

SHORT NOTES

A myna increase—notes on introduced mynas (*Acridotheres*) and bulbuls (*Pycnonotus*) in Western Samoa

Gill *et al.* (1993) reviewed the status of Western Samoa's three introduced songbirds: the Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*, Common Myna *A. tristis* and Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*. Further notes on these species are given here following observations in 1998, when counts in Apia showed that the number of Common Mynas had greatly increased relative to Jungle Mynas.

MYNAS

It is not clear how, why, or from where they were introduced, but Jungle Mynas were noted in Western Samoa for the first time in 1965 (Green 1965; see discussion by Gill *et al.* 1993), and Common Mynas in 1988 (Beichle 1989). Both were first recorded in Apia. Counts of mynas in the streets of Apia by BJG in August 1991 and Tim Lovegrove in March 1992, gave a combined tally of 337 mynas of which 49 or 15% were Common Mynas (Gill *et al.* 1993).

On 10 days in June 1998 (8-9th, 12-19th), I repeated counts of mynas in Apia. During unidirectional walks or car-rides around the town, I noted any mynas seen clearly enough to be sure of their specific identity. Some of the same birds may have been counted on different days, and biases from any behavioural differences between the species were not allowed for, but the overall figures should give a rough index of relative abundance. Of a total of 612 mynas scored, 436 or 71% were Common Mynas and the rest were Jungle Mynas.

Thus, in six years, Common Mynas have changed from the rarer to the more numerous of the two mynas. One group of Common Mynas feeding and squabbling on a grassy area numbered 66 birds. Whether Jungle Mynas have lost or held their absolute numbers, was not determined.

The two mynas are sympatric over much of the Indian subcontinent. Ali & Ripley (1972: 184) noted that Jungle Mynas are "less commensal with man" than Common Mynas. In Burma, Common Mynas are more linked to human habitations than any other myna and rarely seen far from towns and villages, whereas Jungle Mynas are typical of open rural country including forest clearings (Smythies 1953). In Western Samoa, Common Mynas may have the competitive edge in Apia, but Jungle Mynas may be able to hold their own in plantation areas.

Gill *et al.* (1993) found Jungle Mynas over much of 'Upolu. Jungle Mynas are now confirmed as present (but uncommon) in the north-east, by an observation on 15 June of a few mynas in flight over Falefa village, on the north coast about 20 km east of Apia. At least one was a Jungle Myna.

Beichle (1989) and Gill *et al.* (1993) saw a few Jungle Mynas in the south-east of Savai'i. On 12 June, during a short time near the airstrip at Maota in the south-

east, I twice saw a myna briefly but not closely enough to identify the species. On 9 June near the village of Avao in north-east Savai'i, I glimpsed what I believed to be two mynas in flight (they had prominent white wing patches). They were presumably Jungle Mynas. These were the only introduced mynas I saw during three days of bird-watching within 3 km of Manase, north-east Savai'i.

Common Mynas are not yet reported beyond Apia. In June I saw them at the very outskirts of the town, at the University of the South Pacific campus at Alafua (4.4 km from the town centre), and at Vailima (3.9 km from town).

BULBULS

Red-vented Bulbuls are presumably now found all over 'Upolu. They are confirmed on the north-east coast and at mid-altitudes in the south by the following records. On 15 June I saw several at Falefa Falls, on the north coast about 20 km east of Apia. On 19 June, I saw one on the descending southern section of the cross-island road about half-way down.

On Savai'i, Gill *et al.* (1993) recorded bulbuls only in the south-east and north-west. During three days in the Manase area (north-east) I saw no bulbuls. On 12 June, driving south from Manase to Maota along the east coast road I saw the first bulbul at Pu'apu'a, and further bulbuls at Fogapoa, Salelavalu and Salelologa.

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