

## First Records of Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* for Timor and Flores, Lesser Sundas

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**Ringkasan.** Disajikan laporan mengenai penyebaran burung pantai Trulek Topeng *Vanellus miles* di Indonesia. Penyebaran utamanya ada di Australia dan Papua, dengan catatan sporadis di Wallacea bagian timur. Dalam laporan ini disajikan lima catatan pertama di Timor Leste (2-4 ekor, tahun 2005), dua di Timor Barat (3-13 ekor, tahun 2005) dan tiga di Pulau Flores (4-7 ekor, tahun 2007).

The Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* is essentially an Australian and New Guinea (including Aru islands) shorebird with populations now established in New Zealand, with occasional records from eastern Wallacea (Ambon, Banda, Kai, Leti, Babar and Tanimbar: Coates & Bishop 1997) as well as the Solomon islands, Christmas Island, Norfolk Island and Lord Howe Island (Marchant & Higgins 1993). The species has been considered both as a “probably regular visitor” (Marchant & Higgins 1993) and an irregular visitor (Coates & Bishop 1997) to the Moluccas and Lesser Sundas, where records fall between May and September-November. Surprisingly, the only published records for Wallacea are “a good series from Toeal [Kai Kecil island, undated, but bird specimens were sent back in April, June, August, September, November]” (Hartert 1901), an undated specimen from Larat, Tanimbar (Sclater 1883), and two voice records at Saumlaki, Yamdena (Tanimbar archipelago) Island, on 1 May 1993 (Johnstone 1994) and 3 May 1993 (Bishop & Brickle 1999), yet there have apparently been no recent direct field observations from Wallacea. There is but a single record of Masked Lapwing on Ashmore Reef (145 km south of Roti Island) in August 1997 (Milton 2005).

We here document the first records of Masked Lapwing for Timor (five records in East Timor, and two in West Timor; all during 2005) and Flores (three records in 2007). Records of ten species of waterbirds and shorebirds new to Timor Island were recently documented (Trainor 2005), but the Masked Lapwing was observed only after that article was published. The species was included in Trainor *et al.* (2007) but without comment. Further details of the Timor sites

mentioned, including habitat type and coordinates, can be found in Trainor (2005).

### **East Timor**

Four birds were observed feeding on irrigated rice-fields at Manatuto (60 km east of Dili) on 6 June 2005. Subsequently four birds (presumably the same individuals) were seen at "Manatuto, 5 km west" on 14 June, and back at the rice-fields on 15 October, suggesting that this group occupied a small area of wetlands during the entire dry season. These birds were videotaped and photographed to verify identification. Two birds were seen at the Loes River estuary (60 km west of Dili) on 10 September 2005 at the edge of freshwater lagoons, and a further two birds were seen at the edge of the inland freshwater wetland Lake Iralalalo (330 m asl) on 4 October (200 km east of Dili).

### **West Timor**

At Bipolo (*c.* 40 km northwest of Kupang), about 800 m from the forest patch, six birds were observed on wet rice-fields on 2 August 2005 (BB & TM), whereas three and 13 birds were observed (MB) on rather dry rice-fields on 13 and 17 August, respectively.

### **Flores**

Three records, possibly all involving the same individuals, around Maumere, in northeast Flores: seven birds on 24 September 2007 at Maumere (Wai Oti) airport in dry grassland; five birds on 20 November 2007 feeding on exposed coral reef at Waigete (12 km east of Maumere on Larantuka road); and, four birds at Maumere airport on 21 December 2007 (MS).

Our records follow the same seasonal trend as previous records for southeast Wallacea (though specimen records were undated) suggesting that the Masked Lapwing is a sporadic dry season visitor to the region. We are unable to link the occurrence of birds in Wallacea to particular weather patterns, but Masked Lapwings in Australia tend to disperse after rain, and retreat to coastal areas in autumn after inland wetlands become dry over summer (Marchant & Higgins 1993). It is possible that small numbers regularly overshoot the Australian coast and visit Wallacea. We have reported the first December record for the region. Birds probably disperse, or return to Australia once the wet season begins in December-January. Our records are apparently the first field observations of Masked Lapwing in Southeast Asia since the 'collecting era' up to about 1910. We suspect that our 2005 records for Timor represent an influx, involving a minimum of 23 birds, but conceivably, many more birds at unvisited locations.

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**Plate 1.** Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* in Darwin, Australia.