

Slender-billed Crow *Corvus enca* on Banggai and Peleng Islands, off Sulawesi

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Ringkasan. Gagak Hutan *Corvus enca* tersebar luas di Indonesia, dari Sumatra sampai Seram, Maluku Selatan termasuk Sulawesi dan Kepulauan Sula. Namun demikian, para peneliti (seperti White & Bruce 1986; Coates & Bishop 1997) tidak memasukan Kepulauan Banggai dan Kepulauan terdekatnya seperti Peleng sebagai bagian dari jelajahnya karena kurangnya laporan yang bisa dikonfirmasi. Informasi tentang keberadaan *C. enca* di pulau-pulau tersebut penting untuk membedakannya dari spesies gagak yang endemik yaitu Gagak Banggai *C. unicolor*.

The Slender-billed Crow, *Corvus enca*, has a broad distribution in Indonesia, extending from Sumatra to Seram, South Maluku, including Sulawesi and the Sula Islands. Goodwin (1976) listed the Banggai Islands (presumably both Banggai and Peleng), between Central Sulawesi and the Sula Islands, as part of the range of the species. More recently, White and Bruce (1986) and Coates *et al.* (1997) have excluded the Banggai Islands from its range, presumably due to a lack of confirmed records. Establishing the presence of *C. enca* on Banggai and Peleng is important because of the necessity of distinguishing it from the endemic Banggai Crow, *Corvus unicolor*, of which there are only two known specimens, which are believed to have been collected in the Banggai Islands (White & Bruce, 1986). Bishop (1992) and Indrawan *et al.* (1997) observed crows of uncertain identity on both Peleng and Banggai. Bishop (1992) speculated that the crows he observed may have been Slender-billed Crows, while Indrawan (*in litt.*, 2009) stated that all of the crows (with one exception) he saw were subsequently identified as Slender-billed Crows.

I visited Bobong (01° 57.016'S, 124° 23.039'E; 3m asl) in southwest Taliabu from 2 to 11 September 2005, Banggai (01° 35.251'S, 123° 29.973'E; 10m asl) from 11 to 13 September 2005, northeast Peleng (01° 20.722'S, 123° 20.803'E; 269m asl) from 13 to 16 September 2005, and near Marisa, Sulawesi (00° 28.732'N, 121° 56.004'E; 3m asl) on 2 September 2007, tape-recording crows at each of these sites, where they were uncommon. While variable, the calls all fell within the normal range of *C. enca* (Fig. 1) in the Sulawesi/Sula region. Each tape-recorded bird showed the characteristic, rather peculiar, flight of *C. enca* wherein the wings appear not to move above the horizontal plane. Apart from an odd note given by a crow that flew over on 14 September 2005 near the site on Peleng where I tape-recorded *C. enca* two days later, I otherwise did not see or hear any crow that differed from *C. enca*.

The fact that there are not yet published field identification materials on *C. unicolor* introduces an element of doubt on the identification of these birds as *C. enca*. However it is unlikely that *C. unicolor* is identical in flight style and voice to *C. enca*. Furthermore, I had photos of specimens of both *C. enca* and *C. unicolor* with me and felt that the crows I saw on Banggai and Peleng had the longer, more slender-looking bill of *C. enca*. Since no other crow species was encountered on this short survey, I suggest that the Slender-billed Crow is the most likely crow to be encountered on Banggai and Peleng.

A rapid visual survey of the southern two-thirds of Banggai Island by road on 12 September 2005 revealed that the only large trees remaining on that part of the island were on the top of the north-south ridge in the centre of the island. These were scattered and unlikely to provide sufficient habitat for a forest-dependent bird. The driver of the vehicle indicated that the northern third of the island is similar, but I did not have time to check this. It thus seems likely that if the Banggai Crow is forest-dependent, it could not survive on Banggai. While the forest on the much larger island of Peleng is rapidly being logged, there are still some fairly large patches remaining there, and perhaps the situation, at least in the short-term, is more hopeful.

Ongoing research on the crows of Banggai and Peleng is being carried out by the Celebes Bird Club and Indonesian Ornithologists' Union who concur that *C. enca* is numerous there. Interim reports are being published by ZGAP (<http://www.zgap.de/zeitschrift-archiv.html>).

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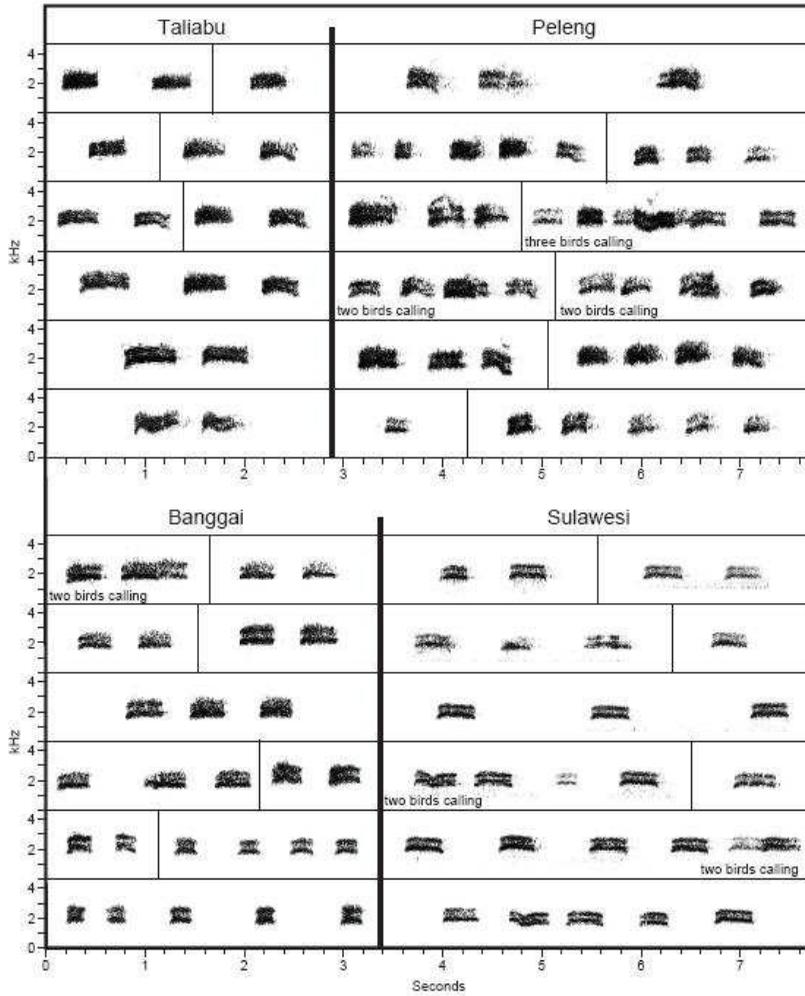


Figure 1. Calls of Slender-billed Crows, *Corvus enca* from 4 Indonesian islands: Sulawesi, Peleng, Banggai and Taliabu, establishing that *Corvus enca* is present on Peleng and Banggai. The call of *Corvus enca* is a thin, high-pitched, nasal, raspy *waah* or *waap*, with many variations.