

RECENT STATUS OF BLACK-  
HEADED GULL  
CHROICOCEPHALUS  
RIDIBUNDUS IN SUMATRA,  
INDONESIA

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## RECENT STATUS OF BLACK-HEADED GULL *CHROICOCEPHALUS RIDIBUNDUS* IN SUMATRA, INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

IQBAL, M., ABDILLAH, H., FEBRIANTO, I., AMRUL, H.M., WINDUSARI, Y. & HANUM, L. 2020. Recent status of Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* in Sumatra, Indonesia. *Marine Ornithology* 48: 53–54.

Here we summarize recent reports (2008–2018) of Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* in Sumatra. These observations confirm that Black-headed Gulls are winter visitors in Sumatra.

**Key words:** Black-headed Gull, Sumatra, status update

### INTRODUCTION

Gulls are most common in temperate latitudes where major upwellings support rich pelagic fisheries, but there are only a few gull species that occur among the Greater Sunda Islands (MacKinnon & Phillipps 1993). The Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* is one of five gull species listed for the Indonesian archipelago (Greater Sundas and Wallacea) (Eaton *et al.* 2016). It has been recorded in Sumatra, Bali, Borneo, northern Sulawesi, and northern Molucca (Easton *et al.* 2016, Hasyim *et al.* 2019). In Sumatra, however, it is known based on only two sight records on 14 and 19 February 1977 in Percut, North Sumatra province (van Marle & Voous 1988). In this paper, we summarize three recent observations of Black-headed Gulls in Sumatra.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

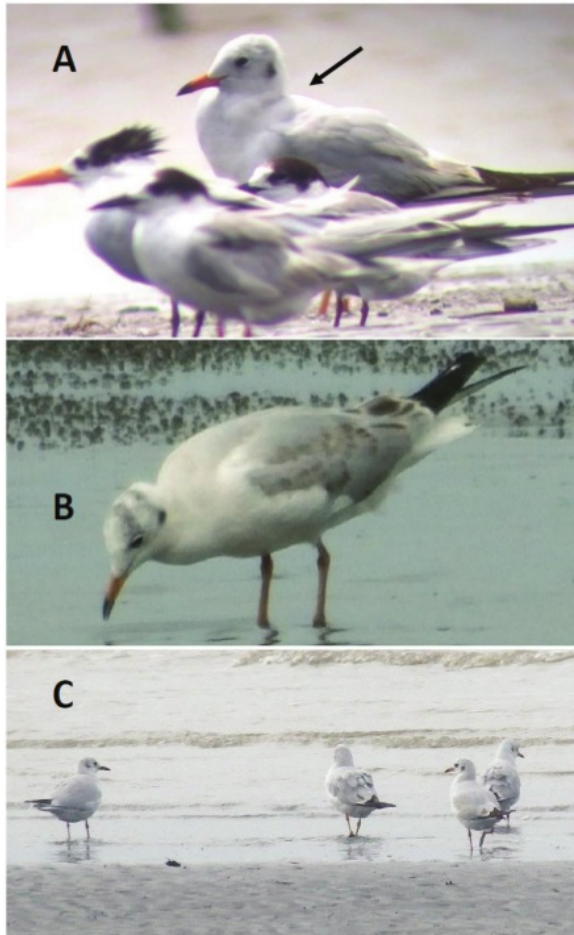
On 27 February 2008, a Black-headed Gull was discovered by one of us (IF) on Cemara Beach (01°19'07"S, 104°26'31"E), Sadu subdistrict, Tanjung Jabung Timur district, Jambi province. A second Black-headed Gull was observed on 05 January 2017 by the second author (HA) in Percut (03°43'49"N, 098°46'31"E), Percut Sei Tuan subdistrict, Deli Serdang district, North Sumatra province. Four more Black-headed Gulls were sighted on 21 February 2018 by the first author (MI) in Sembilang Beach (01°59'43"S, 104°41'11"E), Banyuasin Dua subdistrict, Banyuasin district, South Sumatra province. These birds were identified by observations and photographs. All three locations are spread over the eastern coast of Sumatra.

These birds had a whitish body overall, with pale grey upperparts; a quite long, slender, dark red bill with black tip; a white head with dark ear spot; and pale grey patches around the eyes. These

characteristics indicate an adult non-breeding Black-headed Gull. These individuals differed from other gulls in Southeast Asian and Indonesian waters in the combination of dark red bill and red or yellowish legs. Many of the gulls that have been recorded in Southeast Asian and Indonesian waters show dark bills and legs, or black bills and legs. These include Heuglin's Gull *Larus fuscus heuglini*, Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*, Laughing Gull *Leucophaeus atricilla*, Mew Gull *Larus canus*, Mongolian Gull *Larus vegae mongolicus*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, Pallas's Gull *Ichthyaelus ichthyaelus*, Saunder's Gull *Chroicocephalus saundersii*, and Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus* (Robson 2011, Pratt & Beehler 2015, Eaton *et al.* 2016, Gregory 2017). The bill of the individuals reported here were most similar to the Relict Gull *Ichthyaelus relictus*, Brown-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*, Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*, and Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*, in that they shared the characteristics of dark red bill and red or yellowish legs; however, the birds we observed differed by having pale eyelids or pale eyes, in contrast to the dark eyes of the Slender-billed Gull. Following Olsen & Larsson (2003), recently reported adult non-breeding Black-headed Gulls in Sumatra have been in winter plumage. Adult winter and second-winter Black-headed Gulls are mostly indistinguishable at this stage, but some second-winter individuals show traces of immature plumage, such as dark-patterned tertials and covert marking (especially on upper primary coverts). Individuals seen in Sumatra were overall pale grey in the tertials and their covert markings lacked a dark pattern, indicating an adult in winter plumage.

The first record of this species in Sumatra (van Marle & Voous 1988) has not been confirmed due to confusion of this species with Brown-headed Gull. Thus, the species was listed as hypothetical by van Marle & Voous (1988). Our recent (2008–2018) observations

of Black-headed Gull confirm their occurrence in Sumatra. It is probably a regular winter visitor, though in small numbers, to the east coast of Sumatra.



**Fig. 1.** Black-headed Gulls recorded in Sumatra, Indonesia: (A) one individual encountered among terns on 27 February 2008 in Cemara Beach, Tanjung Jabung Timur district, Jambi province; (B) one individual sighted on 05 January 2017 in Percut, Deli Serdang district, North Sumatra province; and (C) four individuals observed on 21 February 2018 in Sembilang beach, Banyuasin district, South Sumatra province. Photos taken by Iwan Febrianto [A], Hasri Abdillah [B], and Muhammad Iqbal [C].

As assumed by Hasyim *et al.* (2019), the status of these birds is affected by a lack of local researchers and birdwatchers. However, the rapid growth of the ornithological community in Sumatra, as well as easier access to binoculars and cameras, has led to a corresponding increase in observations of vagrant and migratory birds during the last decade (Iqbal *et al.* 2009, Iqbal *et al.* 2010, Imansyah & Iqbal 2015, Iqbal & Albayquni 2016, Putra *et al.* 2018, Hasyim *et al.* 2019).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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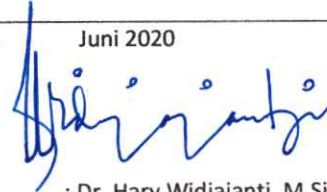
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