

Second record after 139 years of Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* in Indonesia

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The Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* breeds in East Asia and migrates to the northern part of SE Asia in the non-breeding season (Piersma 1996, Sonobe & Usui 1993). It is a relatively unknown and under-surveyed species and count data are insufficient to estimate the population size more accurately than the broad range 25,000–100,000 individuals (Wetlands International 2006). No attempt has ever been made to estimate the size of the population of a particular



Fig. 1. Grey-headed Lapwings in adult non-breeding plumage at Aceh, Sumatra, Indonesia, on 31 Dec 2008. Photo by A. Nurza.

country, but count data suggest that most birds are in China and Bangladesh during the non-breeding season (Bamford *et al.* 2008). Grey-headed Lapwings are scarce to locally common as winter visitors in SE Asia (King *et al.* 1975, Robson 2005). It has also been recorded as a vagrant from Luzon in the Philippines, Brunei and Sarawak on the island of Borneo and in Peninsula Malayasia (Hayman *et al.* 1986, King *et al.* 1975, White & Bruce 1986). It is also listed as an

Indonesian species on the basis from a single record in 1869 (Andrew 1992, Coates & Bishop 2000, Sukmantoro *et al.* 2008, White & Bruce 1986).

On 31 December 2008, we observed 20 Grey-headed Lapwings at Alui Putih, Baktia sub-district, Aceh Utara district, Aceh province, Sumatra Island, Indonesia (5°08'51"N, 97°23'06"E). The birds were observed in a flooded freshwater rice field that had recently been harvested. Although this was the first time that any of us had seen the species, it is very distinctive and identification was straightforward. The birds' heads, necks and upper breasts were mostly plain brownish-grey, they had bright yellow bills with black tips which were rather long for lapwings and there was no wattle (Fig. 1). In flight, outer wings were black and the under-wings white except for the black primaries, and the tails were white with a black subterminal band (Fig. 2). When we checked key references (Coates & Bishop 2000, Hayman *et al.* 1986, King *et al.* 1975, Mackinnon *et al.* 1998, Piersma 1996, Robson 2005, Sonobe &



Fig. 2. Grey-headed Lapwings in flight at Aceh, Sumatra, Indonesia, on 31 Dec 2008. Photo by M. Iqbal.

Usui 1985), it quickly became clear that the characters fitted well with non-breeding Grey-headed Lapwing. Most of the birds were in adult non-breeding plumage; only one lacked a blackish breast-band indicating that it was a juvenile.

The Grey-headed Lapwing was first recorded in Indonesia at Gorontalo (N Sulawesi) in 1869 (Andrew 1992, Sukmantoro *et al.* 2008, White & Bruce 1986), but it has not been found in N Sulawesi in recent surveys (e.g. Bororing *et al.* 2000, Riley 1997, Tebb *et al.* 2008).

Our record on 31 Dec 2008 in Aceh province, Sumatra, is not only the second record for Indonesia, but the first record for Western Indonesia (i.e. Sumatra, Kalimantan, Java and Bali). The site is at least 1,200 km south of the main non-breeding range in SE Asia and the circumstances that may have given rise to our observation are not clear. The latest reported trend for the species is one of decline, though that assessment was made as long ago as 1994 (Perennou *et al.* 1994, Wetlands International 2006). Moreover, as far as we are aware, there is no evidence of range expansion. Vagrancy over large distances normally involves individuals so it is a mystery why 20 Grey-headed Lapwings should have flown so far to the south of their normal range.

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