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VANUATU ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SOCIETY

Threatened Species Factsheet No. 14

VANUATU IMPERIAL PIGEON

What are they called?

Scientific: *Ducula bakeri*

English: Vanuatu Mountain Pigeon or Baker's imperial pigeon

French: Carpophage de baker

Bislama: Nawimba

Vernacular (Local name):

Manutu (Nokovula, Santo) Gwona (Sungwadaga Maewo)

A little bit about them:

These birds are only found in the large northern islands of Vanuatu. These include the Banks group, Santo, Maewo, Ambae, Pentecost and Ambrym.

They prefer to live on hills and montane forests on elevations of 300m+ above sea level. They are usually seen alone or in pairs, sometimes in flocks up to 6 individuals.

These birds are fruitivorous meaning they feed on the fleshy fruit and berries of shrubs and native trees such as figs (Nambanga).

What do they look like?

These large pigeons grow to 40 cm and are dark grey in colour with a pale blue-grey head and purplish-maroon breast. They have a long tail and long bill.

The adult has a glossy look while the young are dull. They have darker purple underside feathers, and do not have a black knob on their bill or white throat compared to their similar relatives.

Source: Dubi Shapiro Photography

Did you know?

- These pigeons are shy, normally heard and rarely seen.
- Their call is a booming powerful twoo-hoo-hoo-hoo often repeated.

Vanuatu Imperial Pigeons are classified as Vulnerable (VU) on the IUCN Red List.

Why are they threatened?

- Habitat destruction as forests are cleared for logging, gardens and cattle ranches.
- Predation by invasive species such as rats, cats, dogs and pigs.
- Popular target for hunters.
- Many are kept in cages as pets making it impossible for them to meet and reproduce with other birds of the same species.

Want to know more?

- IUCN website: www.iucnredlist.org
- Book: **Birds of Melanesia** by Guy Dutson

What do they do for us:

- They disperse seeds from the fruit they eat, in their droppings.
- Their foraging and scratching on the forest floor cycles nutrients in the forest ecosystem.
- Create eco-tourism opportunities through bird watching sessions in the mountains.
- They are an iconic bird for Vanuatu because they are not found anywhere else.

What can we do for them?

- ✓ Increase awareness of the threats to this species and discourage hunting.
- ✓ Discourage pet keeping of wild birds, especially threatened species such as the Vanuatu Imperial Pigeon.
- ✓ Castrate and spay pet cats and dogs to reduce feral animals preying on adults, chicks and eggs.

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