

SLENDER-BILLED GULL *CHROICOCEPHALUS GENEI*, A NEW BIRD FOR INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

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We report a Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei* seen on 08 February 2023 in the Banyuasin Peninsula, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia, the first record of this species in Indonesia. Its presence was 02° latitude farther south than its previously known global distributional range.

Key words: Slender-billed Gull, *Chroicocephalus genei*, vagrant, Berbak Sembilang National Park, seabird

INTRODUCTION

The Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei* is a medium-sized gull whose geographic distribution ranges widely from Western Africa eastward to western South Asia. It is a localised resident in small parts of its coastal range, but individuals from a large breeding population in interior Central Asia disperse widely during the non-breeding season (Burger & Gochfeld 1996, Brazil 2009, Harrison *et al.* 2021). During winter it is found in the Mediterranean Basin, Egypt, and the Persian Gulf, with vagrants reported in South Africa, northwestern Europe, and eastern Asia (Harrison 1985, Harrison *et al.* 2021). During the breeding and non-breeding periods, the species is commonly encountered in western and southern Asia, with a few records in East Asia (Sonobe & Usui 1993) and Southeast Asia, but never previously in Indonesia (Robson 2011, Eaton *et al.* 2021, Billerman *et al.* 2022, Taufiqurrahman *et al.* 2022). Here, we report a Slender-billed Gull in the Banyuasin Peninsula of Berbak Sembilang National Park, Sumatra. This is the first record of this species in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On 08 February 2023, we observed a white gull on the east coastal zone of the Palu Sapi River (02°00'27"S, 104°50'16"E), Banyuasin Peninsula, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia, a conservation area managed by the Berbak-Sembilang National Park Management Authority (The Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry). Initially, we identified the bird as a Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, which was also observed at the time of the white gull sighting. The Black-headed Gull is a regular winter visitor to the area, with small numbers found on the east coast zone of Sumatra (Iqbal *et al.* 2020). However, the white gull

that we encountered had very distinct characteristics, including a long, slender bill and long neck. Thus, it differed from the Black-headed Gull and other gulls.

The bird was identified as an adult, non-breeding Slender-billed Gull by the following features: faint head markings; elongated forehead; distinct long and narrow orange bill with a slightly dark tip; pale eyes; and small orange legs (Fig. 1). These features indicate an adult non-breeding individual (Grant 1986, Sonobe & Usui 1993, Olsen & Larsson 2003, Robson 2011, Harrison *et al.* 2021). Olsen & Larsson (2003) suggest that the Slender-billed Gull is similar to the Black-headed Gull, but the Slender-billed Gull is slightly larger and more graceful, with a smaller head and slimmer, flatter crown, more sloping forehead, longer bill with longer gape-line, longer



Fig. 1. A Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei* (arrow) among Nordmann's Greenshanks *Tringa guttifer* and other waterbirds on 08 February 2023 in Banyuasin Peninsula, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia. (Photo credit: Muhammad Iqbal)



Fig. 2. A Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* (arrow) among Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* and terns on 08 February 2023 in Banyuasin Peninsula, South Sumatra Province, Indonesia. (Photo credit: Muhammad Iqbal)

neck, and deeper breast. The identification of Slender-billed Gull and Black-headed Gull are easier when both birds appear together (Figs. 1, 2).

The presence of a Slender-billed Gull in the Banyuasin Peninsula was expected because this species has been reported regularly in the Thai-Malay Peninsula (Schwilk & Claassen 2012, Billerman *et al.* 2022). Previously in Southeast Asia, the Slender-billed Gull has been recorded in northern Myanmar, Malaysia, and it regularly winters in the Gulf of Thailand and central Thailand (albeit in small numbers), but it has not been reported in Indonesia (MacKinnon & Phillipps 1993, Eaton *et al.* 2021, Taufiqurrahman *et al.* 2022). Thus, this sighting represents the first record of this species in Indonesia. The location where it was sighted is the southernmost record for this species to date, 02° south of its usual global distributional range. Identifying gulls can be a challenge (Harrison *et al.* 2021), except for certain distinct species. Overall, gulls receive less attention than other seabirds from marine biologists (Gaston *et al.* 2004), including in Indonesia. Additional surveys of gulls are needed to fill information gaps of seabird status in Indonesia.

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