Threatened Birds of Asia:
The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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NEGROS STRIPED-BABBLER

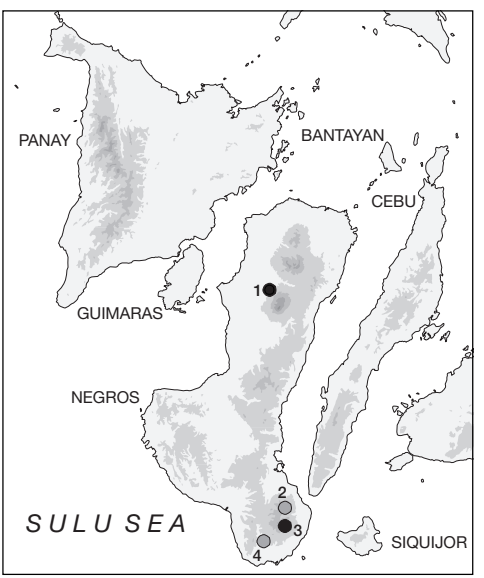
Stachyris nigrorum

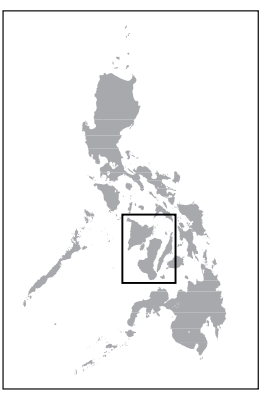
Critical □ —
Endangered ■ B1+2a,b,c,e
Vulnerable □ A2c; D2

This species qualifies as Endangered because it has a very small and declining range, being known from just two mountains, where ongoing forest destruction is reducing the extent, area and quality of its habitat, and causing a decline in numbers. It appears exceedingly rare on one mountain and, if there are no further records in the near future, it should be considered confined to one locality and may require upgrading to Critical.

DISTRIBUTION The Negros Striped-babbler is endemic to Negros in the Philippines, where apart from one record it is known only from the broad vicinity of the type locality, Mt Talinis or Cuernos de Negros, Negros Oriental, thus:

■ ***PHILIPPINES*** *Negros* **Mambucal**, Mt Canlaon, May 1987 (Hornskov 1995a; see Remarks 1); **Lake Balinsasayao**, in the period January 1977 to July 1978 (Alcala and Carumbana 1980); **Mt Talinis**, 1,200 m, April 1951 (Rand and Rabor 1952a), and as "Cuernos de Negros", August 1953, October and December 1955 and January 1956 (six specimens in YPM, ZMH), 1991–1992 (Pa-alan 1993) and March 1997 (I. Mauro *per* F. Verbelen *in litt.* 1997), more specific records being from Luzuriaga, at 1,090–1,600 m, November 1952 to January 1953 (29 specimens in AMNH, BMNH, FMNH, MCZ, PNM), and at Valencia, November and December 1952 and January 1953 (six specimens in YPM), April 1987 (Hornskov 1995a), 1,050–1,400 m, August 1991 (Brooks *et al.* 1992, Evans *et al.* 1993a), 1,000–1,300 m, July or August 1993 (Curio 1993), February 1994 (Hornbuckle 1994) and at c.1,000 m, April 1994 (Davidson ms); **Mantiquil** at Dayungan, Siaton, at 900–1,200 m, December 1966 (17 specimens in DMNH, USNM).





The distribution of Negros Striped-babbler *Stachyris nigrorum*: (1) Mambucal; (2) Lake Balinsasayao; (3) Mt Talinis; (4) Mantiquil.
○ Fairly recent (1950–1979)
● Recent (1980–present)

POPULATION Although reported as uncommon and local (Dickinson *et al.* 1991), recent reports indicate that the Negros Striped-babbler is rather common but that its population is likely to be declining within its very restricted range (Brooks *et al.* 1992, also Evans *et al.* 1993a). It was common to abundant at two sites on Mt Talinis, 1991–1992 (Pa-alan 1993). In only one day at the site a total of 76 individuals were noted, all above 1,050 m, making this the second most frequently recorded species (after Mountain White-eye *Zosterops montanus*) at the site, consequently being considered the least endangered of the threatened Negros endemics (Brooks *et al.* 1992, Evans *et al.* 1993a). Similarly, Hornskov (1995a) found 2–8 daily in early April 1987. However, Curio (1993) only found the species once at a different site on Mt Talinis and speculated whether there might be density fluctuations between years or simply between areas; and further evidence under Threats suggests that this babbler may be rapidly losing habitat.

ECOLOGY ***Habitat*** The species inhabits mountain forest between 950 m and 1,600 m (Dickinson *et al.* 1991). It has also been seen in recently degraded forest (Brooks *et al.* 1992), in an area opened up for agriculture (Pa-alan 1993), and in secondary forest and dense bushes at the forest edge (C. R. Robson *in litt.* 1997). Hornskov (1995a) found that birds favoured the lower storey but that on one evening they moved into the canopy (20 m) to catch the day's last sunlight; an association with Elegant Tit *Parus elegans* was also noted.

Food The species has been found to be one of the primary constituents of mixed feeding flocks, along with Mountain White-eye, Mountain Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus trivirgatus*, Blue-headed Fantail *Rhipidura cyaniceps* and Philippine Bulbul *Ixos philippinus*, mainly occurring in the foliage of understorey trees (Brooks *et al.* 1992, Evans *et al.* 1993a). It has been seen feeding amongst dead leaves hanging under the head of a banana plant (C. R. Robson *in litt.* 1997). In 1991 most birds were observed feeding in the foliage of understorey trees, usually in pairs and rarely in small groups of 6–8 members, feeding mainly on insects and tiny fruits of some forest trees (Evans *et al.* 1993a). A December female (in FMNH) had been eating fruits.

Breeding A breeding female was collected in November (MCZ label data) while a male and female from November and December respectively had slightly enlarged gonads (AMNH, FMNH label data). A single juvenile was recorded being fed by an adult in September (Evans *et al.* 1993a).

Migration It would appear that this species is highly sedentary and should be present within its altitudinal range throughout the year.

THREATS This striped-babbler prefers mid-mountain and mossy forest, and its range still retains considerable forest cover, so that it might be considered the most secure of the threatened birds of Negros; nevertheless, forest destruction owing to agriculture and logging activities has reached 1,250 m on Mt Talinis, higher than at any other site on Negros (Brooks *et al.* 1992, Evans *et al.* 1993a). In 1993 the forest at Mt Talinis under the jurisdiction of PNOC (Philippine National Oil Corporation)—a "substantial part of the Mt Talinis area"—was protected by a single guard who, in response to threats from slash-and-burn farmers, was confining his patrol work to the construction road up the mountain (Curio 1994). The present security of this virtual single-mountain endemic species must therefore be regarded as highly compromised.

MEASURES TAKEN The species has been recorded in only one CPPAP site (Mt Canlaon; see Appendix but also Remarks 1). The Mt Talinis/Twin Lakes area (including the Eastern Cuernos de Negros and Lake Balinsasayao "key sites") has been proposed for FPE funding (see Appendix). In conjunction, the Silliman University Center for Tropical Conservation Studies has been conducting education and awareness campaigns in the local communities

near Mt Talinis itself, targeting wildlife conservation (especially the birds) and the protection of their habitats (R. Pa-alan verbally 1995). The mountain is the chief locality where the Negros Striped-babbler is found and this justifies considerable conservation effort for the site.

MEASURES PROPOSED The species does not occur at any "key sites" which are not targeted for conservation. At Mt Talinis, special initiatives should be targeted by DENR with the support of NGOs or Silliman University to put an end to the continued destruction of the forest at higher elevations through stricter implementation of existing laws and completion of effective awareness campaigns. Regular monitoring of the Negros Striped-babbler as well as the other threatened endemic birds that are found on the mountain should also be undertaken. An appropriate conservation strategy for the forests of Negros is discussed more fully under Visayan Wrinkled Hornbill *Aceros waldeni*.

REMARKS (1) The record from Mt Canlaon in 1987 has not been repeated despite considerable subsequent fieldwork there (e.g. Evans *et al.* 1993b, Hornbuckle 1994, D. Allen verbally 1997), so there must be considerable doubt as to the importance of the site for the species.