

Book & Site Reviews

Nama-nama Burung Di Malaysia

Swee-Yian Lim

Tou Jing Yi is a lecturer at the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia. A long-time member of the Malaysian Nature Society, his interest in birds led him to initiate 'Nama-nama Burung Di Malaysia', a project to collate and integrate all the vernacular names of birds. His knowledge of birds, bird nomenclature and taxonomy together with his command of both English and Malay has resulted in this comprehensive work which offers an invaluable resource for the local non-English speaker in identifying and learning the birds of Malaysia.

In the early years, field guides to the birds of Malaysia tended to use differing Malay names for a species, with the authors using names based on preference. Subsequent field guides listed all vernacular bird names together. Malay bird names can refer to more than one species. Locals use 'burung tiong' to refer to the Common Myna, Javan Myna, Jungle Myna and Hill Myna, a vernacular name that is inadequate for identification and communication. Also, a species can have more than one name, for example Crested Serpent Eagle was Lang Jambul (Tweedie 1960) and Helang Kuik (Robinson & Chasen 1939). In addition, new species such as Hadada Ibis, Willie Wagtail and White-capped Munia were being recorded in Malaysia for which there were no Malay bird names. This uncertainty in language caused problems for researchers and birdwatchers alike, leading to confusion in deciding which proper name to use without creating misunderstanding.

Tou stepped up and took on the task of developing a standardised list of Malay names for all bird species, native and non-native, recorded in Malaysia. He published this list in 2019 in his website: <https://sites.google.com/view/burungdimalaysia/laman-utama>



The main page of his website 'Nama-nama Burung di Malaysia' features the Malay names of species in the Checklist of the Birds of Malaysia (MNS Bird Conservation Council 2021). This checklist was based on the 2019 Clements Checklist and published in 2020. Since then, there have been many changes in the status of the birds of Malaysia, including new additions, common name changes and taxonomic changes according to the periodic Clements Checklist (Clements *et al.*, 2024). To keep readers updated, the page 'Kemas Kini Senarai Kebangsaan' incorporates all the latest changes to the national checklist. In addition, where the taxonomy differs from Clements', Tou uses colour codes to denote the source: Blue for IOC (International

Ornithological Congress; Gill *et al.*, 2025), Red for HBW (Handbook of the Birds of the World), Purple for HBW/IOC and Green for H&M (Howard and Moore; Aves Systematics 2025).

His website also includes the species not yet in the national checklist, but which have good evidence of presence in Malaysia. Further to this, he has devised new Malay names, with spelling consistent with that of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, for species and families of birds not found in Malaysia, so that his system of naming birds in Malay can be adopted for all bird species in the world. Thus, anyone wishing to know the Malay names of birds from neighbouring regions (Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore) or other parts of the world can use this website to search in the pages 'Senarai Tambahan (Tak Pasti)', 'Senarai Tambahan (Wilayah Jiran)' and 'Famili Bukan Passeriformes'.

The website is user-friendly. Laptop and desktop computer users have a shortcut to search for the Malay names of birds. Ctrl-F launches a box in the top right-hand corner. Type in the English or scientific or generic name of the bird, then use the up and down arrows to scroll through the list of highlighted names. When accessing the site on handphones, use the search icon. The website is easy to navigate as the main topics are clearly labelled in the tabs. Links are provided when there is a need to quickly refer to another page.

Kudos to Tou Jing Yi for this much needed and long-awaited list of Malay bird names. 'Nama-nama Burung Di Malaysia' has harmonised all the confusing vernacular bird names into one comprehensive and practical list of Malay bird names. This is a significant step for scientific studies in the Malaysian context as well as communication among local birders. As the website is maintained by the author himself and the Malay bird names have been adopted in the national checklist and in two recent field guides, we can use it as reference with confidence that the information provided is up to date and correct.

References

1. Clements, J.F., Rasmussen, P.C., Schulenberg, *et al.* 2024. The eBird/Clements checklist of Birds of the World: v2024. <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist/download/>
2. Tweedie, M.W.F. (1960). *Common Birds of the Malay Peninsula*. Longman, reprinted 1970.
3. Robinson H.C. & Chasen F.N. (1939). *Birds of the Malay Peninsula*, Volumes 1-4, published in 1927, 1928, 1936, and 1939, respectively.
4. MNS Bird Conservation Council. 2021. *A Checklist of the Birds of Malaysia*. 2020 Edition. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Nature Society. (MNS Conservation Publication No. 22).
5. Gill F., Donsker D. & Rasmussen P. (Eds). 2025. International Ornithological Congress . World Bird List (v15.1). <https://www.worldbirdnames.org/new/>
6. Aves Systematics (2025). The Howard & Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World. Retrieved from <https://www.aviansystematics.org/4th-edition-checklist>