

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES  
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties  
Panama City (Panama), 14 – 25 November 2022

CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENT OF APPENDICES I AND II

A. Proposal

Inclusion of the White-rumped Shama (*Kittacincla malabarica*) in Appendix II in accordance with Article II, paragraph 2 (a), of the Convention; found in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17), Annex 2a, paragraph B whereby it is known, or can be inferred or projected, that regulation of trade in the species is required to ensure that the harvest of specimens from the wild does not reduce the wild population to a level at which its survival might be threatened by continued harvesting or other influences.

B. Proponent

Malaysia, Singapore \*

C. Supporting statement

1. Taxonomy

- |     |  |   |  |
|-----|--|---|--|
| 1.1 | Class:   | Aves  |  |
| 1.2 | Order:   | Passeriformes   |  |
| 1.3 | Family:  | Muscicapidae (Scopoli, 1788)  |  |
| 1.4 | Genus, species or subspecies, including author and year: | Genus: <i>Kittacincla</i> Gould, 1836<br>Species: <i>malabarica</i> Scopoli, 1786 |  |
|     | Subspecies   |   |  |

Taxonomy is complex and evolving. *Kittacincla malabarica* (syn. *Copsychus malabaricus*) is a polytypic species complex comprising multiple genetically distinct subspecies and subpopulations. Collar & Kirwan (2018) recognise 14 subspecies while up to 17 subspecies recognized in Roberts et al.'s (2020) account, with some accorded species status and new taxonomic research potentially uncovering more genetically distinct subspecies (e.g. Wu and Rheindt 2022; Rheindt et al., 2019). The following lists the 14 subspecies recognized by Collar & Kirwan (2018), and additional recognized subspecies.

*K. m. malabarica* (Scopoli, 1786) – White-rumped Shama – W & S India.  
*K. m. leggei* Whistler, 1941 – Sri Lanka.

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\* The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

*K. m. interposita* Robinson & Kloss, 1922 – Nepal, N, CE & NE India, E Bangladesh, Myanmar, S China (S Yunnan, SW Guangxi), Hainan, Thailand and Indochina.

Additional races of *interposita* have been described:

*K. m. indicus* – Nepal and East to North Indochina

*K. m. pellogyna* – SE Myanmar, peninsular Thailand

*K. m. minor* – Hainan

*K. m. macroura* (J. F. Gmelin, 1789) – Con Son I, in S Vietnam.

*K. m. tricolor* (Vieillot, 1818) – Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra, NW Java, Bangka, Belitung, Natuna Is and Anamba Is.

The following synonyms of *tricolor* have been described:

*K. m. mallopercna* – West Malaysia

*K. m. eumesa* – Natuna Island

*K. m. ochroptila* – Anamba Island

*K. m. melanura* Salvadori, 1887 – W Sumatran islands (except Enggano and Simeulue).

*K. m. hypoliza* Oberholser, 1912 – Simeulue I, off W Sumatra.

*K. m. opisthochra* Oberholser, 1912 – Lasia I, near Simeulue.

*K. m. mirabilis* (Hoogerwerf, 1962) – Prinsen (Panaitan) I, off SW Java.

*K. m. omissa* E. J. O. Hartert, 1902 – Java (except NW).

*K. m. javana* – C Java

*K. m. nigricauda* Vorderman, 1893 – Kangean I.

*K. m. suavis* (P. L. Sclater, 1861) – Borneo (Sarawak and Kalimantan).

*K. (m.) stricklandii* (Motley & Dillwyn, 1855) – White-crowned Shama – N Borneo, including Banggi I.

*K. (m.) barbouri* Bangs & J. L. Peters, 1927 – Maratua Is, in E Borneo

1.5 Scientific synonyms: *Copsychus malabaricus* (Scopoli, 1788);  
*Muscicapa malabarica* (Scopoli, 1786)

1.6 Common names: English: White-rumped Shama  
French: Shama à croupion blanc  
Malay: Murai batu  
Indonesian : Murai

1.7 Code numbers: Not available

## 2. Overview

There is strong justification for the inclusion of *K. malabarica* in Appendix II of CITES given its frequency and volume of birds involved in trafficking and illegal trade. This is particularly concerning when the species can in fact be legally hunted and traded with the licences and permits (including through captive-breeding), but smuggling continues unabated, and local extinctions have already been documented. In more recent years, there is more evidence of illegal international trade. Without more immediate interventions to regulate this trade to a level that is able to sustain wild populations in the long term, the species faces a significant extinction risk.

Owing to its remarkable singing ability, the White-rumped Shama *Kittacincla malabarica* is one of the most sought-after and valuable species in the South-East Asian cage bird trade (Nash 1993, Burivalova *et al.* 2017; Leupen *et al.*, 2018) and among the most important species used in singing competitions. It is a widespread species, native to 15 countries, occurring from India, Nepal and southern China in the north, to Indonesia (as far east as East Java and East Kalimantan) in the south (BirdLife International 2017). Its large range led the species to be classified as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

However, South-East Asian White-rumped Shama populations are thought to be in decline (Jepson & Ladle 2005) with local extinctions having already occurred in places such as Java, Sumatra and West Kalimantan as a direct result of the cage bird trade (Eaton *et al.* 2015, Eaton *et al.* 2016, Ng *et al.* 2017; Leupen *et al.*, 2018). The fact that White-rumped Shama has been divided into 14 largely island-endemic subspecies (Collar & Kirwan, 2018), with possibly more recognised, only exacerbates the conservation risks that are being imposed on it by unsustainable trade. These subspecies typically have small populations with limited distributions, making them particularly vulnerable to over-exploitation. When trapped in excessive volumes and frequency, without any regulation in place, the extinction risk is high. In fact, some of these subspecies are already highly threatened by trade or even feared extinct. The *K. malabarica* is recognised amongst the

highest priorities for action by the IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group, which currently lists 9 named subspecies and 1 as yet un-named subspecies as Tier 1 priority taxa, and an additional subspecies listed on Tier 2<sup>1</sup>.

### 3. Species characteristics

#### 3.1 Distribution

The White-rumped Shama is a wide-spread species across Asia, native to 15 countries: Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; India; Indonesia; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Myanmar; Nepal; Singapore; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Viet Nam (BirdLife International 2021). It is split into 14 subspecies, of which 11 are island endemics, and 12 occur in Southeast Asia (Collar & Kirwan, 2018).

Figure 1: Distribution of the White-rumped Shama



#### 3.2 Habitat

*Kittacincla malabarica* is described as a skulking resident of broadleaved evergreen and mixed deciduous forest, secondary growth and bamboo (Robson 2008). It can be found in the undergrowth of a range of forest types and quality, including logged and unlogged mixed dipterocarp forest, teak forest, mixed bamboo forest, secondary jungle, clearings in forest, overgrown tree plantations, mangroves, coastal vegetation, tidal riverine swamp-forest and *kerangas*. It is typically found in the lowlands up to 500–600m, but can also range up to altitudes of 1200m in Peninsular Malaysia, 1500m in Thailand and 1750m in Borneo (Wells 2007).

#### 3.3 Biological characteristics

The species is solitary, but forms monogamous pair bonds during the breeding season. Males are highly territorial especially during breeding season, and sing to defend their territorial boundaries (Wells 2007). It is this aggressive territorial behavior that makes the species susceptible to trapping using playbacks (Eaton et al 2015).

In the wild, the breeding season is usually in the middle of the year. The breeding pair build a shallow cup-style nest of plant material in trees and artificial sites. The female lays two to four eggs at 24-hour

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.asiansongbirdtradesq.com/taxa-list>; Tier 1 and 2 taxa are those considered to be the most threatened from trade, needing urgent action.

intervals, followed by an incubation period of 13-15 days. The nestlings remain in the nest for 11-13 days before fledging, and remain dependent on the parents until up to 26 days. Juveniles remaining within the vicinity of the nest for up to 54 days before dispersing (Wells 2007). Generation length is 3.6 years (BirdLife International 2017). The species is non-migrating and sedentary.

The song of the male White-rumped Shama is considered to be one of the best in Asia, comprising a wide range of melodious phrases delivered in a rich and loud tone, and also includes mimicry of other species' birdsong. Females produce a simpler, short song only during breeding season and in the presence of her mate (Collar and Kirwan 2018). They are crepuscular, being most active at dawn and dusk.

### 3.4 Morphological characteristics

Most easily identified by its long tail. The male nominate subspecies has a glossy black hood to back, less glossy grey-black wings and tail, white rump and outer tail feathers; underside orange-rufous, with whitish thighs, black bill, pinkish legs, dark brown eyes. The female is similar, but matt grey on hood to back and wings, tail shorter, slightly greyer. Juvenile is blackish brown with few buff streaks above, buff with brown scales from chin to breast and flanks, whitish belly to vent, tail shorter than the female. Subspecies vary in length of tail, hue of the orange underside, size, and presence of white on the crown (Wells 2007).

Race *leggei* is slightly shorter-tailed than nominate, female very like male, and underparts paler orange or rufous than nominate; *interposita* is shorter-tailed, male is duller black to dark grey-brown, has duller underparts and less black in outertail-feathers, and female darker and duller than nominate; *macroura* is similar to previous but has even less black in outer tail, male paler-breasted; *melanura* is also similar, but tail all black, underparts generally slightly darker chestnut, and is larger than nominate; *tricolor* is also very similar, but thigh feathers orange-rufous (as underparts), female blackish grey-brown on throat, shorter-tailed; *hypoliza* differs from *melanura* only in being smaller; *opisthochra* is larger than last-named and *melanura*, with a paler belly; *mirabilis* is very like *melanura*, differing only in shorter bill, wings and tail, and undertail may show small white tips on some feathers; *suavis* resembles previous (and nominate), but female virtually as male, slightly less glossy on throat and breast, and tail often slightly shorter; *stricklandii* is very like last, but has white crown (from above black forehead) to nape, usually with flecks of black; *barbouri* is like previous, but with all-black tail, longer tarsus and wing; *nigricauda* has tail almost all black, few white tips on outer feathers, and underparts rufous-orange without chestnut tone, sexes similar except female much shorter-tailed; *omissa* is smaller than *suavis* and *nigricauda*, with paler orange rear underparts and white tibial feathering.

### 3.5 Role of the species in its ecosystem

*Kittacincla malabarica* feeds mainly on arthropods including ants, caterpillars, moths, beetles, flies, centipedes and worms (Wells 2007). They therefore play a role in arthropod population control in the ecosystem, which may have pest control implications. Some berries are also eaten (Wells 2007), which means the species have seed dispersal functions.

## 4. Status and trends

### 4.1 Habitat trends

*Kittacincla malabarica* occurs in a range of forest types primarily in the lowlands, and is known to tolerate low to moderate levels of disturbance. Extensive deforestation occurring throughout its range (Roberts et al. 2020; Global Forest Watch 2021).

### 4.2 Population size

There are no population estimates for the species across its range, but it is believed to be large as the species is described as common in at least some parts of its range, and well above 10,000 individuals, therefore the species is evaluated as Least Concern (BirdLife International 2021). However, some island endemic subpopulations are believed to have only a few surviving individuals. Subspecies *hypoliza*, *barbouri* and *opisthochra* are for example most likely extinct in the wild, whilst subspecies *melanurus* is at critical levels on Siberut, and potentially extinct on other islands (F. Rheindt in litt. 2020 in BirdLife International 2021). Based on wildlife inventory and observation data in Peninsular

Malaysia, the species number is declining and lower number of captured individuals during mist netting activity.

The population of white-rumped shama in Singapore is unknown but it has shown a 368.2% increase from 10 years of Annual Bird Census data (pers. comm. Yong Ding Li), which suggests an upwards trend, and consequently, a revision in conservation status from “Critically Endangered” to “Endangered” in the next edition of the Singapore Red Data Book.

#### 4.3 Population structure

There is currently little information available to establish any population structure for *Kittacincla malabarica*. However, trapping tends to target males for their superior song and longer tails, which is likely to result in a gender imbalance in the wild population structure.

#### 4.4 Population trends

Declining (BirdLife International 2021), particularly for Southeast Asian populations. In the most recent Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group meeting in 2019, a discussion on the status of the *Kittacincla malabarica* subspecies concluded that the only populations that remained of Least Concern were the South Asian ones (*K.m. malabarica*, *K.m. leggei* and *K.m. indicus*), the ones in peninsular Southeast Asia were Near Threatened (*K.m. interposita* and *K.m. mallopercna*), and all others considered Vulnerable, Endangered, or possibly extinct in the wild (Brusland et al. 2019).

#### 4.5 Geographic trends

In Brunei, observations indicate that the species is scarce and confined to the interior forest and protected areas of Brunei Darussalam (Joremy anak Tony in litt., 2022).

The species is considered common in Peninsular Malaysia with the main habitat mostly in lowland primary forest. However, the subspecies *tricolor* is thought to be rapidly declining in Peninsular Malaysia (F. Rheindt in litt., 2022).

In Indonesia the species is believed to have become rare in most locations. On Java, the species was rare in the 1980s from trapping for trade, and was thought to have been trapped to local extinction in the wild from Java prior to 1997 (Jepson & Ladle 2009). The race *omissus*, which is confined to Java, is suspected to be extinct in the wild with no recent records (Eaton et al. 2015). The race *tricolor*, present in northwest and west Java, still persists, but recent estimates note that the species is very rare even at high altitudes (Mittermeier et al. 2014) and may be confined solely to Ujung Kulon National Park (Eaton et al. 2015).

Populations of the more widespread *tricolor* in Sumatra and West Kalimantan are believed to have been ‘decimated’ in response to Javan extirpations, as trappers seek birds from the other islands (Jepson & Ladle 2009). Populations in Way Canguk, a research area within Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park in southern Sumatra, declined significantly from the late 1990s/early 2000s to 2007 and 2011 due to heavy trapping (Harris et al. 2016). Field observations of birds where the species was previously reliably recorded have dwindled (Eaton et al. 2015).

On Borneo, the two present subspecies *suavis* and *stricklandii* are considered to be still present and relatively common, although there is evidence of heavy trapping for trade (Leupen et al. 2018). Field surveys in West Kalimantan protected forest sites indicate that the species is scarce in habitats where it should be commonly observed (Miller, A. pers. comm. 2018).

For range-restricted island endemic races on Maratua (*barbouri*), Lasia (*opisthochra*) and on islands off West Sumatra (*melanura* and *hypolizus*) are believed to have declined to extremely low levels due to intense trapping by Javanese trappers targeting these islands (Chua et al. 2015; Eaton et al. 2015; F. Rheindt in litt. 2020 in BirdLife International 2021). Some of these island forms are even suspected to have been extirpated from the wild.

The species is considered to be common in Thailand and Vietnam, but even there, declines have been recorded (Collar & Kirwan 2018).

The white-rumped shama in Singapore is an uncommon resident occurring in forests, secondary growth, scrub and former plantations on the main island. It is also recorded from the offshore islands of Sentosa, Pulau Tekong Besar and Pulau Ubin. Genomic analyses have shown that populations on Singapore main island are primarily derived from captive birds, but birds from Ubin appear genomically native (Ng et al. 2017).

## 5. Threats

The primary threat to the species comes from trapping of live animals for the caged bird trade. Despite overall favourable conservation status of Least Concern on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (BirdLife International 2021), Southeast Asian subspecies *tricolor*, *hypoliza*, *javana*, *mirabilis*, *opisthochra*, *melanura*, *omissa*, *nigricauda* and *barbouri* are believed to be threatened by extinction due to significant pressure from trapping to supply the trade in wild birds (ASTSG 2022; Eaton et al. 2015). Even though some that were considered common as recently as two decades ago, heavy trapping has resulted in marked declines and even local extinctions (Collar & Kirwan 2018). Harris et al. (2016) noted that the White-rumped Shama was the species most vulnerable to population decline and sensitive to trapping, based on ranking by interviewed trappers who supply for trade. Although the species is thought to tolerate low to moderate levels of disturbance, it still requires relatively intact and dense forest. Habitat loss and degradation may exacerbate losses in the wild populations.

While much of the trade in White-rumped Shammas has been thought to be domestic, this has become increasingly international as local populations near demand centres become depleted. Traders are turning to birds sourced from other range countries, as evidenced from the number of seizures involving international trade (Leupen et al. 2018, TRAFFIC data; see *Illegal Trade*).

## 6. Utilization and trade

### 6.1 National utilization

*Kittacincla malabarica* have been recorded for sale and in trade in multiple Southeast Asian countries, to supply the demand for the species for use in bird singing competitions and as pets (Nash 1993, Jepson & Ladle 2005, Shepherd 2006, Kirichot et al. 2014, Chng et al. 2015, Eaton et al. 2017a, 2017b, Rentschlar et al. 2018).

In Indonesia, Marshall et al (2019) estimate over 3 million *K. malabarica* kept in captivity across Java alone. In 1987, approximately 20 *K. malabarica* were documented for sale each day in Jakarta's Pramuka Market, as the 22<sup>nd</sup> most numerous species recorded (Basuni and Setiyani 1989). An increase was noted since early 2000 and it is estimated that at least 121,000 birds, most of them wild-caught, are being kept in captivity in six cities on Java and Bali (Jepson & Ladle 2009). In 2012, over 4000 individuals were recorded during weekly surveys in Medan markets (Giyanto *in litt.* 2014 in Eaton et al. 2015). A total of 6904 individuals were recorded across nine studies comprising 381 surveys spanning 2012-2018 across selected locations in Java, Kalimantan and Sumatra, ranging from 1 to 256 individuals in a single survey in one location (Leupen et al. 2018), with online trade surveys finding the species equally popular (Leupen et al. 2018; TRAFFIC unpub data).

Physical market surveys in northern Peninsular Malaysia in 2012 and in Sabah in 2014 documented 288 individuals. Additionally, a 313-day survey from 2016-2018 of 21 Facebook groups in the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah alone uncovered 741 individuals, of which 696 were advertised as belonging to the *stricklandii* subspecies. In 2018, 17 individuals were recorded from 21 days of online trade assessment of a popular Malaysian e-commerce website (Leupen et al. 2018). Online trade surveys carried out for 256 hours between Oct 2019 to Oct 2020 on online trade platforms recorded 364 *Kittacincla malabarica*, including one *K. m. stricklandii*; this was the second most numerous species recorded (TRAFFIC data).

In Singapore, *Kittacincla malabarica* were the 8<sup>th</sup> most numerous species recorded, with 3200 wild birds making up 2.5% of all birds observed in trade between 1991 and 1993; these were said to be sourced from Malaysia and Indonesia (Nash 1993). A survey of pet shops there in 2005-2006 recorded 69 White-rumped Shammas (Lee 2006), and a follow-up inventory 2015 documented 162 individuals (Eaton et al. 2017a). *Kittacincla malabarica* was the 4<sup>th</sup> most numerous species recorded from online trade surveys, with 254 individuals recorded over a five-month period (Chiok and Chng, 2021). Genetics studies revealed that a large part of Singapore's current White-rumped Shama population were

descended from escaped birds originating from peninsular Southeast Asia, most likely Peninsular Malaysia populations (Ng *et al.* 2017).

In Thailand, most of the wild bird trade studies centered around the Chatuchak Market in Bangkok. From 1966-1968, 2540 *Kittacincla malabarica* were recorded for sale in a year there (McClure & Chaiyaphun 1971). In 1987-1988, 1992 *Kittacincla malabarica* were recorded from 25 weekends in a one-year period (Round 2003). A study in 2000-2001 recorded 73 birds for sale in Chatuchak Market (Round and Jukmongkol 2003). A series of 30 surveys from 2007-2016 documented 201 individuals for sale (Leupen *et al.* 2018). As online platforms rise in prominence in being used for wildlife trade, a 23-day online trade assessment of live animal trade on Facebook in 2016 recorded 28 individuals for sale (Phassauradomsak & Krishnasamy 2018). Surveys in 2020 and 2021 reinforce findings, emerging amongst the top three species offered for sale, totalling 162 individuals (*in prep*).

In Vietnam, a songbird consumer study found that the species is one of the most desired birds sought after by bird keepers, and that most owned or preferred to keep wild-caught birds, which are mostly sourced from within the country. The species is used in songbird competitions and kept as a pet (TRAFFIC *in prep*). A total of 716 individuals were recorded in 10 surveys in physical locations in Vietnam in 2016 and 2017, and a further 34 were recorded in online trade studies in Vietnam spanning a total of 48 days in 2016 and 2017 (Nguyen & Willemsen 2016; Leupen *et al.* 2018). Surveys of Hanoi markets in 2000, 2003 and 2007 recorded 35, 55 and 43 birds respectively (Brooks-Moizer *et al.* 2009), and a 2009 follow-up study of selected major locations in Vietnam recorded 352 individuals (Edmunds *et al.* 2011).

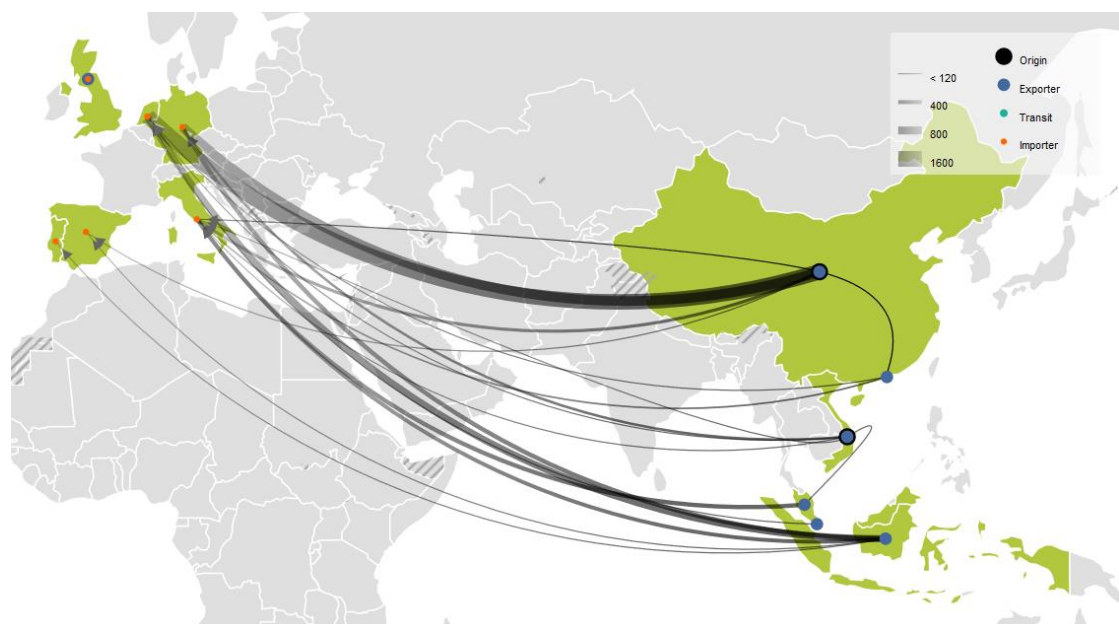
Outside Southeast Asia, small numbers of *Kittacincla malabarica* has been observed for sale in Hong Kong SAR (Nash 1993) and India (Ahmed 2004).

## 6.2 Legal trade

While not protected under international regulations, legal international trade is permitted according to national quarantine and wildlife import/export laws.

*Kittacincla malabarica* international trade records are available from the CITES Trade Database despite them not being listed on the Appendices, as it was listed on European Union (EU) Annex D from 1997 to 2003. These are far from complete but provide a small snapshot of what was imported by EU States during that period. A search for records from 1975 to 2018 uncovered 5768 live individuals reported by importers between 1998 and 2004, mostly exported from Southeast and East Asian countries to the EU (Figure 2). In October 2005, the EU implemented a ban on wild bird imports as a policy measure to prevent the spread of avian influenza, which is still in place.

Figure 2: Imports of *K.malabarica* into the EU from 1998-2004



*K. malabaricas* are also traded regularly between Brunei, East Malaysia and Kalimantan. Bird singing competitions drive this cross-border trade: Bruneians prefer to import more experienced and trained winning birds from neighbouring countries. Conversely, Sabahans import tricolor from Brunei, as *stricklandii* is the dominant subspecies in Sabah (Joremy anak Tony in litt., 2022), though it is uncertain if these were legal imports.

### 6.3 Parts and derivatives in trade

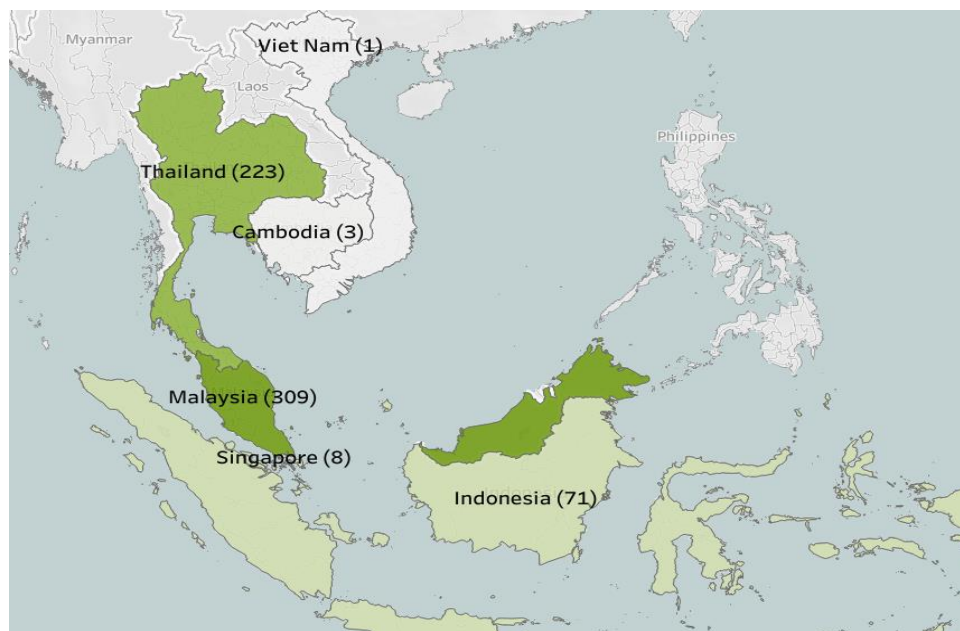
*Kittacincla malabarica* is traded live for the caged bird trade, and there is no information available supporting the use of parts and derivatives of the species in trade.

### 6.4 Illegal trade

The illegal international trade of White-rumped Shammas in the early 1990s was documented by Nash (1993), specifically relating to the illegal trapping of protected White-rumped Shammas from Malaysia, particularly along the Thai-Malaysian border, for export to Singapore. More recently, enforcement actions intercepting illegal transport and possession of White-rumped Shammas illustrate part of this illegal trade. This is based on data from TRAFFIC's Wildlife Trade Information System (WiTIS) which to a large extent is based on open-source data, aggregated data from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia (PERHILITAN) for 2011-2017 and aggregated data from the Thailand government for 2010-2018. The result of analysis of this dataset should not be considered as absolute trafficking trends or volumes, given that the true scale of illegal trade and trafficking is considered to be higher than the actual rate of detection. Although seizure records are a mark of wildlife trafficking, there are numerous variables that influence crime occurrence, detection and reporting effort which may potentially cause bias in analysis results. Noting also, that seizure and trafficking data from most White-rumped Shama range states has been lacking in this dataset.

A total of 615 seizure incidents involving the White-rumped Shama were recorded between January 2009 and May 2022. These seizures were concentrated in the Southeast Asian region with the highest seizures in Malaysia (309), followed by Thailand (223), Indonesia (71), Singapore (8), Cambodia (3) and Viet Nam (1) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The number of White-rumped Shamas seizure incidents recorded for each of the five Southeast Asian countries where data was available, between January 2009 and May 2022.

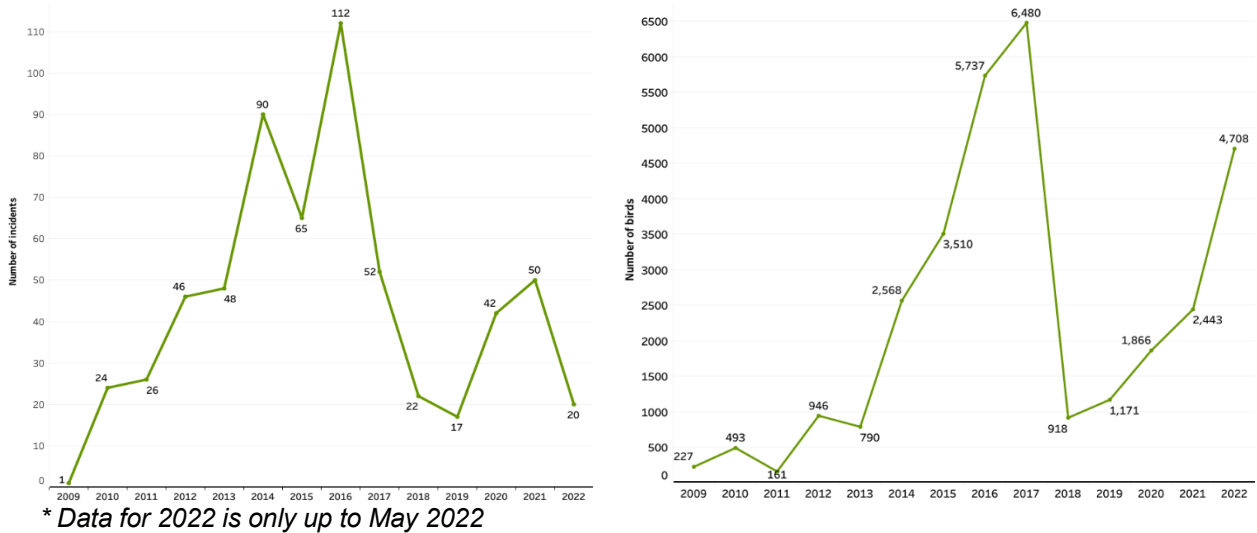


A total of 32,018 birds were confiscated where over half of these were reported as live; a majority were not reported if they were alive (but assumed to be so given that the species is targeted for the pet trade), apart from 115 birds that were reported to be dead. The total number of individuals however could be higher due to another record of 5,676 accumulated count of wild birds seized involving White-



rumped Shama, but for which the volumes of each species were not detailed – this incident is excluded from this analysis. Seizure incidents peaked in 2016, with a corresponding high number of birds seized that year. The number of birds seized shows an upward trend after a decline in 2018, with 31.8% of birds seized after 2018 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: (left): Total number of seizures per year from 2009 – 2022 (right): total number of White-rumped Shammas seized per year, from 2009-2022



Based on this seizure data, at least 78 (13%) of the total seizure incidents involved international smuggling. Of these, 42 were bound for Indonesia from Malaysia (all Indonesia-bound shipments were reported to have been transported from Malaysia). Fifteen shipments were found to have been sent from Malaysia to Thailand. There were 12 international seizures with unspecified trade routes.

According to information from traders, demand for birds in Indonesian Borneo (Kalimantan) has resulted in the smuggling of 6000 birds a month, including White-rumped Shama, from Malaysian Borneo to Indonesia (Rentschlar et al. 2017). White-rumped Shammas are also frequently smuggled with Oriental Magpie-robins *Copsychus saularis* from Malaysia to Indonesia by sea (Chng et al. 2021).

## 6.5 Actual or potential trade impacts

Trade is the most urgent and pressing threat facing *Kittacincla malabarica* particularly for Southeast Asian populations (BirdLife International 2021). Although there is some captive breeding for commercial use by hobbyist breeders, there is a consumer preference for wild birds and the majority of the birds being traded are still being sourced from wild populations. Steep declines and local extinctions have been reported where trapping pressure is most intensive, with some range-restricted island endemic subspecies suspected to be extinct in the wild with no recent records. Most of the trade historically has been domestic. However, as populations around the main centres of demand dwindle and become more difficult to source, trappers and traders turn to sources further afield. In recent years a growing number of smuggled bird shipments containing *Kittacincla malabarica* have been intercepted from Malaysia into Indonesia.

It has been hypothesized that targeted trapping of the species using playback has impacted the wild behavior of surviving birds as more aggressive males are removed; individuals encountered in the wild were noted to have been very quiet when found and do not generally respond to playbacks (Eaton et al. 2015).

## 7. Legal instruments

### 7.1 National

Trade in *K. malabarica* is specifically listed as protected in five of the species' range states (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Malaysia, Thailand) and receives broader protection under the regulatory framework

for wildlife in China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Singapore. It is not specifically protected in Bhutan, Brunei, Lao PDR, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam.

In Indonesia, the species was briefly listed on the updated protected species list Government Regulation (No. 20) of 2018 (P.20/2018). However, shortly after this regulation was passed, the list of bird species was revised in September 2018 under the Government Regulation (No 92) of 2018 (P.92/2018), as a result of lobbying by hobbyists and traders<sup>2</sup> and five species were removed, including *K. malabarica*. Use of the species is regulated under a harvest quota system. In India, in the new proposed amendments to the Wild Life (Protection) Act (which is still in parliament and pending approval), the proposal is to further elevate *K. malabarica*'s protection status by listing it in Schedule II.

## 7.2 International

*Kittacincla malabarica* is currently not listed on any CITES Appendices. It is not protected by any other international agreement.

## 8. Species management

### 8.1 Management measures

There are conservation breeding projects occurring in the islands off West Sumatra to protect, breed and reintroduce the endemic White-rumped Shama subspecies found there (Baveja, 2020; ASTSG, 2021).

### 8.2 Population monitoring

Malaysian scientific authorities are planning to conduct a study to determine the current population estimates of White-rumped Shammas and to assess the conservation status, trade levels and harvest quota of the species.

### 8.3 Control measures

#### 8.3.1 International

The concerning volume the species is being smuggled, including what appears to be a rising case of international smuggling, coupled with its range-restricted sub-species, requires immediate international regulation to ensure its long-term survival. Such trafficking and illegal trade happens despite the fact that they can be legally hunted and traded with licenses and permits. Upon successful listing on Appendix II, international trade can be regulated, monitored and controlled, including through any additional protection measures under national legislations in range states. This will particularly be important given that captive breeding in the species is already taking place with high volume of trafficking, and therefore, mandatory recording of such trade will ensure range states can make informed decisions about trade regulation and control for a species that is highly trafficked.

#### 8.3.2 Domestic

Various national legal instruments regulate the capture, trade, import and export of the species applies across the range states. In Sabah, over 4000 licenses and permits were issued between 2017-2021, for hunting, keeping, breeding, and trade in accordance to its legislation. See Section 7. Legal Instruments and 8.4 Captive breeding.

### 8.4 Captive breeding

The commercial captive-breeding of *K. malabaricas* is subjected to national regulations, including registration of farms by relevant authorities, paperwork required to possess and sell bred individuals, inspections of breeding facilities. For example, the *K. malabarica* is on the list of protected birds in Thailand that can be registered for breeding and subsequently possession. Breeding facilities need to present documentation that includes details of operation staff, equipment, breeding procedures, and

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<sup>2</sup> <https://news.mongabay.com/2018/10/5-bird-species-lose-protections-more-at-risk-in-newindonesia-decree/>

evidence of legal acquisition of protected wildlife for breeding when applying for a permit, and also requires regular reporting. Buyers are also required to apply for a permit to possess captive-bred wildlife. Similarly in Malaysia, breeding is allowed.

Wild-caught White-rumped Shamas are generally preferred by songbird hobbyists over captive-bred individuals, due to their purported superior singing abilities. Previous research found that in Indonesia, wild-caught individuals were particularly popular in richer and better-educated households (Jepson & Ladle 2005). According to another study, most White-rumped Shamas in Indonesian households were said to have been sourced from the wild (Jepson & Ladle 2009). This was largely confirmed in a more recent study into consumer attitudes in the Indonesian bird trade; during a survey in Medan, 185 White-rumped Shamas were found across 762 households (Burivalova *et al.* 2017). Only 11% (n=21) of these birds was said to have been captive-bred. Interviewees indicated that captive-bred birds were less desirable because of their inferior song and ‘lesser quality’ in general. Lack of availability of captive-bred individuals was also said to play an important role in consumers’ decision to opt for wild-caught birds (Burivalova *et al.* 2017). Across the assessed online surveys, several online advertisements specifically stated that the birds on offer were wild-caught (Leupen *et al.* 2018).

Some traders stated that that captive-bred White-rumped Shamas are more desirable because of their longer lifespans and greater compatibility with life in a cage (wild-caught birds were said to remain silent during their first few months in captivity) (Leupen *et al.* 2018). This suggests that well-regulated captive-breeding operations could potentially take some pressure off wild White-rumped Shama populations. Some captive-breeding already takes place and involves both independent breeders and larger-scale, multi-species bird farms (Jepson *et al.* 2011). However, the lack of published records makes it impossible to determine the extent to which White-rumped Shamas are being bred. To date, there are 52 captive breeders throughout Peninsular Malaysia who hold a commercial captive breeding permit for this species. In any case, captive breeding efforts could only be successful if customer preferences were to largely shift from wild-caught to captive-bred birds and if captive breeding operations were conducted under a robust governance system, accompanied by strict and efficient enforcement efforts to prevent the laundering of illegally-captured wild birds through captive-breeding channels (Leupen *et al.* 2018).

#### 8.5 Habitat conservation

Some localities where White-rumped Shamas are found are protected areas.

### 9. Information on similar species

<i>Kittacincla malabarica</i> (White-rumped Shama)	<i>Trichixos pyrropyga</i> (Rufous-tailed Shama)
- 21.5-28 cm	- Smaller, 21-22 cm
- White rump	- Rufous rump
- Long blackish tail	- Rufous tail
- Lack brow-spot	- White brow-spot

### 10. Consultations

The essence of this proposal was tabled at the 17<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Working Group on CITES and Wildlife Enforcement on 25 May 2022. This draft proposal was distributed to the range states on 2 June 2022 for comments. Singapore and Nepal agreed to become a co-proponent; Thailand supported the proposal; Viet Nam has no objection to the proposal; China supported the proposal, but not including the Chinese population.

### 11. Additional remarks

As far back as 25 years ago, it was strongly recommended that the White-rumped Shama be proposed for listing in Appendix II or at least Appendix III of CITES to assist in documenting trade and to ensure that trade is not conducted in an illegal and unsustainable manner (Nash 1993). Shepherd *et al.* (2004) also recommended that White-rumped Shama be proposed for a CITES Appendix II or I listing.

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