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VANUATU ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SOCIETY

Threatened Species Factsheet No. 11

ROYAL PARROTFINCH

What are they called?

Scientific:
Erythrura regia or *E. cyaneovirens*

Other English: Red-headed Parrotfinch

French: Diamant royal

Bislama:

Vernacular (local name):
Tabut (Tongoa & Emae)
Batukira (Nokovula village Santo)

A little bit about them:

They are small colourful birds found in closed canopy forests and are native to Samoa and Vanutu in the pacific, with the Vanuatu subspecies found on Santo, Epi, Emae and Tongoa. There are also historical records of Royal Parrotfinches from many other islands in Vanuatu, including in Tafea.

They feed mainly on the fruit of the fig trees such as banyan trees, and little insects, their larvae and eggs attached to fruit and seeds.

What do they look like?

These small birds grow up to 12 cm. The head and the tail are bright red while the throat and breast are light blue. The wings and the rest of the underparts are blue-green. They have thick black bills with brown eyes and feet. Females have more green feathers on their upper back. Young birds are duller and mostly green, have a green-blue face and pale bill.

Source: Phil Bender

Did you know?

- Parrotfinches are not in the same family as parrots!
- The Vanuatu and Samoa subpopulations were thought to be different species, but new scientific evidence shows they are the same.

Source: Phil Bender

Royal Parrotfinches are classified as Vulnerable (VU) on the IUCN Red List.

Why are they threatened?

- Loss of habitat as forested land is being cleared for agriculture, gardens and other developments.
- The caged bird trade is threatening populations as individuals are illegally taken from the wild.

Want to know more?

- Read about them in the book ***Birds of Vanuatu*** by Heinrich L Bregulla
- Visit: www.iucnredlist.org

What do they do for us?

- Parrotfinches are good seed dispersers of fig species and also act as indicators of the abundance of fig trees.
- They control pest species of insect by eating the figs they need to lay in, and directly eating larvae.
- They can provide tourism opportunities through bird watching activities.

What can we do for them?

- ✓ Report any trading of them.
- ✓ Carefully manage land clearing to preserve important habitat, especially banyan trees.
- ✓ Record sightings of the birds to understand habitat and population numbers, and promote ecotourism.

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