

HOUSE CROW OBSERVED IN NORTH SUMATRA

by
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Belawan is a major port situated approximately 20 km from the city of Medan in North Sumatra. This port is on the Strait of Malacca with ships forever arriving and departing to a multitude of destinations. It was probably on one of these ships that a House Crow *Corvus splendens* made its way to this port town.

The natural range of the House Crow is Iran through India to Southwest China and Myanmar (Burma). In Indonesia it has been recorded in Ujung Kulon and Krakatau (in the Sunda Straits between Java and Sumatra) (MacKinnon & Phillipps 1993). It is suspected that it arrived at these locations by ship as well.

Many of the ships visiting Belawan are from Malaysia where an introduced population of House Crows has multiplied to become one of the most commonly sighted birds in many areas, especially around cities and ports. The city of Penang is one such place where the House Crow is extremely common. It is very likely that the bird spotted in Belawan came from one of these relatively nearby places.

The House Crow was spotted perched on a telephone wire at the port of Belawan. It was observed for approximately ten minutes until it flew to the ground briefly then flew off. It was observed around midday in clean weather conditions, from a distance of no more than ten metres. Binoculars were not necessary, and the bird was immediately recognized by its grey collar that extended part way up the back of the head. The rest of the body was black, including the bill and feet.

Reference:

MacKinnon, J. & K. Phillipps. 1993. *A field guide to the birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Bali*. Oxford, New York, Toronto: Oxford Uni. Press.

[*Ed:* There have been no further reports of a population of House Crow becoming established on either Krakatau or Ujung Kulon since individuals were first seen there in 1986. Although administered from Lampung province in Sumatra, Krakatau is included within the Java faunal province in the Indonesia Checklist This record therefore constitutes the first for Sumatra. In view of this bird's capacity for traveling the World on board ship, it seems surprising that there have not been further reports from Indonesia. Surely it can only be a matter of time before a population becomes established at Tanjung Priok, the port of Jakarta, and elsewhere].