



Typical habitat in moist semi-evergreen forest during monsoon

Habitat:

In evergreen, mixed deciduous, bamboo or secondary forests; plantations and cultivation; In semi-arid regions, in well wooded tracks around rivers and streams.

Habit:

Single, in pairs or with mixed parties of flycatchers and woodpeckers in tall trees and thickets in jungles. Restless, agile, flutters or takes short sallies in search of aerial insects.

Distribution:

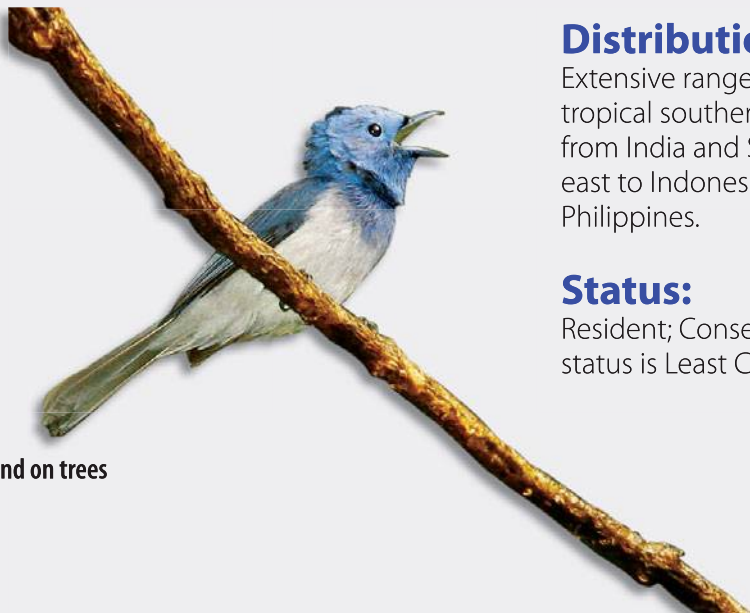
Extensive range including tropical southern Asia from India and Sri Lanka east to Indonesia and the Philippines.

Status:

Resident; Conservation status is Least Concern.



The Monarch is equally at ease on the wings and on trees



Food:



Various food items include grub taken from tree bark and small winged insects taken in flight.



Mouth is greenish yellow

Winged insects are taken in flight. Items include butterflies, moths, cicadas, grasshoppers, small bugs, beetles, wasps, bees, etc. Food may be taken in flight, from the ground or a branch from beneath the bark or leaves



Male



Female



Key Features:

- Sexes dimorphic.
- **Male:** Azure blue; pale wings; black tuft on nape; thin dark line across throat.

The majestic fantail stance of the Monarch



The black-nape as seen from the top



Tiny dark eyes and black gorget in front view

- **Female:** Blue crown, brown above; bluish whitish below. Lacks nape patch and throat line.
- Bill dark blue, black tipped in male; horny brown in female.
- Long, numerous rectal bristles. Tail can be cocked and fanned.
- Iris – brown; Blue bare eye ring.
- Legs –slaty blue in male; grey brown in female.
- Nestlings have a brown streaked plumage; it eventually turns to blue.



Underparts of the male



The chicks have a greenish yellow gape

Nest:



Male is strengthening the nest with cobwebs



Moss is used to make the nest wall



Courtship feeding on the nest



Female incubating the eggs

The nest is a neat conical cup with a long loose tail often made under the canopy, but sometimes in the open; built in to a horizontal peripheral slender fork or elbow of a forest tree, shrubs, plantations or bamboo; built from bark fibers, grass stems; coated with green moss, cobweb, spider egg cases and lichen; placed 1 to 9 m up. Female builds, male provides material.

Some Related Species:

Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula superciliaris*; Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides*. Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*; Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*;



Blue-throated Flycatcher: Male and female



Male Ultramarine Flycatcher



Female Ultramarine and Verditer Flycatchers



Cultural aspects:

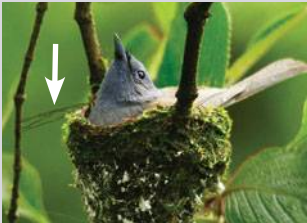
The Monarch is admired in Kokan for its azure blue plumage. In Marathi language it is called *Neelamani* (Blue Sapphire).

Etymology:

Hupothumis (Gr), a bird mentioned by Aristophanes but not identified further; *azureus* (L), azure coloured. (Pande, Satish 2009).

Amazing Facts:

The nest in peripheral branches is often stabilized by fixing it to another branch using cobwebs or hair. This prevents egg loss in windy situations. The Monarch breeds during monsoon braving the heavy onslaught of rains. It erects the black nape tuft when excited. Rarely descends to the ground for insects.



The nest branch is amazingly stabilized using hair

Parenting:



Male attending the chicks



Male incubating in rain !



Female holding the fecal sac

THREATS:

Tree felling for firewood. Natural predation and nest branch breaking due to the vagaries of nature.

CONSERVATION:

Protected under Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. Research and 'Rural Outreach Programs' undertaken by Ela Foundation, stressing conservation of habitats, are proving promising.

Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea* (Boddaert, 1783)

Type locality: Harhow, Hainan TSN 560552 (Avibase).
Neelpari (Marathi); **Neel-sir Machhrya** (Hindi); **Kala Matha Katkatia** (Bengali); **Kalong tesa** (Car Nicobar); **Yeepidippan** (Tamil); **Kalli Vel-neeli** (Malayalam); **Nil-kurulla, Marawa** (Simhala).

- **Size:** 16 cm.
- **Weight:** 10-14 g Male; 8.5-9 g female.
- **Wing:** Male: 64-75 mm. female 66-76 mm .
- **Tail:** Male 65-76 mm/F: 65-74 mm.
- **Tarsus:** 16-18 mm.
- **Bill:** 14-17 mm.
- **Breeding season:** March – August.
- **Clutch:** 3-4 eggs. One clutch / year.
- **Eggs:** Oval; Chalky white, tinged with brown, few markings.
- **Egg Size:** 17.4 x 13.3 mm (Baker).
- **Incubation:** 12-13 d. By both parents.
- **Nuptial displays:** Both sexes - Tail cocking, fanning; flying.
- **Call:** Usually silent; High pitched *sweech- weech*. Song *Chew, chew, chew;* Alarm *chi-chwee*.

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- **Photographs:** Dr. Satish Pande, Prashant Deshpande, Rohan Joshi, Ram Mone, Aboli Kulkarni and Alok Marathe. Niranjana Sant (Cover).
- **Design:** Kiran Velhankar, MediaNext Infoprocessors Pvt. Ltd.
- **Copyright and Published by:** Ela Foundation, C-9, Bhosale Park, Sahakarnagar-2, Pune 411009. July, 2014. An OENSL initiative. www.elafoundation.org.
- **References:** *Ali & Ripley (1969). *Satish Pande. (2009) Latin Names of Indian Birds Explained. Book made and Funded by Ela Foundation.; Satish Pande et al (2003). Birds of Western Ghats, Kokan and Malabar. Last two published by Oxford University Press and Bombay Natural History Society.
- **Recommended Citation:** Pande, Satish and Prashant Deshpande (2015). Black-naped Monarch. *Ela File* 22: 1-6. Ela Foundation, Pune.

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Black-naped Monarch

- **Order:** Passeriformes • **Family:** Monarchidae
- **Status:** Resident

ELA FOUNDATION



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Conservation Through Education & Research



Forest Department
Maharashtra
Principle Chief
Conservator of Forests
(RET), Pune

Flight:



The beautiful Black-naped Monarch is an accomplished flier, elegant on the wings with astonishing control over flight.

Phenology:



The deep nest cup in an orchid safeguards eggs in strong winds



A typical clutch of three eggs



The eyes of newborns are closed



Dominant chick demanding food



Male alighting on the nest



Male perched on the nest and on a side branch with three chicks in the nest

Ecological Role:



Various flycatchers play a significant role of controlling insect population, as can be seen from this photo-panel. The feeding frequency during the nesting period can be as much as every five minutes for two hours in the morning and evening and reducing in the afternoon

Dr. Satish Pande, Ram Mone and Prashant Deshpande did field research for more than 6 years and were assisted by Rajgopal Patil. Thanks are due to Mafzul Hussain IFS, PCCF (RET), Anurag Chaudhary, IFS, APCCF and Nitin Kakodkar, IFS, CCF (ET), Pune, Maharashtra State Forest Department for supporting this publication.