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Cover: A bag worm with its beautiful heap of junk. Acrylics on 300 GSM paper by Dupati Poojitha based on a picture by Sanjay Molur.





## First record of Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* in Indonesia

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Storks are among the large “wading” birds, species that characteristically feed while walking about in shallow wetlands (Hancock et al. 1992) which are with long necks, bills, and legs; and they thus represent the most distinctive families (Elliott 1992). Twenty species are recognized, although there is still dispute over the taxonomic status of a few (del Hoyo & Collar 2014). Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* is one of the most abundant Asian storks, ranging from Pakistan, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, China, and southeastern Asian countries (Elliott 1992; Hancock et al. 1992; BirdLife International 2023). This stork is recently listed as ‘Least Concern’ because it is thought to be a wide range that extends from southern Asia through to southeastern Asia, with a population trend that seems to be rising (BirdLife International 2023). *M. leucocephala* has been regularly recorded from Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore (Jeyarajasingam & Pearson 2012; Puan et al. 2020), but it has not been reported from the Indonesian archipelago

(MacKinnon & Phillipps 1993; Eaton et al. 2021). Here, we report an observation of *M. leucocephala* from northern Sumatra, the country’s first record for Indonesia.

On the afternoon (approximately 1600 h) of 19 January 2022, while observing waterbirds in the coastal zone of North Sumatra province, three of us (HA, FS, FAH) observed an individual Painted Stork. The site where this species was found is mangrove forest and mudflat habitat in Pematang Lalang village (3.7161°N, 98.8122°E), Percut Sei Tuan subdistrict, Deli Serdang district, North Sumatra province, Indonesia (Figure 1), along with 11 Milky Storks *Mycteria cinerea*. The bird is very similar to *M. cinerea* by size, behaviour, and morphological characteristics (white large stork with black-and-white markings on wings). Both *M. leucocephala* and *M. cinerea* share a very large size of waterbird, with white plumage, black wing markings, a long bill with slightly decurved, whitish neck & mantle, facial red skin, a bill bright yellow, and long legs (Image 1). We followed appropriate field guides (Sonobe & Usui

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Figure 1. Map of the area of observation of *Myoteria leucocephala* in Sumatra. Black triangle is record in 2022, and yellow triangle is recent record in 2025.

1993; Robson 2011; Puan et al. 2020) for identification. *M. leucocephala* has black colour markings in wing coverts; and pink flush colour in scapulars, secondaries and wing coverts. These characters are not present in *M. cinerea*, which have entirely white wing coverts.

In addition, three Painted Storks were documented on 31 January 2025 in Percut, northern Sumatra (eBird 2025). The site is very close to the previous observation of *M. leucocephala* in 2022. This recent record suggests *M. leucocephala* is a recently regular visitor in northern Sumatra.

The coastal zone of North Sumatra province is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) (Holmes & Rombang 2001; Birdlife International 2022). The nearest areas where *M. leucocephala* is found are Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore (Jeyarajasingam & Pearson 2012; Puan et al. 2020). In Peninsular Malaysia, *M. leucocephala*

has been known as a migrant in low numbers to Perlis and Kedah (including Pulau Langkawi), vagrant to Kuala Lumpur, recently feral and locally common resident with free-flying populations successfully bred at National Zoo in Selangor, free-flying regularly disperses to feed in wetlands out of the zoo and frequent at the Kuala Lumpur and Putra Jaya wetlands where a satellite breeding colony has formed (Wells 1999; Jeyarajasingam & Pearson 2012). In Singapore, the birds are most likely from the Mandai Zoo which was introduced in 1987, free fly to Johor Bahru of Malaysia to feed in the wetlands (Jeyarajasingam & Pearson 2012). The distance between Pematang Lalang village of northern Sumatra and with Painted Stork found in the Malay Peninsula and Singapore is about 250–500 km. The Pematang Lalang village of North Sumatra province is about c. 250 km to Kuala Lumpur, c. 500 km to Johor Bahru, and c. 500 km to



Image 1. A *Mycteria leucocephala* perching on the mangrove tree in Pematang Lalang Village, Percut Sei Tuan Subdistrict, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia, 19 January 2022. © Hasri Abdillah.

Singapore. Considering the *M. leucocephala* in northern Sumatra from the Malay Peninsula or Singapore, it may be likely that the species also occurs in other suitable wetlands nearby in Sumatra for foraging.

Our record of *M. leucocephala* in northern Sumatra is part of a spate of new distribution records of vagrant migrant waterbirds in Sumatra. This appears most likely to relate to rapidly rising interest in waterbirds among local researchers and amateurs on the island in the last decade, as well as easier access to cameras with tele lenses for documentation (Abdillah & Iqbal 2012; Imansyah & Iqbal 2015; Putra et al. 2018). Due to its similarity with *M. cinerea*, it is possible this species was overlooked earlier in Sumatra in the past by birdwatchers or researchers. Based on this record, *M. leucocephala* needs special attention from birdwatchers in the future, particularly when a hybrid of this species with Milky Stork has been reported, both in the wild and the zoo (Baveja et al. 2019).

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