

Javan (White-vented) Myna *Acridotheres javanicus* and Pale-bellied Myna *A. cinereus* in North Sulawesi

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Ringkasan. Kami melaporkan hasil-hasil pengamatan dua species introduksi di Sulawesi Utara yang sebelumnya tidak pernah dilaporkan, yaitu Kerak kerbau *Acridotheres javanicus* dan Kerak Sulawesi *A. cinereus*. Model kolonisasi jenis-jenis ini di Sulawesi Utara belum dipahami dengan baik. Namun keberadaan jenis ini sebagai burung peliharaan di bagian wilayah lain di Indonesia menyiratkan kemungkinan perdagangan sebagai sumbernya.

Introduction

In a recent review of introduced birds in northern Sulawesi, Fitzsimons *et al.* (2011) highlighted the presence of a number of species that had not previously been recorded in the literature. Here we report on records of two further species most likely introduced to North Sulawesi: the Javan (White-vented) Myna *Acridotheres javanicus* and the Pale-bellied Myna *A. cinereus*. The natural distribution of the Javan Myna is Java and Bali, where it is widespread and patchily common (McKinnon & Phillipps 1993; Mason 2011), but it has also been introduced to other parts of Indonesia including Sumatra, Borneo and the Lesser Sundas, as well as the Thai-Malay Peninsula and Singapore (Wells 2009; Hails & Jarvis 1987; Phillipps & Phillipps 2014). The Pale-bellied Myna is endemic to the southwest peninsula of Sulawesi north to Rantepao (Coates & Bishop 1997), and it too has been introduced to other parts of Indonesia and East Malaysia (Phillipps & Phillipps 2014).

Observations

On 4 April 2012, just after sunset at approximately 17:50 hrs, at Kalasey, near Manado, North Sulawesi (1°27'10" N, 124°45'21" E), JST saw an single sturnid picking at flowers of introduced Pinto Peanuts *Arachis pinto* (or maybe insects on those flowers) on the ground that was covered by various introduced ornamental plants. It was originally thought to be a native Grosbeak Starling *Scissirostrum dubium*. JST managed to obtain two photographs of this individual (Plate 1). A second individual was then heard to give a single shriek from a Poinciana *Delonix regia* tree some 15 m away. The call did not sound like that of the Grosbeak Starling. The individual on the ground then flew to join the calling individual and panned photographs of the flying birds were taken (Plate 2).

It was clear at this stage it was an *Acridotheres* myna, with obvious white wing patches and identified at the time as Javan Myna. JST was familiar with this species, having observed it at close range in Singapore only a month earlier. These mynas were clearly Javan Mynas and not Pale-bellied Mynas due to the dark belly

and back (Plates 1 and 2). Shortly afterwards, the birds flew across the hotel to the beach. JST revisited the site on the afternoon of 7 August 2013 but did not locate the species.

In September 2012, near Manado's Sam Ratulangi airport, Ronny Adolf Buol and colleagues observed and photographed 10-15 individual *Acridotheres mynas* (Plate 3) and collected a dead specimen (pers. comm.). These birds had much paler underparts and are most likely to be Pale-bellied Myna, an endemic to South Sulawesi.



JOHN TASIRIN

Plate 1. Javan Myna feeding among Pinto Peanuts *Arachis pintoi*, Kalasey, Sulawesi.



JOHN TASIRIN

Plate 2. Javan Myna in flight Kalasey, Sulawesi.



RONNY ADOLF BUOL

Plate 3. Pale-bellied Myna on cattle near Manado's Sam Ratulangi airport.



JOHN TASIRIN

Plate 4. Pale-bellied Myna, Bitung, North Sulawesi.

On 12 July 2014, JST observed six individuals of Pale-bellied Myna in a large chicken-wired enclosure (4 m wide x 8 m long x 6 m high) in Bitung, North Sulawesi (1°27'36" N, 125°12'36" E) (Plate 4). Bitung is about 50 km east of Kalasey and about 30 km east of the Manado airport. The keeper said that they had been brought by local farmers a couple of months earlier (during May 2014). There was no certainty about the place where the birds had been captured but it may be assumed that it was near Bitung.

Discussion

The taxonomy of the Javan Myna has been checkered, as has been the history of common names for the ‘crested’ *Acridotheres mynas* (Feare & Craig 1998). Currently considered a full species (Zuccon *et al.* 2008), it has at times been lumped with Great Myna *A. grandis* and Jungle Myna *A. fuscus*, and is still known as White-vented Myna by some authorities. While the Pale-bellied Myna *A. cinereus* was also considered part of the White-vented Myna complex, it is now recognized as a separate species. Due to the confusion, the International Ornithologists’ Union recommends removing the common name ‘White-vented Myna’ from any of the species in this group (IOC 2012). DNA analysis of *Acridotheres* shows that *A. cinereus*, *A. javanicus*, and *A. fuscus* form one group of closely related taxa while *A. grandis* is distant from any of these taxa (Zuccon *et al.* 2008).

The Javan Myna is a native of Java and Bali but has been introduced to southern Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore, where it is very common (Lim *et al.* 2003; Wells 2009), Sumatra, Borneo (Mann 2008; Wong 2011; Iqbal *et al.* 2013; Phillipps & Phillipps 2014), Christmas Island (Coates & Bishop 1997), and Japan and Taiwan (Brazil 2009). Within Wallacea, Coates and Bishop (1997) suggest that the Javan Myna was “presumably recently introduced” to Sumba, being first noted in the late 1980s, whereas it was first recorded in Flores in 1990. Although it has been suggested that the species has been introduced to other parts of the world, Lever (2005) considers this is most likely a case of mistaken identity and confused taxonomy.

To our knowledge the Javan Myna has not previously been reported from Sulawesi. Nevertheless, the confused taxonomy of the genus *Acridotheres mynas* (Zuccon *et al.* 2008) and difficulty in identification of similar-looking taxa has led to ambiguity on the status and origins of these mynas on Sulawesi in some of the major bird guides. For example, Holmes & Phillipps (1996: 69) suggest that the ‘White-vented Myna *A. javanicus*’ of south Sulawesi “may be a feral population, but its source and taxonomic affinity await clarification”, while Strange (2001) also mistakenly suggests ‘White-vented Myna (Javan Myna) *Acridotheres javanicus*’ to be introduced to south Sulawesi but did not acknowledge the presence of the endemic *A. cinereus* in the south of the island.

Although the Pale-bellied Myna is endemic to South Sulawesi north to Rantepao (Coates & Bishop 1997), it has not been reported previously in North Sulawesi. Like the Javan Myna, the Pale-bellied Myna has been introduced to other parts of Indonesia and Malaysia; Gregory-Smith (1997 in Lever 2005) reported that the species had established itself at Kuching in the southwest of Sarawak and suggested it was probably ship assisted, while Wong (2011) reported it having been in the Tawau area in eastern Sabah for a number of years. The mode of colonization for these mynas in North Sulawesi is not clear. However Yap & Sodhi (2004) suggested that escaped cage birds are the most likely cause of colonisation for *Acridotheres javanicus* in other parts of south-east Asia. Furthermore, Shepherd *et al.* (2004) and Shepherd (2006) reported that ‘White-vented/Javan Mynas’ were one of the most numerous species present in wildlife markets of Medan, Sumatra, in the late 1990s-early 2000s, and this is likely to have been the case in other parts of Indonesia, including Sulawesi. Further research on the invasion by mynas in

Indonesia and elsewhere is warranted and reporting on the establishing of new populations in the literature should be encouraged.

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