

RECENT INTERESTING SIGHTINGS OF SHOREBIRDS IN SOUTHERN SUMATRA, INDONESIA

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During a short survey of an oil palm plantation in the Ogan Komering Ilir District of South Sumatra Province from 24–28 September 2009, three interesting shorebirds sightings were recorded at the settling ponds of the estate's processing mill. The shorebirds recorded were the Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, and Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*. The habitat surrounding the plantation is not typical shorebird habitat. The occurrence of these three shorebirds in the location and habitat described make these significantly interesting records for Southern Sumatra. This paper discusses the significance of these records. More surveys of inland and freshwater wetland habitats as well as artificial habitats of this type are required to assess the true abundance of these shorebird species in Sumatra.

INTRODUCTION

Six main natural wetland habitat types have been identified in Southern Sumatra: coastal waters, mudflats, mangroves, inland swamps, swamp forests and lebaks (Verheugt *et al.* 1993). The coastal area of the South Sumatra Province rank as one of the most important stop-over sites for shorebird in the East Asian-Australasian flyway (Danielsen & Verheugt 1990). Other wetland habitats provide additional shorebird habitat. A few shorebird species are not typically observed in intertidal mudflats, and so have received poor coverage in wader surveys conducted in northern and southern Sumatra.

METHODS

Between 24–28 September 2009, a survey of remnant wetland habitat areas at an oil palm plantation was made in three areas of Wilmar International's estate located in the Ogan Komering Ilir District of South Sumatra Province. The three main survey areas were Burnai Timur, Burnai Barat and Bambu Kuning (Figure 1). During this survey, incidental observations of shorebirds were made in settling ponds in Burnai Timur (S 03.621910 E 104.868390) (Figure 2). All shorebirds observed were documented.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In total, four shorebird species were recorded during the surveys. There were three unusual sightings of shorebird species in a settling pond at the palm oil plantation in the Wilmar International's estate located in the Ogan Komering Ilir District. The shorebirds recorded were the Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, and Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

A pair of Little Ringed Plover was observed in settling pond of palm oil in Burnai Timur on 24 September 2009 (Figure 3). The occurrence of this migratory shorebird in an oil palm plantation is very surprising. The Little Ringed Plover was first recorded in South Sumatra in 1918 (Marle & Voous 1988), and absent from records of intensive shorebird surveys in the lowland and east coast of South Sumatra province between 1984–1989 (Silvius 1988; Danielsen &

Skov 1989; Verheugt *et al.* 1990; Verheugt *et al.* 1993). This is the first record for the South Sumatra province for 82 years (Nash & Nash 1985a; Nash & Nash 1985b; Marle & Voous 1988; Holmes 1996; Iqbal 2005; Iqbal 2006). In Lampung province of Southern Sumatra, Little Ringed Plover are listed in Way Kambas National Park without details (Milton 1985; Parrot & Andrew 1996) and were reported from Metro on 11 August 1976 (Marle & Voous 1988).

There are some more recent records from northern Sumatra, in Aceh on November–December 1995 with maximum count 123 birds (Crossland 2000), in Batam Island eight birds on 28 December 2001 and two bird on September 2002 (Crossland 2005) and 14 birds on the east coast of Aceh on 30 December 2008 (Iqbal *Pers. Obs.*). Crossland *et al.* (2006) stated that this bird is relatively common in Aceh area of the north-east, but generally scarce elsewhere.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

A flock of approximately 100 individuals was recorded in a settling pond at the palm oil plantation mill at Burnai Timur on 25 December 2009 (Figures 4 & 5). This large number of Wood Sandpipers was surprising, as this species usually occurs in small flocks. During a survey in 1986, Silvius (1988) recorded a total of 27 Wood Sandpipers in Jambi and South Sumatra Provinces. Marle & Voous (1988) reported flocks of up to 20 in Sumatra. This record is thought to be the largest congregation of this species known for Sumatra.

The Wood Sandpiper is not typically a species of intertidal mudflats so it has received poor coverage in wader surveys conducted in north and south Sumatra. The species was absent from recent shorebird surveys in the east coast of Northern Sumatra (Crossland 2000; Crossland & Sinambela 2005; Crossland *et al.* 2006; Crossland *et al.* 2009). Mackinnon *et al.* (1998) state that this species is common and widespread in the Greater Sundas. Holmes & Nash (1990) list this as one of the common waders inland in Sumatra and Kalimantan, while Parrot & Andrew (1996) report it as common in agricultural land surrounding Way Kambas National Park, Lampung province. More surveys of rice field and freshwater wetland habitats are required before the true abundance of this species in Sumatra can be assessed (Crossland *et al.* 2006).

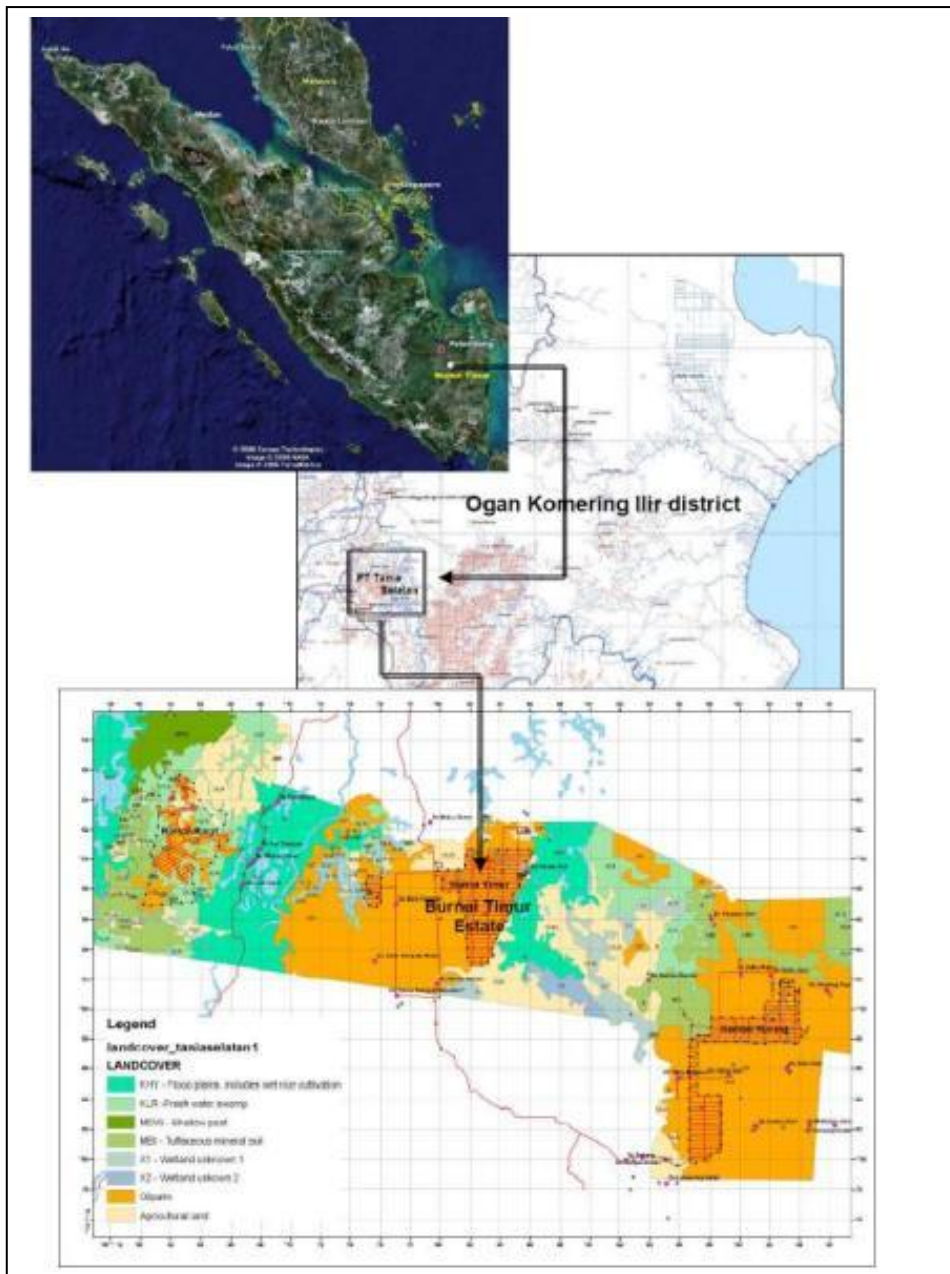


Figure 1. Map showing the three main survey areas were Burnai Timur, Burnai Barat and Bambu Kuning

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

One Curlew Sandpiper was observed on 24 September in settling pond at Burnai Timur. Curlew Sandpiper is locally common in flocks on mudflats along the coast of Sumatra (Marle & Voous 1988). This is a new inland record for this species in Sumatra. The furthest inland record for this species in South Sumatra is currently in the rice fields at

Delta Upang, about 25 km inland. However, the Curlew Sandpiper recorded in our recent survey of the plantation at Burnai Timur were about 100 km inland from the coast. This is most likely the furthest inland record for this species for South Sumatra, and possibly even Sumatra.



Figure 2. Settling ponds in a palm oil plantation in Burnai Timur, southern Sumatra.



Figure 3. A pair of Little Ringed Plover in a settling pond in the palm oil plantation in Burnai Timur.

CONCLUSIONS

The observation of three shorebirds species above during a short survey in the settling ponds of palm oil plantation mill is interesting. Many wetland habitats and forests in Sumatra were converted as palm oil plantation. Monoculture plantations like this tend to have very low avian diversity, however, they may provide attractive staging habitat for migratory shorebirds, including the species described here.

In our survey area, the artificial settling ponds were attractive to migratory shorebirds as they provided feeding and roosting habitat. There is no other published information that provides evidence for the importance of palm oil plantation settling ponds for shorebirds, despite there being many palm oil plantations in Sumatra. It seems that if managed well, monoculture palm plantations could potentially provide habitat and therefore support the survival of key shorebird species. It is clear that further work is needed to determine the importance of these artificial habitats for migratory shorebird species in Sumatra.

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Figure 4. A flock of about 100 Wood Sandpipers in flight, in a palm oil plantation in Burnai Timur, southern Sumatra.



Figure 5. A flock of about 100 Wood Sandpipers foraging in a settling pond in Burnai Timur.