

ongoing research at Napahai and at Poyang Lake and is familiar with Chinese waterbirds. We viewed the bird through 8.5×42 binoculars for five minutes. It was loosely associating with a dispersed group of five Black Storks *C. nigra* and two Black-necked Cranes, and was foraging along the flooded edge of Napahai wetland with its head extended forward, close to the ground. It was a similar size to the Black Storks and had a black cap, solid white nape and neck, black plumage with purplish tones, large bill and white undertail-coverts. These are all standard field marks for this species.

This observation came one day after the bird was documented by Han *et al.* (2011). Colleagues at the Kunming Institute of Zoology (KIZ) were notified of the bird's presence and they, in turn, monitored the Woolly-necked Stork while it was at Napahai. Field reports indicate that the bird was present in the Napahai wetland from June to September of 2011 and was last seen on 28 September 2011 (Wu Heqi pers. comm.).

The historic status of the Woolly-necked in China is unclear. Han *et al.* (2011) suggest the 2011 Napahai bird is the first record for China, but S. Chan (*in litt.* 2012) reports that a museum specimen at KIZ derives from an individual on display at the Kunming Zoo in the 1960s. The origin of that bird is unknown, but transportation and political considerations at that time suggest that it is likely to have been caught in China. The 2011 bird at Napahai thus seems likely to be the second for China. Robson (2008) lists the species as a 'rare to locally fairly common resident' in North Myanmar, adjacent to Yunnan, so it is perhaps surprising that there have not been more prior records. Future observers at Napahai and other wetlands in Yunnan should be aware of the potential for the presence of the Woolly-necked Stork and other species that occur in neighbouring countries but are not regularly recorded in China.

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First records of Javan Munia *Lonchura leucogastroides* in Peninsular Malaysia

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The Javan Munia *Lonchura leucogastroides* is an estrildid finch native to the Indonesian Islands of Java, Bali and Lombok. It is also established in southern Sumatra, where it was probably introduced (MacKinnon & Phillips 1993, Wells 2009), and in Singapore where it was introduced around 1922. By the 1980s it had become the commonest estrildid finch in Singapore (Lever 1987) but its numbers have declined in recent years (Wells 2009), and the species is now considered uncommon there. Despite the narrowness (approximately 1 km) of the strait separating Singapore from Malaysia's southern state of Johor, the only published record of this species in Peninsular Malaysia is of a single bird in a Johor Bahru park in April 2003 that was considered to be an escapee (mentioned in Wells 2009). This paper discusses recent observations of Javan Munias in Johor that suggest that the species is now a breeding resident there.

At 09h00 on 21 July 2011, three adult and two immature Javan Munias were observed at Sungai Tiram, Johor (1°37'03"N 103°47'29"E), where they were seen perching on and moving in and out of tall (>1 m) grass stems. The white bellies of the birds drew my attention, as did the black throat and vent on the adult birds. Their rump and tail were dark in colour, distinguishing them from White-bellied Munia *L. leucogastra*, which has an olive-yellow tail fringe. These birds were seen again in the same location on 22 July 2011 at 07h50, where they were observed for over 10 minutes at a distance of 7 m. When disturbed, they would move a short

distance and resume foraging amongst the grass stems. These birds were present at the same site on 11 August and 6 October 2011, by which time the two juvenile birds had developed adult plumage.

Following discussions with the local birding community, Paul Wu, a member of the Malaysian Nature Society, provided photographs of this species that he had taken in April and May 2009 at a Temple near Kulai, some 30 km west of the Sungai Tiram site. He estimated there were three to four pairs of birds nesting in potted plants around the temple, and had photographed one bird carrying nesting material.

In some Asian countries, estrildid finches are traded as prayer birds; this often involves transfer of birds from their point of capture to another location where they are released into the wild as part of religious rituals (Severinghaus & Chi 1999). In Malaysia, estrildid finches are the most commonly traded prayer birds, and are both imported from Indonesia (Shepherd 2006) and netted from native stocks for trade at local bird markets. On 7 October 2011, during a search of the local bird market near the Sungai Tiram site, I found three captive Javan Munias for sale, together with 62 other estrildid finches. The trader stated that the birds had been trapped on the eastern reaches of Sungai Tiram, and that his shop had been selling Javan Munias irregularly for at least ten years. Following this development, between 7 and 16 October 2011, all bird markets that could be located in Johor south of 2°N were surveyed (n=10). During this survey, an additional five Javan Munias were discovered for sale

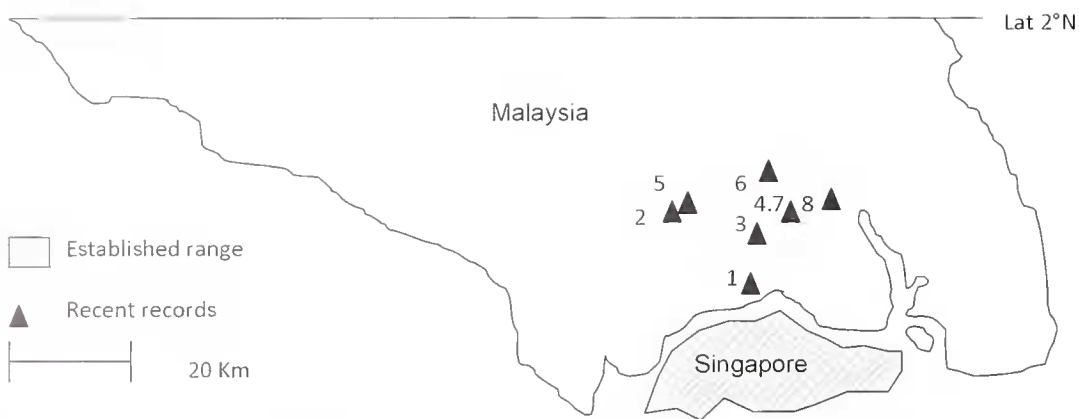


Figure 1. Records of Javan Munia in Peninsular Malaysia.

Serial	Date	Location	Notes
1	Apr 2003	Johor Bahru	1 bird identified in a city park of Johor Bahru, considered to be an aviary escapee or deliberately released (mentioned in Wells 2009)
2	Apr-May 2009	Kulai	3-4 pairs of wild birds observed carrying nesting material at Seng Kang Temple, Kulai. One pair photographed
3	Jul-Oct 2011	Sungai Tiram	5 wild birds, two with juvenile plumage, observed and photographed in same location regularly Jul-Oct 2011
4	Oct 2011	Ulu Tiram	3 captive birds for sale, trapped on eastern reaches of Sungai Tiram (8)
5	Oct 2011	Kulai	5 captive birds for sale, trapping location unknown
6	Dec 2011	PULADA Army Camp	2 wild birds observed
7	Dec 2011	Ulu Tiram	19 captive birds for sale, trapped on eastern reaches of Sungai Tiram (8)
			Total birds = 41

at the Kulai bird market. The 2,021 captive estrildid finches found in Johor's bird markets during this survey comprised 1,070 Scaly-breasted Munias *L. punctulata* (52.9%), 601 Black-headed Munias *L. atricapilla* (29.7%), 342 White-headed Munias *L. maja* (16.9%) and 8 Javan Munias (0.4%).

I made two further observations of Javan Munias during December 2011. One was at the PULADA Army Camp (1°37'15"N 103°49'55"E), where two birds were observed flying into and then sheltering inside an ornamental shrub. The other was at the Ulu Tiram bird market where an additional 19 captive birds were on sale; these were also reportedly captured on the eastern reaches of Sungai Tiram. The location of these and previous observations are given in Figure 1.

Given the number of both wild and captive birds recorded, the photograph of a bird carrying nesting material, and the presence of juvenile birds in the wild, it would appear that the Javan Munia is now established as a breeding resident on the northern rural fringe of Johor Bahru. Anecdotal evidence from traders supports this, suggesting that, as predicted by Wells (2009), the species has been present in small numbers in Johor for a number of years.

It is difficult to say with certainty whether Johor's Javan Munias have become established entirely through natural immigration of wild birds from Singapore, or whether the population originated from the release of prayer birds, imported from neighbouring countries such as Singapore or Indonesia. Possibly, combinations of these factors have occurred, with released prayer birds augmenting a small naturally immigrated population. Given the proximity of Johor to Singapore, and that Javan Munia has not yet been recorded in other urban areas of Malaysia where prayer birds are used, it is more probable that the Johor population has originated from Singapore rather than Indonesia. Currently, the most northern record of Javan Munia in Johor is approximately 50 km from the Singapore Central Business District, implying that this species has extended its range a similar distance in the 90 years of its presence in Singapore. Based on this precedent, it is probable that, unassisted, this species will be slow to disperse further north.

My survey of bird markets in October 2011 established that Javan Munia comprised less than 1% of the captive estrildid finches sold in Johor's prayer bird trade. As there is no price difference between species of estrildid finch sold, it is unlikely that Javan Munia is specifically targeted for capture. However, the seemingly low number of individuals and localised occurrence of Javan Munia

in Johor makes the species vulnerable. It is likely that trapping for the prayer bird trade is disrupting the formation of a stable population base in the Sungai Tiram and Kulai local areas. Because captured Javan Munia make up only a minority of estrildid finches for sale, and are generally sold in mixed-species groups, their release may isolate individual birds, and will not necessarily facilitate the colonisation of new areas. If in the future Johor's Javan Munia population increases in abundance as Singapore's did in the 1980s, the proportion of captive Javan Munias being traded will probably increase, and the liberation of prayer birds into suitable habitats such as gardens and temples could enable a faster dispersion of this species across the state than would be expected if natural processes only were involved. There is potential for competition to occur with other *Lonchura* native to Malaysia, perhaps most interestingly with White-bellied Munia, which unlike the Malaysia's other *Lonchura*, is not found at the Peninsula's southernmost tip, and did not experience range overlap with Javan Munia in Singapore. The status and distribution of both Javan and White-bellied Munia in Malaysia should be closely monitored in the future.

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