

4. The 4 Sep sighting was of 'a loose flock of seven', while there were seven singles on 20 Sep.
5. Five individual sightings, identified as probable, between 3°33'-36'S, 129°30'-43'E.

NOTES ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE LITTLE CURLEW IN INDONESIA

by

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(First draft received 19 September 1995)

The Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* breeds in the dry, open steppes of northern Siberia and winters in the dry grassy plains of the northern interior of Australia, where they gather in thousands (Pringle 1987). The birds are passage migrants through the eastern part of Indonesia. The largest numbers appear to pass through New Guinea (Beehler *et al.* 1986; Coates 1985), with very few records either further east (Coates 1985: New Britain and Bougainville) or west of the island. The habitat where the birds on passage are encountered in Indonesia resemble the breeding and wintering habitat, and they should be sought in areas of short grass, at airports for example.

The status of the species in the area west of New Guinea (Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and Greater and Lesser Sundas) is discussed in this paper.

Distributional notes

Table 1 lists all known records of Little Curlew for Indonesia and North Borneo. During recent years a number of localities have been added but few of these have been published, and therefore details of the observations are given below.

New records from the author.

Bali

On 16 October 1993 the open dry savanna-like grazing field beside Gilimanuk Bay, adjacent to the Bali Barat National Park, was visited by Sujatnika and the author in order to survey palearctic waders. Instead of the expected Oriental Plovers *Charadrius veredus*, which are normally present at this time of the year, a Little Curlew was present. It was observed from 17.55 to 18.45 hrs. The following description was made in the field after approaching to within a few meters.

Feathers of the upperparts were dark brown with bold buffy fringes; the light coloured head showed two broad dark stripes on the crown, coming together on the nape and leaving a narrow light stripe over the middle of the crown, which ended with a broader spot on the nape; here a dark stripe continued downward; the remaining parts of the neck and the underparts were light buff brown with a darker wash on the breast, wing coverts were light grey brown with very dense broad fringes, the primaries had fine brown bars. The black bill was of medium length, somewhat curved at the end, with lighter coloured and broader proximal part; legs were light grey brown. Head looked broad and fat, with upper part of neck broader than lower part. The bird was

foraging on the grass, quickly moving back and forth; on 18.22 hrs the bird put its bill into the back feathers to roost, still on the grazing field. It was silent throughout.

Hitherto only one unconfirmed record existed for this species on Bali (Mason 1989), from Suwung, South Bali, in the month of January.

Mangole, Sula Islands (Maluku)

On 29 October 1991 a Little Curlew was observed around noon on the airstrip of Falabisahaya (Mangole Island). The bird was first seen standing quietly on the short grass, but later flying short distances over the airport and finally moving to a grass field near a school building. The following description was made.

The base of the slightly curved bill was pinkish, tip of the bill dark. Two dark stripes commenced on the crown, coming together on the nape and running downward to the back. Wings were light greyish brown with dark spots and black primaries; the back was dark with light spots. Less pronounced streaking on the breast suggested a juvenile bird. Legs were grey. A hoarse whimbrel-like "kuwe, kuwe" was produced during the fast flight, in which the bird looked much more slender than its much larger sympatric congeners.

The observation was shared with Peter Davidson, Tony Stones, Rob Lucking, Nigel Bean, Wahyu Rahardjaringtrah and Hidayat Banjaransari and briefly mentioned in Davidson *et al.* (1995).

Sumba (Nusa Tenggara Timur)

On 7 November 1992 I visited a completely dried-out swamp of 20 to 30 ha, located immediately south of the road along the south coast of Sumba, at the edge of the village of Kalala (Kadakamali near Watu Limbong). Apart from >50 Oriental Plovers, >30 Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* and numerous Yellow Wagtails *Molacilla flava*, three Little Curlews were observed. They were unmistakably curlews, but with shorter, straighter bill, much quicker movements, and size only slightly larger than the nearby Oriental Plovers.

No Little Curlews had been recorded previously from Sumba (White & Bruce 1986).

Discussion

There has been a slight increase in the number of records of Little Curlews over the past two decades, probably due to increased survey activity and improved identification techniques. Nevertheless, the large numbers of Little Curlew wintering in Australia confirm that its status is

relatively safe and indeed the species has been omitted from the threatened list (Collar *et al.* 1994), where it was previously listed as near-threatened (Collar & Andrew 1988).

Post-breeding flocks gather in the breeding grounds from late July, and most leave in September (Hayman *et al.* 1986), to arrive in Indonesia in October. As only very few records exist for the return passage, from mid-April to 11 June (Coates 1985), Beehler *et al.* (1986) suggests that the birds overfly New Guinea without halting. In the region west of New Guinea, all records relate to the southward migration, except for one record from April.

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Locality	Date	No.	Habitat	Reference
Sarawak				
Kuching	5 Oct 1900	1	?	Smythies 1957
Kuching airport	15 Nov 1965	2	dry grassy land	Sutton in Smythies 1981
id	23 Nov 1965	6	id	id
Miri	25 Oct 1976	3	?	Burton 1978
Sabah				
West coast	7Sep?	?	?	KV Thompson in Smythies 1981
id	19Sep?	7	?	id
id	26Apr?	7	?	id
Brunei				
Airport	10 Dec 1976	?	?	Burton 1978
Wasan	14 Oct 1988	7	?	Mann 1989
Java				
S Lumajang	19 Oct 1939	1	creek	Kooiman 1940
Bali				
Gilimanuk	16-Oct-93	'	dry grazing field	this paper
Lesser Sundas				
Tiwu Bowu, Sikka, Flores	21-Oct-90	2	?	Verhoeve, in prep.
Sumba	7-Nov-92	3	dry swamp	this paper
Timor	Oct?	12	?	McKew <i>et al.</i> 1975
Kupang Bay, Timor	3-Oct-85	1	mudflats	Andrew 1985
Sulawesi				
Menado	Oct?	1	?	Schlegel 1866
N. peninsula	Oct?	1	?	Meyer & Wigglesworth 1898
SE. peninsula	16-Sep-95	6	tidal flats	Uni. of Leeds 1995

Locality	Date	No.	Habitat	Reference
Moluccas				
Taliabu, Sula	Jul-Oct 1938	1	?	White & Bruce 1986: p.485
Mangole, Sula	29-Oct-1991	1	airstrip	this paper
Teluk Kao, Halmahera	26, 29 Jul 1987	6	sandy shore	D.A. Holmes, pers. comm.
Halmahera	14-Sep-1994	1	tidal flats	R.A. Fuller, <i>in litt.</i>
Bacan	Oct 1858 ¹	?	?	Wallace in Hartert 1903
Ambon	10 Aug?	?	?	White & Bruce 1986
Ambon airport	Oct 1988	?	?	Andrews 1988
Banda Naira, Banda	26 Sep 1992	2	airstrip	Johnstone & Sudaryanti 1995
Lonthor, Banda	Jul 1994	10	tidal mudflats	Moorese <i>et al.</i> 1996
Tual, Little Kai	Oct 1897	3	?	Hartert 1901
Aru ²	7-Feb-1905	?	?	Von Rosenberg, in Von Berlepsch 1911
Dobo, Aru	?	?	?	Ribbe, in Von Berlepsch 1911

Table 1 cont.

Wallace visited the island of Bacan between October 1858 and April 1859, but further details are not known to the author.