid decline owing to extensive lowland deforestation, compounded by exploitation for the cagebird trade. As a result its now small population is becoming increasingly severely fragmented, qualifying it as Vulnerable.

DISTRIBUTION The Green Racquet-tail is endemic to the Philippines, where it is known from Luzon and Marinduque. Rand (1970b) mentioned that “specimens from Samal island in Gulf of Davao are surely escaped cagebirds”; the same may be true of a bird at the American Cemetery, Manila, in March 1995 (Crosby 1995). Records are from:

■ **PHILIPPINES** *Luzon (western)* **Bucay**, Abra, February 1895 (male in AMNH); **Barit**, Abra, November 1894 (male in BMNH); **Mt Data**, March 1895 (female in BMNH); **Papaya**, Ecija, July 1958 (two specimens in CM); **Gapan** at Santa Cruz, Nueva Ecija, July and October 1958 (three specimens in AMNH, CM); foot of **Mt Arayat**, Pampanga, December 1893 (Whitehead 1899c; also four specimens in AMNH and BMNH); **Montalban**, February 1877 (four males in BMNH); **Subic Bay Forest Reserve**, February 1984 (Fisher mss), February 1994, several flocks (A. Jensen *in litt.* 1994), March 1997 (T. H. Fisher verbally 1997, P. A. J. Morris *in litt.* 1997); **Lamao**, Bataan, November and December 1947 (Gilliard 1950; five specimens in AMNH); **Mariveles**, Bataan, March 1902 (male in FMNH), with two specimens (in DMNH) simply labelled Bataan, July 1958; (*eastern*) **Mt Cagua** at San Pascual and at Ipil, Gonzaga, Cagayan, April 1960 (24 specimens, two labelled as at 75 m, in BMNH, FMNH, PNM, UPLB, YPM; also Poulsen 1995); **Sitio Hot Springs**, Via, Baggao, Cagayan, on the west slope of the Sierra Madre (evidently below Los Dos Cuernos), 110 m, May 1989 (male in USNM); **Quibal**, Peñablanca, Cagayan, 240 m, February and March 1980 (four specimens in DMNH); **Cayapa**, Peñablanca, March 1991 (Danielsen *et al.* 1994) and April/May 1992 (Poulsen 1995); **Palay** west of Los Dos Cuernos, May 1991 (Danielsen *et al.* 1994, Poulsen 1995); **Maconacon**, Isabela, April 1983 (Fisher mss; also Poulsen 1995); **Minuma**, May 1994, where scarce (Davidson ms, C. R. Robson *in litt.* 1997); **Siagot**, Bintacan, March 1991 (Danielsen *et al.* 1994) and March 1992 (Poulsen 1995); **Mt Palanan**, Isabela, June 1987 (Jensen and Hornskov 1992); **San Mariano** at Disulap (in one case Dipamanan), Isabela, April–May 1961 (nine specimens in AMNH, PNM) and October 1982 (male in NCSM), including from the former site “Molino”, May 1894 (two males in BMNH; Poulsen 1995), at Decirabe, April 1961 (male in PNM), and at Dimalasud (specimen in PNM); near **Mt Dipalayag**, April 1991 (Danielsen *et al.* 1994, Poulsen 1995); **Diagopanay**, Dinapigue, March 1991 (Danielsen *et al.* 1994, Poulsen 1995); **María Aurora Memorial National Park** in the Tilasi valley, Dinalongan, April 1996 (D. W. Billing *in litt.* 1997, T. H. Fisher verbally 1997); about one hour north of **Baler**, April 1996 (T. H. Fisher verbally 1997, W. Simpson *in litt.* 1997); (*central*) **Angat Dam**, February 1986 and March 1990, but not subsequently (Fisher mss, T. H. Fisher verbally 1997; also Poulsen 1995); **Quezon National Park**, May 1983 and January 1984 (Fisher mss), July 1987 (Jensen and Hornskov 1992), March 1990 and 1992 (N. J. Redman *in litt.* 1994), with birds claimed as this species in January and February 1994 (Hornbuckle 1994, P. A. J. Morris *in litt.* 1994), but see Threats; (*southern*) unspecified locality, Sorsogon province, February–August 1903 (seven specimens in AMNH and ANSP);



The distribution of Green Racquet-tail *Prioniturus luconensis*: (1) Bucay; (2) Barit; (3) Mt Data; (4) Papaya; (5) Gapan; (6) Mt Arayat; (7) Montalban; (8) Subic Bay Forest Reserve; (9) Lamao; (10) Mariveles; (11) Mt Cagua; (12) Sitio Hot Springs; (13) Quibal; (14) Cayapa; (15) Palay; (16) Maconacon; (17) Minuma; (18) Siagot; (19) Mt Palanan; (20) San Mariano; (21) Mt Dipaylag; (22) Diagopanay; (23) Maria Aurora Memorial National Park; (24) Baler; (25) Angat Dam; (26) Quezon National Park; (27) Boac; (28) Canat; (29) Gasaing.
 ○ Historical (pre-1950) ● Fairly recent (1950–1979) ● Recent (1980–present)

Marinduque Boac, June 1877 (female in MNHN), and in particular at **Canat**, 1,050 m, March 1970 (two specimens in DMNH; also duPont 1972b); **Gasaing**, June 1881 (two specimens in MNHN).

Two localities on Luzon remain untraced: Abancaye, Balete, before 1880 (two specimens in MNHN), and Sibul, May 1907 (male in BMNH).

POPULATION This parrot has been characterised as uncommon and local (Gonzales and Rees 1988, Dickinson *et al.* 1991) but is now judged to be very rare on Luzon, and numbers must be small on Marinduque (Collar *et al.* 1994). It was “common about the foot of Monte Arayat” and “in north Luzon... abundant in the maize-fields” (Whitehead 1899c). On the Bataan Peninsula in 1947 it was “fairly common in the canopy of original tropical forest” (Gilliard 1950). It was locally common in lowland forest at Quezon National Park during the 1980s (Collar and Andrew 1988) but judged very rare there in 1989–1990 (see Poulsen 1995) and is now apparently extinct (T. H. Fisher verbally 1997; see Threats). It appears to be extinct at Angat Dam, with no records since 1990 (T. H. Fisher verbally 1997). It is considered common at Subic Bay Forest Reserve, with several flocks being seen in a three-hour visit in February 1994 (A. Jensen *in litt.* 1994) and March 1997 (T. H. Fisher verbally 1997). In the Sierra Madre in 1991 it was uncommon at Diagopanay and Siagot and rare at San Mariano and Dipalayag, Sitio Palay (west of Los Dos Cuernos) and Cayapa (Danielsen *et al.* 1994). It may still be fairly secure in the Sierra Madre and Bataan, but populations are declining and the species is nowhere common (Poulsen 1995).

ECOLOGY Habitat The species is reported to inhabit forest edge and cultivated areas in the lowlands and foothills (Dickinson *et al.* 1991) or secondary growth in lowlands and mountains (Gonzales and Rees 1988), but its increasing rarity suggests a greater dependence on lowland forest than this indicates (see quotation under Population from Gilliard 1950): it is certainly the case that birds range out into scattered fruiting trees in open areas (G. C. L. Dutson *in litt.* 1994), and into heavily degraded forest (C. R. Robson *in litt.* 1994). On Luzon it is a lowland species: all recent records from the Sierra Madre stem from 300–700 m (Poulsen 1995), and only on Marinduque has it explicitly been recorded above 1,000 m (see Distribution). Records in the Sierra Madre were in primary and secondary forest and flying over degraded habitat (Danielsen *et al.* 1994).

Food The species is reported to eat fruit, particularly bananas, young corn (flowers and seeds), and rice (Whitehead 1899c, Delacour and Mayr 1946, Gonzales and Rees 1988).

Breeding All the evidence points to April and May as the main season: one male and one female from Mt Cagua, April, had active gonads, and another female contained a “ripe egg” (FMNH label data); and Whitehead (1899c) collected a young racquet-tail from northern Luzon in May. Birds labelled “juvenile” and “immature” have been collected in December, February and March (four specimens in BMNH).

Migration Nothing is recorded, and as a lowland species this bird might be expected to be more sedentary than some upland frugivores; nevertheless, small-scale displacements cannot be ruled out.

THREATS Habitat destruction and trapping for the cagebird trade have been identified as significant problems for this species, with local extinction from lower-level forest loss likely in some areas and absence of birds from human population centres, owing to trapping pressure, certain in others (Poulsen 1995; also Collar *et al.* 1994). Mt Data is now reported to be devoid of forest (NADM). Interspecific competition may also perhaps play a part once habitats have been modified: the species has now apparently been replaced by Blue-crowned Racquet-tail *Prioniturus discurus* in Quezon National Park; the latter species was first recorded there

in 1992, and *P. luconensis* has not been recorded with certainty there since that date (T. H. Fisher verbally 1997).

MEASURES TAKEN Two areas in which the species currently occurs are CPPAP sites (Bataan Natural Park/Subic Bay and Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park; see Appendix). A further population receives some protection within Maria Aurora Memorial National Park. The species is banned from trade under CITES Appendix II and legislation exists to protect it from hunting, although these laws are freely violated.

MEASURES PROPOSED Apart from the areas targeted for conservation above, the species is known, presently or historically, from two “key sites” (Mts Cagua and Mariveles Mountains; see Appendix) and these deserve further survey and formal designation, at least in part, under the NIPAS process. A conservation strategy for Luzon needs to address the distribution of this species and the habitats it frequents alongside similar considerations for other threatened birds endemic, or near-endemic, to the island (see Remarks 1). There is an urgent need for better information on the ecology and year-round requirements of this species, and a study in Subic Bay Nature Reserve could be helpful in providing certain baseline data for the species’s (and indeed the reserve’s) future management. There is a need for careful examination of *Prioniturus* at all sites at which *P. luconensis* has been recorded, given its similarity to the apparently invasive *P. discurus*; the spread of the latter species should be carefully monitored.

REMARKS (1) Several threatened bird species are, at least largely, endemic to Luzon, and are at risk primarily owing to habitat loss: Luzon Buttonquail *Turnix worcesteri*, Brown-banded Rail *Lewinia mirificus*, Flame-breasted Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus marchei*, Whiskered Pitta *Pitta kochi*, Ashy Thrush *Zoothera cinerea*, Luzon Water-redstart *Rhyacornis bicolor*, White-browed Jungle-flycatcher *Rhinomyias insignis* and Isabela Oriole *Oriolus isabellae*. These taxa will benefit most from an integrated conservation strategy for the island and their requirements should be taken into account equally such that areas supporting populations of the greatest number are prioritised for conservation effort. However, any such system of priority areas will itself sit partly within and greatly complement the necessary forest reserve system for the survival of the Philippine Eagle *Pithecophaga jefferyi* on Luzon (see Measures Proposed *Defence and extension of the protected area network* under that species).