

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 has since been regarded a member of the Old-World flycatchers, Muscicapidae (Voelker and Spellman 2004, AOU 2011, Clements et al. 2016, Gill and Donsker 2016). 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 of White-rumped Shammas 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 Kaua'i 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](#) and other indigenous landbirds 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-2014 ([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. But in highland areas, Paxton et al. (2016) detected an increase of 273% in exterior portions of the the Alaka'i Plateau between 2000 and 2012, and estimated 6422-12,272 birds on the Alaka'i Plateau in 2012. On Lehua Islet off the N tip of *Ni'ihau*, VanderWerf et al. (2007) recorded an individual 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, at which time 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 the mid-1970s. Data from the Honolulu [Christmas Bird Count](#) also indicate increases in densities at the original release sites during the 1970s and into the 1980s, followed by a decline through the 2000s and a possible resurgence during the early 2010s ([Graph](#)); on the Waipi'o count densities have been fairly stable between 1980 and 2014. 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); following breeding they are occasionally encountered in lowland urban settings, e.g., in Kapiolani Park, Honolulu 28 Sep 2011 and 30 Nov 2013.

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 19 subspecies are recognized (Clements et al. 2016) 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 2000-mid 2010s they had been reported in lush vegetation at low elevations throughout the island, except perhaps at the far W end. 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) and there were continued observations of singing birds in 2010-2012. 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, the description suggests dueting [Hwameis](#), and there is no description of the second sighting. At this time we consider these, along with other tentative reports of one on the road to Haleakala 3 Dec 2000 and from an unknown locality in Feb 2008, as unsubstantiated. The first confirmed report from Maui was of a bird photographed at Honolua Bay 25 May 2015 ([HRBP](#) 6746). There are as yet to reports from Kaho'olawe or Hawai'i I.

The subspecific status of shamas on Moloka'i, Lana'i, and Maui has not been determined but it is likely the same as that of the O'ahu population; the photograph records of the Lana'i bird ([HRBP](#) 5904-5905) show paler individuals resembling the O'ahu birds, whereas the subspecies of the Maui bird ([HRBP](#) 6746) is indeterminable from the photogtaph.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>