

## WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA

## *Copsychus malabaricus*

Other: Shama (<1983), Shama Thrush

*C.m. indicus* (Kaua'i)

*C.m. javana* and/or *suavis*? (O'ahu)

**naturalized (non-native) resident, long established**

White-rumped Shammas are found from s. India (including Sri Lanka) and sw. China to SE Asia and w. Indonesia, and they have been introduced only to the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* around the world (Long 1981, Lever 1987, Ali and Ripley 1997, AOU 1998, Roberts et al. 1998). A graceful bird with a haunting melodious song, it was formerly considered a member of the thrush family (e.g., AOU 1998) but we follow more recent taxonomies considering it within the Old-World flycatchers, Muscicapidae (Voelker and Spellman 2004, Clements 2007). They were initially introduced to Kaua'i in 1931 and O'ahu in 1940, and have since spread naturally to Ni'ihau, Moloka'i, and Lana'i.

The first introductions were made on *Kaua'i* of "a few birds", of the Nepalese and ne. Indian subspecies *C. m. indicus*, transported via San Francisco in about 1931 (Caum 1933, Swedberg 1967a, Lever 1987, Roberts et al. 1998; *E* 13:75) or perhaps as early as 1924 (*E* 31:26). Specimen examination (PP, USNM) indicates birds from Kaua'i are consistent with *indicus* and differ from those on O'ahu (see below and [HRBP](#) page). It is unknown where on the island releases occurred but by 1935-1937 they were considered well established (*E* 2:52, 7:12; Munro 1944) and were found to be widespread on the island (noted in Haena, Lihue, and Waimea) by the early 1960s (Richardson and Bowles 1964). The USFWS (1983c) roughly estimated an island-wide population of 19,000 individuals in 1968-1973 and Scott et al. (1986) estimated 45 in an area of the Alakai Swamp during the [HFBS](#), where the USFWS (1983c) had found only two individuals; see also Walther (1995). Concerns have been expressed about the shama's competing with the native [Puaohi](#) for food (Snetsinger et al. 1999, Foster 2009). Data from the Kapa'a [Christmas Bird Count](#) indicate a peak in the late 1970s followed by a significant decline to lower numbers recorded during the 1990s-2000s ([Graph](#)), although still considered common on the island as a whole by Denny (1999); see also [HRBP](#) 5897-5899, 5902. There was no apparent trend in numbers during the Lihue Christmas Count in 1971-1992. VanderWerf et al. (2007) recorded an individual on Lehua Islet off *Ni'ihau* 5-7 Oct 2005, suggesting that it may have colonized the main island of Ni'ihau as well, where observer coverage was sparse since Fisher's (1951) visit in 1947, when he recorded no shammas.

After the successes of introduction to Kaua'i, approximately 84 White-rumped Shammas were also released by the [Hui Manu Society](#) in the Nu'uuanu Valley and at Makiki Heights, *O'ahu*, in 1938-1940 (Swedberg 1967a, Roberts et al. 1998; *E* 31:26-27; *PoP* 49[12]:29). Observations through the 1950s were initially confined to lush foothill habitats above Honolulu (e.g., Berger 1972, 1981; Roberts et al. 1998; *E* 6:28, 9:8, 13:74-76) but during the 1960s-1980s the shama population expanded on O'ahu in both numbers and range (HAS 1971-1981, Shallenberger 1977c, Shallenberger and Vaughn 1978). They were first noted in Kaneohe in 1959 (*E* 20:4), Aiea in 1960 (Shallenberger and Vaughn 1978), and Kailua, Wahiawa, Halawa Valley, Waipi'o, and the North Shore all in 1976, indicating rapid expansion during this year. Data from the Honolulu [Christmas Bird Count](#) also indicate increases in density in the original release sites during

the 1970s and into the 1980s, followed by a decline through the 2000s ([Graph](#)); on the Waipi'o count densities have been fairly stable between 1980 and the 2000s. White-rumped Shammas remain common in lush vegetation on O'ahu (*cf.* [HRBP](#) 5900-5901, 5903, 5906-5907) and breed primarily in Mar-Aug (Aguon and Conant 1994).

The origin for birds liberated on O'ahu has variously been reported as India (*indicus*, via Kaua'i; *cf.* Aguon and Conant 1994), Calcutta and Java (*E* 31:27), and Malaysia (HAS 1981-2005). T. Pratt (*in* Roberts et al. 1998) reported that O'ahu birds appeared paler below than those of Kaua'i and this was confirmed through specimen examination (PP, USNM, BPBM; [HRBP](#) 5480), O'ahu birds most closely matching *C.m. javana* of c. Java and/or *suavis* of Borneo. Up to 18 subspecies are recognized (Clements 2007) and it is possible that other subspecies may have been involved with the O'ahu introductions, and/or that there has been some mixing due to movement between O'ahu and Kaua'i.

On *Moloka'i*, the first report of White-rumped Shama came from Pa'alau SP at the trailhead to Kalaupapa Peninsula, where one was reported by two independent observers during the first week of Sep, 1997. Two months later one was observed about 30 km E of Kaunakakai, and by the late 2000s they had been reported in lush vegetation at low elevations throughout the island. On *Lana'i* the first record was of one taped singing and photographed along the Munro Trail above Lana'i City 25 Jun 2009 ([HRBP](#) 5904-5905). The subspecific status of shammas on Moloka'i and Lana'i has not been determined but it is likely the same as that of the O'ahu population; the Lana'i individual ([HRBP](#) 5904-5905) resembles O'ahu birds. On Maui, two independent reports of a White-rumped Shama from Kaenae Peninsula 3 and 18 Mar 1989 are intriguing, but the identification of the first bird was tentative and the description suggests dueting [Hwameis](#), and there is no description of the second sighting. At this time we consider these, along with another tentative report of one on the road to Haleakala 3 Dec 2000 and another from an unknown locality in Feb 2008, as unsubstantiated.

### [Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

### [Literature cited](#)

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