

NEWSLETTER OF THE IUCN SSC ASIAN SONGBIRD TRADE SPECIALIST GROUP

DAWN CHORUS

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Newsletter of the IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade
Specialist Group

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Indonesia



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FOREWORD BY DAVID JEGGO¹

¹ Chair of the IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (IUCN SSC ASTSG)

Welcome to this fourth issue of the IUCN SSC ASTSG's newsletter, *Dawn Chorus*. Like the previous editions, it contains a range of contributions from our members, covering varied aspects of the group's activities. It illustrates well the breadth of work that the IUCN SSC ASTSG members are engaged in to combat the negative conservation aspects of unsustainable trade in Asian songbirds.

Within the contents, reference is made to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, along with Species360, and it is good to see the engagement of the IUCN SSC ASTSG with these bodies to the benefit of its activities. There was a good representation of the IUCN SSC ASTSG membership at the recent CITES Conference of the Parties (CITES CoP), and the authors of the first two articles were among the attendees.

The first contribution by Sunny Nelson and Jessica Lee, provides information on the recent CITES CoP and the next by Simon Bruslund et. al., while broader in context, is also in part related to CITES. Both refer to the low number of songbirds listed in the Appendices of CITES and the current belief that listing more species could aid their conservation. This is true for songbirds at a global level and, while much of the concern regarding trade in Southeast Asia has focused on internal trade, there is a growing realisation that international trade is also important and of the conservation benefit of listing certain songbirds.

To do this will require good data to support recommendations for listing. The need for this is emphasised again to categorise species correctly on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in the next article by Alex Berryman, of BirdLife's Red List team and one of the IUCN SSC ASTSG's newer members. The Red List categorisations are of importance, and the IUCN SSC ASTSG works

very closely with BirdLife International in providing data for the trade-affected Asian species. The Red List categories not only help the IUCN SSC ASTSG set its priorities but give greater justification for broader conservation support for those listed in the higher categories of threat.

Taxonomy affects the Red Listings of birds as this is done at the species level. Therefore, taxa not currently universally recognised as full species are not Red Listed. Some subspecies however are also considered by the IUCN SSC ASTSG as conservation priorities hence its own priority taxa list, as explained in [the last issue of Dawn Chorus](#). Moreover, experience has shown that given further research some taxa once considered subspecies are sufficiently distinct to warrant splitting as full species. They are then assessed separately as such and frequently qualify for a threatened category. An example of this is the Javan Blue-flycatcher, a taxon for which the IUCN SSC ASTSG has been concerned for some time as being exceptionally scarce and, as reported by Alex Berryman, was recently split so that it is now listed as Critically Endangered.

This species and another now accepted as a full species, the Javan Pied Starling, are the subject of the next two contributions. Irfan Rosyadi explains about the work being carried out by his group in guarding the nests of Javan Blue-flycatchers and engaging the local community. It is very heartening to see this as a measure already in place aimed at helping to save this species. In the following article, it is encouraging to see the great effort being made by the Prigen Conservation Breeding Ark in commencing the recovery of the Javan Pied Starling through the trial release of birds bred there, as Jochen Menner describes. While in its early stages, it is a promising and vital start to the recovery of this species that, while commercially bred in large numbers, as far as we know has been extirpated from the wild.

This newsletter concludes with an interview with Marison Guciano, and discusses the work of FLIGHT and their assistance with confiscations. This is of importance as, along with changing attitudes, the tighter implementation and enforcement of laws that are aimed at protecting songbirds is an important step in halting their decline.

An underlying trend we are seeing is the increasing effort and interest in research to better understand and provide a sounder scientific basis for the actions required. At one extreme to identify and prevent the imminent extinction of those taxa most at risk while, at the other to bring in appropriate measures aimed at ending the unsustainable trade in wild-caught songbirds. All in all, while there is still a long way to go and for some taxa, the situation may well get worse before it improves, it is clear from the content of this edition of Dawn Chorus that progress is being made.

- David Jeggo



photo by Jonathan Beilby

White-rumped Shama

SUPPORT FOR SONGBIRDS: CITES COP19 OUTCOMES FOR STRAW-HEADED BULBUL AND WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA

Written by Sunny Nelson^{1,2} & Jessica Lee^{3,4}

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³ [Mandai Nature](#)

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The 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora or [CITES CoP19](#), was a success for many species impacted by international trade. For two weeks from 14th to 25th November 2022 in Panama, over 2,500 government representatives from 160 Parties (countries), as well as INGOs, NGOs and other stakeholders, met to engage in renewed discussions on existing documents as well as new amendments to Appendices I and II of the Convention. Of the 52 species listing proposals that were proposed, 46 were adopted. This includes close to 100 species of sharks and rays, 50 turtle and tortoise species, 160 amphibian species, including glass frogs and more than 150 tree species (e.g. Rosewoods). The CITES CoP19 also reached a record number of 365 decisions that will lead towards the safeguarding of threatened wildlife species that are impacted by the trade and also underpins the livelihoods of people.

Of the 52 proposals presented, two proposals up for consideration that are of particular interest were on Asian songbirds, specifically, the Straw-headed Bulbul (*Pyconotus zeylanicus*) for transfer from Appendix II to Appendix I, and the White-rumped Shama (*Kittacincla malabarica*) to be included in Appendix II. Both species are facing population declines in

the wild, as a result of the unsustainable and illegal trade, and have been a focus of the IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (IUCN SSC ASTSG) and NGOs in the region and globally. This also represented the first proposals put forward by range-states and co-proponents Singapore and Malaysia at a CITES event.



photo by Jonathan Beilby

Straw-headed Bulbul

The CoP18 set the stage for future discussion of songbird trade. This was when the US and Sri Lanka submitted a document under species-specific matters entitled 'Songbird

Trade and Conservation Management (*Passeriformes ssp.*)'. Recommendations from this document were adopted and directed the Secretariat to consult with experts, convene a workshop, and commission a study to study the scale and scope of international trade involving songbirds. Despite Covid-19 severely impacting the ability to take on the work during the intersessional period, efforts by various non-government coalitions contributed to tools such as the Songbird Species Knowledge Index (Songbird SKI) and [an information document led by BirdLife International and partners on Songbirds \(Passeriformes\)](#) in the CITES Appendices and their Prevalence in Trade continued. The governments of Singapore and Malaysia (White-rumped Shama) with the United States of America (Straw-headed Bulbul) also collaborated over this time to put forth the two songbird proposals.

Representatives from ex-situ conservation bodies such as the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), as well as conservation organisations such as BirdLife International and its Asian partners, TRAFFIC, Monitor Conservation Research Society (Monitor), Mandai Nature, the IUCN SSC ASTSG, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and others convened throughout the conference, met and lobbied with Parties, and intervened to voice support of both proposals. This resulted in many Asian and global Parties taking to the floor to voice their support for both proposals. After discussion and negotiations among Parties, both proposals were adopted, with a 12-month delayed implementation for the Straw-headed Bulbul. [The CITES Appendices have now been formally updated.](#)

CoP19 also saw two well-received songbird-themed side events – the first one, entitled 'Keeping the Music Alive', delved into the rationale behind the two songbird proposals, seeking support for them. This was held on 17th November and led by the Singapore and Malaysia governments, supported by Mandai Nature. The second side event was entitled 'Silent Forest – Songbird Trade', and was focused on how songbirds need better protection under CITES and looked to share information with CITES parties and observer organisations on matters of songbird trade and to create more opportunities to meet and discuss songbird trade research and conservation. This took place on the 23rd of November and was co-hosted by AZA, Birdlife International, EAZA, IUCN SSC ASTSG, Monitor, Red Siskin Initiative, Species360, TRAFFIC, United States Fish & Wildlife Service, WCS and WAZA. Given the successful outcome of the CoP19 for the two songbird proposals, there is much more work to be done for other songbirds affected by international trade. The IUCN SSC ASTSG will continue to be active and work to support better regulation of the international trade in songbirds under CITES.



photo by Torben Weber / Basel Zoo

Chestnut-backed Thrush

THE SONGBIRD SPECIES KNOWLEDGE INDEX

Written by Simon Bruslund,^{1,2,3,4} Johanna Staerk,^{4,5} Boyd Leupen^{2,7} & Dalia Conde^{4,5}

¹ [EAZA Silent Forest Group](#)

² [Members of the IUCN SSC ASTSG](#)

³ [Marlow Birdpark](#)

⁴ [Species360 Conservation Science Alliance](#)

⁵ [University of Southern Denmark](#)

⁶ [Monitor Conservation Research Society](#)

The Species Knowledge Index (SKI) is a tool that quantifies current species knowledge by integrating multiple layers of data into a single resource to help identify data gaps and conservation priorities. By mapping data across various knowledge areas, the SKI methodology supports evidence-based decision-making by policymakers, management authorities, zoo and aquarium leadership, and conservation practitioners.

Compared to other bird orders, remarkably few *Passeriformes* are listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). As of May 2022, CITES includes only 1.4% of extant songbird taxa, and only one species [White-rumped Shama (*Kittacincla malabarica*)] was added to the list at last November's Conference of the Parties (CoP19, Panama City, Panama).

This low number of CITES-listed songbirds is partly due to a dearth of actionable information. Recognising the need to fill data gaps, the CITES Parties directed the Secretariat to commission a study into the scale and scope of the international songbird trade to better determine conservation and regulatory needs (Decision 18.256) at CoP18 in Geneva in 2019. To support this decision and contribute towards these research goals, the Songbird Species

Knowledge Index (Songbird SKI) was created ([see AC31, Doc. 30, Paragraph 6](#)).

Initiated in 2020, the Songbird SKI is led by Species360's Conservation Science Alliance, the University of Southern Denmark's Biology Department and the Interdisciplinary Centre on Population Dynamics (CPop). It works in partnership with a diverse set of stakeholders covering a wide range of disciplines, including Marlow Birdpark, the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), Monitor Conservation Research Society (Monitor), Lincoln Park Zoo, TRAFFIC, IUCN SSC ASTSG, Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, and others, and was peer-reviewed by BirdLife International.

The Songbird SKI integrates songbird data from 32 repositories for species conservation priorities, management (focusing on ex-situ management), biology, species use, ecological and evolutionary parameters, and evidence of illegal and legal trade. These data are used to cover six knowledge areas: trade, extinction risk, conventions and treaties, management opportunities (with a focus on ex-situ interventions), biological information and species' intrinsic value. Through this integratory approach, the Songbird SKI allows for the identification of species in need of further

research and/or species that could benefit from a CITES listing or other forms of improved regulation and enforcement.

To assess international trade in non-CITES-listed songbirds, we accessed data from many published and exclusive sources, including the newly developed [Songbirds in Trade Database \(SiTDB\)](#).

At CoP19, Songbird SKI partners, in collaboration with other organisations, held a side event during which the Songbird SKI was introduced. We were successful in making the results visible and available to relevant stakeholders. In addition to the two approved appendix listings for White-rumped Shama and Straw-headed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus zey-*

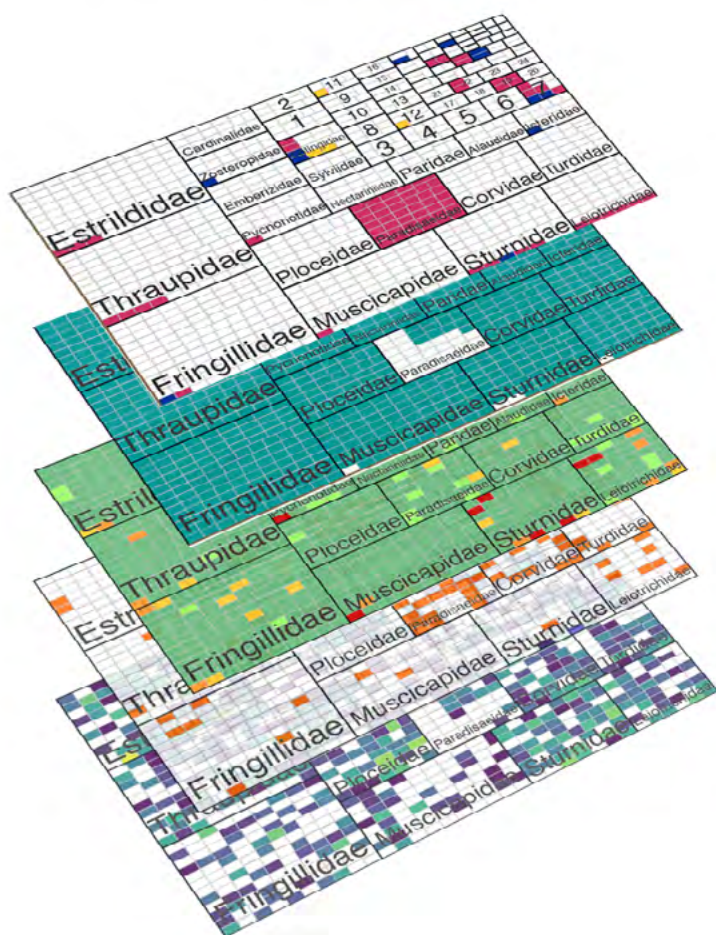
lanicus) respectively, Doc. 74 recommending that Decision 18.256 (and other related Decisions) be renewed was also approved.

The detailed Songbird SKI Report is presented in the form of three associated reports directed at CITES, which are openly available here:

- [Songbird SKI Summary report](#)
- [Songbird SKI Full Version - Annex 1](#)
- [Essays on live songbird trade and conservation - Annex 2](#)

The associated dataset is described in the open data paper [“A standardized dataset for conservation prioritization of songbirds to support CITES”](#) by Juergens and colleagues. The data itself can be downloaded [here](#).

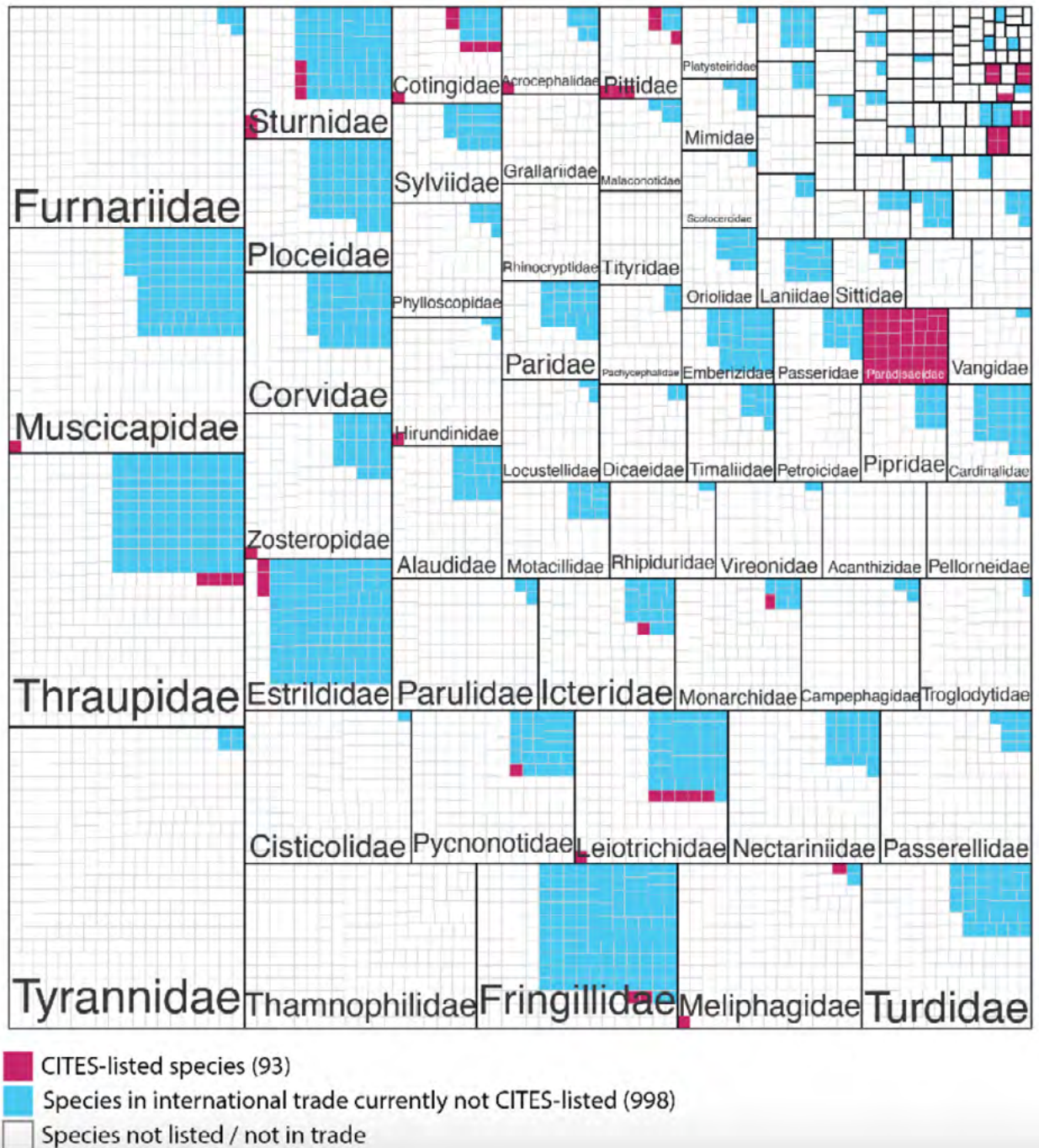
DATA LAYERS



CITES-listed species
 +
 International trade
 +
 IUCN Red List
 +
 Climate change vulnerability
 +
 Ecological distinctiveness

Going forward, the Species360 Conservation Science Alliance, Monitor, and the EAZA Silent Forest Group hope that the Songbird SKI will help scientists and policymakers to focus resources on those species already threatened by trade, habitat loss, and climate change and those that are particularly at risk of becoming so.

Depending on available funding, the next development is to make in-depth assessments for the priority species identified by the Songbird SKI and determine if they would benefit from a CITES listing. Where this is the case, data compiled through the Songbird SKI will be used to support CITES proposals.



In May 2022, the Songbird SKI identified that out of the 6,599 species (each shown as a single small square), only 1.4% (93 spp.) were CITES-listed (dark pink squares), while 998 species were found in international trade without being CITES-listed (blue squares).

THE IUCN RED LIST OF THREATENED SPECIES: AN URGENT NEED FOR MORE DATA TO SUPPORT THE LINK BETWEEN THE ASIAN SONGBIRD TRADE AND THE DECLINE IN WILD POPULATIONS

Written by Alex J. Berryman^{1,2}

¹ [BirdLife International](#)

² Member of the IUCN SSC ASTSG

[The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#) remains the most lauded and widely accepted metric for measuring species' extinction risk. Species are assessed against five overarching criteria and placed in categories that qualitatively describe (but are quantitatively derived) their extinction risk. Birds, uniquely, have been comprehensively assessed – a task devolved to [BirdLife International](#), as the global Red List Authority for birds – since 1988, allowing us to accurately track trends in extinction risk over time. The agreement of the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties (CBD CoP15) in Montreal demands (somewhat obscurely) that: “Human induced extinction of known threatened species is halted, and, by 2050, extinction rate and risk of all species are reduced tenfold and the abundance of native wild species is increased to healthy and resilient levels”. The Red List has, therefore, never been more relevant.

In Asia, the songbird trade is a grim exemplar of the challenges faced. Over the past decade, as will be more than familiar to readers, increasing evidence has emerged that for some species, the songbird trade is now intense enough to be driving (in some cases precipitous) declines in wild populations. Of the 25 species – as defined by BirdLife International – represented on [the IUCN SSC ASTSG's 'Tier 1 Priority Taxa List'](#), 16 now appear on the IUCN Red List

as threatened with extinction. This includes [Javan Blue-flycatcher \(*Cyornis banyumas*\)](#), also known as Jungle-flycatcher), which in 2022 was recognised as a species for the first time and debuted on the Red List as a Critically Endangered species.



photo by Prigen Conservation Breeding Ark
Wangi-wangi White-eye

In 2023, with the recognition of [the recently described Wangi-wangi White-eye \(*Zosterops spp.*\)](#), the list will likely grow by one more. Of the handful still listed as Least Concern, most [e.g. White-rumped Shama (*Kittacincla malabarica*) and Oriental Magpie Robin (*Copsychus*

sularis]] are explained by large, stable populations away from Southeast Asia, which vastly reduce the species' global extinction risk. For others, such as, Bare-throated Whistler (*Pachycephala nudigula*), there is an ongoing need to collaborate and share data/concerns.

But we need more data. Demand for a species in trade is not axiomatic with a decline in wild populations, and there is an urgent need to better understand the species-specific links between the two. In many cases, we have convincing anecdotes that species have declined in response to trade, but few data to determine the rate – a critical component of any extinction risk evaluation under Criterion A, under which most threatened songbirds are listed. Javan Blue-flycatcher now reigns as a prime example of the work we have to do. The data for this Critically Endangered

species – one that is likely to go extinct in the near future without urgent intervention – are, even for standards of threatened species in Asia, remarkably poor. We have no accurate quantification of how many there are, where they are (away from a few regularly watched sites) or how rapidly they have declined (precautionarily assumed, at the moment, to be >80% over ten years). [And none are captive in a conservation breeding facility.](#) Conservation has always suffered from scarce resources, but the Red List process (and the data upon which it depends) is a model framework for determining future research priorities.



photo by Ikmal Maulanal Huda
Local community members observe the Javan Blue-flycatcher nest

COMMUNITY-BASED SONGBIRD CONSERVATION IN MENOREH HILL: BAMBOO AND ARENGA PALM AGROFOREST AS A HABITAT FOR JAVAN BLUE-FLYCATCHER

Written by Irfan Rosyadi^{1,2}

¹ [Kanopi Indonesia](#)

² Member of the IUCN SSC ASTSG

On the cloudy and misty morning of November 8, 2022, Supangat, Suhandri and Darna Wijayanto were getting ready behind the blinds about four meters from the nest. They brought binoculars and a tally sheet to monitor Javan Blue-flycatcher (*Cyornis*

banyumas) breeding activity. Supangat said: “The male came with an insect in his beak and is feeding the chick”, and Darna recorded it in the tally sheet. Last night they received training on bird nest monitoring from Kelik Suparno.

Kelik is an ex-poacher who is now a conservation leader in Jatimulyo, a village in the Menoreh Mountains, which is located in the region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The agroforest in this village is inhabited by more than 100 bird species, including threatened songbirds such as Javan Blue-flycatcher, Ruby-throated Bulbul (*Rubigula dispar*) and Brown-cheeked Bulbul (*Alophoixus bres*).

Since the village regulations were launched in 2014, Kelik and his friends have stopped poaching birds. In 2016, a conservation activist introduced the nest adoption programme to Kelik and his friend. Two years later, they established a forest farmer group named [Kelompok Tani Hutan Wanapaksi](#) (KTH Wanapaksi). Through the nest adoption, a wider community can donate to help KTH Wanapaksi monitor and protect bird nests.



photo by Ikmal Maulanal Huda
Vegetation around the Javan Blue-flycatcher nesting site

Between 2020 and 2023, KTH Wanapaksi and Kanopi Indonesia received support from [Oriental Bird Club](#) and [Zoologische Gesellschaft für Arten und Populationsschutz](#) (ZGAP), Fonds für bedrohte Papageien (FbP) and Strunden-Papageien-Stiftung (SPS) to support songbird conservation work. The supported activities include further development and improvement of the nest adoption programme, local community engagement, in particular, connected to the regulation and prohibition of bird poaching, songbird monitoring, conservation breeding of Javan Blue-flycatcher, Ruby-throated Bulbul and Brown-cheeked Bulbul, as well as related training for breeding and monitoring.

Between September and November 2022, five active Javan Blue-flycatcher nests were adopted. Hopefully, with routine monitoring, more nests can be detected and adopted. Of the five nests, one nest has not produced any hatchlings, but four others were successful in breeding. Of four which were successful, there was one nest where some of the chicks died. Kelik explained that the extreme weather and rains caused two out of three chicks to drown. Kelik also identified the other cause of breeding failure: the predators and parasitic birds, such as *Cuculidae*, known for leaving their eggs in Javan Blue-flycatcher nests.

The Javan Blue Flycatcher nests were most commonly found in the holes of the bamboo stalks, or cliff walls' cavities, while the nest materials were from *Arenga pinnata* husks and moss. Bamboo trees and *arenga pinnata* are easily found in Jatimulyo. The bamboo trees are often used by the community for various purposes, but, unfortunately, are often being cut without checking for the presence of nest holes.

For the last two years, Kelik has been running an initiative to make artificial holes in bamboo for the Javan Blue-flycatcher nesting. The project has been successful; some of the artificial holes were used by birds. This project also made it easier for Kelik to locate the nests. The holes are made with the support and sometimes even by the local landowners themselves so that they can participate in the protection of the nests from poaching. When the hole is used by the Flycatchers, the landowner gets an incentive from the nest adoption programme.

Looking forward, it is essential to estimate the population of the Javan Blue-flycatcher. Assessing the mature population in the

Jatimulyo village, covered by the nest adoption programme, is the first priority. Finding a suitable scientific but easy-to-implement method is needed for both assessing and monitoring the dynamics of the population.

The nest adoption programme is still limited and does not cover the whole population. The further engagement of the wider community, including farmers, and more active promotion of the programme will help to generate more funding for the project. In addition, other alternatives, such as the development and selling of local products could be explored to support the songbird conservation and benefit the local community.



photo by Ikmal Maulanal Huda
Male Javan Blue-flycatcher feeding the chicks



photo by Kukuh Hadi
Javan Pied Starling

REINTRODUCTION OF JAVAN PIED STARLING

Written by Jochen Menner^{1,2,3}

¹ [Prigen Conservation Breeding Ark](#)

² [Taman Safari Indonesia 2 Jatim](#)

³ [Member of the IUCN SSC ASTSG](#)

The Javan Pied Starling (*Gracupica jalla*) is a Critically Endangered songbird species endemic to Java, Bali and Southern Sumatra, Indonesia. It has been eradicated in Bali, Sumatra and even in Java. It is highly doubted that any populations persist in the wild. While the Javan Pied Starling might be extinct in the wild, it is kept in huge numbers by private bird owners and commercial breeding enterprises all over Western Indonesia. These commercial breeding farms produce all the Starlings that are available in the trade nowadays. Unfortunately, these breeders do not pay much attention to conservation concerns. The Javan Pied Starlings are commonly selectively bred towards colour mutations, and occasionally cross-bred with the mainland Pied Starling species (*Gracupica contra* and *G.floweri*). Therefore, a large portion of the current captive population is lost for species conservation.

At Prigen Conservation Breeding Ark (PCBA) at Taman Safari in East Java, the Javan Pied Starlings have been bred since 2018. The breeding has progressed to the point where third-generation birds have hatched and are successfully raised. None of the almost 70 birds living at PCBA shows signs of hybridisation or colour mutations.

With PCBA's population continuously growing, we set out to establish a semi-wild population

of the Javan Pied Starling on the grounds of Taman Safari Indonesia II Jatim. Taman Safari offers the perfect location for this endeavour, being fully fenced, guarded around the clock and consisting of 360 hectares of mixed habitat types. The large herds of herbivores secure vast areas of short grass and a high density of insects.

For the release, 40 Starlings, all hatched and parent-reared at PCBA, had been selected and moved to a habituation aviary adjacent to the large giraffe exhibit at Taman Safari. The birds spent four weeks in this aviary in order to get accustomed to the surroundings and the feeding schedule.



photo by Kukuh Hadi
Javan Pied Starling

On November 5, 2022, we held an opening ceremony that was attended by more than 100 guests. Forty Starlings were released by Indra Exploitasia from Konservasi Keanekaragaman Hayati Spesies dan Genetik, Dr. Andriyanto from the Jawa Timur Provincial Government and Tony Sumampau from Taman Safari Indonesia.

Nearly all birds immediately left the aviary, but stayed in close proximity and started coming back to the aviary within a few hours. For the first week, the birds remained near the aviary and started foraging for food in nearby trees and the giraffe exhibit. Subsequently, the Starlings started exploring a wider radius and eventually came back to PCBA, which is a few hundred meters from the release site. Since then, the majority of released Starlings have established themselves in and around PCBA,

certainly being attracted to the Starlings that remained in breeding aviaries. The birds receive supplementary feeding at PCBA and the release site. Within the first month after the release, various pairs have started building nests, and it seems to be only a matter of time until the first Javan Pied Starlings fledge in the wild, after decades of absence.



photo by Febry Riyad

Release of Javan Pied Starlings to the ground of Taman Safari Indonesia II Jatim



photo by S.Shukhova

Marison Guciano, Executive Director of FLIGHT

MEET THE IUCN SSC ASTSG TRADE AND LEGISLATION SUB-GROUP'S MEMBER: INTERVIEW WITH MARISON GUCIANO^{1,2}

¹ [FLIGHT](#)

² Member of the IUCN SSC ASTSG

Tell us about your role at FLIGHT and how does it address the illegal songbird trade in Indonesia?

Marison: I was the Co-founder of FLIGHT, and now I am the Executive Director. Our organisation was formed as a direct response to the massive scale of the songbird trade in Indonesia, most of which involves the trapping of wild birds to supply the demand.

Although we consider ourselves a small group, we have more than 20 staff investigators and informants spread across various parts of Indonesia, from Sumatra to Papua. As the Executive Director, I analyse the information regarding the illegal songbird trade gathered by our investigators and informants. It includes various data such as routes, perpetrators, time and vehicles involved in smuggling attempts. Based on the collected information, we decide

with whom we want to collaborate to carry out the confiscation. Choosing the right officers to work with is essential, as we want to avoid engaging the corrupt ones who work together with the smugglers.

Our focus is on the supply chain targeting major traders. Whenever there is an opportunity, we and the authorities would confiscate the birds as soon as possible. However, we are often only able to stop smugglers when they are already far from the poaching location and bird habitat, for example, at the ports. We release confiscated birds as soon as possible after a health check to avoid mass bird deaths due to stress.

In early 2023, we started building aviaries to treat confiscated, unable to fly birds that have

glue-damaged wings caused by trapping. We have already engaged a veterinarian, and we plan on hiring a former bird collector to help to treat birds with damaged wings. He has decades of experience in caring for songbirds, an expertise that is not often found among veterinarians.

What are the main achievements of FLIGHT in songbird conservation in 2022?

Marison: Throughout 2022, we have rescued 38,017 songbirds from the illegal trade and released those that survived back into the wild. Apart from songbirds, we have also managed to rescue other endangered species, such as hornbills, gibbons, tree kangaroos and more.



photo by FLIGHT

Police and FLIGHT's team member checking car for songbird smuggling

FLIGHT often collaborates with law enforcement authorities. In your opinion, what is the key to building strong working relationships with them?

Marison: We give appreciation, such as placards and certificates, to law enforcement officers with whom we work. Networking is essential too. We often meet with them just for a tea or coffee, in a comfortable atmosphere. We treat them like close friends and try to build mutual trust between us.

Did you notice any patterns or changes in the songbird trade in Indonesia and its tackling before-during-after Covid-19?

Marison: I did not notice any significant changes in the trade. In my opinion, the rise of the online songbird trade during Covid-19 just shows the effort of traders to take advantage of technology to make it easier for them to operate.

The bird trade in Indonesia is still running as usual. Changes occur only in routes and ways smugglers transport the birds. They are learning from their previous failures and are now looking for alternative routes, such as using small ports that are not guarded by officers or where the bribing is easier.

What are the benefits of being a member of the IUCN SSC ASTSG?

Marison: I like that I can share information on bird trade with other members of the IUCN SSC ASTSG to support their work. While I share information gained from my investigations and research on the ground, they can share a bigger picture, as well as encourage improvements at the policy level, including the international regulation of trade.



photo by Kukuh Hadi

One of the reintroduced Javan Pied Starlings at Taman Safari Indonesia II Jatim release site

Thank you for reading our newsletter!

More information can be found on our website: <https://www.asiansongbirdtradesg.com/>

For enquiries, please email us at asiansongbirdtradesg@gmail.com

The IUCN SSC ASTSG on social media

Facebook: [@IUCN.Songbirds](https://www.facebook.com/IUCN.Songbirds)

Instagram: [@iucn_songbirds](https://www.instagram.com/iucn_songbirds)

Twitter: [@IUCN_songbirds](https://twitter.com/IUCN_songbirds)



The IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group (ASTSG)
<https://www.asiansongbirdtradesg.com/>

