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An Overview of the Status of Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* (Charadriiformes: Scolopacidae) in Sumatra, Indonesia

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Abstract
The Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* is a migratory shorebird species that migrates to the southern hemisphere, including Indonesia. In Sumatra, the species was previously considered a vagrant, but new records suggest it may be an uncommon visitor. A study compiled 26 sightings of *Tringa brevipes* in Sumatra from 1999 to 2024, with most records coming from the east coast of the island. The species was found in small numbers, with the largest flock consisting of 20 individuals. Based on these records, it is recommend reclassifying the species' status to "uncommon visitor" rather than "vagrant." Further research is needed to understand the species' migration patterns and habitat use in Sumatra.

Keywords: migratory, shorebird, status, Sumatra, *Tringa brevipes*.

Introduction

The Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* is a migratory shorebird species that travels along the East Asian Australasian Flyway (Hayman *et al.* 1986). Its breeding grounds are located in north-central and north-east Siberia, from where it migrates to the southern hemisphere, reaching countries in Asia, Australia, and the Pacific Islands (Message & Taylor 2005; BirdLife International 2025). This species has a wide distribution across Indonesia, with records from various regions, including the Greater Sundas (Atlas Burung Indonesia 2020, Taufiqurrahman *et al.* 2022). Its presence in Indonesia is part of its larger migratory route (Bamford *et al.* 2008).

On the status review of shorebirds in Sumatra, Iqbal *et al.* (2013) classified *T. brevipes* as vagrant, based on two sightings of the species in Siberut Island, Mentawai Islands, that constitute the first for Sumatra (Kemp 2000, Grantham & Kemp 2000). Further observations reveal three new sightings: one from Belitung Island (Iqbal *et al.* 2014) and twice in Pantai Panjang, Bengkulu, represent Sumatra's mainland (Rahmansyah & Iqbal 2015). Mugan *et al.* (2017) add sightings from Pantai Jono, North Sumatra on 24-25 March 2017, and verified the species rarity, as the only six records compiled show a very small number of sightings compared to the numerous efforts made in various shorebird surveys in Sumatra.

Here in this paper, we add information on the species' occurrence from various locations in Sumatra. Our records collated from separate observations and show the overlooked evidence of the species' occurrence on the island. We compiled all records of *T. brevipes* in Sumatra, discuss the possibility that cause the overlooked and recommend its new status for the island.

Methods

Observations made separately during 2011-2024 in eight locations: five in North Sumatra, two in South Sumatra and one in west Sumatran islands. Observations made using binoculars and, if possible, the occurrence of the species being documented using camera. Abbreviations on the observations refer to the authors as follow (alphabetically): AS (Arif Setiawan), DM (Deni Mulyana), HA (Hasri Abdillah), IS (Ismael Saumanuk) & IT (Imam Taufiqurrahman).

To ensure a more comprehensive dataset, we also drew from published information and citizen science platforms like eBird and iNaturalist (eBird 2025; iNaturalist 2025). To determine the species' status, we follow Henry (2012), with categorization as follows:

- Common: found in moderate to large numbers, and easily found in appropriate habitat at right time of year.
- Fairly Common: found in small to moderate numbers, and usually easy to find in appropriate habitat at the right time of year.
- Uncommon: found in small numbers, and usually, but not always found with some effort in appropriate habitat at the right time of year.
- Rare: occurs annually in very small numbers. Not expected on any given day, but may be found with extended effort over the course of the appropriate season(s).
- Accidental: represents an exceptional occurrence that might not be repeated again for decades.

Results and Discussion

As result, there are a total 15 sighting records made in 13 years of our observations during 2011-2024. Summarized observations presented in Table 1.

North Sumatra

During 2011-2024, HA observed *T. brevipes* up to seven times from six areas: five are from Deli Serdang district, one from Batubara district and one from Pantai Jono (sometimes also called Pantai Sujono or Pantai Perjuangan). The first was two birds in a fishpond of Tanjung Rejo village, Deli Serdang, 7 February 2011. This reveals the first occurrence of *T. brevipes*, both for North Sumatra and mainland, earlier than the previous report of a single bird in Pantai Panjang, Bengkulu on 9 October 2014 by Rahmansyah & Iqbal (2015). However, no photographs were taken during the sighting. Later on 12 November 2011, a single bird was observed from the same area.



Figure 1. One of two Grey-tailed Tattlers *Tringa brevipes* spotted in Deli Serdang, North Sumatra, alongside a small group of Sand Plovers on 21 October 2017 (Photograph: Hasri Abdillah).

On 2 December 2011, HA observed two birds in a mudflat of Percut village and up to four birds on 17 January 2012 in Sei Tuan village. On 21 October 2017, two birds observed in a group of sand plover species *Charadrius sp* on Beting Camar coast, Karang Gading, Langkat Timur Laut (Fig. 1). The highest number observed was five birds in the coast of Durian village, Batubara district, 14 March 2018. This area is characterized with a white sand beach, mudflats, ponds and mangroves (Abdillah *et al.* 2022). The most recent sighting was from Pantai Jono, where five *T. brevipes* observed on 19 November 2024. The area is the same location as Mugan *et al.* (2017) recorded the species.

Table 1. Records of Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* in Sumatra during 1999-2024. Notes: refer to authors, AS (Arif Setiawan), DM (Deni Mulyana), HA (Hasri Abdillah), IS (Ismael Saumanuk) & IT (Imam Taufiqurrahman).

DATE	LOCATION	NO OF BIRD(S)	SOURCE/OBSERVER(S)
1 Apr 1999	Siberut Island, West Sumatra	1	Kemp (2000)
8 & 10 Jan 2000	Siberut Island, West Sumatra	1	Kemp (2000)
7 Feb 2011	Deli Serdang, North Sumatra	2	HA *pers. obs.*
12 Nov 2011	Deli Serdang, North Sumatra	1	HA *pers. obs.*
2 Dec 2011	Percut, North Sumatra	2	HA *pers. obs.*
7 Jan 2012	Enggano Island, Bengkulu	4	iNaturalist 2025
17 Jan 2012	Sei Tuan, North Sumatra	4	HA *pers. obs.*
21 Feb 2014	Bayan Beach, Belitung Island	7	Iqbal *et al.* (2014)
9 Oct 2014	Gading Cempaka, Bengkulu city	1	Rahmansyah & Iqbal (2015)
6 Nov 2014	Gading Cempaka, Bengkulu city	1	Rahmansyah & Iqbal (2015)
24-25 Mar 2017	Pantai Jono, North Sumatra	2-3	Mugan *et al.* (2017)
25 Aug 2017	Siberut Island, West Sumatra	2	IS *pers. obs.*
23 Sept 2017	Siberut Island, West Sumatra	1	IT & AS *pers. obs.*
21 Oct 2017	Deli Serdang, North Sumatra	2	HA *pers. obs.*
28 Feb 2018	Siberut Island, West Sumatra	1	IS *pers. obs.*
16 May 2018	Siberut Island, West Sumatra	1	IS *pers. obs.*
16 Nov 2018	Batu Buruk, South Sumatra	4	DM *pers. obs.*
15 Dec 2018	Siberut Island, West Sumatra	3	IS *pers. obs.*
14 Mar 2018	Batubara District, North Sumatra	5	HA *pers. obs.*
13 Apr 2019	Siberut Island, West Sumatra	2	IT & AS *pers. obs.*
26 Oct 2019	Kuala Pawon, Aceh	1	Putra *et al.* (2020)
26 Oct 2019	Jangka village, Aceh	1	Putra *et al.* (2020)
22 Dec 2019	Barong Besar, South Sumatra	1	Mulyani & Iqbal (2020);
2 Mar 2020	Enggano Island, Bengkulu	20	Iqbal *et al.* (2020)
16 & 25 Nov 2020	Barong Besar, South Sumatra	1	Iqbal *et al.* (2022)
19 Nov 2024	Pantai Jono, North Sumatra	5	HA *pers. obs.*

Siberut Island, West Sumatra

Six sightings of *T. brevipes* (four by IS and two by IT & AS) recorded during 2017-2019 from an inter-tidal area on Muara Siberut, east coast of Siberut Island. The records are located from the same area as it was first reported by Grantham & Kemp (2000). Only a small number observed in all sightings, with the highest was three birds joined in flock with a Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* on 15 December 2018 (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Three Grey-tailed Tattlers *Tringa brevipes* with a Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* observed in Muara Siberut, Mentawai Is., W. Sumatra, 15 December 2018 (Photograph: Ismael Saumanuk).

South Sumatra

Four birds observed by DM during migratory bird monitoring in Berbak Sembilang NP, 16 November 2018, with two of the birds and a single Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* photographed (Fig. 3). The birds are found at Batu Buruk, a sandy beach containing small rocks, close to Sembilang estuary. This constitutes the first record of the species in the park. The second sighting is from a single bird recorded in Sungai Barong Besar, 22 December 2019 (Mulyani & Iqbal 2020).



Figure 3. Two of four Grey-tailed Tattlers *Tringa brevipes* with a Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* observed in Batu Buruk, Banyuasin Peninsular, South Sumatra,16 November 2018 (Photograph: Deni Mulyana).

Our records, combined with previously published data, bring the total number of *T. brevipes* sightings in Sumatra to 26 over a 25-year period (1999-2024) (Fig. 4, Table 1). These sightings are distributed across 15 locations, with the majority reported from the mainland, particularly along the east coast from Aceh to South Sumatra. Notably, two locations in North Sumatra, Sei Tuan and Percut, were frequently visited by observers (Crossland *et al*. 2012; Putra *et al*. 2015; Putra *et al.* 2017) without any recorded sightings of the species—until HA documented it three times in 2011, with two of those sightings in Tanjung Rejo village. The timing of these records coincides with the species' northward and southward migrations (Howes et al. 2003), suggesting that the area provides a suitable habitat for *T. brevipes*.

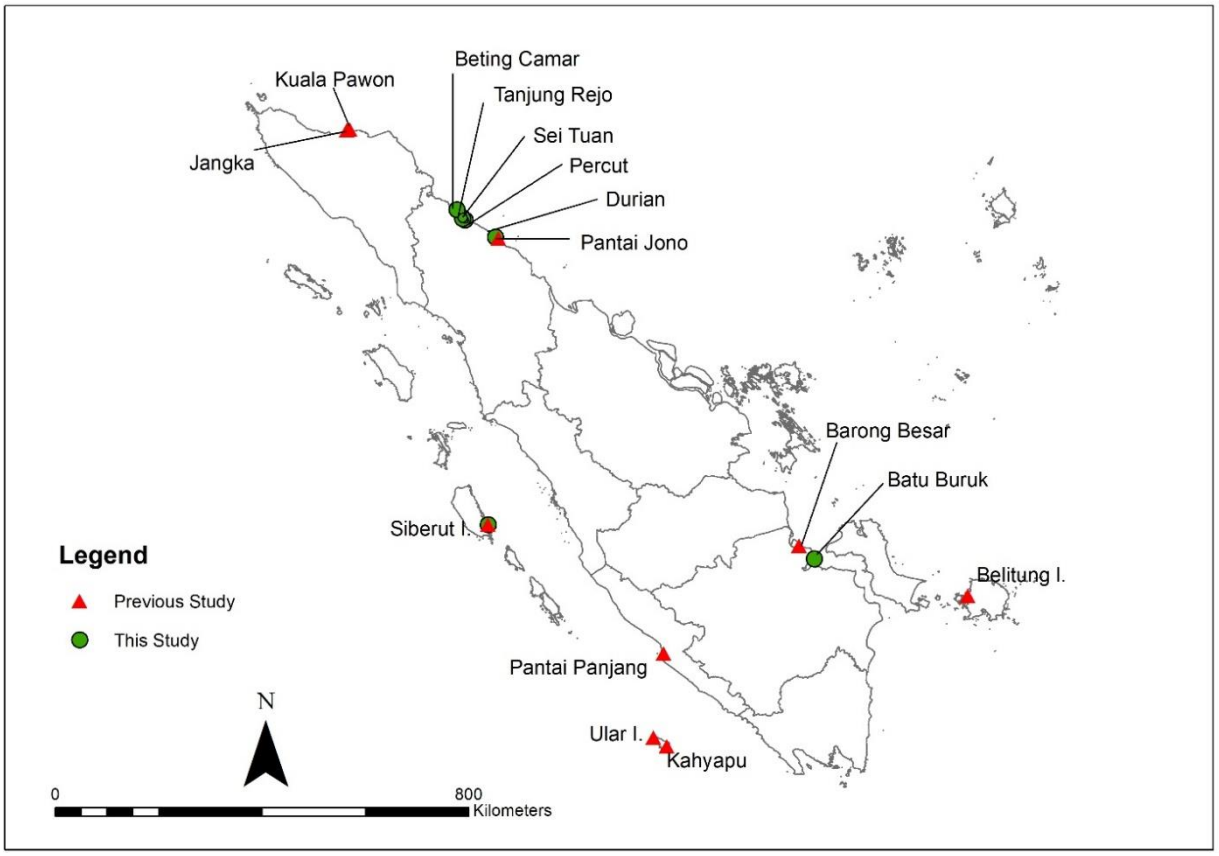


Figure 4. Map showing all records of Grey-tailed Tattler *T. brevipes* in Sumatra 1999-2024

The Grey-tailed Tattler *T. brevipes* has more frequently been recorded in West Sumatran satellitte islands, with up to six times being recorded in Siberut I. within only less than two years (August 2017-April 2019). In Enggano I., the species recorded for twice. Prior the observation in Ular I. by Iqbal *et al.* (2020), four birds photographed in Kahyapu by Rendra R. Rais on 7 January 2012, stored in iNaturalist (2025) and represent the first for the island. All of these records strongly indicates that the species is a regular visitor to the area, both during northward and southward migration. The paucity record in Siberut for almost two decades after the species first observed (Kemp 2000, Grantham & Kemp 2000) might have resulted from the rare visit to the area by any observers, specifically to monitor the shorebirds.

The overlooked and scarcity record of *T. brevipes* in Sumatra might also be reflected by the non-stop flight movement and route preferences by the species during its migration. Sumatra lie in the western-most of Indonesia, and the species tend to prefer the eastern part of the flyway rather than the west part, as revealed from the movement of three *T. brevipes* fitted with geolocator in eastern Indonesia (Coleman *et al.* 2018). The study reveals during northward migration, two individuals took a five days non-stop flight from South-east Queensland to Japan, while one individual took an additional staging site in Northern Philippines before Japan to finally reach their breeding ground in East Russia. While during southward migration, the individuals took an even more eastern route, using the mid-Pacific island of Guam and Papua New Guinea before reaching South-east Queensland.

Furthermore, the estimated number of *T. brevipes* visiting Indonesia is generally low. Bamford *et al.* (2008) reported the maximum count of the species in Indonesia is 334 birds, with a total of estimation 1,000 birds occur in the region. Recent estimation with spatial extrapolations resulted a little less, with

902 birds occur (Hansen *et al.* 2016). The number is only about 1,3% of the estimated population of the world, which is 70,000 birds. Of this, only a small number of birds visited Sumatra, with 20 individuals recently observed in Ular I., Enggano I., Bengkulu on 2 March 2020 as the largest (Iqbal *et al.* 2020).

Based on all the records, we recommend *T. brevipes* as an uncommon visitor in Sumatra, rather than vagrant as suggested by Iqbal *et al.* (2013) or very rare migrant (Mugan *et al.* 2017), although it is only present in small numbers. More detail and careful observations in various suitable areas is needed to reveal more of its occurrence on the island. The west coast of Sumatra is largely unknown and demanded as a priority for shorebird survey (Janra *et al.* 2018, Iqbal *et al.* 2013, Iqbal *et al.* 2020), thus any effort made along the area might reveal new sighting locations for the species. Regular visits to a well-known area for shorebirds along the east coast and visits to small islands in any part of Sumatra might also result in a valuable record.

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