

Threatened Birds of Asia:

The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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SOMBRE KINGFISHER

Todiramphus funebris

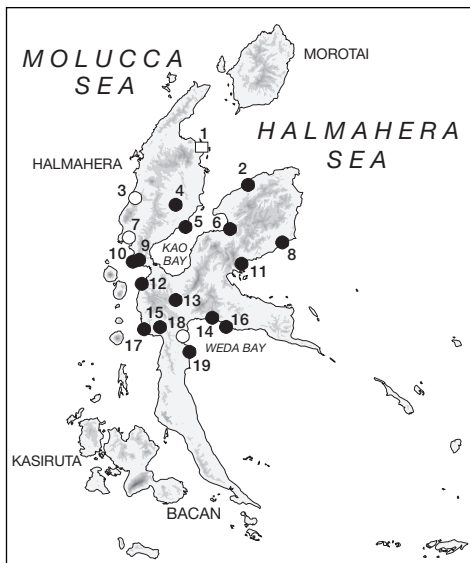


Critical —
 Endangered —
Vulnerable **C2b**

Formerly treated as *Near Threatened*, this forest kingfisher has been upgraded to *Vulnerable*, because its small population is undergoing a decline as a result of increasing habitat loss and degradation.

DISTRIBUTION The Sombre Kingfisher is, on present knowledge, endemic to the island of Halmahera in the North Moluccas, Indonesia, as determined here (see Remarks 1) and in Coates and Bishop (1997). Records are from:

■ **INDONESIA Halmahera Tobelo**, May 1912 (Forshaw 1985); **Labilabi**, February–March 1995 (Poulsen and Lambert 2000, MKP), September 1995 (J. O. Gjershaug and N. Rov *in litt.* 1999), July 1998 (I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999); **Gunung Gamkonora**, May 1931 (two specimens in AMNH); **Tolewang** in Kao sago swamp, April 1996 (Poulsen and Lambert 2000, MKP); **Kao** (Teluk Kau road), August 1999 (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 2000); **Sungai Dodaga**, July/September 1994 (Fuller undated), May 1995 (Poulsen and Lambert 2000, MKP); **Jailolo** (“Gilolo”), April 1931 (14 specimens in AMNH), September 1954 (Ripley 1959); **Miaf**, April 1995 (Poulsen and Lambert 2000, MKP); **Kali Batu Putih**, since 1984 (many observers *in litt.* 1999); **Sidangoli**, September 1983 (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 2000), September 1995 (J. O. Gjershaug and N. Rov *in litt.* 1999); **Buli**, April–May 1995 (Poulsen and Lambert 2000, MKP); **Oba**, August 1994 (Poulsen and Lambert 2000, MKP); **Kulo**, July 1994 (Poulsen and Lambert 2000, MKP); **Kobe**, May 1999 (D. Agista *in litt.* 1999); **Hijrah**, May 1999 (D. Agista *in litt.* 1999); **Waleh**, May 1999 (D. Agista *in litt.* 1999); **Woda**, June–July 1994 (Poulsen and Lambert 2000, MKP); **Weda**, “sea coast”, June 1863 (male in RMNH); **Sosowomo**, May 1999 (D. Agista *in litt.* 1999).



The distribution of Sombre Kingfisher

Todiramphus funebris: (1) Tobelo; (2) Labilabi; (3) Gunung Gamkonora; (4) Tolewang; (5) Kao; (6) Sungai Dodaga; (7) Jailolo; (8) Miaf; (9) Kali Batu Putih; (10) Sidangoli; (11) Buli; (12) Oba; (13) Kulo; (14) Kobe; (15) Hijrah; (16) Waleh; (17) Woda; (18) Weda; (19) Sosowomo.

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

BMNH holds five skins from “Gilolo” collected by A. R. Wallace in 1858–1859 and six from “South Halmahera” by J. Waterstradt in September–November 1902.

POPULATION Although considered “evidently quite common” (Fry *et al.* 1992), more recent and experienced testimony suggests it is uncommon and rarely seen, perching for long periods in well shaded positions (Coates and Bishop 1997, 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 (Fuller undated). Nevertheless, one observer heard it regularly at two sites and judged it to be moderately common (I. Mauro *in litt.* 1999). On the other hand, the evidence below that this is a bird of lowland forests, and that lowland forest in Halmahera is decreasing in area and quality, strongly suggests that it is in decline.

ECOLOGY Habitat This is an inhabitant of the lower canopy and mid-storey, often overlooking clearings, in closed primary forest, swamp forest dominated by sago palms and with few tall trees, tall secondary woodland, mangroves and forest edge, occasionally entering coconut groves and plantations, from the lowlands to 620 m (Heinrich 1956, Coates and Bishop 1997, MKP; see Remarks 2). In recent fieldwork the species was found most frequently below 100 m and always below 455 m, but *contra* Heinrich (1956) it was not found to be an open-country species (MKP; also Poulsen and Lambert 2000). However, Fuller (undated) found it slightly more frequently in cultivated habitats than in forest. A bird in 1986 was at the edge of tall bamboo near selectively logged forest (F. R. Lambert *in litt.* 1999).

Food The species employs a perch-and-pounce hunting technique, keeping watch from a high perch and dropping to the ground to take its prey: large grasshoppers (presumably bush-crickets), a centipede, snakes and lizards have been recorded in the diet (Heinrich 1956, Fuller undated, Coates and Bishop 1997, MKP).

Breeding There is no information.

THREATS White and Bruce (1986) commented that this species appeared to be “an old relict endemic”, which implies a certain constitutive dependence on highly stable conditions in order to survive. It 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 At the start of the 1990s it was reported that around 90% of the total area of Halmahera remained forested (Lambert 1993a,b). However, the forests in question “are rich in economically valuable timbers and exploitation by logging companies is now intensive” (Lambert 1993a,b). By the end of the 1990s the lowest-lying forests, which are the most important for this species, had “to a large extent been converted into cultivated areas and remaining lowland areas are mostly under threat”, from settlement and transmigration, conversion to agriculture, selective logging, plantations, irrigation schemes, fuelwood collection and mineral extraction (Poulsen *et al.* 1999). Thus one visitor in 1998 found that “the noise of chainsaws was almost constant throughout the daylight hours during our stay on Halmahera” (C. Donald *in litt.* 1999). The area around Kali Batu Putih (Sidangoli) has been almost entirely cleared in the past 10 years (K. D. Bishop *in litt.* 1999).

MEASURES TAKEN This species has been protected under Indonesian law since 1931 (Inskipp 1986).

MEASURES PROPOSED There is a detailed recommendation for a national park embracing a total of 2,130 km², plus the Dodaga mangrove area, on Halmahera (see equivalent section

under White Cockatoo). Gunung Gamkonora has been recommended for wildlife sanctuary or recreation forest status (Purmiasa 1997).

Detailed ecological studies of this species, coupled with a range-wide evaluation of its status, are needed to provide the basis for its secure conservation.

REMARKS (1) White and Bruce (1986) listed Ternate and Tidore as possible islands, based on a very hesitant (bracketed) listing qualified by a footnote expressing uncertainty in van Bemmelen (1948). Without indicating a source, both Forshaw (1985) and Fry *et al.* (1992) listed Ternate as a definite island. This might be based on a specimen in BMNH (Sharpe and Ogilvie Grant 1892) but the label in question says "Ternate or Gilolo" (Gilolo being the old name for Halmahera), so it is untenable to regard Ternate as confirmed. There is, incidentally, another specimen in BMNH marked "Batchian" (Bacan) which, however, appears to have been either deliberately or accidentally ignored by previous researchers and may not be an original annotation. (2) The ascription to "open, cultivated lowlands, gardens and coconut plantations near forest" (Fry *et al.* 1992), prompted by White and Bruce (1986) drawing attention to Heinrich (1956), appears to misplace the balance; it is (on other evidence) a forest bird that *occasionally* enters more open, disturbed habitats.