

First Breeding Records of Shikra *Accipiter badius* in Indonesia

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Ringkasan. Di Indonesia Elangalap Shikra *Accipiter badius* selama ini dikenal sebagai jenis yang bermigrasi sampai ke Sumatera. Tulisan ini melaporkan catatan berbiak pertama Elangalap Shikra di Indonesia yang ternyata merupakan populasi penempat berdasarkan pengamatan pada beberapa sarang aktif yang ditemukan antara bulan Januari dan April 2008 di Aceh, Sumatera yang sebelumnya tidak melaporkan. Laporan ini juga mencatat perilaku berbiak seperti kopulasi, membangun sarang, dan kehadiran anak. Dengan laporan ini juga berarti meluasnya populasi berbiak Elangalap Shikra, sekaligus menyarankan penelitian lebih jauh mengenai distribusi, kelimpahan, dan tingkat kesuksesan berbiak jenis ini.

Indonesia has 19 species of goshawks and sparrowhawks belonging to the genus *Accipiter* (Sukmantoro *et al.* 2007), of which one is considered as a strict migrant, four as partial migrants, and two as irregular visitors. The Shikra *Accipiter badius* is considered as a regular winter migrant or vagrant to Sumatra (van Marle & Voous 1988; Thiollay 1994; MacKinnon *et al.* 1998; Zalles & Bildstein 2000; Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001), despite a specimen record for Medan on 18 June 1912 (van Marle & Voous 1988), well outside its non-breeding season in southeast Asia, from the end of September to early March (Wells 1999; Higuchi *et al.* 2005). One of six subspecies, *poliopsis* is resident from northeast India east to southern China and south to southern Thailand and Vietnam, and wintering as far south as southern Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore and Sumatra (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001; Naoroji 2007). This paper provides the first report of breeding of several pairs of Shikra in Indonesia, as well as records in May and July, all of which suggests the presence of a small resident population in northern Sumatra.

On 9 January 2008 a pair of Shikras was seen copulating at the rear of the Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, Aceh, Sumatra. This pair was seen copulating again on three separate days (26, 28 and 29 January 2008) near the nest tree; at least two of the three copulations occurred in the morning. From 26 January to 5 February the pair engaged in active nest building, mostly in the

morning between 07:00 to 09:00 hrs, when they carried Acacia twigs in their legs or bill approximately seven times per hour. Such behaviour is typical among raptors prior to egg laying (Newton 1979; Naoroji 2007). From 6 to 27 February, incubating behaviour was seen many times, but from 27 February to 7 March, the nest was unattended, and no offspring were produced by the pair. The failure of this breeding attempt was apparently caused by human activity around the nest tree. However, an adult Shikra was seen back at the nest location on 7 March 2008, when it was seen re-arranging the nest, indicating that re-nesting might have taken place subsequently.

Five additional pairs of Shikra were found with active or inactive nests, the latter with either fledged young or juvenile birds nearby, over the following four months; two were in Banda Aceh and three in Aceh Besar (Table 1). All nests except those of Pairs 1 and 2 were located in coconut plantations, mixed with housing or paddy fields. Except for Pair 2, which built its nest in a Casuarina tree (Plates 1 and 2), all nests were built in coconut trees *Cocos nucifera*. Nest materials included leaves of an *Acacia* sp (Pair 1), *Cocos nucifera* (Pair 2) and

Table 1. Records of Shikras *Accipiter badius* nesting in northern Sumatra during 2008 by authors (except DM and RN).

Date of first encounter	Pair/ No.	Location (district)	Coordinates	Nest site and notes
9 January	1	Banda Aceh	05°34'36"N; 95°21'47"E	Active nest in clearing at rear of Universitas Syiah Kuala campus; unsuccessful (see text for details)
25 January	2	Banda Aceh	05°34'21"N; 95°22'07"E	Active nest in grove of Casuarinas beside building (Plates 1 and 2); fate unknown
25 March	3	Banda Aceh	05°33'54"N; 95°21'16"E	Nest in coconut plantation with housing; two immatures (Plate 3) perched next to nest on 29 May
1 April	4	Aceh Besar	05°35'05"N; 95°22'00"E	Active nest in a mixture area of coconut plantation, coastal ponds and housing; fate unknown
10 April	5	Aceh Besar	05°29'39"N; 95°16'03"E	Nest in mixture of coconut plantations, swamps and paddy fields; on 18 May two of three fledged young were taken (Plate 5); see text for details
7 May	6	Aceh Besar	05°23'03"N; 95°31'24"E	Nest in a mixture of coconut and banana plantations; adult pair attending fledgling (Plate 4)

Syzygium sp (Pair 3). At least three of the pairs were successful in producing one to three fledglings (Pairs 3, 5 and 6, Table 1; Plates 3 and 4). However, two of the offspring produced by Pair 5 were caught by the owner of the plantation on which the pair nested (Plate 5); luckily, the third escaped.

Additional records of Shikra during 2008 include solitary birds seen near a bus terminal in Medan, North Sumatra, on 5 April (A. Adcock, pers. comm.), and in a coconut plantation (05°37'38" N, 95°23'52" E) in Aceh Besar regency, on 19 July (M. Ismail, pers. comm.; Plate 6). In mid January, AN also witnessed as many as 13 Shikras flying over Aceh Besar during a 35 min period.

The Indo-Malayan races of Shikra are known to breed between January and June (Indian subcontinent), March-August (Sri Lanka) and March-June (Southeast Asia) (Thiollay 1994; Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). All of the nests we found in Aceh during 2008 were active between January and April. This is similar to the breeding season in the Indian sub-continent, where the species is resident. The normal over-wintering period of migratory Chinese Goshawk *A. soloensis* and Japanese Sparrowhawk *A. gularis* in Java is September to March (Nijman *et al.* 2006). As the young from at least two nests in Aceh fledged in May, and "over-wintering" adult birds were seen as late as mid-July, it is feasible that our observations signify a resident population in northern Sumatra.. Considering the relatively low survey intensity in Aceh, and the age of the June records (1912), this population may have been overlooked, but it may also refer to a recent expansion.

The relatively high density of nests in Aceh seems typical of Indo-Malayan races of the Shikra (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). Given the proclivity of this species for open country, it is likely that its colonisation of the region has been facilitated by the rapid rate of deforestation and conversion of forest to oil palm plantations in Sumatra (BirdLife International 2003). Additional observations are needed to determine the distribution and movements of Shikras in Sumatra. In view of the capture of young we observed, it would also be useful to conduct a public awareness campaign to inform people that all birds of prey are protected under Indonesian law (see Sukmantoro *et al.*). Nevertheless such laws are meaningless unless the people who break them, by capturing and selling wild birds, are prosecuted.

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Plate 1. The adult male of Pair 2 at the nest; **Plate 2.** The habitat around nest tree of Pair 2 (right).



Plates 3 and 4. Offspring of Pair 3 (left) and Pair 6 (centre); **Plate 5.** Two of three offspring of Pair 5 taken by local people (right). All photos: Agus Nurza.