

## First records of Little Stint *Calidris minuta* in Indonesia

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**Summary.** Details are presented of the first two Indonesian records of the Little Stint *Calidris minuta*, discovered during shorebird surveys on the north coast of Aceh Province, Sumatra, between 18 October 2019 and 30 January 2020. As the species has already been recorded multiple times in most of the surrounding countries it is assumed that it had hitherto been overlooked in Indonesia. As further records from other parts of Indonesia can be expected, we summarise key features for distinguishing the species from the very similar Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, with which it often associates.

**Ringkasan.** Informasi rinci dua laporan mengenai Kedidi kecil *Calidris minutus* yang pertama untuk Indonesia yang ditemukan selama survei-survei di kawasan pesisir utara Provinsi Aceh, Sumatera, antara 18 Oktober dan 30 Januari 2020. Karena jenis ini sudah dilaporkan beberapa kali di negara-negara tetangga sekitar maka ini diasumsikan bahwa sampai saat ini keberadaannya terlewatkan di Indonesia. Karena laporan-laporan lebih jauh dari Indonesia mungkin bisa didapatkan lagi, kami merangkum ciri-ciri kunci yang membedakan jenis ini dari Kedidi leher-merah *Calidris ruficollis*, di mana keduanya sering dikaitkan.

### Introduction

The island of Sumatra holds many of the most important staging and wintering sites for shorebirds in the Indonesian Archipelago (Silvius *et al.* 1988; Iqbal *et al.* 2013; Putra *et al.* 2017), and supports globally significant congregations of threatened and near-threatened species such as the Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* and Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*. Early surveys of the coast of Jambi and South Sumatra provinces yielded counts of well over 100,000 shorebirds, including high counts of many species such as the Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (Silvius *et al.* 1988). Yet the northern coast of Sumatra has been little surveyed for its waterbirds and it is only in recent years that extensive field work here has identified significant congregations of many species, and determined new areas of important coastal wetlands for conservation, especially in North Sumatra and Aceh provinces (Putra *et al.* 2017).

Between 18 October 2019 and 31 January 2020, a series of large-scale shorebird surveys was conducted along the north-eastern coast of Sumatra in Aceh province by an international team, led by CAP. The first survey (18-31 October), in which YDL, SUC and YM participated, was partly a follow-up of the unexpected first Indonesian record of Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmaea* in a fishpond area in Lhoksukon, Aceh (Putra *et al.* 2019), but also aimed at uncovering other potentially productive shorebird sites in a little-surveyed part of Sumatra based on available information from online maps, while conducting the first targeted assessments of hunting and trapping of shorebirds in the region.

During three such surveys, we encountered a small calidrid sandpiper of which photographs were taken that subsequently confirmed its identification as Little Stint *Calidris*

*minuta*. This note documents these sightings, which constitute the first substantiated records of the species for Indonesia.

### Sightings and identification

On 21 October 2019 at around 10:00hrs, a small calidrid sandpiper was spotted by YM that showed some morphological differences from the surrounding Red-necked Stints *C. ruficollis* in a fishpond area close to the village of Ulee Matang (approximate location, 5.2°N, 97.4°E) near the town of Lhoksukon, North Aceh Regency, Aceh province. SC was able to obtain clear views through a telescope and YM took several photographs (Plates 1 and 2) before the flock departed. In comparison to the Red-necked Stints, the bird had longer legs (both tarsus and tibia) and a longer bill, with a thinner tip, as well as a longer neck. Like the Red-necked Stints, the bird was in winter plumage, but it differed from the former birds in having more extensive dark centres to the feathers of its scapulars and wing coverts. These features are consistent with the Little Stint (Jonsson & Grant 1984; Beaman & Madge 1998). Unfortunately the team was unable to relocate the bird subsequently.

On 8 December 2019, during a survey at the same location, CAP observed a small calidrid sandpiper in breeding plumage with features consistent with Little Stint. A similar-looking bird, presumably the same individual, was observed there again on 31 January 2020, and some photographs were obtained (Plates 3 and 4). These photographs show the distinctive features of the Little Stint in breeding plumage: a clear white throat and chin contrasting with bright rufous cheeks, a white supercilium that splits around both sides of the eye, and all visible upperwing feathers including tertials and coverts having broad black centres with rufous edges (Jonsson & Grant 1984). In addition, the same structural differences from Red-necked Stint, as described above, can be seen in the photograph showing the bird alongside a Red-necked Stint.

### Discussion

The Little Stint is generally regarded as a vagrant in all countries and territories to the east of Myanmar (McKinnon & Phillipps 2000; Robson 2008; Brazil 2018), but with increased birdwatching coverage it has been recorded annually in recent years from Thailand, Malaysia, China, Hongkong, Taiwan and Japan (eBird 2020). There are several records of the species from Sabah (Myers 2009; Phillipps & Phillipps 2014) in northern Borneo, but none yet from Kalimantan, and the first record from Singapore was not until 2017 (OwYong & Tan 2018). Given that Little Stint has been recorded more than 50 times from Australia (Rogers & Cox 2015), it was almost a foregone conclusion that it had been overlooked in Indonesia, one that these observations have verified. More records from Indonesia can be expected in the future, especially on the Malacca Straits coast of Sumatra. Experience from surrounding countries shows that it readily associates with Red-necked Stints during migration and on its wintering grounds, and we encourage observers to carefully scan through flocks of stints looking for anomalous individuals, keeping in mind the key identification criteria. Whenever possible, multiple photographs should be obtained in order to confirm identification.

### Editor's note

Shortly before the publication of this note, the editors were informed of a probable record of a Little Stint on Pulau Serangan, Bali, on 17 December 2017 (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S41192652>), which was accompanied by photographs. Preliminary opinions from experts support the identification of this bird as a Little Stint, which if accepted would constitute the first record of the species for Indonesia, as it precedes the records described in this note. We thank the observer Nigel Jacket for sharing his record, and Danny Rogers for his views on the bird in question.



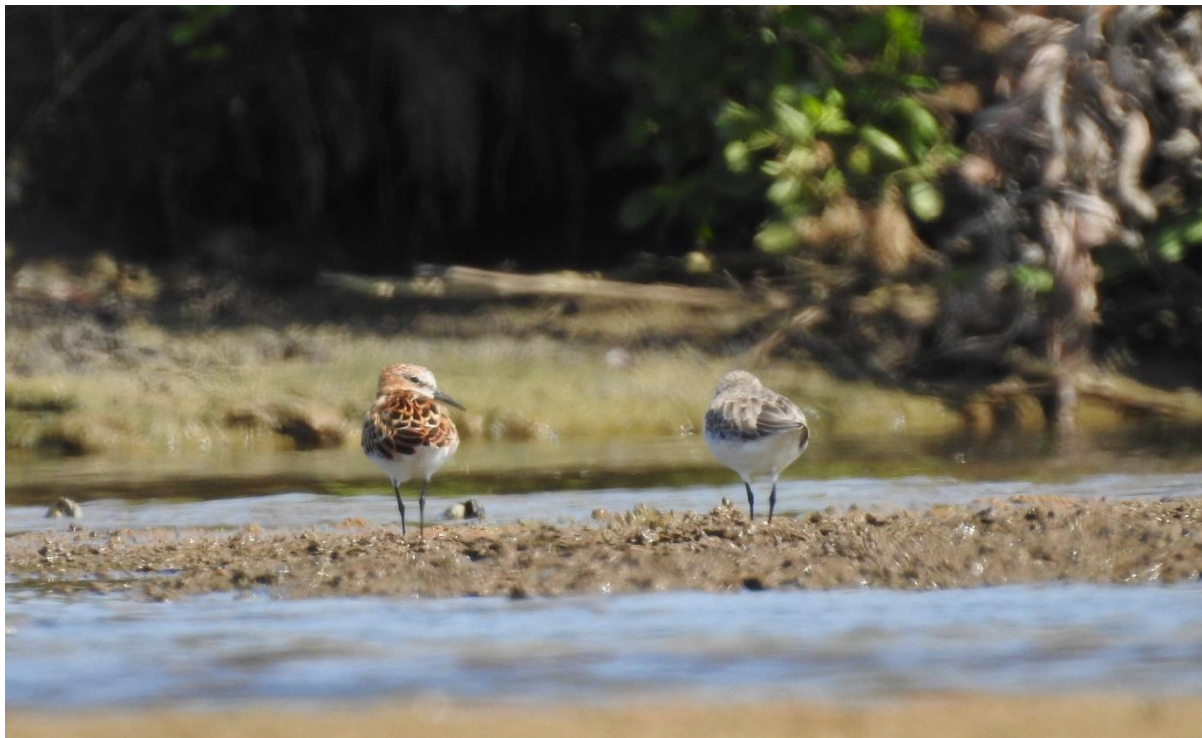
**Plate 1.** Little Stint (closest bird, looking left, out of focus) at Ulee Matang on 21 October 2019, surrounded by Red-necked Stints. © Yann Muzika.



**Plate 2.** Little Stint (closest bird) at Ulee Matang, partially obscuring a Red-necked Stint. © Yann Muzika.



**Plate 3.** Little Stint in breeding plumage (bird on right) next to a Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*. Ulee Matang, 31 January 2020. © Chairunas Adha Putra.



**Plate 4.** Little Stint 2 (bird on left) next to a Red-necked Stint. Ulee Matang, 31 January 2020. © Chairunas Adha Putra.

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