Threatened Birds of Asia:
The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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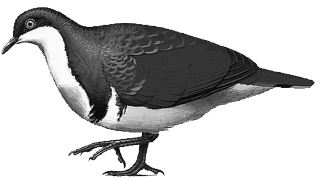
SULU BLEEDING-HEART
Gallicolumba menagei

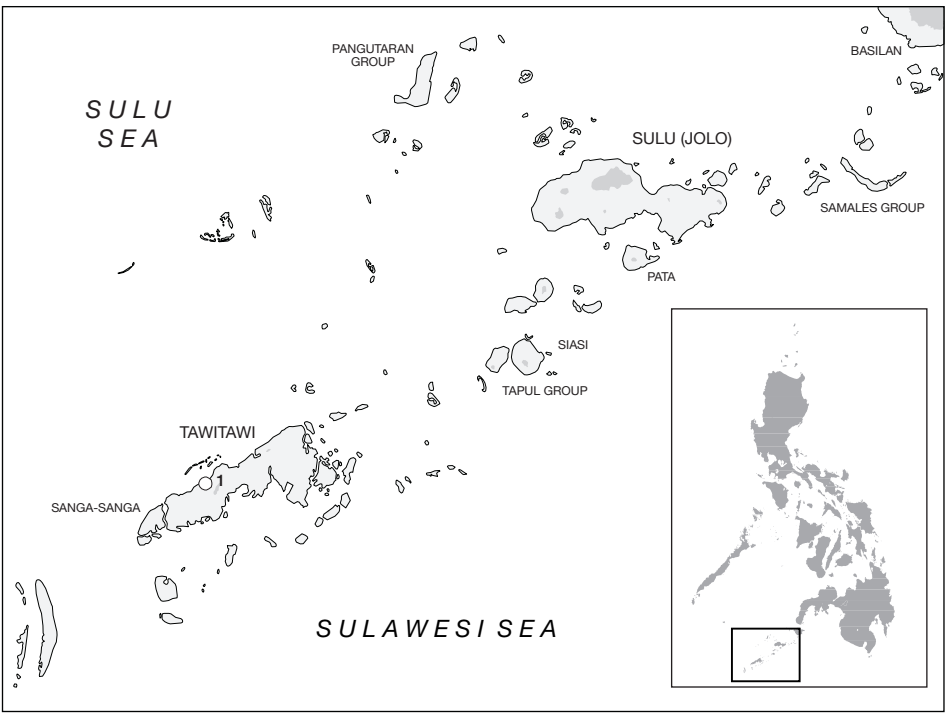


Critical ■ A2c; C2b; D1
Endangered □ B1+2a,b,c,d,e; C1
Vulnerable □ A1c,d; D2

The lack of records of this species for over a century suggests that it must have a tiny population, if it survives at all. Continuing forest loss indicates that it is almost certainly declining. Indeed, it is predicted to undergo an extremely rapid population reduction in the immediate future based on this loss. These factors together qualify it as Critical.

DISTRIBUTION The Sulu Bleeding-heart is endemic to the Sulu archipelago, Philippines, where it appears to be known with certainty only from two specimens on Tawitawi, but with unconfirmed reports also for that island and from the islands of Siasi, Tandubatu, Dundangan, Baliungan and Simunul. A sight record from Jolo (see Remarks 1 under Mindanao Bleeding-heart *G. criniger*) was never confirmed, the species was not found there during fieldwork in 1994 (Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995) and the island now appears to be devoid of forest (Lambert 1993c, Collar *et al.* 1994); in any case there is no good evidence that the form on Jolo was this species. Records and reports are as follows:

■ ***PHILIPPINES*** *Siasi* an apparently reliable local report, around 1945 (D. Allen *in litt.* 1996);



The distribution of Sulu Bleeding-heart *Gallicolumba menagei*: (1) Tataan. ○ Historical (pre-1950)

Tawitawi **Tataan**, October 1891 (Bourns and Worcester 1894); Languyan, unconfirmed local reports, January 1995 (Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995);
Tandubatu unconfirmed local reports, January 1995 (Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995);
Dundangan unconfirmed local reports, January 1995 (Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995);
Baliungan unconfirmed local reports, January 1995 (Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995);
Simunul unconfirmed local report, undated (D. Allen *in litt.* 1996).

POPULATION The population of the Sulu Bleeding-heart must be extremely small and on the verge of extinction. Even a century ago the bird was considered "extremely rare and difficult to obtain" by its first describers, who only procured two males (Bourns and Worcester 1894, McGregor 1909–1910). Hachisuka (1936), in support of this, noted that the number of records was remarkably low in proportion to the number of visits by naturalists to the islands. Lambert (1993c), on his visit to Tawitawi in September 1991, failed to observe the bird and cited the failure of duPont and Rabor (1973a) to collect this species despite their 22-day stay on Tawitawi in December 1971, but he found it "hard to imagine that it does not still occur in the extensive forests on the island". It was not found during fieldwork in the Sulus in 1994 and 1996 (Dutson *et al.* 1996, D. Allen *in litt.* 1996). Local inhabitants questioned by Diesmos and Pedregosa (1995) claimed the species to be "quite abundant" before the 1970s, thereafter declining "dramatically" on these islands, and now seen "only rarely". Although exact numbers are not known, recent reports suggest that it now occurs at a very low density and is rarely seen, and then almost always singly (Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995). Moreover, although three of the islands from which the bleeding-heart has been recently reported (Tandubatu, Dundangan and Baliungan) apparently retain much forest (as does Languyan on the Tawitawi mainland), their small size (two at 700 ha and one at 300 ha) gives little hope for the existence of large and stable populations (Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995); in any case, these reports cannot be accepted as certain and therefore are unavailable for an assessment of the species's conservation status. It needs to be emphasised that this species has not been seen since its discovery in 1891.

ECOLOGY ***Habitat*** The Sulu Bleeding-heart is believed to occupy primary and secondary forest, feeding on the forest floor (Dickinson *et al.* 1991). All *Gallicolumba* live on the forest floor, only perching in trees when roosting, seeking cover or breeding (McGregor 1909–1910, Delacour 1932); however, when flushed they generally alight on the ground, run rapidly, and hide in thick growth (Delacour and Mayr 1946). The information derived from local reports under Distribution might suggest that this species is a small-island specialist (as are certain other *Gallicolumba*: D. Gibbs verbally 1996); alternatively, the prevalence of reports from small islands may be due to a combination of their retaining substantial forest cover and not suffering from insurgency problems (which prohibit fieldwork).

Food There is no information.

Breeding There is no information.

Migration It seems highly improbable that a species with so restricted a range would undertake any identifiable displacements, but minor responses to patterns of food distribution cannot be ruled out.

THREATS The Sulu Bleeding-heart is highly threatened by forest destruction coupled with intensive and uncontrolled hunting: on Tawitawi logging is accelerating so fast that there is grave concern for the species (Collar *et al.* 1994, Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995), in spite of the assertion based on personal experience gained by observers in around 1987 and September 1991 that "extensive forest still exists" on the island (Krupa and Buck 1988, Lambert 1993c). Such forest (as seen from the air) appears actually to be young secondary growth (almost all trees are currently below 20 cm in diameter at breast height), and logging of the few remaining

areas with large trees—almost entirely confined to rugged and mountainous areas—appears to be unsustainable and soon to be followed by uncontrolled settlement and full conversion to agriculture as the island develops and malaria is eradicated (D. Allen *in litt*. 1996, 1997). On the islands of Tandubatu, Dundangan and Baliungan of the Tandubas Island group, where the species has been most recently reported, small-scale logging operations occur, with the resultant wood either being used locally or shipped to Mindanao and Negros (Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995). Hunting and trapping are no longer considered threats at present, although villagers suggested that during the martial law years in the 1970s the shooting of various animals by military and paramilitary groups could have caused a dramatic decrease of the bleeding-heart population; continuing habitat destruction is now considered the real and major threat to the species (Diesmos and Pedregosa 1995; see Threats under Sulu Hornbill *Anthracoceros montani*).

MEASURES TAKEN In the mid-1990s the species was featured on an environmental awareness poster focusing on bleeding-hearts as part of the "Only in the Philippines" series, funded by British Airways Assisting Conservation and FFI, with text in English and Tagalog (W. L. R. Oliver verbally 1997). Otherwise none is known, although in 1997 Mindanao State University (Tawitawi) and the Haribon Foundation commenced collaboration on an awareness campaign focusing on the conservation of terrestrial biodiversity on Tawitawi (NADM). Coastal areas of Sulu and Tawitawi have been proposed for FPE funding (see Appendix).

MEASURES PROPOSED The species is known from only one "key site" (Tawitawi) and this clearly deserves further survey so that appropriate areas on the island (or possibly on other islands, depending on if and where the species is finally rediscovered) might be formally designated under the NIPAS process. There is an urgent need to protect the remaining patches of forest on Tawitawi itself, and nearby islands in the archipelago. This should be incorporated into a strategy for the protection of other threatened endemic birds of the Sulus and Tawitawi (see Measures Proposed under Sulu Hornbill), involving extensive conservation awareness programmes and education campaigns within local communities.