

BirdLife Australia Rarities Committee Unusual Record Report Form

Section A: Submitter details	
Your name(s) Joint submissions are fine	David James and Wendy Powe
Section B: Record details	
Common and scientific names Include subspecies if relevant	Malayan Night <i>Gorsachius melanolophus</i>
Site location (with GPS if possible)	Christmas Island On a vehicle track between Jedda Cave and Grants Well
Date(s) and time(s) of record (First and last date of occurrence if known)	DJ recorded it on 2 nd , 3 rd , 4 th and 5 th of September 2022, during Christmas Island Bird Week. According to Linda Collette it had been present for about a month, but I don't have an earliest record date.
How many individuals were there?	1
What was the distance to the bird(s)?	10 m
Habitat description	A vehicle track through complex evergreen rainforest on the Christmas Island plateau
Sighting conditions (e.g. weather, visibility, light conditions)	Heavily overcast conditions usually led to dark and gloomy conditions inside the forest. However, the bird was either still or moving slowly and very close.
How confident are you in the identification (as a %) and why?	100%
Did you find and/or identify the bird initially? Who else recorded the bird and do they agree with the identification?	Mark Holdsworth located the bird on 2 September 2022 and showed me a photo, which I identified as Malayan NH. The bird may have been present for up to a month (Linda Collette, pers. com). However, there is no report of it on the <i>Christmas and Cocos Keeling Birds</i> Facebook page prior to 7 September (link below).
What experience have you had with this species?	DJ has seen four individuals on CI previously, one in 2002 (BARC Case 345) and three in 2002/03. I've also prepared BARC submissions for two on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in 2015 (Case 1073) and 2019 (Case 1074).
Has this species been seen at this location before? When?	Probably at least 20 reports from CI by now. James & McAllen (2014) listed 12 reports up to 2012. There have been more records since, with allegedly five individuals in 2021 alone (Linda Collette, pers. com.). Regrettably, only four of these have been submitted to BARC (Cases 345, 735 and 872 (which were accepted), and 569 (which was not accepted).
Have photographs of the bird or discussion of it occurred on the internet? (Please provide the site name, a summary, electronic link, etc.)	https://www.facebook.com/groups/372844310790577/posts/825266665548337/
Do you permit BARC to display your images etc. electronically (credited with your name)	Yes

Section C: Supporting evidence

Please include evidence that supports the identification, such as photographs, video, call recordings, etc. Digital images can be pasted into this document below, at the end, or provided separately. Digital video and sound recordings can be sent separately to this form. Label photos etc or insert captions to make note of relevant features they show.



Wendy Powe



David James



David James

Section D: Description of the bird(s)	
Please provide a description of the bird(s) including all identification features recorded. Provide all possible details that might corroborate the identification.	
Plumage	See photos.
Bare parts	The soles were slightly brighter orange-yellow than the dull yellow legs.
Moult details	No evidence of moult visible
Structure and 'jizz'	Dumpy, medium-sized heron with a thick and short neck, thick and short legs, and a stout bill. Scapulars and tertials largely cover all the wing and tail feathers. The nuchal crest is slightly erectile, but also broad and floppy. A ruff on the breast recalls bustards and is puffed-up when the bird is alarmed.
Calls	No calls
Behaviours	Diurnal, at least, not searched for at night. Quite sedentary. Hunting invertebrates on the track and verges. Slow methodical movements, listening intently for rustles. Would sneak into the forest if approached too closely, but never appeared startled. Did not fly. Much tamer than the other individuals that I have seen.
Age, sex and/or taxonomy	It is in fresh juvenile plumage, with no sign of any moult. It is a rufous-morph bird, or closer to the rufous end than the grey end of the spectrum, at least. DJ's photos depict the bird as more grey than reality.

Section E: Confusion species	
Please indicate other species that the bird(s) might be confused with and how they can be eliminated	
<p>A dumpy, medium sized heron with a thick neck, heavy legs, a short and heavy bill, and finely patterned plumage has to be a <i>Gorsachius</i> night-heron, of which there are three species.</p> <p>White-eared Night Heron <i>G. magnificus</i> is eliminated because all plumages show a bold black and white head pattern.</p> <p>The speckled face, and the heavily vermiculated neck and upperparts plumage with small white spots or splotches are indicative of 'juvenile' or first cycle plumages in <i>Gorsachius</i> night-herons.</p> <p>The black nuchal 'crest' with profuse white spots, drooping over the hind-neck, is diagnostic of first cycle Malayan and rules out the similar Japanese Night Heron <i>G. goisagi</i>.</p> <p>Other important identification features (apical spots on the tips of the outer primaries and barring on the flanks and axillaries, were not seen or photographed.</p>	

Section F: References and aids	
Did you use books, journal articles or on-line sites or pages to help you prepare this submission? Which ones?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> James, D.J. & McAllan, I.A.W. (2014), The Birds of Christmas Island, Indian Ocean: A Review. <i>Australian Field Ornithology</i> 31, Supplement. BARC Submission 1073
Would you like to acknowledge the assistance of others in the identification process or preparation of this submission?	Thanks to Mark Holdsworth for finding it and to Linda Collette for providing some background information.