

## BIRD TO WATCH

# Observations of Milky Stork *Mycteria cinerea* during 2001–2007 in South Sumatra province, Indonesia

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**Plate 1.** Up to 500 Milky Storks *Mycteria cinerea* near by Timbul Jaya village, South Sumatra, 2 August 2005.

The Milky Stork *Mycteria cinerea* is widely but very patchily distributed in South-East Asia and is known from Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Peninsular Malaysia and Indonesia (BirdLife International 2001). The population is small and in long-term decline due to loss of coastal habitat, hunting for food and trade. The mainland population is now very small with no more than 100–150 birds in Cambodia and Peninsular Malaysia and no breeding populations remaining in Thailand or Vietnam.

In Indonesia the species is resident in Sumatra, Java and Sulawesi (Silvius & Verheugt 1989). The last stronghold of the species is Sumatra where most of the population resides. On Java numbers declined seriously in the twentieth century and the breeding population there is “tiny” (BirdLife International 2001). There may also be a small resident population on Sulawesi with the main concentration in the south-east although it has not been observed year round, most records being from August to December in recent years, and breeding has not been proved. Due to these declines that might amount to more than 50% over the last three generations, the species qualifies as Vulnerable (BirdLife International 2001, 2004).

The major observations reported here were made in South Sumatra between 2001 and 2005.

Milky Stork were recorded at six locations: Solok Buntu, Pulau Alanggantang/Bangko river, Banyuasin Peninsular, Pulau Betet, Timbul Jaya village (Muara Padang subdistrict) (Plate 1) and Banyuasin river (Plate 2). Details of locations and the number of birds observed are summarised in

**Plate 2.** Up to 300 Milky Storks *Mycteria cinerea* on the Banyuasin river, South Sumatra, December 2005.



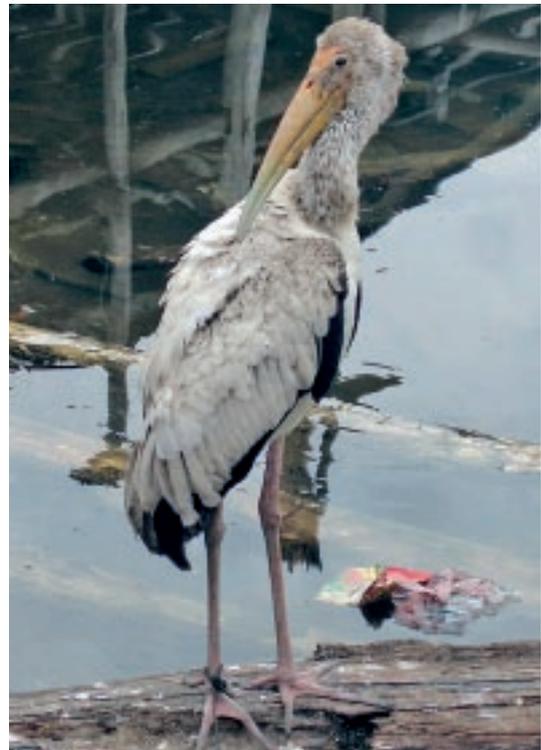
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**Table 1.** Observations of Milky Stork in South Sumatra province during 2001–2005.

Site	Date	Number of birds	Coordinates	Remarks
2001				
Banyuasin Peninsula	19 February	240–260	–	Mudflat and mangrove forest
Banyuasin Peninsula	31 July	84	–	Mudflat and mangrove forest
Solok Buntu	9 November	11	02°11'S 104°53'E	Mangrove forest converted for fish and prawn farming
Pulau Alanggantang/ S. Bangko	11 November	58	01°54'S 104°38'E	Mangrove forest
2002				
Banyuasin Peninsula	19 February	20	–	Mudflat and mangrove forest
Pulau Betet	20 February	1	–	Mudflat and mangrove forest
Banyuasin Peninsula	2 March	121	01°59'–02°13'S 104°43'–104°52'E	Mudflat and mangrove forest
Banyuasin Peninsula	17 June	324	02°00'–02°06'S 104°50'–104°47'E	Mudflat and mangrove forest
Banyuasin Peninsula	9 October	16	01°59'S 104°49'E	Mudflat and mangrove forest
2003				
Banyuasin Peninsula	11 April	24	–	Mudflat and mangrove forest
Banyuasin Peninsula	21 October	77	02°11'–01°59'S 104°54'–104°46'E	Mudflat and mangrove forest
2004				
Banyuasin Peninsula	24 February	120	–	Mudflat and mangrove forest
Banyuasin Peninsula	29 June	55	–	Mudflat and mangrove forest
2005				
Timbul Jaya Village– Muara Padang subdistrict	2 August	500	02°45'S 105°29'E	Mangrove forest converted for fish and prawn farming
Banyuasin River	12 December	300	–	Mangrove forest

Table 1. The largest concentration of Milky Storks was 500 birds in Timbul Jaya village on 2 August 2005, followed by 324 birds on the Banyuasin Peninsula on 17 June 2002. The latter record is the largest number seen in this location during the period, but is well down in comparison with a maximum 1,000 birds there during 1989 surveys (Verheugt *et al.* 1993). Immature birds were noted, but we found no evidence of nesting and breeding at these sites. Three breeding colonies were reported in South Sumatra during 1988 (Danielsen *et al.* 1991), these being located at Tanjung Koyan (estimated 300–400 nests with 500 adults and at least 50 juveniles), Tanjung Selokan (300 nests with 50 adults and several juveniles) and Banyuasin Peninsula at 02°20'S 105°00'E (280 nests with 250 adults and 100 juveniles). Administratively Tanjung Koyan and Tanjung Selokan are part of Ogan Komering Ilir (OKI) district, and the Banyuasin Peninsula is now part of Sembilang National Park. Since Danielsen *et al.* (1991) no colonies of Milky Stork have been reported in the OKI district.

In September 2006, during survey work for White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata* in South Sumatra, we found a juvenile Milky Stork—approximately three months old—at the house of a local forestry worker on Sungai Belidang river (Plate 3). The bird had been taken from a nest in the coastal forest on the river (within the OKI

**Plate 3.** Captive juvenile Milky Stork, Dusun Sungai Belidang, Simpang Tiga village, OKI district, September 2006.

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**Plate 4.** Typical conditions during survey work, 25 July 2007, in swamp between Simpang Tiga village and Teluk Pulai. Attempts to reach a location where local people reported Milky Stork nesting had to be abandoned.

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**Plate 5.** Captive Milky Stork chicks, Simpang Tiga Sakti village, 28 July 2007, reported to have been taken from back swamp or peat forest swamp near Teluk Pulai.

district) and had been sold for Rp. 25,000 (\$3). The area is very isolated and can only be reached by boat/motorised vessel. Local people reported that this stork breeds “in thousands” on Sungai Batang River. It is clear that further surveys to confirm the location of breeding sites are needed and in July/August 2007 we tried to visit some coastal localities in the OKI district. However, survey work is physically difficult, time-consuming and expensive (Plate 4).

Our survey failed to find a colony, but again we found chicks (Plate 5) and juvenile birds caught by



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**Plate 6.** General view of Simpang Tiga Sakti village, July 2007.

local people living in Sakti village (Plate 6). There can be very little doubt that there is a Milky Stork breeding colony somewhere nearby either in protected coastal forest of the Ogan Komering Ilir district or in the adjacent PT. SBA Wood Industries forest concession.

## References

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