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A WADER SURVEY OF THE WESTERN COASTLINE OF SARAWAK**Phillip J. Edwards & Peter M. Polshek****ABSTRACT**

The first complete survey of waders to be undertaken on the western coastline of Sarawak was carried out between Santubong and Kuala Igan from 28 September to 1 November 1985. Thirty-four species were observed of which two, black-winged stilt and sharp-tailed sandpiper, were new records for Sarawak, and two others, grey-headed lapwing and Temminck's stint, represented a second and third record respectively. The highest counts recorded in Sarawak of another 18 species were made.

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by

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INTRODUCTION

The first complete survey of waders to be undertaken on the western coastline of Sarawak was carried out between Santubong and Kuala Igan from 28 September to 1 November 1985. Additionally, visits to various airports were made up until 8 November. The survey was completed in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Office (NPWO) of the Sarawak Forest Department and formed part of a series of surveys throughout South East Asia coordinated by INTERWADER. This is an international cooperative programme launched in 1983 with the aim of collecting data on the numbers, distribution and ecology of wading birds in East Asia and the western Pacific region.

This paper presents a species by species account of the results of the survey. A brief review of the status of each species in Borneo or Sarawak, as known prior to this survey, is given at the beginning of each account so as to highlight differences or confirm existing ideas. We have decided to abandon the nomenclature and taxonomic order of Smythies (1981) and instead have adopted that used by Hayman *et al* (1986).

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METHODS

Surveys were undertaken using 10x40 binoculars and 20x60 telescopes mounted on tripods. Beaches and mud-flats were surveyed either from small fishing boats or, more satisfactorily, by landing from small speed boats. In the case of sand or hard mud, the area could be traversed easily on foot but where extensive areas of soft mud were encountered, landing was possible only from the numerous rivers that bisected the flats, and counts were made, therefore, only from these places. Surveys were made for the most part by two people, one identifying and counting, the other recording. Checks were made at random intervals by reversing roles. In cases where only one person was able to survey, counts were made into a pocket tape-recorder and transcribed later in the day.

RESULTS

The completed counts from the survey are given in Table 1, by section of coastline. The significant details are given below by species.

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*)

Two immatures of the Australasian race *leucocephalus* seen on 25 October represent the first record of this species for Sarawak. The two birds were feeding along the muddy banks of the canal traversing the northern end of Pulau Bruit, a few miles east of Kampong Tekajong. One was photographed. The combination of long pink legs, black wings and white underparts made specific identification easy. The major age and racial characters were the slight brownish tinge to the wings; the pale grey hind- and side-neck merging into white at the front, the grey coming slightly further forward towards the base of the neck similar to juveniles of the nominate race; the darker grey crown and ear coverts; and the distinct white band separating the grey base of the hind neck from the mantle. Two birds, thought to be the same ones, were flushed from the marshes around Kampong Tekajong on 26 October and a single bird was seen on 28 October and 1 November feeding along the canal banks close to the original sighting. This bird was paler on the head and neck and was believed to be an adult female therefore representing a third individual.

ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE (*Glareola maldivarum*)

Regular passage migrant to Borneo (Smythies 1981) preferring stretches of dry grassland (Smythies 1957) but occasionally seen on the coast, e.g. 240 on 26.3.75 in Brunei (Smith 1977). We encountered only four on the coast — two on Tanjong Kabong and one on Tanjong Batang Marau, both on 19 October, and one on Tanjong Sirik, Pulau Bruit, on 27 October. The main site, however, was Kuching Airport where they have been noted regularly in the past being most common in spring when up to 80 have been counted (Banks 1935, Harrison 1957, Smythies, 1957, 1962). We made three visits to the airport counting 101 on 15 October, 105 on 22 October and 28 on 5 November. In addition one of us (PJE) counted 15 at Sibu airport on 8 November.

GREY-HEADED LAPWING (*Vanelus cinereus*)

Only one previous record of this species exists for Sarawak, that of a single bird at Miri on 18.1.75 also seen earlier in Brunei on 28.11.74 (Smith