

First record of Beach Thick-knee and Grey-tailed Tattler on Enggano Island, Indonesia

By Arum Setiawan

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Enggano is a small island in the Indian Ocean, 100 km southwest of Sumatra, Indonesia (Verbelen 2009), and is part of the North Bengkulu (Bengkulu Utara) district of the Indonesian province of Bengkulu (Fig. 1; Maryanto *et al.* 2017). It has probably never been connected with the Sumatran mainland and has an impoverished fauna (Whitten *et al.* 2000).

On 2 March 2020, we visited Snake Island (Pulau Ular) off the north coast of Enggano (Fig. 1; 05°18'S, 102°07'E), an island formed from dead coral deposited by wave action. Local people had reported that Snake Island includes breeding habitat for waterbirds at certain times (particularly for gulls and egrets). At about 10:00 hrs, we observed a Beach Thick-knee *Esacus magnirostris* and a flock of 20 Grey-tailed Tattlers *Tringa brevipes*.

We first saw the Beach Thick-knee when it was flying, but it soon landed on the beach. It was readily identified by its distinctive characters: large size, very stout black bill with small yellow patches at the base, yellow eyes, black head with white supercilium and throat, breast buffy, underparts white, upperparts medium brown, wing coverts pale grey with broad white-bordered black bar in the upper part of the folded wing, and yellow legs (Fig. 2). These features confirm identification of the bird as a Beach Thick-knee, the only thick-knee species known to occur in Indonesia (Hayman *et al.* 1986, Sonobe & Usui 1993, Chandler 2009, Robson 2011, Eaton *et al.* 2016).

The flock of 20 Grey-tailed Tattlers was seen on the beach of Snake Island. All the birds were similar, with uniformly ash-grey back, short yellow legs (when in flight, the legs did not extend beyond the tail), blackish bill with yellow base and short nasal groove, prominent white supercilium extending behind the eye and blackish lore stripe, no barring on the underparts, but grey wash on the sides of breast and flanks (Fig. 3). These features confirm identification as Grey-tailed Tattler (Hayman *et al.* 1986, Sonobe & Usui 1993, Chandler 2009, Robson 2011, Eaton *et al.* 2016).

The occurrence of Beach Thick-knee and Grey-tailed Tattler on Enggano Island was unexpected. Beach Thick-knee is listed as Near Threatened because it has a small

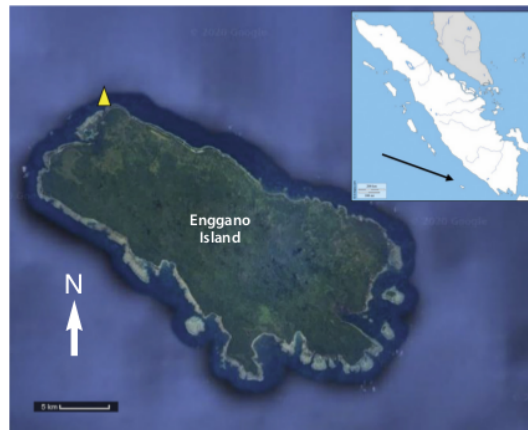


Fig 1. Map of Enggano Island showing the location of the record of Beach Thick-knee and Grey-tailed Tattler on 2 March 2020 (triangle).

population (BirdLife International 2020a). In Sumatra, records of Beach Thick-knee are sparse (fewer than 10 published records during 1980–2020), with reports from Siberut Island in 1997, from Simeuleu in 1991, and two on the beach at Belimbing, Lampung province in 1992 (Holmes 1996); all of these localities are on the western side of Sumatra.

Like Beach Thick-knee, Grey-tailed Tattler is listed as Near Threatened based on evidence that it is undergoing a moderately rapid population decline, driven by ongoing habitat loss and degradation, disturbance and hunting pressure (BirdLife International 2020b). There were no records of Grey-tailed Tattlers on Sumatra or any of its islands until 1999 when a single bird was recorded twice on Siberut Island, 500 km northwest of Enggano (Grantham & Kemp 2000). This was followed by an observation of seven birds on Belitung Island in February 2014, and then by observations in Bengkulu province in October and November 2014 which constitutes



Fig 2. A Beach Thick-knee (and Reef Egrets *Egretta sacra*) photographed on 2 March 2020 on Snake Island, Enggano, Sumatra, Indonesia (photo: Muhammad Iqbal).



Fig 3. Grey-tailed Tattlers photographed on 2 March 2020 on Snake island, Enggano, Sumatra, Indonesia (photo: Muhammad Iqbal).

the first record for mainland Sumatra (Iqbal *et al.* 2014a, Rahmansyah & Iqbal 2015). Muga *et al.* (2017) considered Grey-tailed Tattler as a rare vagrant to Sumatra with a small number of observations. Therefore, our record of 20 birds represents the first record for Enggano Island and the largest number recorded anywhere in Sumatra.

These records of Beach Thick-knee and Grey-tailed Tattler on Enggano Island add to a body of information about the occurrence of scarce waders in Sumatra which has increased considerably over the past decade (e.g. Iqbal *et al.* 2010, 2013, 2014b, Imansyah & Iqbal 2015, Putra *et al.* 2018). We think this probably reflects the impact of growing numbers of local birdwatchers and researchers with access to binoculars and long-lens cameras, rather than birds expanding their ranges. The importance for waders of Enggano Island and other west Sumatran islands may have been overlooked in the past, when birdwatchers were more interested in finding endemic species. Further studies on Enggano are needed in order to confirm the status and population size of the waders that occur there.

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