

## SHORT NOTE

### More myna matters – notes on introduced passerines in Western Samoa

We visited Western Samoa at the following times: 26 July to 15 August 1991 (BJG), 9 August to 21 September 1991 (JRH and TGL) and 21 March to 4 April 1992 (TGL). Among the abundant Jungle Mynas (*Acridotheres fuscus*) in Apia we saw a few Common Mynas (*A. tristis*), as had Beichle (1989), and we made some counts of the relative abundance of the two species. During our visits we travelled along all the main roads of both islands. We mapped the sites at which we saw Jungle Mynas and Red-vented Bulbuls (*Pycnonotus cafer*), as a bench-mark for future observations. A review of previous records of mynas in Western Samoa has disclosed a report (Green 1965) that establishes an earlier date of introduction than was noted by Beichle (1989).

#### Jungle Myna

Mynas were first reported in Western Samoa by Green (1965) as “Introduced Mynah *Acridotheres tristis*?”, and Dhondt (1976) as *A. tristis*. However, these birds were almost certainly Jungle Mynas because only Jungle Mynas were seen by Beichle during extensive field work from 1977 to 1984 (Beichle 1989) and by Watling in January 1978 (Watling 1978b).

The increase of the Jungle Myna in Western Samoa may be traced chronologically as follows:

July 1957. Not recorded by Keith (1957) who spent three days on 'Upolu. Not mentioned in the review by Ashmole (1963).

May-June 1965. Green (1965) often saw mynas in Apia but not beyond the town area.

September 1970. Not recorded by DuPont (1972) and two companions, who made a point of recording species not previously reported.

February 1972. Not recorded by Kaigler (1973) during a few days on 'Upolu.

1973-74. Dhondt (1976) saw mynas in small groups of up to seven, only in the Apia area. They were breeding, and Dhondt predicted that they would spread rapidly.

January 1978. Watling (1978b) noted localised small flocks of Jungle Mynas in the suburbs and environs of Apia; they were not common.

August-September 1978. Child (1979) saw a few small groups of up to six Jungle Mynas in and around Apia, but nowhere else either inland or along the coast of 'Upolu.

August-September 1979. A party of 17 ornithologists found Jungle Mynas “in considerable numbers” on 'Upolu and no longer confined to Apia, but they gave no further details (Reed 1980).

1979. Muse & Muse (1982) undertook fieldwork for their book in 1979. They reported that hundreds of Jungle Mynas roosted in large flocks at Apia and that the species was expanding its range to include much of the northern side of 'Upolu.

These records show that Jungle Mynas established at Apia before 1965 but remained uncommon and localised until about 1979, when their presence outside Apia was first noted. During our visits Jungle Mynas were very common in the Apia area, often in large flocks, and well established at many sites across 'Upolu (Fig. 1). On Savai'i we saw a few in the south-east as did Beichle (1989).

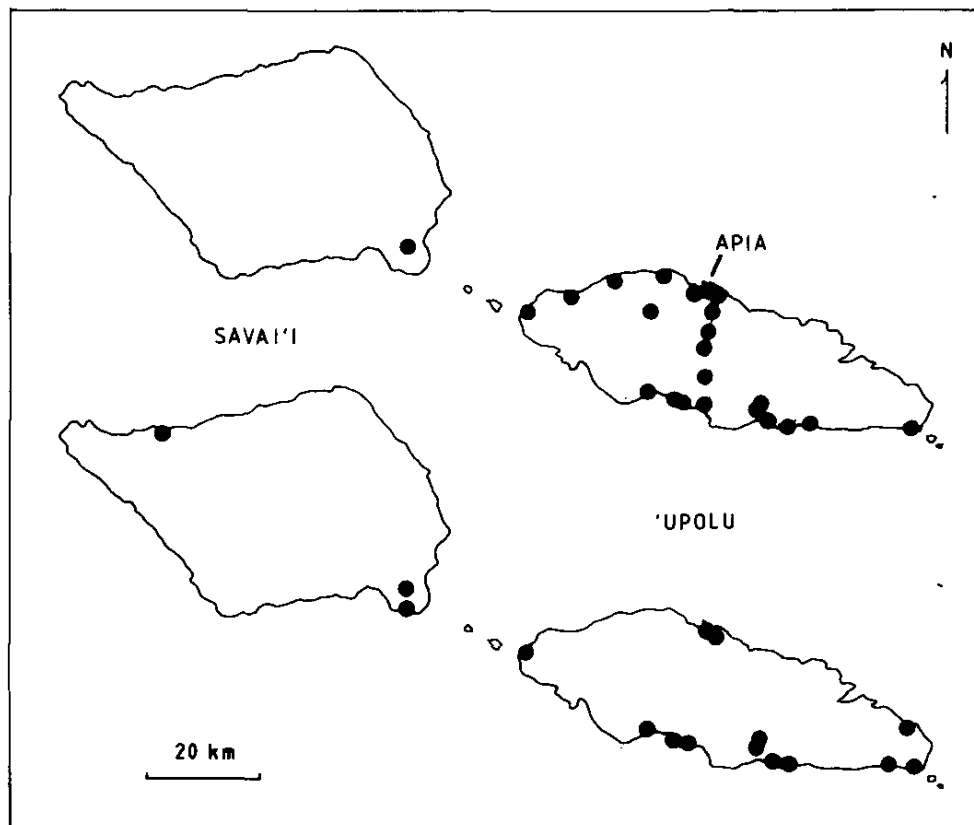


FIGURE 1 — Outline maps of Western Samoa showing sites in 1991-2 where we saw Jungle Mynas (upper map) and Red-vented Bulbuls (lower map).

### Common Myna

This species was first reported from Western Samoa by Beichle (1989), who saw at least 24 birds in and near Apia between June and August 1988. We saw small numbers of this species in the same area. As well as in central Apia, they were present as far west as Vaitele, as far east as Fagali'i airstrip, and from the end of Mulinu'u Point (north) to the hospital at Moto'otua (south).

On five consecutive days in August 1991, BJG scored the identity of mynas in the streets around Apia. Of 220 mynas seen closely enough to be sure of their specific identity, 29 (13%) were Common Mynas and the rest were Jungle Mynas. On 27 March 1992, TGL counted 117 mynas on school grounds at Moto'otua, of which 20 (17%) were Common Mynas.

### Red-vented Bulbul

Red-vented Bulbuls of Fijian origin may have been released at Apia in 1943 (Watling 1978a). The Bulbul was first reported on 'Upolu by Keith (1957), who found it to be common during a 3-day visit in July 1957. DuPont (1972) saw small numbers of bulbuls in south-east Savai'i in September 1970, the first record for this island. Figure 1 shows localities where we saw this species.

## Discussion

Jungle Mynas are established in Fiji; Common Mynas occur on numerous islands of Fiji, the Cook Islands and French Polynesia (Pratt *et al.* 1987). Both species of myna were almost certainly brought to Western Samoa deliberately. Had they dispersed naturally from other Pacific islands it is most unlikely that they would have first established at Apia.

The future of neither species may be assured. Pratt *et al.* (1987) noted that a breeding population of Common Mynas on Kwajalein (Marshall Islands) died out, and they discussed in general the instability of introduced populations on Pacific islands (pp. 34-35). It may take several decades before an introduced species can be considered established. It is therefore important that bird-watchers in the Pacific do not neglect to record the status of introduced birds.

In December 1991 Cyclone Val struck Western Samoa. On TGL's second visit, after the cyclone, he found that the numbers of both Jungle Mynas and bulbuls beyond Apia seemed much reduced compared with his first visit. These birds remained very common in Apia, however, perhaps because the large buildings there had offered shelter from the full force of the cyclonic winds.

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B.J. GILL, *Auckland Institute & Museum, Private Bag 92018, Auckland*  
T.G. LOVEGROVE, *Zoology Department, Auckland University, Private Bag 92019, Auckland*  
J.R. HAY, *Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 10-420, Wellington*