

## Rare Birds in Iran in the Late 1960s and 1970s

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**Abstract:** The 12-year period from 1967 to 1978 was a period of intense ornithological activity in Iran. The Ornithology Unit in the Department of the Environment carried out numerous surveys throughout the country; several important international ornithological expeditions visited Iran and subsequently published their findings, and a number of resident and visiting bird-watchers kept detailed records of their observations and submitted these to the Ornithology Unit. These activities added greatly to our knowledge of the status and distribution of birds in Iran, and produced many records of birds which had rarely if ever been recorded in Iran before. This paper gives details of all records known to the author of 92 species that were recorded as rarities in Iran during the 12-year period under review. These include 18 species that had not previously been recorded in Iran, a further 67 species that were recorded on fewer than 13 occasions, and seven slightly commoner species for which there were very few records prior to 1967. All records of four distinctive subspecies are also included. The 29 species that were known from Iran prior to 1967 but not recorded during the period under review are listed in an Appendix.

**Keywords:** Rare birds, rarities, 1970s, status, distribution, Iran.

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### INTRODUCTION

The creation of the Iran Game & Fish Department in 1967 and establishment within it of a Division of Research and Development marked a major turning point in the study and documentation of the fauna and flora of Iran. For the first time, there was a body within the government responsible for the systematic recording of Iran's diverse wildlife and identification of sites important for nature conservation. David A. Ferguson, at that time an American Peace Corps Volunteer, joined the new Department as ornithologist, and in January 1967, carried out the first mid-winter waterfowl counts in what was to become an annual nationwide census that has continued almost without break to the present time. Ferguson and his colleagues in the Division of Research and Development kept detailed records of all bird species observed during their field surveys and wrote these up in a series on internal Department reports.

Ferguson left the Game & Fish Department in June 1970 and was replaced by the author who took over as head of the fledgling Ornithology Unit in October 1970. He was assisted by a number of young Iranian biologists, notably A. Adhami, M.A. Ashtiani, M. Bahrami, A.

Eftekhar, E. Kahrom and J. Mansoori, several of whom quickly became keen ornithologists. In October 1974, an English bird-ringer, F.B. Argyle, was recruited to set up an Iranian bird-ringing scheme and train Iranian bird-ringers, notably B. Behrouzi-Rad, who continued to run the ringing scheme after Argyle left in March 1978. L. Cornwallis, who had already spent several years working on the birds of Fars Province in the early 1960s, joined the Department in January 1976, and took over as head of the Ornithology Unit when the author left in March 1976. He remained in Iran until the autumn of 1978, but by that time the activities of the Ornithology Unit were being scaled down, and with the onset of the revolution in late 1978, field work was temporarily suspended.

Throughout the 12-year period from 1967 to 1978, personnel of the Ornithology Unit carried out numerous bird surveys throughout Iran at all seasons of the year. Initially, priority was given to studies of waterbirds and selected game-birds of interest to the sport hunter. However, as the activities of the Department (renamed Department of the Environment in March 1972) were expanded to take on a broader, ecosystem approach to the conservation of the natural environment, more emphasis was given to general

avifaunal surveys in poorly known regions of the country with a view to the identification of suitable areas for the creation of protected areas. These surveys resulted in a rapid accumulation of new information on the status and distribution of birds in Iran, and produced a number of records of birds which had rarely or never been recorded in Iran before.

At the same time, there was an upsurge in interest in the birds of Iran amongst foreign ornithologists and bird-watchers, and during the period 1967–78, a large number of competent field ornithologists visited Iran as part of major international expeditions or simply as independent travellers. All foreigners wishing to carry out research in any of the Department's reserves (which numbered over 60 and covered almost eight million ha by the late 1970s) were required to obtain permits from the Department and to submit details of their observations. Expatriate bird-watchers resident in Iran and visiting bird-watchers were also encouraged to submit their records to the Ornithology Unit, and indeed many of these participated in the mid-winter waterbird counts and bird ringing activities organised by the Ornithology Unit.

Much of the Ornithology Unit's work on wetlands and waterbirds in the late 1960s and 1970s has been published in some form or another. The results of the annual mid-winter waterbird censuses were submitted to the International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB, later to become Wetlands International) for incorporation in the annual reports of the International Waterbird Census, and general information on the principal wetlands and their waterbirds was summarised in *A Directory of Wetlands in the Middle East* (Scott 1995). More recently, information on breeding waterbirds in Iran in the 1970s has been summarised by Scott (2007a). However, very little of the other information accumulated by the Ornithology Unit on the status and distribution of birds in Iran in the late 1960s and 1970s has ever been published. The chapter on Iran in *Important Bird Areas in the Middle East* (Evans 1994) includes some information on the birds of 105 IBAs, most of which was derived from surveys in the 1970s, but this focuses on threatened species, regional specialities and species occurring in internationally important numbers. One or two of

the more important discoveries made by the Ornithology Unit in the late 1960s and 1970s have been described in the literature, e.g. the discovery of a population of Caucasian Grouse *Lyrurus mlokosiewiczi* in north-western Iran in 1971 (Scott 1976) and the rediscovery of Siberian Cranes *Gus leucogeranus* wintering in the south Caspian lowlands in 1978 (Ashtiani 1987), but most of the observations of rare birds in Iran, including the first records of ten new species for Iran, have never been published. This paper seeks to remedy this situation by giving details of all records known to the author of 92 species and four subspecies that were recorded as rarities in Iran during the 12-year period from January 1967 to December 1978.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Records of rare birds in Iran in the late 1960s and 1970s have been extracted from a variety of sources. Much the most important has been the original field notes and cyclostyled trip reports from hundreds of field surveys carried out by the author and other personnel of the Ornithology Unit between January 1967 and the summer of 1978. The author alone accumulated over 60,000 records of birds in Iran between October 1970 and March 1976. Other important sources of information have included the following:

\* Observations made by expatriate bird-watchers resident in Iran who regularly submitted their records to the Ornithology Unit, notably M.D. Hutchinson, G.N. Langfield, G.T. Nelson, P.N. Paul, M. Payne, K.G. Rogers and M. Smart.

\* Observations made by visiting ornithologists and bird-watchers who either submitted their records directly to the Ornithology Unit at the time of their visit, or subsequently to the author in response to requests for information circulated in 1977 and 1978. One such request appeared in the journal *Ibis* in 1978 (vol. 120, p. 269). Major contributors included G.A. Atkinson-Willes, P.W. Burness, S.K. Carnie, E. Carp, J.W.F. Davis, C.D.R. Heard, B. King, S.C. Madge, R.G. Newell, R.E. Scott, P.A. Walton and M.B. Webster.

\* Records of seabirds observed by P.W.G. Chilman, K. Salwegter and R.A. Smith from on board ships passing through the Persian Gulf,

Strait of Hormoz and Gulf of Oman in the late 1960s and 1970s. Many of these records were published in the *Gulf Birdwatchers' Newsletter* and *Sea Swallow*.

\* The published accounts of three major ornithological expeditions to Iran between 1967 and 1975 (Érard & Etchécopar 1970, Misonne 1976, Desfayes & Praz 1978). C. Érard and R.D. Etchécopar spent over two months travelling widely in central, eastern and southeastern Iran between 6 April and 9 June 1967, and collected over 820 specimens for the National Museum of Natural History in Paris. X. Misonne led a Belgian scientific mission to the central deserts of Iran between 1 April and 15 June 1972, and visited some of the country's remotest desert regions in the Dasht-e Lut and Hamoun-e Jazmurian. M. Desfayes and J.C. Praz carried out surveys on several mountains in the Kerman Highlands and also on Kuh-e Taftan in Sistan & Baluchestan between 7 May and 25 June 1975, and collected a number of voucher specimens for the Smithsonian Institution.

\* The unpublished reports of two other ornithological expeditions to Iran: an expedition to Sistan & Baluchestan in April 1972 organised jointly by the Ornithology Unit and a group of British bird-watchers (S. Cramp, P.A.D. Hollom, R.F. Porter and D.I.M. Wallace), and the British Zoological Expedition to the southeast Caspian in August 1972 (D.J. Garbutt, M.B. Webster *et al.*).

\* The 'daily logs' (maintained by the author) from two popular bird-watching sites close to the capital, Tehran: the Lashgarak area and Ghale-Now Marshes. The Lashgarak area in the Alborz foothills north of Tehran was visited on 191 dates between June 1972 and February 1976, and produced records of a total of 266 species. Bird migration through this area in the 1970s has recently been summarised by Scott (2007b). Ghale-Now Marshes comprised a complex of natural freshwater marshes, flooded brick-pits and sewage lagoons adjacent to the Varamin road on the edge of the desert southeast of Tehran. This site, which was particularly attractive to migratory waders, was visited on 43 dates between February 1972 and January 1976, and produced records of 150 species.

Although there was no formal 'Rarities Committee' in Iran at the time, all records were

vetted by personnel of the Ornithology Unit whenever possible, and many records, especially those of visiting bird-watchers with limited experience in the Middle East, were rejected unless accompanied by convincing documentation.

The systematic list that follows summarises the observations of 92 species that were considered to be rarities in Iran during the period 1967 to 1978 inclusive. These include 18 species that had not previously been recorded in Iran and a further 67 species that were recorded on no more than 12 occasions in the 12-year period under review. Most of these species are genuine vagrants, rare passage migrants or very scarce and irregular winter visitors in Iran, but a few are scarce and local breeding species for which there were very few records in the 1960s and 1970s, *e.g.* Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*, Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* and White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes*, and two are species which probably occurred in Iran only as a result of deliberate or accidental introductions by man (Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* and House Crow *Corvus splendens*).

The list also includes seven species that were recorded on more than 12 occasions. Four of these, Persian Shearwater *Puffinus persicus*, Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* and Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*, are included because there had been very few records in Iran prior to 1967 and little was known of their status at that time. The other three species, Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera* and Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis*, are scarce and irregular winter visitors to northern Iran, and in the case of the two larks, only likely to occur in any numbers in extremely harsh winters.

Full treatment is also given to four distinctive subspecies that were recorded on very few occasions in the late 1960s and 1970s: Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis ruficollis*, White-crowned Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus coronatus*, the Sistan form of the Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus yatii* (Afghan Scrub Sparrow), and the eastern form of the Carrion Crow *Corvus corone orientalis*.

Three species that were recorded on fewer

than 13 occasions have been excluded from this review, namely Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* (12 records), Pallid (Striated) Scops Owl *Otus brucei* (nine records) and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* (10 records). All three are believed to have extensive breeding ranges in Iran and may even be locally common, but are inconspicuous and/or nocturnal species that are easily overlooked and thus grossly under-recorded.

There seems to have been very little ornithological activity in Iran in the early 1960s, and little information is available other than the published reports of Savage (1964) who visited Lake Urumiyeh in northwestern Iran in 1960, Feeny *et al.* (1968) who report on two autumn surveys in the southeast Caspian in 1961 and 1963, and Nielsen & Speyer (1967) and Nielsen (1969) who report on their observations in the southwest Caspian in 1959–64 and 1967. Rare birds encountered by these authors are mentioned in the species accounts, as are any other records of rare birds in the period 1960–66 known to the author. One species, the Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, has been included in this review solely on the basis of four records in the early 1960s, and there were no records during the period 1967–78.

The old literature on the birds of Iran contains references to at least 29 species which are known to have occurred in Iran prior to 1960 but for which there were no reliable records in the 1960s and 1970s. These are listed in Appendix I. Appendix II gives a list of 17 species that have been mentioned in the published literature as occurring in Iran, but for which all records prior to the late 1970s have subsequently come under doubt and are no longer considered to be acceptable.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

Each species account begins with a brief summary of the status of the species in Iran as understood by the late 1970s, based on reports in the published literature (principally Zarudny 1903, 1911, Jervis Read 1958, Schüz 1959a, Vaurie 1959, 1965, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970) and records obtained in the 1960s and 1970s. This is followed by a list of all records from the period 1967–78. Birds recorded by the author are

indicated with the initials DAS; the surnames of all other observers are given in full. Any records from the period 1960–66 are mentioned at the end of the species account. The number in brackets after the species' scientific name indicates the total number of records in the 12-year period 1967–78, and does not include any records in the early 1960s.

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### **Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata* (3)

A rare winter visitor to the south Caspian, listed by Jervis Read (1958), Schüz (1959a), Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), but not by Zarudny (1911).

One flying west over the Caspian Sea 12 km east of Ramsar, Mazandaran, on 31 January 1971 (DAS); one flying west over the Caspian Sea off Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 28 February 1972 (DAS); and two flying east over the Caspian Sea off Lapoo-Zargmarz Ab-bandans, Mazandaran, on 21 February 1974 (DAS).

### **Black-throated Diver** *Gavia arctica* (12)

A regular winter visitor in very small numbers to the south Caspian coast and lakes on the Turkman Steppes, listed by Jervis Read (1958), Schüz (1959a), Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), but not by Zarudny (1911).

There were 12 records between early November and mid-April, mostly in the southeast Caspian. Two on Gorgan Bay, Mazandaran, on 27 January 1972, and one in the same area on 29 February 1972 (DAS). One on Lake Ulmagol, Golestan, on 30 January 1972, and four flying west over the Caspian Sea off Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 28 February 1972 (DAS). One on the Caspian Sea near Now-Shahr, Mazandaran, on 14 April 1973, two on the sea between Alamdeh and Fereidoon-Kenar, Mazandaran, on 15 April 1973, and two flying east over the sea near Babolsar, Mazandaran, on 16 April 1973 (DAS). One on the sea off Amirkelayeh Wildlife Refuge, Gilan, on 13 January 1974 (G.A. Atkinson-Willes). One on the sea off Lapoo-Zargmarz Ab-bandans, Mazandaran, on 19 December 1974 (DAS). One off the east end of Miankaleh Peninsula on 27 November 1975, and two (including an adult in breeding plumage) on the sea off Miankaleh Peninsula on 4 March 1976 (DAS). One in the channel at the east end of Miankaleh Peninsula on 5 November 1976 (M.D. Hutchinson, G.N. Langfield).

### **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* (1)

A vagrant to the Baluchestan coast, first recorded in 1972.

One was observed flying northwest close inshore off the headland at Chahbahar, Baluchestan, in the

morning of 5 April 1972 (S. Cramp, P.A.D. Hollom, R.F. Porter & D.I.M. Wallace). This was the first record of this species in Iran. D.I.M. Wallace (*in litt.*) writes as follows: “The first record of this essentially mid-Atlantic and Mediterranean species for the region and Iran, and presumably of a bird that had moved north from the wintering grounds off South Africa on the wrong side of the continent. Another lost individual reached New Zealand in 1934”. It is now known that many birds disperse east into the southern Indian Ocean, and it has been speculated that some of these return to the Mediterranean via the northern Indian Ocean and Red Sea, as small flocks have been recorded in the Gulf of Aqaba and have been observed flying inland at Eilat at nightfall (Harrison 1978). No attempt was made to assign the Chahbahar bird to subspecies. However, if the bird was a stray from a regular migration route through the northern Indian Ocean and Red Sea to the eastern Mediterranean, it is more likely to have been of the nominate form *diomedea* (now sometimes treated as a separate species, Scopoli’s Shearwater) than of either of the two forms breeding in the eastern Atlantic (*borealis* and *edwardsii*).

#### **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus pacificus* (2)

A vagrant to the Strait of Hormoz and Gulf of Oman, not previously recorded in Iran, although according to Vaurie (1965), the species wanders north to the Arabian Sea and southern Red Sea.

One was observed in the Gulf of Oman off the Iranian coast in early June 1969 (Gulf Birdwatchers’ Newsletter 2), and a “a few” were seen in the Strait of Hormoz on 24 September 1976 (W. Weitkowitz, pers. comm.). These appear to be the first records of the species in Iranian waters. An all dark shearwater off Farsi Island in the Persian Gulf on 22 July 1970 was thought to be this species (P.W.G. Chilman, Gulf Birdwatchers’ Newsletter 17).

#### **Persian Shearwater** *Puffinus persicus* (12+)

A common visitor to the southern Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormoz and Gulf of Oman, from early October to March or April, but largely absent during the summer months and rare in inshore waters. According to Zarudny (1911), breeds on islands off the Iranian coast in the southern Persian Gulf, but this has never been confirmed (Hüe & Etchécopar 1970).

The only records by Ornithology Unit personnel were one flying east close inshore off Chahbahar, Baluchestan, on 6 April 1972, one flying east off Ra’s Bostaneh, west of Bandar-e Lengeh, Persian Gulf, on 20 October 1973, three at sea southeast of Lavan Island on 24 May 1974, and one flying east off the south coast of Qeshm Island on 25 May 1974 (DAS *et al.*). Most reports during the 1970s come from

birdwatchers passing through the southern Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman on board ships, and have been published in the Gulf Birdwatchers’ Newsletter and Sea Swallow. Several observers reported large numbers around the Tunb, Siri and Farur islands between November and March, and it seems likely that the species was breeding there, although this was never proven. P.W.G. Chilman observed about 240 in feeding flocks near the Tunb Islands on 21 November 1972, 100 in the Strait of Hormoz on 25 November 1973, and 73 at sea off Kish Island on 26 November 1974. R.A. Smith found only small numbers in the Strait of Hormoz in early October 1970 (the first he had seen for several months), but large numbers a month later. W. Weitkowitz found the species to be abundant in the Strait of Hormoz on 16 November 1976, and observed large groups between Farur and the Tunb Islands and small groups west of Farur on 12 March 1978. C.D.R. Heard observed single small shearwaters, presumably this species, in Hendorabi Strait on 1 June 1978 and close inshore off Sheedvar Island on 1 June 1978.

#### **Wilson’s Storm Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* (7+)

Probably a regular non-breeding visitor to the Gulf of Oman and less commonly the Strait of Hormoz and southern Persian Gulf, but rare in inshore waters. According to Zarudny (1911), a vagrant to the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, but not listed by Jervis Read (1958). Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) included the northern Indian Ocean in its range, but implied that proof of its occurrence in the Gulf of Oman and Persian Gulf was lacking.

Only one was observed by Ornithology Unit personnel during the 1970s, a single bird in the Strait of Hormoz approximately 6 km south of Bandar Abbas on 22 June 1977 (F.B. Argyle). However, the species was recorded on a number of occasions in the 1960s and 1970s by birdwatchers passing through the southern Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman on board ships. These records, published in the Gulf Birdwatchers’ Newsletter and Sea Swallow, include a report of 350 on the Iranian side of the Gulf of Oman (25°N, 59°E) on 14 September 1962 (Sea Swallow 17). Between 1967 and 1969, P.W.G. Chilman found the species to be common in the Gulf of Oman and present throughout the year, with fewest in spring and early summer (Gulf Birdwatchers’ Newsletter 17). This observer also recorded a single bird off Kish Island in the Persian Gulf in July 1967. K. Salwegter observed two in the Strait of Hormoz on 5 May 1968 (Gulf Birdwatchers’ Newsletter 7). Large numbers were recorded in the northern Gulf of Oman in early July 1969, and about six were seen 160 km west of the Strait of Hormoz in mid-July 1969 (Gulf Birdwatchers’ Newsletter 2). R.A. Smith observed two

off Farsi Island in July 1970 (Gulf Birdwatchers' Newsletter 17).

**Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* (15+)

Present in small numbers throughout the year in the Strait of Hormoz and southern Persian Gulf. Recorded as possibly breeding by Zarudny (1911) and found breeding on Nabi Tunb in April 1921 and March 1923 (Ticehurst *et al.* 1925), but rarely recorded in inshore waters. The form concerned is *indicus* (Vaurie 1965, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970).

The only records by Ornithology Unit personnel and visiting bird-watchers during the 1970s were of one off Chahbahar, Baluchestan, on 5 April 1972 (D.I.M. Wallace *et al.*), two birds flying west at sea off the south coast of Qeshm Island on 25 May 1974 (DAS), and one off Chahbahar, Baluchestan, on 3 May 1978 (C.D.R. Heard). However, there were several reports from birdwatchers passing through the southern Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman on board ships in the 1960s and 1970s. K. Salwegter observed four between Tunb and Siri islands on 18 June 1965 (Gulf Birdwatchers' Newsletter 7), and R.A. Smith reported two at sea 8 km south of Tunb Island on 1 March 1970. P.W.G. Chilman recorded small numbers in the Strait of Hormoz in July and December 1967, November 1968, November 1969, and July, August and November 1973, and observed a single bird south of Hengam Island on 29 November 1973. W. Weitkowitz saw several in the Strait of Hormoz on 24 September 1976, 16 November 1976 and 10 June 1977.

**Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra* (1)

Listed as a vagrant to the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea by Zarudny (1911). According to Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), occurs on the Mekran coast west to Persian Baluchestan and may breed on some of the offshore islands. However, there are no islands suitable for breeding sea-birds along the Iranian section of the Mekran coast, and the paucity of records suggests that the species is only a rare visitor to Iranian waters.

The only record in the 1960s and 1970s was of a single sub-adult flying into Chahbahar Bay at Chahbahar, Baluchestan, in the morning of 5 April 1972 (D.A. Scott, D.I.M. Wallace *et al.*).

**Socotra Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* (9)

Scarce and local in the southern Persian Gulf. Previously known to breed only on islands off the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf (Vaurie 1965), and not listed for Iran by Zarudny (1911), although Jervis Read (1958) included it in his checklist of the birds of Iran, and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) suspected that it might breed on islands off the Iranian coast.

A colony of about 100 pairs with 200 juveniles was discovered in boulders at the east end of Sheedvar Island, near Lavan Island, on 9–11 June 1972 (DAS *et al.*). About 150 birds including 50 juveniles were present at this site on 23–24 June 1976 (F.B. Argyle). Sixty birds were present on 20–21 June 1977, although no nests were found (L. Cornwallis), and 150 birds were present a month later, on 19 July 1977 (F.B. Argyle). C.D.R. Heard found at least 180 birds on Sheedvar Island on 2 June 1978. The only other records were an immature 15 km southeast of Bandar Abbas on 5 March 1970 (R.A. Smith), 14 off the south shore of Qeshm Island on 26 January 1974 (DAS), an adult and two immatures off the east end of Larak Island on 24 May 1974 (DAS), and five at sea off Lavan Island on 18 June 1977 (L. Cornwallis).

**African Darter** *Anhinga rufa* (4)

A very rare winter visitor to Khuzestan. The species is listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958), but the details of previous records are unknown. It is not listed for Iran by Zarudny (1911), nor is it mentioned by Vaurie (1965) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), who give the total range of the form *chantrei* as Lake Antioch, Turkey and Lake Huleh, Israel (where now extinct) and the marshes of southern Iraq.

All four records were from the Dez River in Dez Wildlife Refuge, Khuzestan: three on 15 January 1973 (A. Eftekhar, L. Cornwallis), one on 12 November 1973 (DAS), one on 16 December 1974 (F.A. Harrington, Jr), and one on 15 January 1975 (DAS).

**Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* (28)

A scarce resident in the southern Persian Gulf and along the coast of eastern Hormozgan. Listed as a vagrant to southern Baluchestan by Zarudny (1911), and also listed by Jervis Read (1958). Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that it is a casual visitor to southern Persian Baluchestan but apparently does not breed. These authors also list it for the marshes of the Tigris and Euphrates in neighbouring Iraq.

Aerial surveys of the southern Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormoz and Mekran coast in January 1973, January 1974 and January 1975 revealed the presence of a small population of Goliath Herons in mangrove areas from the Mehran Delta in the Khouran Strait in the west to the region of Jask in the east. Birds were recorded in the Mehran Delta (up to four), in the Gol Delta, at Bandar-e Khamir, in Hara Protected Area (up to seven), on the northwest coast of Qeshm Island, in the deltas of the Rud-e Minab, Rud-e Gaz and Rud-e Hara, at Jask Creek, and on the coast about 45 km east of Jask. The highest total count was 17 in January 1974. Four adults were observed in Hara Protected Area on 27 May 1974 (DAS), and breeding was first

suspected in this area in 1975, when two adults and an immature were observed amongst mangrove-fringed islands west of Laft on 5–8 June (DAS). Breeding was proven in the Protected Area in 1976, when a pair was found nesting in a colony of Great Egrets *Casmerodius albus* and Western Reef Egrets *Egretta gularis* in tall mangroves on 5–6 July (F.B. Argyle). The single half-grown chick was ringed. A nest with two chicks was found in the same area on 23–24 June 1977, and again the chicks were ringed (F.B. Argyle). These were the first breeding records of this species in Iran. However, given the numbers recorded in winter, it seems likely that several other pairs were breeding in mangroves along the coast of Hormozgan in the 1970s. Other records in this period included an immature at Jask Creek on 15 October 1973 (DAS), at least two adults in mangroves east of Bandar-e Khamir on 18–19 October 1973 (DAS), two near Laft in Hara Protected Area on 26 February 1976 (B. King), and one in mangroves near Jask on 14 May 1978 (Reynolds 1978).

#### **Striated Heron** *Butorides striatus* (9)

A scarce resident in the southern Persian Gulf and along the Baluchestan coast. Not listed for Iran by Zarudny (1911), Jervis Read (1958), Vaurie (1965) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), although Løppenthin (1951) refers to three birds (two of which were collected) on “Shatwar Island near Bushehr” in April 1938. It seems probable that Løppenthin was referring to the small island now known as Sheedvar off the east end of Lavan Island, although this is about 300 km southeast of Bushehr.

In June 1972, a small population was discovered on Lavan Island and nearby Sheedvar Island in the Persian Gulf. Five birds (including one immature) were found on the coast of Lavan on 8–9 June 1972, and eleven adults and one immature were located during a thorough survey of Sheedvar Island on 9–11 June 1972 (DAS & W. Kinunen). Four adults and an unfledged young were found on Sheedvar in June 1976 (F.B. Argyle); single adults were seen there on 26 June (L. Cornwallis) and 19 July 1977 (F.B. Argyle), and two were present on 2 June 1978 (C.D.R. Heard). There were three other records in the 1970s: one on a rocky shore 8 km east of Jask on 13 October 1973 (DAS), one on the jetty at Dargahan on Qeshm Island on 15 February 1974 (G.A. Atkinson-Willes), and one in the mangroves in Hara Protected Area on 6 June 1975 (DAS).

#### **Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* (19)

A scarce winter visitor to the wetlands of Khuzestan, and may have bred in 1972 and 1974. Although known to breed in the marshes of southern Iraq, prior to the 1970s the only record from Iran appears to have

been an old record of a party in the south Caspian region (Zarudny 1911, Schüz 1959a, Vaurie 1965, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970). It is presumably on the basis of this record that Jervis Read (1958) included it in his checklist of the birds of Iran.

The Sacred Ibis was recorded annually during the mid-winter waterbird censuses in Khuzestan from 1970/71 to 1974/75, with totals of six in February 1971, 27 in January 1972, 24 in January 1973, 51 in January 1974, and 96 in January 1975. Birds were recorded from the marshes south of Shushtar (1 in 1972, and 5 in 1975), Deh-Now and Dasht-e Ahu marshes along the Dez River (6 in 1971, 26 in 1972, 23 in 1973, 24 in 1974, and 41 in 1975), Shavour Dam/Bamdej Marshes (16 in 1974, and 50 in 1975), and Shadegan Marshes (1 in 1973) (DAS, A. Adhami, E. Carp, A. Eftekhar *et al.*). It was assumed that most of these birds originated from the breeding population in the Mesopotamian Marshes in neighbouring Iraq. However, there were five or six birds in Shadegan Marshes on 3 March 1972 (M. Smart), two parties of four including one juvenile in Shadegan Marshes on 13–14 May 1972 (DAS), and a party of nine in Bamdej Marshes on 6 June 1974 (DAS). It is possible, therefore, that a few pairs were breeding somewhere in Khuzestan. There is also a report of no less than 200 in the Bandar-e Imam Khomeini marshes (near Shadegan) on 8 April 1978 (C.D.R. Heard & P.A. Walton).

#### **Bean Goose** *Anser fabalis* (1)

Apparently only a rare vagrant to northern Iran. The species was listed for Iran by Zarudny (1911) and Jervis Read (1958), and Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) thought that the form *johanseni* wintered in the south Caspian region and Sistan. Schüz (1959a) also included the species for the south Caspian lowlands. However, although there had been several reports of this species in northern Iran (Misonne 1953, Passburg 1959), the only fully substantiated record prior to 1973 appears to have been a bird shot near Torbat-e Jam in northern Khorasan on 22 October 1898 (Zarudny 1903). This was assigned to the nominate race *fabalis*.

A single bird was present in a large flock of Lesser White-fronted Geese *Anser erythropus* in Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, from 16–19 April 1973 (DAS *et al.*).

#### **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* (10)

Formerly a common winter visitor to the south Caspian lowlands (Zarudny 1911, Schüz 1959a), but most of the wintering birds disappeared in the late 1960s when almost the entire population of the species shifted its wintering grounds to the Black Sea (Scott & Rose 1996). Since then, the species has occurred only as a

very rare winter visitor to the south Caspian region, Azarbaijan and Khuzestan.

A flock of 16 at Lake Kobi, Azarbaijan, on 15 January 1970 (H. Kowalski). Two with a large flock of Greylag Geese *Anser anser*, Greater White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons* and Lesser White-fronted Geese *A. erythropus* on the plains south of Shushtar, Khuzestan, on 14 February 1971, and one with a large flock of grey geese at Deh-Now Marshes near the Dez River, Khuzestan, on 15 February 1971 (DAS, A. Adhami, E. Carp). A single bird with a flock of Greylag Geese at the mouth of the Sefid-Rud near Bandar-e Kiashahr, Gilan, on 28 January 1973 (M. Smart) and again in late February 1973 (A. Adhami). Two at Incheh Lake on the Turkman Steppes, Golestan, on 3 February 1973 (A. Adhami). A flock of 22 in Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, on 20 December 1973 (A. Eftekhar). A flock of 19 amongst the wintering Lesser White-fronted Geese at Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, on 28 November 1975 (DAS *et al.*), with seven in the same area on 3 February 1976 (DAS), and two on 3 March 1976 (DAS, B. King).

**Cotton Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus coromandelianus* (1)  
A vagrant to southeastern Iran, first recorded in 1973. The species is known to occur regularly as near as eastern Afghanistan (Hüe & Etchécopar 1970).

The head of a duck was handed in to Department of the Environment personnel in Zabol on 5 February 1973 by a hunter who had shot the bird at the Hamoun-e Sabari in early January 1973 and was puzzled by its identity. It was subsequently identified as that of a female Cotton Pygmy Goose – the first record of this species in Iran (L. Cornwallis, DAS).

**Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis* (1)  
A vagrant to the south Caspian coast. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a winter visitor to the south Caspian. Schüz (1959a) did not record it himself, but notes that two specimens had been collected at Baku (Republic of Azerbaijan), while Vaurie (1965) states that it winters on the Caspian Sea and on the lakes of Turkestan, and has occasionally wandered as far south as Baluchestan, Sind and Assam. However, it is not listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970).

An immature drake was seen on the Caspian Sea 2 km west of Fereidoon-Kenar, Mazandaran, at about 08:30 hrs on 7 January 1971 (DAS, A. Adhami, M. Bosch). The bird was close inshore, amongst the breaking waves, and was with two Common Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula*.

**Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* (1)  
A vagrant to the south Caspian coast. Zarudny (1903, 1911) mentions having obtained a specimen between the mouths of the Gorgan and Gijas rivers in the

southeast Caspian, and lists it as a very rare winter visitor to the south Caspian. Jervis Read (1958) includes it in his checklist of the birds of Iran. Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that it occasionally occurs south to the Caspian Sea, and Schüz (1959a) refers to the old record by Zarudny, but there do not appear to have been any records since then.

A female was seen on the Caspian Sea 12 km west of Alamdeh, Mazandaran, at about 12:45 hrs on 7 January 1971 (DAS, A. Adhami, M. Bosch). The bird was in company with a large flock of Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula*.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* (10)

Apparently only an uncommon winter visitor to the south Caspian region, rarely straggling south of the Alborz. The former status of the Red Kite in Iran is uncertain because of confusion with the local populations of Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, which are considerably paler than European birds and can appear very similar to Red Kites. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) considered the status of this species very uncertain throughout the region, and Énard & Etchécopar (1970) cast doubt on the old reports of breeding in the south Caspian region (Zarudny 1911, Buxton 1921, Paludan 1940). There can be little doubt that the large numbers of Red Kites, including two flocks each of about 40 birds, reported flying south between Sari and Qaem-Shahr, Mazandaran, by Feeny *et al.* (1968) on 19 August 1961 were in fact Black Kite – a common migrant in this area and yet one that was only reported in very small numbers by Feeny *et al.* (1968).

Only ten records in the late 1960s and 1970s are considered acceptable. One seen flying over the Sefid-Rud north of the barrage, Gilan, on 12 September 1968 (A.F.G. Walker). One in the valley above Bazar near Rezvandeh, Gilan, on 28 April 1970 (P.W. Burness, R.G. Newell, R.E. Scott *et al.*). One at Seyed-Mahalleh Ab-bandans near Sari, on 4 February 1971 (DAS). One flying north over the coastal plain 45 km south of Astara, Gilan, on 16 January 1972 (DAS). One over the coastal plain near Sari, on 17 August 1972 (D.J. Garbutt, M.B. Webster *et al.*). One at the edge of the Caspian forest 3 km south of Alamdeh, Mazandaran, on 4 September 1972 (DAS). One flying east over Tehran on 16 September 1972 (P.N. Paul). One in the Sefid-Rud valley between Manjil and Tarik, Gilan, on 23 January 1973 (M. Smart). Five in forested hills 50 km west of Hashtpar on the Hero-Abad road, Gilan, on 19–20 October 1973 (S.K. Carnie). One flying south over the coastal marshes at Astara, Gilan, on 27 September 1975 (DAS).

**Pallas's Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* (3)  
Formerly a regular winter visitor to Iran, occurring in



the south Caspian region, in Sistan and along the coast of the Persian Gulf from the Mesopotamian Marshes on the Iraqi border to Persian Baluchestan (Zarudny 1911, Jervis Read 1958, Schüz 1959a, Vaurie 1965, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970), but already extremely rare by the 1970s.

There were only three records in the late 1960s and 1970s. An adult was seen flying north along a river 5 km south of Haji-Abad, between Kerman and Bandar Abbas, on 20 April 1969 (Gyllin 1974). An adult was observed over the lower Marun River, Khuzestan, on 28 April 1969 (P. Conder & S. Cramp). A first-year bird was seen (and photographed) on the northwest shore of Gorgan Bay in Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, on 2 August 1975 (DAS, R. Robinson). An eagle, almost certainly this species, was seen on the Caspian coast near Noor-Abad, between Mahmoud-Abad and Alamdeh, Mazandaran, on 30 May 1967 (Érard & Etchécopar 1970).

**White-rumped Vulture (Indian White-backed Vulture)** *Gyps bengalensis* (3)

Listed as a breeding bird in southern Persian Baluchestan by Zarudny (1911), and also mentioned for southern Persian Baluchestan by Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), but there appear to have been very few records since Zarudny's time.

There were only three records in the late 1960s and 1970s: Érard & Etchécopar (1970) saw a single bird and two together on a steppic plateau between Chandgan and Qasr-e Qand (east of Nik-Shahr), southeast Baluchestan, on 13 May 1967; an adult was seen perched in an acacia in a well-wooded river valley 30 km east of Minab, Hormozgan, on 26 February 1971 (DAS); and one was seen in flight over Bahu-Kalat village in the Sarbaz valley, southeast Baluchestan, on 10 April 1972 (S. Cramp, P.A.D. Hollom, DAS *et al.*).

**White-eyed Buzzard** *Butastur teesa* (12)

A scarce resident in the coastal lowlands of eastern Hormozgan and southern Baluchestan, listed by Zarudny (1911), Jervis Read (1958), Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970).

Érard & Etchécopar (1970) failed to find this species during their survey in Hormozgan and Baluchestan in 1967, but these authors spent very little time in the coastal lowlands. However, there were 12 records in the 1970s. One on the coastal plain 100 km south of the Gaz River, Hormozgan, on 28 February 1971 (DAS). One, on the Mekran coast 37 km east of Kutch (near Karevan), Baluchestan, on 2 March 1971 (DAS). A pair near Bahu-Kalat village, Sarbaz Valley, Baluchestan on 10 April 1972, and a pair near Garmbit, Sarbaz Valley, on 11 April 1972 (DAS *et al.*). One in the lower Sarbaz

Valley and one in a garden in Chahbahar, Baluchestan, on 10 January 1973 (DAS). One near Bahu Kalat, Sarbaz Valley, on 28 January 1974 (DAS). One in a wadi near Bandar Abbas airport, on 3 and 4 February 1974 (DAS), and one again in this area on 20 January 1975 (DAS). One in a garden in Chahbahar, Baluchestan on 26 January 1975 (DAS). Three in Kuh-e Geno Protected Area near Bandar Abbas, on 25 June 1977 (F.B. Argyle). One near Bahu-Kalat, Baluchestan, on 11 May 1978 (P.A. Walton).

**Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus* (17)

The nominate race is a scarce winter visitor to the Caspian lowlands and Turkman Steppes, rarely straggling south of the Alborz (Jervis Read 1958, Schüz 1959a, Vaurie 1965, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970). Zarudny (1911) listed it as a scarce winter visitor to northern Khorasan.

Single birds were recorded on a total of 17 occasions in the 1970s, mostly at Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran (eight records: DAS, S.K. Carnie, M.D. Hutchinson & G.N. Langfield) and on the Turkman Steppes, Golestan, (seven records: DAS, M. Smart, G.A. Atkinson-Willes, A. van den Berg). The earliest in autumn was a bird at Miankaleh Peninsula on 22 October 1974, and the latest in spring, a bird also at Miankaleh Peninsula on 2 February 1976. There was one record in Gilan, an adult at Bandar-e Kiashahr Lagoon on 17 December 1971 (DAS), and one record south of the Alborz, a bird over Eshk-Abad Marshes near Ghale-Now, southeast of Tehran, on 23 January 1976 (DAS).

**Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* (5)

Zarudny (1911) listed the form *vindhiana* as a breeding bird in southern Persian Baluchestan. Vaurie (1965) also lists this form for southern Baluchestan, and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that it is probably a scarce resident in southeastern Baluchestan.

Tawny Eagles were recorded in extreme southeastern Baluchestan on five occasions in the 1970s: two (an adult and a sub-adult) in Gandu (Bahu Kalat) Protected Area, Baluchestan, on 10 April 1972 (DAS *et al.*); three immatures 10 km south of Bahu-Kalat village on 11 April 1972 (DAS *et al.*); an adult in the Sarbaz Valley, Gandu Protected Area, on 22 January 1975 (DAS); an adult over the Dashtyri and an adult and an immature in the Sarbaz Valley south of Bahu-Kalat on 20 October 1975 (DAS); and two birds near Bahu Kalat on 5 May 1978 (C.D.R. Heard). The birds occurring in this area were suspected of belonging to a resident population of *A. rapax vindhiana*, which breeds widely in the Indian subcontinent, but this was never proven.

**Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* (7)

A rare passage migrant in northern Iran. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a scarce passage migrant in northwestern Iran, the south Caspian region and northern Khorasan. The species is also mentioned by Schüz (1959a) for the south Caspian region, but it is not listed by Jervis Read (1958). However, Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny (1911) and state that it occurs on migration in northwestern Iran, the southern Caspian districts and northern Khorasan.

Two near Bandar Anzali, on 21 April 1967, and one near Bandar Anzali on 30 April 1967 (Nielsen 1969). A male near Siah-Cham, between Maku and Mianeh in northwestern Azarbaijan on 25 July 1969 (S.C. Madge). Two males at Gori Gol, Azarbaijan, on 17 June 1970 (S.C. Madge). A second calendar-year male at Lashgarak near Tehran on 24 May 1973 (DAS). A first-year male at Voshmigir Dam on the Turkman Steppes, Golestan, on 1 August 1975 (DAS). A female at Bandar Anzali, on 4 April 1978 (C.D.R. Heard & P.A. Walton).

**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus* (10)

A very local breeding species, found only on islands in Lake Urumiyeh, Azarbaijan, where presumably a summer visitor; first recorded in 1971. The Lanner Falcon is not listed for Iran by Zarudny (1911), Vaurie (1965) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970). Jervis Read (1958) includes it in his checklist under the name *Falco rusticolus*, and does not mention Saker Falcon *F. cherrug*, which at that time was treated by some authors as being conspecific with Gyr Falcon under the name *Falco rusticolus*. Thus it is likely that Jervis Read was referring to Saker Falcon (a fairly common and widespread species in Iran at that time) rather than Lanner Falcon.

Indications that there could be a small breeding population on islands in Lake Urumiyeh, Azarbaijan, were first obtained in 1971: a pair was seen in display flight over an islet off Ashk Island on 6 August, and a pair was seen near the west end of Kabudan Island on 10 August (DAS). In 1972, single individuals were observed on a small island west of Espier and in a group of islets north of Arezu on 16 June, a pair was observed at a small islet near the northwest corner of the lake on 17 June, and a sub-adult was observed amongst the islets north of Arezu on 12 August (DAS). A single bird was recorded at the islet near the northwest corner of the lake on 29 August 1973 (DAS). S.K. Carnie found an adult female and an immature male on an islet northeast of Ashk Island on 13 and 14 March 1974, and a watched a pair copulating on an islet north of Arezu on 14 March. Single birds were seen on the cliffs of Espier Island and amongst the islets north of Arezu on 29 June 1974

(DAS). It was concluded that there were between three and five pairs breeding on islands in Lake Urumiyeh. These would appear to be the first breeding records of this species in Iran. The only other record of Lanner Falcon during the 1970s was a pair over the plains 60 km east of Zanjan on 20 November 1972 (DAS). The form concerned is probably *feldeggii* which breeds through Asia Minor eastward to Armenia (Vaurie 1965, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970).

**Laggar Falcon** *Falco jugger* (1)

A vagrant to southeastern Iran, first recorded in 1972.

A single bird was seen by X. Misonne at Purvadeh (33°03'N, 57°17'E), near the north end of the Dasht-e Lut, Khorasan, on 9 April 1972 (Misonne 1976). This was the first record of the species in Iran, although it was known to occur from southern Turkmenistan and eastern Afghanistan south to Baluchestan and the Mekran in Pakistan (Vaurie 1965, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970).

**Caucasian Grouse (Caucasian Black Grouse)** *Tetrao mlokosiewiczzi* (9)

A scarce and very local resident in northern Azarbaijan, first confirmed for Iran in 1971.

During the summer of 1971, reports reached the Ornithology Unit of a black game-bird in the deciduous woodland in the remote Kalibar Mountains in northern Azarbaijan. An expedition was mounted in late November 1971, and on 30 November, the presence of Caucasian Grouse in Iran was confirmed with the sighting of 11 individuals (two males and five females) in the Kalshur Valley in the Kalibar Mountains (Scott 1976). Personnel of the Ornithology Unit visited this area again in June 1973 (11 males), July 1974 (eight birds), May 1975 (28 males and six females) and April 1977 (33 males and seven females), and several surveys were carried out by local Department personnel. C.D.R. Heard found 17 birds including at least five females on 26 May 1978, and P.A. Walton found four males and a female in the same area on 30 May 1978. The total population was estimated at about 150–250 birds. The entire area was declared a non-hunting area in 1971, and in 1975, a protected area of 72,460 ha was established (the Arasbaran Protected Area) to provide protection for the grouse population.

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix* (8)

Apparently a scarce resident in the uplands of the northwest from Azarbaijan to Zanjan and Kordestan, although there are few well documented records. Zarudny (1911) listed it as a resident in northwestern Iran and the south Caspian region. Vaurie (1965) gave the range as “northwestern Iran and western Iran in the

Zagros east to Lorestan; also southern Caspian districts according to Zarudny". Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Vaurie, and show the breeding range extending throughout the Caspian lowlands to the region of Gorgan Bay. Schüz (1959a), however, dismisses the reports of breeding in the south Caspian lowlands as being erroneous.

The Grey Partridge was regularly reported from the Kalibar Mountains in northern Azarbaijan, particularly in the Kalshur Valley, in the 1970s. Three birds were observed on 4 June 1973 (A. Eftekhari), 14 birds, including a pair with a small chick, on 1–3 July 1974 (DAS), many birds on 23–24 April 1977 (F.B. Argyle), nine birds on 6–14 May 1977 (J. Mansoori), and six birds on 26 May 1978 (C.D.R. Heard). Local Department of the Environment personnel also reported the species to be fairly common in Kiamaki Protected Area in northern Azarbaijan, to the west of the Kalibar Mountains. The only other records were of six birds in Bijar Protected Area, Kordestan, on 13 April 1973 (A. Eftekhari), and three birds near Ahar, East Azarbaijan, on 15 June 1973 (A. Eftekhari).

#### **Small Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvatica* (1)

Zarudny (1911) lists the species as a rare breeding bird in southern Persian Baluchestan and also as a rare vagrant in the Paropamisus in the northeast. Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny and provide no further details.

The only record in the 1960s and 1970s was of a bird flushed from amongst tamarisks in the Sarbaz Valley 10 km south of Bahu-Kalat, southeast Baluchestan, on 21 October 1975 (DAS).

#### **Siberian Crane** *Grus leucogeranus* (7)

Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a scarce winter visitor to the south Caspian lowlands and lower Atrek River, and also as a rare winter visitor to the Sistan basin. There are old reports in the south Caspian region from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Schüz 1959a), and four birds were observed at Lenkoran in the Republic of Azerbaijan in February 1925 (Vaurie 1965), but from then until the mid-1970s, the only confirmed record was of a single bird flying west over the Anzali Mordab, Gilan, on 29 March 1963 (Nielsen & Speyer 1967).

In mid-January 1978, B. Behrouzi-Rad and M.A. Ashtiani discovered two adults in rice paddies near Fereidoon-Kenar Ab-bandans, Mazandaran (Ashtiani 1987). Seven birds were found in the same area on 8 February 1978, and subsequent visits that winter revealed the presence of at least 11 and possibly 14 individuals (M.A. Ashtiani, F.B. Argyle, L. Cornwallis, G. Archibald). According to local farmers and hunters, this tiny population – the sole survivors in

the western population of Siberian Cranes – had been visiting the area for many years, arriving in October and departing in March. It is likely that these were the same birds as the 6–15 individuals that had been reported staging regularly in spring and occasionally in autumn at the Astrakhan Reserve in the Volga Delta in Russia.

#### **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* (3)

According to Zarudny (1911), a passage migrant in the south Caspian region and winter visitor to the Sistan basin, southern Baluchestan and coastal lowlands of the Persian Gulf. The species was listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958), and mentioned for the south Caspian by Schüz (1959a). Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny (1911) and state that it occurs on migration in southern Iran and Sistan. However, there appear to have been few records in recent decades, and it is now clear that the species is only a very scarce passage migrant in the north and west.

Two birds were shot near Chalus, Mazandaran, on 17 April 1972 (H. Tajbash, pers. comm.), an adult was seen at Lake Kobi, Azarbaijan, on 17 August 1972 (DAS), and there were two adults near the east end of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 15 September 1973 (DAS, G.T. Nelson). There is also a record from the mid-1960s: L. Cornwallis (pers. comm.) observed a single bird at Lake Maharlu, Fars, in 1965 or 1966.

#### **Greater Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* (1)

A vagrant to southeastern Iran, first recorded in 1972. According to Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), Hartert (1910–22, 1932–38) includes Iran, Iraq and Asia Minor in the range of this species, but without certain proof. The species is not listed by Zarudny (1911).

A single bird was seen by X. Misonne at the edge of a small lake to the east of the great sand dunes of the Dasht-e Lut (30°23'N, 59°46'E), Kerman, on 10 May 1972 (Misonne 1976). The bird was watched for about ten minutes and then flew off to the north. This was the first record of the species in Iran. It occurs regularly in Sind (Pakistan) and perhaps also in eastern Afghanistan (Vaurie 1965, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970).

#### **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* (3)

A vagrant or rare passage migrant in northern Iran. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a rare passage migrant in northwestern Iran, and the species is also listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958), but it is not mentioned by Vaurie (1965) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970).

There were only three acceptable records in the late 1960s and 1970s: Énard & Etchécopar (1970) refer to a bird that was shot by the Rud-e Shur 40 km south of

Tehran on 14 April 1967; a single bird was seen over the marshes near the west end of Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, on 31 August 1972 (D.J. Garbutt, M.B. Webster *et al.*); and a single bird was seen at Ghale-Now Marsh near Tehran on 6 May 1977 (F.B. Argyle & G.N. Langfield).

Feeny *et al.* (1968) list all the pratincoles they saw at Miankaleh Peninsula in August and September 1961 under the name Collared Pratincole *G. pratincola*, but thought that the small parties they had observed were “probably all the black-winged form”. These authors include the records of P.J.K. Burton *et al.* who visited the Bandar-e Gaz area on the south side of Gorgan Bay in August 1963, and recorded 35 “Black-winged Pratincoles” on 21 August, and 95 on 27 August. As neither Feeny *et al.* nor Burton *et al.* mention Collared (*i.e.* Red-winged) Pratincole – a common breeding bird in the Miankaleh/Gorgan Bay area – it is probable that they were mistaken in their identification of Black-winged Pratincoles. S.C. Madge was probably also mistaken when he thought that about 70% of the 6,000 pratincoles that he saw in rice fields 20 km east of Babolsar, Mazandaran, on 1 August 1969 were this species.

#### **Small Pratincole** *Glareola lactea* (1)

A vagrant to the south Caspian region, first recorded in 1977.

A single bird, probably an immature, on the Caspian shore of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, in the early afternoon of 14 July 1977 (DAS, A. Adhami, D. Howell). The bird was watched (and photographed) for over 30 minutes at ranges down to 8 m. This was the first record for Iran. The species breeds as near as the Kabul River and its tributaries in eastern Afghanistan and Sind Province in Pakistan, and is known to move locally depending on flood conditions (Vaurie 1965, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970).

#### **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* (3)

Probably a scarce but regular winter visitor to the southern Persian Gulf and coast of Baluchestan. Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a scarce winter visitor to the south Caspian region and passage migrant in south Persian Baluchestan and southwestern Iran, and also listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958), but not mentioned by Vaurie (1965). Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that it is occasional on migration in Afghanistan and possibly also in Iran.

There were three records in the 1970s: a party of four on the shore at Chahbahar, southeast Baluchestan, on 3 March 1971 (DAS); a party of three in the same area on 4 April 1972 (DAS, D.I.M. Wallace *et al.*); and a single bird by a small pond on the Dashtyari near the Sarbaz River, southeast Baluchestan, on 18

October 1975 (DAS, F.B. Argyle).

#### **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* (6)

A rare passage migrant in spring and autumn, mainly in the south Caspian region, although there is a ringing recovery from Sistan & Baluchestan. Zarudny (1911) listed it as a passage migrant in northwestern Iran, the south Caspian region and the Zagros, and a rare migrant in southern Khorasan. The species was also listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958), and mentioned for the south Caspian region by Schüz (1959a). Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that it occurs “without doubt” in Iran, but Vaurie (1965) does not mention it for Iran.

A single bird was seen near Bandar Anzali, on 2 April 1967 (Nielsen 1969). A single bird was seen near Bandar Anzali, on 25 March 1968 (D.A. Ferguson), and a party of eight was found in the same area on 25 April 1969 (D.A. Ferguson). A bird ringed as a pullus on 17 June 1970 in Kurgaldzhin Nature Reserve, Tengiz Lake, Tselinograd Region, Kazakhstan, was recovered on 2 October 1970 at Hamoun Lake in the Sistan Basin, Sistan & Baluchestan (Argyle 1975). A single bird was seen at Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 29 October 1971 (DAS), and two birds were found in the same area three weeks later on 19 November (DAS).

There were two records of this species in Iran in the early 1960s: a party of 12 at Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 16 February 1963, and a single bird at Miankaleh Peninsula on 13 April 1963 (Nielsen & Speyer 1967).

#### **Slender-billed Curlew** *Numenius tenuirostris* (2)

A very rare and decreasing passage migrant, recorded from the south Caspian region, Persian Gulf and Sistan. Zarudny (1911) lists the species for the south Caspian region and Sistan, but his assertion that it breeds in Sistan was surely erroneous. Jervis Read (1958) includes the species in his checklist, while Schüz (1959a), Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) refer back to Zarudny and add no further records.

Érard & Etchécopar (1970) record seeing three on the mudflats at Bandar Abbas on 25 April 1967 and seven in the same area on 30 April 1967. However, none was recorded during the 1970s, despite numerous surveys in suitable habitat throughout the country during the spring and autumn migration seasons and in winter.

There is one adequately documented record in the early 1960s: a single bird seen by P.J.K. Burton *et al.* at Bandar-e Gaz on the south side of Gorgan Bay, Mazandaran, on 23 and 27 August 1963 (Feeny *et al.* 1968).

**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* (0)

A vagrant in the south Caspian region and Sistan basin. There is one old record: a bird collected by Zarudny at Zahedan, on 14 September 1898 (Zarudny 1903, mentioned in Kratochwill & Kirwan 2004). This record was presumably the basis for the listing by Jervis Read (1958). However, Vaurie (1965) and Hübner & Etchécopar (1970) do not mention the species for Iran.

None was recorded during the late 1960s and 1970s, but there were four records in the early 1960s: a small party near Gohar-Baran (Farah-Abad), Mazandaran, on 23 August 1961 (B.P. Nielsen *et al.*, pers. comm.); an adult still partly in breeding plumage on Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 18 September 1961 (Feeny *et al.* 1968); a single bird on Miankaleh Peninsula on 22 March 1963 (Nielsen & Speyer 1967); and a party of four seen by P.J.K. Burton *et al.* at Bandar-e Gaz on the south side of Gorgan Bay, Mazandaran, on 21 August 1963 (Feeny *et al.* 1968).

**Red Phalarope (Grey Phalarope)** *Phalaropus fulicarius* (8)

A rare passage migrant in the south Caspian region, and perhaps regular in small numbers offshore in the Persian Gulf. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a passage migrant in the south Caspian region and possibly also a passage migrant and winter visitor to the south coast of Iran, and Jervis Read (1958) includes it in his checklist of the birds of Iran. Vaurie (1965) notes that wintering birds have been found at sea off the coast of southern Arabia, while Hübner & Etchécopar (1970) state that it is known from Iraq and the Strait of Hormoz. Two were reported by X. Misonne at Tir-Tash, Mazandaran, on 19–20 October 1953 (Misonne 1953).

Érard & Etchécopar (1970) observed small groups totalling about 100 birds on the sea between Bandar Abbas and Qeshm Island amongst much larger numbers of Red-necked Phalaropes *P. lobatus* on 26 April 1967, and also saw about 30 on the sea near Hormoz Island on 29 April 1967. The majority of these birds were in breeding plumage. There were five records in the south Caspian region in the 1970s: one at Bandar Anzali, on 7 January 1970 (H. Kowalski); one on the Caspian shore at the west end of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 30 October 1971 (DAS); one at Bandar-e Kiashahr Lagoon, Gilan, on 17 November 1971 (DAS); one on the Caspian shore west of Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, on 18 November 1972 (R. Smith); and one at the west end of Gorgan Bay, Mazandaran, on 12 September 1975 (DAS). W. Weitkowitz observed “small groups” in company with large numbers of Red-necked

Phalaropes in the northern Arabian Sea off the Iranian coast on 5 September 1976.

**Great Skua** *Catharacta [skua]* ssp. (2)

A vagrant to the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman. A bird seen by K. Salwegter between Tunb Island and Sirri Island in the Persian Gulf on 18 June 1965 (Gulf Birdwatchers' Newsletter 7) appears to be the first record of a 'Great Skua' in Iran, as the species was not listed by Zarudny (1911), Jervis Read (1958) or Vaurie (1965).

There were two more records of 'Great Skuas' in the late 1960s and 1970s. Érard & Etchécopar (1970) observed one amongst other skuas off Qeshm Island, Hormozgan, on 27 April 1967, and P.W.G. Chilman reported one at sea (28°21'N, 50°55'E) south of Khark Island on 2 August 1973.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the 'Great Skuas' of the Southern Hemisphere (*antarctica*, *lonnbergi*, *hamiltoni* and *chilensis*) were widely considered to be conspecific with the Great Skua *C. skua* of the North Atlantic. It is now known that one of the southern forms, *lonnbergi* (Subantarctic or Brown Skua), occasionally wanders north in the Indian Ocean at least as far as Sri Lanka, Kerala (India), Somalia and Oman (Olsen & Larsson 1997). The North Atlantic form (*skua*) wanders occasionally into the eastern Mediterranean and has been recorded as a vagrant in the Black Sea, but does not appear to have been recorded with certainty in the Persian Gulf or Indian Ocean (Olsen & Larsson 1997). The three birds recorded in Iranian waters in the 1960s and 1970s are therefore perhaps more likely to have been Subantarctic Skuas *C. [skua] lonnbergi* than Great Skuas *C. [skua] skua*. There is, however, a further possibility. The closely related and very similar South Polar Skua *C. maccormicki* is also known to wander north in the northern Indian Ocean at least as far as the Oman coast, and some authors have suggested that most if not all of the records of 'Great Skuas' in the northern Indian Ocean refer to this species (*e.g.* Porter *et al.* 1996). Separation of these various forms in the field is at best difficult and often impossible, and even if detailed descriptions of the three Iranian birds still existed, it is very unlikely that their true identity could be determined.

**Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* (1)

A vagrant to the south Caspian region. One seen flying northwest over the Anzali Mordab, Gilan, on 30 April 1956 (Schüz 1959a) appears to have been the first record for Iran, as the species was not listed by Zarudny (1911) or Jervis Read (1958). Vaurie (1965) and Hübner & Etchécopar (1970) make no mention of this species for Iran.

A party of nine flew north over the airfield near Bandar Anzali, on 29 April 1970 (P.W. Burness, R.G. Newell, R.E. Scott *et al.*). Feeny *et al.* (1968) saw four skuas, probably this species, flying south high over Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 31 August 1961, and another possible Long-tailed Skua at Miankaleh on 10 September 1961.

**White-eyed Gull** *Larus leucophthalmus* (1)

A vagrant to southeast Baluchestan, first recorded in Iran in 1975.

An adult in winter plumage on the rocky shore of the peninsula at Chahbahar, southeast Baluchestan, in the morning of 24 January 1975 (DAS). The bird was in loose company with an adult and an immature Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii* and a Caspian Gull *L. cachinnans*, and was watched at very close range on the ground and in flight for over an hour. The area was checked again that afternoon, but the bird had disappeared. This was the first record of the White-eyed Gull in Iran. The species is confined as a breeding bird to the Red Sea, but outside the breeding season has wandered to the United Arab Emirates, Oman and the southeast Mediterranean (Porter *et al.* 1996).

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus* (2)

A vagrant to the south Caspian region. Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that the species occasionally wanders to the Caspian Sea, but do not mention Iran. The species was not listed by Zarudny (1911), and Schüz (1959a) casts doubt on old records in the south Caspian region. The two records in the 1970s may, therefore, have been the first confirmed records in Iran.

An adult was seen on the Caspian coast near Gohar-Baran (Farah-Abad), Mazandaran, on 1 February 1973 (DAS, G.V.T. Matthews), and an immature was found at the mouth of the Sefid-Rud, Gilan, less than a month later on 27 February 1973 (DAS).

**Brown-headed Gull** *Larus brunnicephalus* (2)

A vagrant to southeast Baluchestan and the Sistan basin. Prior to the 1970s, the only record of this species in Iran was an old record from Chahbahar, Baluchestan, listed in Ticehurst (1926–27). The species was not listed for Iran by Zarudny (1911), Jervis Read (1958), Vaurie (1965) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970).

There were two records in the 1970s. A first-winter bird was found on the rocky shore of the peninsula at Chahbahar, southeast Baluchestan, in the morning of 22 January 1975 (DAS). The bird was watched at close range for over an hour and a detailed description

was taken. A first-winter bird was seen in flight near Takht-e Shah, Hamoun-e Puzak, Sistan, on 25 October 1975 (DAS & F.B. Argyle).

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* (5)

A vagrant to the south Caspian region, first recorded in 1967.

An adult was seen at Bandar Anzali, on 21 April 1967 (Nielsen 1969), and two adults were present in the same area on 29 April 1967 (Nielsen 1969). A single bird was seen at Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, between 19 and 23 December 1968 (H. Kowalski). There was an immature on the shore of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 16 and 24 August 1973 (M. Smart), and another immature (first-winter) on the shore of Miankaleh Peninsula on 1 February, 3 March and 4 March 1976 (DAS).

**Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* (4)

A vagrant to the south Caspian, Strait of Hormoz and Mekran coast. The species was listed for the south Caspian region by Schüz (1959a), but was not listed for Iran by Zarudny (1911), Jervis Read (1958) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970). Vaurie (1965) refers to an old record in Turkestan, and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) refer to a record of two immatures seen near Kabul, Afghanistan, in September 1965. Thus the four records in the 1970s (involving six individuals) would appear to be the first fully documented records for Iran.

An adult and a first-winter bird were seen on a sandy beach on the coast between Kudsar (149 km east of Jask) and Kuch (189 km east of Jask), Baluchestan, on 1 March 1971 (DAS). The birds were watched at close range resting on the beach, preening and bathing, and were also observed in flight. A first-winter bird was seen close inshore off the headland at Chahbahar, southeast Baluchestan, in the morning of 5 April 1972 (D.I.M. Wallace *et al.*). A first-winter bird was found at the mouth of the Sefid-Rud, Gilan, at about 09:30 hrs on 28 November 1972 (DAS). This bird was watched at rest on the water and in flight with a flock of 120 immature Little Gulls *Larus minutus*. An adult and an immature were observed on the coast near Dargahan, Qeshm Island, on 25 February 1976 (B. King).

**Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* (1)

A vagrant to the Gulf of Oman. The species is not listed for Iran by Zarudny (1911), Jervis Read (1958) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970). Reports of large numbers breeding on Nabi Tunb and Farur islands in the Persian Gulf, given in Ticehurst *et al.* (1925), undoubtedly refer to the very similar Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*, as no subsequent workers have

found Sooty Terns breeding in the Persian Gulf.

Two birds (an adult and an immature) came on board a ship at 25°15'N, 57°26'E, about 55 km southwest of Jask, Hormozgan, on 17 May 1974 (P.W.G. Chilman). This appears to be the only reliable record of this species in Iranian waters, although there is an unconfirmed report of 31 at sea between Tunb Island and Siri Island in the southern Persian Gulf on 18 June 1965 (K. Salwegter).

**Pallas's Sandgrouse** *Syrhaptes paradoxus* (1)

Status uncertain; possibly an irregular winter visitor to the Turkman Steppes. Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a rare passage migrant in Khorasan and possibly a winter visitor to the south Caspian region, and also listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958). According to Vaurie (1965) and Hübner & Etchécopar (1970), the species winters irregularly south to Transcaucasia, northern Iran, Transcaucasia and southern Russian Turkistan (Turkmenistan), but Schüz (1959a) mentions only two old records in the south Caspian lowlands, near Lenkoran in the present day Republic of Azerbaijan in 1875 and 1878.

A group of nine and a flock of 150 were observed on the Turkman Steppe 18 km north of Gomishan, Golestan, on 30 December 1970, along with about 200 Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *P. alchata* (DAS, A. Adhami, M. Bosch). Attempts to visit this area in subsequent winters failed because of the poor condition of the roads after heavy rain.

**Yellow-eyed Dove** *Columba eversmanni* (5)

Status uncertain; probably a scarce resident or partial migrant in the extreme northeast of Iran. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a scarce breeding bird in northern and southern Khorasan, a passage migrant in northern Baluchestan, and a winter visitor in southern Baluchestan. Vaurie (1965) and Hübner & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny and state that it breeds in northeastern Iran in the Kopet-Dagh and valley of the Hari-Rud, Khorasan, and winters south to Persian Baluchestan. However, prior to the 1970s, there appears to have been only one record since Zarudny's time: a bird captured in Sistan on 28 April 1905 (Baker 1919).

All five records in the period under review were from northeastern Khorasan: a pair 6 km east of Tayebad on 9 June (DAS); a pair near a village in the Hari-Rud valley 45 km south of Sarakhs on 11 June 1973 (DAS); a party of four on the plains 20–25 km northeast of Darreh-Gaz on 13 June 1973 (DAS); a single bird on the plains west of Shirvan on 18 June 1973 (DAS); and about 100 in the Hari-Rud valley 26 km south of Sarakhs on 20 September 1974 (DAS). On the latter occasion, the birds were first observed in

a number of small groups but these congregated together at dusk to drink in the river before flying to roost in the riverine forest.

**Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis* (5)

A rare passage migrant in eastern Iran, also recorded in winter in southeast Baluchestan (Zarudny 1911, Vaurie 1965, Hübner & Etchécopar 1970).

All five records in the 1970s were in late September and October. A first-winter bird in the valley of the Jagin River east of Jask, and another immature bird at Jask Creek, Hormozgan, on 14 October 1973 (DAS). One in the forest by the Hari-Rud 26 km south of Sarakhs, Khorasan, on 21 September 1974 (DAS). One in a garden in a village 16 km west of Damghan, Semnan, on 24 September 1974 (DAS). One at Hormak oasis 55 km north of Zahedan, on 24 October 1975 (DAS). Four turtle doves, probably of this species, were observed in Gandu (Bahu-Kalat) Protected Area, southeast Baluchestan, on 16–18 November 1970 (M. Bosch *et al.*).

**Red Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia tranquebarica* (1)

A vagrant to southeast Baluchestan, first recorded in Iran in 1975.

Two birds were found in a garden in Chahbahar, southeast Baluchestan, on 29 January 1975, and were observed at close range for several minutes before they were flushed by a passer and flew off out of sight (DAS). These birds appeared on the same day as an Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea*, following a period of unusually severe weather with strong southeast winds, thunderstorms and torrential rain from 24–26 January. According to Vaurie (1965), the species breeds in eastern Afghanistan and Pakistan probably as far west as Bela in eastern Baluchestan Province.

**Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* (1)

Status uncertain; probably an uncommon summer visitor to the western Zagros. According to Zarudny (1911), breeds in the Zagros and occurs as a vagrant in the south Caspian region and southern Baluchestan. There are old breeding records from Fars (Blanford 1876, Witherby 1903). Vaurie (1965) and Hübner & Etchécopar (1970) follow these authors and give the breeding range as the Zagros Mountains of southwestern Iran east to Fars.

The only record in the 1970s was of a juvenile with a party of Eurasian Magpies *Pica pica* in gardens on the east side of Lake Zaribar, Kordestan, on 13 July 1974 (DAS). The Eurasian Magpie is the principal host of the Great Spotted Cuckoo, and it seems likely that this bird had been reared locally.

**Asian Koel** *Eudynamys scolopacea* (2)

A vagrant to southeast Baluchestan and the southern Persian Gulf, first recorded in Iran in 1975.

An immature female was discovered in a large garden in Chahbahar, southeastern Baluchestan, on 29 January 1975, following a period of unusually severe weather with strong southeast winds, thunderstorms and torrential rain from 24–26 January (DAS). When first seen, the bird was being chased out of an acacia tree by a female Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. It retreated into another acacia where good views were obtained from close range. This was the first record of Asian Koel in Iran. There was one other record in the 1970s: a bird heard calling in mangrove forest near Laft in Hara Protected Area, Hormozgan, on 25 February 1976 (B. King). The species breeds as near as the Indus Valley in Sind Province, Pakistan (Grimmett *et al.* 1998), and has been recorded as an irregular winter visitor or vagrant in Oman and the United Arab Emirates (Porter *et al.* 1996).

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* (3)

Status uncertain; probably a very scarce resident in southwestern Iran. The species was not listed for Iran by Zarudny (1911), but Capito (1931) refers to a specimen taken at Mishun, Fars, in spring 1925, and according to Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), the form *erlangeri* occurs from the Iraq border eastwards through the Zagros Mountains to Fars Province, and west in the Zagros to at least Lorestan. Vaurie (1965) also draws attention to a specimen collected at Gasan-Kuli at the mouth of the Atrak River in Turkmenistan close to the Iranian border in October 1942, and concludes that “the range of the Barn Owl in Iran is probably more extensive than our present knowledge indicates”.

There were only three records in the period under review, all in the southwest of the country: one in Dez Wildlife Refuge near Haft-Tappeh, Khuzestan, on 15 May 1971 (DAS); one found dead in a ruined building 1 km east of Tchoqa-Zanbil near the Dez River, Khuzestan, on 25 March 1975 (D.L. Howell & P. Joslin); and two or three birds seen 2–3 km north of Bushehr on the Persian Gulf coast in January 1977 (B. Darehshoori).

**Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca* (1)

A vagrant to the southeast Caspian region in winter. Zarudny (1911) considered the species to be a rare vagrant to the south Caspian and referred to a record of a bird at the mouth of the Gorgan River, Golestan, in March 1903. Schüz (1959a) was not convinced of the occurrence of the species in the south Caspian region, and cast doubt on an old report of a Snowy Owl near Rasht in May in the

1920s. Jervis Read (1958) did not include it in his checklist of the birds of Iran, but Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny and state that it wanders occasionally to the south Caspian lowlands of Iran.

A female was seen on the Turkman Steppe 15 km north of Gomishan, Golestan, on 20 December 1974 (DAS, A. Adhami). The bird was seen at very close range (down to 27 metres) and photographed. It was perched on a small mound at the boundary between the cultivated plains north of Gomishan and the *Salicornia* flats to the north.

**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus* (10)

Status uncertain; possibly a fairly common winter visitor to much of Iran, but easily overlooked. Zarudny (1911) stated that the species was a breeding bird in the south Caspian region, and this was repeated by Schüz (1959a), Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), but Énard & Etchécopar (1970) noted that all specimens were taken during the migration seasons or in winter, and could therefore refer to migrants.

All records in the late 1960s and 1970s were between 16 September and 17 January, except for a bird in Arasbaran Protected Area in northern Azarbaijan in May 1978. A bird collected near Neishabur, Khorasan, on 2 October 1969 (Department of the Environment Natural History Museum). At least one and probably three near Lake Ulmagol, Golestan, on 29 December 1970 (DAS, A. Adhami, M. Bosch). One at Ab-e Paravan near Lake Maharlu, Fars, on 29 October 1974 (DAS). One mist-netted and ringed in the upper Lar Valley in the Alborz north of Tehran on 2 October 1975 (F.B. Argyle, DAS). One in tamarisks by the Sarbaz River south of Bahu-Kalat, southeastern Baluchestan, on 21 October 1975 (F.B. Argyle). One in a public garden in Zabol, on 25 October 1975 (DAS), and at least four in gardens in Zabol on 17 January 1976 (DAS). Twelve mist-netted and ringed in the upper Lar Valley, Tehran, on 16–17 September 1976 (F.B. Argyle, K. Rogers). One seen in Arasbaran Protected Area, Azarbaijan, on 26 May 1978 (C.D.R. Heard). According to Rogers (2001), a total of 16 were ringed at the mist-netting site in the upper Lar Valley during the period 1975–78, but this total includes the single bird on 2 October 1975 and 12 on 16–17 September 1976, mentioned above.

**Sykes's Nightjar** *Caprimulgus mahrattensis* (3)

Status uncertain; probably a scarce resident in eastern Hormozgan and southern Baluchestan. Blanford (1876) and Zarudny (1911) list the species for southern Baluchestan, and Vaurie (1965) states that it probably occurs in Sistan as it is said to be common in the Afghan portion of the Sistan basin. Hüe & Etchécopar



(1970) follow these authors and give the range in Iran as southern Baluchestan and probably Sistan.

At least one and probably two more on the coastal plain just west of Jask, Hormozgan, on 28 February 1971 (DAS). A pair calling in the Sarbaz Valley 8 km north of Garmabit, Gandu (Bahu-Kalat) Protected Area, Baluchestan, on 12 April 1972 (P.A.D. Hollom *et al.*). One flushed by day near Bahu-Kalat, Baluchestan, on 4 May 1978 (C.D.R. Heard). A nightjar probably of this species was seen at Dalghan in the Gandu Protected Area, Baluchestan, on 18 November 1970 (M. Bosch, W. Kinunen).

#### **Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius* (5)

A scarce resident in the forest of the south Caspian lowlands from the Talysh Mountains in the west to the region of Gorgan in the east (Zarudny 1911, Misonne 1953, Schüz 1959a, Vaurie 1965, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970).

The Black Woodpecker seems to have become very scarce in Iran by the 1970s, and there were only five records: one near the Sardab-Rud southwest of Chalus, Mazandaran, sometime in 1970 (W. Kinunen); one near Tang-e Gol in Golestan National Park, Golestan, on 2 March 1970 (Y. Shadlu per D.A. Ferguson); a male in the same area on 3 February 1972 (DAS, J.W.F. Davis); one in the forest 30 km south of the highway, just east of Azad-Shahr (Shahpasand), Golestan, on 29 January 1976 (reported by an English hunter); and an undated record of one in the forest 20 km south of Amol, Mazandaran (F.B. Argyle). There were also unconfirmed reports of several birds in the Talar-Sarband forest east of Pol-e Sefid, Mazandaran, in April and May 1968 (Department of the Environment files).

#### **White-winged Lark** *Melanocorypha leucoptera* (18)

A winter visitor in fluctuating numbers to the south Caspian lowlands and Turkman Steppes, and rare vagrant farther south. Zarudny (1911), Schüz (1959a), Vaurie (1959) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) list it as a winter visitor to northern Iran, primarily in the south Caspian region.

All except five of the records in the period under review were during the extremely severe winter of January 1972, when there was a large invasion of this species and Black Lark *M. yeltoniensis* into the south Caspian lowlands. At least 70 birds were observed on the Turkman Steppes 5–15 km east of Gomishan, Golestan, on 30 December 1970 (DAS, A. Adhami, M. Bosch), and a single bird was found on Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 3 January 1971 (DAS, A. Adhami, M. Bosch). The invasion in the winter of 1971/1972 occurred during a period of exceptionally heavy snowfall in the southwest Caspian in mid-

January 1972. The first were three birds at Astara, Gilan, and seven flying south along the coast 25 km south of Astara on 15 January (DAS, J.W.F. Davis). Another was seen flying south along the coast 10 km south of Astara on 16 January, and there was one in Selke Wildlife Refuge, Gilan, on 20 January. There was a heavy passage eastwards along the coast near Chalus, Mazandaran, in the afternoon of 23 January (100+) and morning of 24 January (300), and there were at least 100 along the Caspian shore between Now-Shahr and Gohar-Baran (Farah-Abad), and over 1,000 on Larim-Sara plains north of Sari, also on 24 January. Several thousand birds were present in the Larim-Sara and Gohar-Baran (Farah-Abad) area on 25 January. There were over 100 birds on Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 26 January, and many hundreds in this area on 27 January. A further 30 were recorded along the south side of Gorgan Bay near Behshahr, Mazandaran, on 29 January (DAS, J.W.F. Davis). A month later, the great majority of these birds had disappeared, and only one bird was recorded during a survey of the south Caspian lowlands in late February – a single bird at Larim-Sara plains, Mazandaran, on 27 February 1972 (DAS). The only other records were two birds by the Rud-e Shur south of Karaj, Tehran, on 5 January 1973 (P.N. Paul), and one bird flying west with a flock of Calandra Larks *M. calandra* near the east end of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 27 November 1975 (DAS).

#### **Black Lark** *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* (13)

A rare and highly irregular winter visitor to the south Caspian lowlands, only occurring in very severe winters. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a rare winter visitor to the south Caspian region and Atrek Valley. The species is also listed by Jervis Read (1958), Vaurie (1959) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) who follow Zarudny. However, there appear to have been very few records in Iran, and the only record for the south Caspian lowlands mentioned by Schüz (1959a) is a very old report from the region of Bandar Anzali, in January 1773. Schüz also mentions a report from Lenkoran in the Republic of Azarbaijan in December 1879.

All records in the period under review were from the extremely severe winter of 1971/1972, when there was a large invasion of this species in the south Caspian lowlands along with an even larger invasion of White-winged Larks *M. leucoptera*. The main influx of Black Larks occurred during a period of exceptionally heavy snowfall in the southwest Caspian in mid-January 1972, but some numbers remained in the southeast Caspian until at least late February. The first birds were a female near the Caspian shore 25 km south of Astara, Gilan, on 15 January, and a female in

the coastal dunes near Hashtpar, Gilan, on 16 January (DAS, J.W.F. Davis). Thirty birds, including an adult male, flew east along the coast near Chalus, Mazandaran, in the afternoon of 23 January, and a further 80 flew east past the same site in the morning of 24 January. There were also about 150 along the Caspian shore between Now-Shahr and Gohar-Baran (Farah-Abad) on 24 January, and several hundred (along with several thousand White-winged Larks) in the Larim-Sara and Gohar-Baran (Farah-Abad) area, Mazandaran, on 25 January. Forty birds were found at the east end of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 26 January; there were at least 200 (including 15 adult males) on Miankaleh Peninsula on 27 January, and 10 birds near the southwest corner of Gorgan Bay, Mazandaran, on 29 January (DAS, J.W.F. Davis *et al.*). Much smaller numbers were recorded during a survey of the south Caspian lowlands a month later: 90 (including two adult males) at Fereidoon-Kenar, eight near Babolsar and 50 at Larim-Sara, Mazandaran, on 26 February 1972, and six at Larim-Sara on 27 February 1972 (DAS *et al.*).

**Hume's Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella acutirostris* (2)

Status uncertain; probably an uncommon and local summer visitor to the highlands of northeastern Khorasan. According to Énard & Etchécopar (1970), Zarudny collected a specimen to the southeast of Birjand on 29 June 1896 and thought that the species was probably breeding in eastern Khorasan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) show the breeding range extending from central Afghanistan west to the region of Birjand in northeastern Khorasan.

About 20 birds including juveniles were seen in the hills 20 km north of Torbat-e Jam, Khorasan, on 9 and 10 June 1973, and another 12 were found in the hills 24–29 km north of Torbat-e Jam on 10 June 1973 (DAS). These records strongly suggest that the species does indeed breed in eastern Khorasan. S.C. Madge saw 20 *Calandrella* larks thought to be of this species on the plains near Chamanbid between Kalaleh and Bojnurd, Khorasan, on 25 June 1970, and about 12 on the plains 15 km east of Torbat-e Jam, Khorasan, on 28 June 1970.

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* (10)

A very scarce passage migrant and occasional winter visitor, mainly in the north and east. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a scarce winter visitor and passage migrant in Persian Baluchestan, the Persian Gulf and the Mesopotamian region of southwest Iran. The species is listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958), presumably following Zarudny, but not by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970). The latter authors mention a report by Zarudny

in 1911 of a Richard's Pipit in the district of Karun in Iraq, close to the Iranian border.

One at Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 3 January 1971 (DAS). One at Govater, Gandu (Bahu-Kalat) Protected Area, Baluchestan, on 4 March 1971 (DAS). One by the Rud-e Shirin east of Bandar Abbas, on 12 October 1973 (DAS). One by the coast road 85 km north of Jask, Hormozgan, on 16 October 1973 (DAS). One near Bandar Assalu, Bushehr, on 21 October 1973 (DAS). One at Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 2 November 1973 (DAS). One in rice fields at Ab-e Paravan, Lake Maharlou, Fars, on 19 January 1974 (A. Eftekhar, DAS). One at Delbar spring, Touran Wildlife Refuge, Khorasan, on 25 & 26 April 1974 (DAS). One in rice fields near Nayband, Khorasan, on 27 April 1975 (DAS). One flying north up the Sarbaz Valley 10 km south of Bahu-Kalat, Baluchestan, on 21 October 1975 (DAS).

**Bohemian Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus* (2)

A rare and irregular winter visitor, listed for the south Caspian region by Zarudny (1911) and Schüz (1959a), and also for the Atrek Valley and Khorasan by Zarudny (1911) and for southwestern Iran by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970).

There were only two records in the period under review: a small party seen at Tang-e Gol in Golestan National Park, Golestan, in November or December 1970 (M. Bosch); and two adults in a garden in Chahbahar, Baluchestan, on 5 March 1971 (DAS).

**Black-throated Accentor** *Prunella atrogularis* (3)

A scarce winter visitor to the north and east. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a passage migrant in the south Caspian region and Khorasan, and a scarce winter visitor to the Sistan basin, Kerman and northern Baluchestan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny and state that the nominate form occurs as a migrant from the north of Iran south to Kerman and Baluchestan.

A single bird was seen near the west end of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 2 November 1973 (DAS). Three birds were found in a garden in Zahedan, on 8 February 1974 (DAS), and there were at least 14 in a public garden in Zabol, on 17 January 1976 (DAS).

**Red-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis ruficollis* (2)

A vagrant in winter, first recorded in 1976.

B. King discovered a male Red-throated Thrush in an area of cotton fields just to the west of Ghale-Now Marsh, southeast of Tehran, on 17 February 1976. DAS visited the site in the early morning of 19 February, and quickly found the bird by a ditch with a few *Phragmites* and tamarisks in an area of cotton fields about 1 km west of Ghale-Now Marsh. Two

weeks later, on 4 March 1976, DAS found another male in a garden at Ashuradeh at the east end of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran. These were the first records of this distinctive form in Iran. The Black-throated Thrush *T. r. atrogularis* is a fairly common winter visitor to north, central and eastern Iran, occasionally reaching the Gulf coast and southern Baluchestan, but numbers vary considerably from winter to winter. The winter of 1975/76 was a particularly good winter for this form, with more records than in any of the preceding five winters and observations from as far south central Fars, Yazd and Sistan & Baluchestan. According to Hübner & Etchécopar (1970), the Red-throated Thrush is an occasional winter visitor to eastern Afghanistan.

#### **Iraq Babbler** *Turdoides altirostris* (6)

A scarce and local resident in the wetlands of Khuzestan. According to Zarudny (1911), a resident in the Mesopotamian portion of southwestern Iran and also in the littoral of the Persian Gulf. The species was listed for Khuzestan by Vaurie (1953), but apparently overlooked by Jervis Read (1958). Two were collected at Harmala on the Dez River north of Ahwaz on 27 October 1957 (Diesselhorst 1962). Hübner & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny and give the range as southwestern Iran, along the base of the Zagros and along the Karun River.

The Iraq Babbler was recorded at three sites in Khuzestan in the 1970s: in patches of *Phragmites* reed-beds along the Dez River in Dez Wildlife Refuge, north of Ahwaz, where there were about 15 on 5 January 1972, a pair on 15 May 1972, and five (including a pair with a juvenile) on 6–7 June 1974 (DAS *et al.*); in reed-beds at an oxbow lake near Hamidiyeh, west of Ahwaz, where there were five on 14 May 1972 and five on 13 November 1973 (DAS *et al.*); and along the Shatt-al-Arab west of Khorram-Shahr, where there were two on 8 April 1978 (C.D.R. Heard & P.A. Walton). There is also one report from the mid-1960s: a bird observed in a marsh 15 km south of Andimeshk, Khuzestan, on 19 June 1965 (E.V. Thompson, *in litt.*).

#### **Bearded Reedling (Bearded Tit)** *Panurus biarmicus* (8)

Zarudny (1911) lists the Bearded Reedling as a breeding bird in the south Caspian region, the valley of the Hari-Rud in northeastern Khorasan, and in Sistan and Baluchestan, and this is repeated by Hübner & Etchécopar (1970), presumably on the basis of Zarudny's assertion. However, Schüz (1959a) considered the species to be only a winter visitor to the south Caspian lowlands. The few records in the late 1960s and 1970s suggest that the species is only a non-

breeding visitor to the south Caspian region and rare straggler to the Tehran area.

Five of the eight records were in the winter of 1970/71 – presumably an 'irruption' year for this species further north in the Caspian: a party of six in a coastal marsh at Astara, Gilan, on 20 October 1970; a party of five at Amirkelayeh Lake, Gilan, on 25 October 1970; 20 at Lake Eymar, Golestan, on 28 December 1970; 20 at Lake Ajigol, Golestan, on 29 December 1970; and a party of five at Seyed-Mahalleh Ab-bandans, Mazandaran on 5 January 1971 (DAS, A Adhami, M. Bosch *et al.*). A single bird was seen at Dasht-e Naz Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, on 16 December 1969 (D.A. Ferguson); three were observed at Ghale-Now Marsh near Tehran on 27 January 1973 (P.N. Paul), and there was a flock of about 50 in a coastal marsh near Astara, Gilan, on 7 January 1974 (G.A. Atkinson-Willes). Twelve surveys of the wetlands of the Sistan basin in the 1970s failed to find the species, and in 1971, when these wetlands dried out completely, there were no reed-beds suitable for the bird.

#### **Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* (8)

The form *neurotica* is a scarce and very local resident in Khuzestan and Ilam. It is not mentioned by Zarudny (1911), but Jervis Read (1968) includes it in his checklist of the birds of Iran, and Vaurie (1959) states that it breeds on the Iran/Iraq border near Ghasr-e Shirin, Ilam. Hübner & Etchécopar (1970) show the range extending from the region of Ghasr-e Shirin southeast to southern Khuzestan.

There were no records in the 1960s, and five of the eight records in the 1970s were from Shadegan Marshes, Khuzestan: one in song over the southern marshes on 13 May 1972 (DAS); three in song over the northern marshes on 15 May 1972 (DAS); one in rice fields near Shadegan village on 14 November 1973 (DAS); two in rice fields near Shadegan village on 4 June 1974 (DAS); and several in the central marshes on 20 January 1976 (F.B. Argyle). Two of the other records were also in Khuzestan: a single bird in a date garden on the western outskirts of Ahwaz on 14 February 1971 (DAS), and a single bird in a marsh 20 km northwest of Shush on 16 May 1972 (DAS). A bird was found in song in a wet meadow in a valley northwest of Gilan-e Gharb (southeast of Ghasr-e Shirin), Ilam, on 30 June 1975, and was presumably breeding in the area (DAS).

#### **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* (11)

A scarce and local summer visitor to northeastern Iran and the Sistan basin; probably a fairly common passage migrant in the east and southeast, but

doubtless often overlooked because of difficulties in field identification. Zarudny (1911) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) list it as a breeding bird in Khorasan and Sistan, and a passage migrant in Kerman and northern Baluchestan.

Érard & Etchécopar (1970) observed numerous migrants in irrigated cultivation at Zahedan, on 10 May 1967, and also a number of birds in flooded areas near cultivation in the Sistan basin, notably around Zabol, on 18–20 May 1967. While many of the latter were thought to be birds still on passage, some were paired and in song, and were thought to be breeding in the area. There was only one probable breeding record in the 1970s: an observation of at least three birds in song in a *Juncus* marsh at the southwest corner of Gorgan Bay, Mazandaran, on 12 July 1972 (DAS). Passage migrants were recorded as follows: one in a garden in Zabol, on 30 March 1972 and one in a garden in Zahedan, on 31 March 1972 (DAS *et al.*); four in acacias near Bandar Abbas airport, on 19 May 1974 and one in a garden east of Bandar Abbas on 20 May 1974 (DAS); three in low scrub on Larak Island, Hormozgan, on 24 May 1974 (DAS); two at the west end of Qeshm Island, Hormozgan, on 26 May 1974 (DAS); three in gardens at Mazduran, Khorasan, on 20 September 1974 (DAS); and one at Bahu-Kalat, Baluchestan, on 3 and 5 May 1978 (C.D.R. Heard).

The Paddyfield Warbler was also recorded in the southeast Caspian in the early 1960s: two were trapped at Bandar-e Gaz on the south side of Gorgan Bay, Mazandaran, on 15 August 1963, and another two were trapped in the same area on 25 August (Feeny *et al.* 1963).

#### **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* (6)

A scarce and local summer visitor to the extreme northwest; probably occurs as a scarce passage migrant in the north and west, but status uncertain because of difficulties in identification outside the breeding season. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a scarce passage migrant in northwestern Iran, Khorasan, southwestern Iran and the Persian Gulf, and a possible breeding bird in the Zagros. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) give the range as northwestern Iran east to Gilan in the southwest Caspian and south in the Zagros to Lorestan.

There were only six definite or possible breeding records in the 1970s, all in the extreme northwest of the country. Four of these were in and around Arasbaran Protected Area in the Kalibar Mountains in East Azarbaijan: a pair in song at the southern edge of the Protected Area on 1 July 1974, and at least six (some in song) in the same area on 2 July 1974 (DAS); one in song along the Aras River north of the Protected Area on 6 July 1974 (DAS), and at least five in the Israndurst, Mahidi and Mahmood-Abad areas on 27

May 1978 (P.A. Walton). Dejonghe (1980) watched a pair of birds carrying food at Cham-Asbi (38°13'N, 48°15'E) near Ardabil, East Azarbaijan, on 9 July 1975, and found the species commonly in a marsh near Ardabil Lake (38°15'N, 48°18'E) at about the same time.

There were a number of reports of birds on passage, including birds trapped and ringed, during the 1960s and 1970s. Feeny *et al.* (1968) refer to a bird trapped at Bandar-e Gaz on the south shore of Gorgan Bay, Mazandaran, on 25 August 1963. Érard & Etchécopar (1970) collected two specimens and saw many others in gardens at Hermak-Abad (Hormak), north of Zahedan, on 21 and 23 May 1967, and saw many individuals in gardens around Zabol and elsewhere in the Sistan basin on 18–20 May 1967. Rogers (2001) lists a total of 26 Marsh Warblers ringed at a regular trapping site in the Alborz Mountains north of Tehran in the period 1975–78. C.D.R. Heard observed one at Bandar Lengeh on 31 May 1978.

As the Marsh Warbler is notoriously difficult to separate from the race *fusca* of the European Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* even in the hand, all these records of birds on passage are best treated with caution. The large numbers reportedly trapped in the upper Lar Valley in 1975–78 are quite remarkable, as only three European Reed Warblers were trapped at this site during the same period. In contrast, no Marsh Warblers were recorded at Lashgarak in the Alborz foothills north of Tehran on 191 visits between June 1972 and February 1976, while European Reed Warblers were recorded on a total of 24 occasions, with up to 16 being recorded in a day (Scott 2007). Similarly, it seems quite extraordinary that there should be a pronounced spring passage through Sistan & Baluchestan, as reported by Érard & Etchécopar (1970), as the Marsh Warbler breeds no further east than 70°E and apparently winters exclusively in Africa (Cramp 1992).

#### **Mountain Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus sindianus* (2)

The form *lorenzii* is a fairly common summer visitor to the Kalibar Mountains in northern Azarbaijan. The status of the species at other times of the year is uncertain because of the difficulty in identification. Zarudny (1911) lists the form *lorenzii* as a passage migrant in the Zagros, and the form *sindianus* as a passage migrant in Khorasan and winter visitor to south Baluchestan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) give the breeding range of *lorenzii* as Transcaucasia, Armenia and perhaps Azarbaijan, Iran, and note that it has been recorded in autumn in Azarbaijan.

The form *lorenzii* was found commonly in song in the deciduous forests in Arasbaran Protected Area in

the Kalibar Mountains, northern Azarbaijan, on 1–5 July 1974, with up to 20 recorded in a day (DAS), and again on 26–30 May 1978, when over 45 birds were seen and heard (C.D.R. Heard & P.A. Walton).

**Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus orientalis* (1)

A vagrant or very scarce summer visitor to the western Zagros, first recorded in 1975.

A single bird in song in a lightly wooded valley in the hills 13 km east of Marivan, Kordestan, on 4 July 1975 (DAS). The bird was watched at close range between 06:30 and 09:40 hrs in a clump of willows and poplars along a river bank in an area of scrubby oak woodland. The bird was very active, repeatedly uttering a short, simple song, described at the time as “a yaffle of ‘chi-chi-chi-chi-chi...’ fast and sometimes with a short flourish at the end.” This was the first record for Iran. The species is known to breed as close to Iran as southeastern Turkey (Porter *et al.* 1996), and could be a very scarce breeding summer visitor to the western Zagros. It occurs on passage in Iraq, and has occurred as a vagrant in Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen (Porter *et al.* 1996).

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (7)

A scarce passage migrant, mainly in the north. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a rare passage migrant in the south Caspian region, and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that it occurs on migration in northern Iran. However, there seem to have been very few published records.

None was recorded in the 1960s, and three of the seven records in the 1970s were from the Lashgarak area north of Tehran. Two at Lashgarak, Tehran, on 9 September 1973 (DAS). One at Khaneh-Sorkh south of Kerman on 11 October 1973 (DAS). One at Ghale-Now Marsh near Tehran on 19 April 1974 (DAS). One at Lashgarak from 6 to 9 May 1974 (DAS), and one at Lashgarak on 9 September 1974 (DAS). One in the upper Lar Valley in the Alborz north of Tehran on 4 September 1975 (DAS). One in a garden in Chahbahar, Baluchestan, on 17 October 1975 (DAS & F.B. Argyle).

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* (10)

A vagrant or scarce passage migrant in northern Iran, chiefly in autumn. Schüz (1959a) mentions a record of the nominate form from Gorgan in the south Caspian lowlands on 16 March 1917, but Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) do not mention this form for Iran. Neither *P. inornatus* nor *P. humei* were listed by Zarudny (1911).

One at Galugah Ab-bandan near Bandar Anzali, from 11 to 25 April 1970, with two birds present on 15

and 18 April (P.W. Burness, R.G. Newell, R.E. Scott *et al.*). One at Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 3 November 1973 (DAS). One at Lashgarak, Tehran, on 8 November and 23 November 1973 (P.N. Paul, DAS). One at Semeskandeh Protected Area near Sari, on 18 March 1974 (DAS), and another individual in the same area on 19 March 1974 (DAS). One near Roshgar, south of Mashad, on 23 September 1974 (DAS). One at Lashgarak, Tehran, on 7 October 1974 (DAS). Three at Madjurad spring, Touran Protected Area, on 15 November 1974 (DAS). One in a garden near the east end of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 27 November 1975 (DAS).

The closely related Hume's Warbler *P. humei* is a fairly common winter visitor from early October to late April in Sistan & Baluchestan and Hormozgan, occurring west to the region of Bandar Abbas and north to Zabol in the Sistan basin (pers. obs.).

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (4)

A vagrant or very scarce passage migrant in northern Iran. Zarudny (1911) lists *viridanus* (the form breeding in Eastern Europe) as a rare passage migrant in the south Caspian region, Khorasan and Kerman. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) do not mention this form for Iran.

One near the west end of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 6 May 1971 (DAS), and one in the same area on 29 October 1971 (DAS). One at Lashgarak, Tehran, on 28 October 1973 (DAS), and another at Lashgarak on 10 October 1976 (M.D. Hutchinson & G.N. Langfield).

The closely related Green Warbler *P. nitidus* is a common summer visitor to the Kalibar Mountains in northern Azarbaijan and the Caspian forest east to Golestan, and a very common passage migrant, especially in autumn, throughout northern and eastern Iran (pers. obs.).

**European Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* (11)

A scarce passage migrant in spring in the north, but status in autumn unknown because of difficulties in separation from the very similar Semi-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata*. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a passage migrant in the south Caspian region. The species was also listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958), but is not mentioned by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970).

None was recorded in the 1960s. Nine of the 11 records in the 1970s were at Lashgarak, a regularly watched site in the Alborz foothills north of Tehran: two on 20 April and one on 21 April 1973 (DAS, P.N. Paul); two on 26 March, one on 31 March, seven on 4 April, four on 5 April and two on 8 April 1974 (DAS); and one on 28 March and one on 3 April 1975 (DAS, K.G. Rogers). The only other records were three males at Astara between 18 and 25 March 1976 (K.G.

Rogers), and a male at Ahwaz, on 8 April 1978 (C.D.R. Heard).

Only records of males in breeding plumage were considered acceptable, as the separation of females and males in non-breeding plumage from the very similar Semi-collared Flycatcher (a common breeding bird and passage migrant in northern and western Iran) was at that time poorly understood. Thus it is possible that the European Pied Flycatcher occurs as a regular passage migrant in autumn, and is commoner in spring than the records suggest.

**White-crowned Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus coronatus* (1)

Status uncertain; according to Zarudny (1911), the form *stoliczkae* (*coronatus* group) is a passage migrant and winter visitor in the Sistan basin, Kerman and Baluchestan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), citing Zarudny, state that it probably breeds in northeastern Khorasan and in winter occurs in eastern Iran south to Sistan & Baluchestan.

A single bird was seen in a bushy gully in the hills near Doruneh, south of Sabzevar, Khorasan, on 25 April 1975 (DAS).

**Caspian Tit** *Parus hyrcanus* (11)

A scarce resident in the Caspian forest on the north slope of the Alborz from the region of Gorgan to Gilan (Zarudny 1911, Hüe & Etchécopar 1970). In the 1960s and 1970s, *P. hyrcanus* was still considered to be a subspecies of the widespread Sombre Tit *P. lugubris*. The 1970s records are therefore based on distribution, rather than positive identification of the form *hyrcanus*.

Several family parties in tall forest in Golestan National Park, Golestan, on 29 May 1967 (Érard & Etchécopar 1970). One at Aju in the Central Alborz Protected Area, Mazandaran, on 22 March 1968 (D.A. Ferguson), and four at Dasht-e Naz Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran, on 13 December 1968 (D.A. Ferguson). One or two in the Caspian forest near Shahpasand (Azad-Shahr), Golestan, on 15 October 1970 (S.C. Madge). Three at Tang-e Gol, Golestan National Park, Golestan, on 3 May 1971 (DAS). Two in the Caspian forest west of Asalem, Gilan, on 1 August 1971 (DAS). Two in the forest above Tang-e Gol, Golestan National Park, on 3 February 1972 (DAS). One in the Caspian forest near Tir-Tash, Mazandaran, on 24 August 1972 (D.J. Garbutt, M.B. Webster *et al.*). Three in the Caspian forest between Galanrud and Deylam, Mazandaran, on 15 April 1973 (DAS). A family party of four in the Caspian forest in Masuleh Valley, Gilan, on 12 July 1975 (DAS). Two near the upper limit of the Caspian forest in Parvar Protected

Area, Semnan, on 23 August 1975 (DAS). A ‘Sombre Tit’ observed at Manzarieh Scout Camp in Tehran on 12 January 1973 (P.N. Paul) was more likely to have been a Caspian Tit (*hyrcanus*) that had wandered over from the Caspian forest less than 50 km to the north, than a Sombre Tit (*lugubris*) from the Zagros, 400 km to the west.

The Sombre Tit is a fairly common resident in deciduous woodland in the Kalibar Mountains in northern East Azarbaijan (ssp. *anatoliae*), throughout wooded areas in the Zagros Mountains from the region of Sardasht in southern West Azarbaijan southeast to the region of Jiroft in Fars (ssp. *dubius*), and in pistachio/almond woodlands in the highlands south of Kerman (ssp. *kirmanensis*) (Harrap & Quinn 1996, pers. obs.).

**Turkestan Tit** *Parus bokharensis* (4)

A scarce resident in the lowlands along the Turkmenistan border in the extreme northeast of Khorasan. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a resident in the Paropamisus. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) give the range as extending from northeastern Afghanistan west across Afghan Turkestan and the Paropamisus to the borders of Khorasan.

Three of the four records in the 1970s were in riverine woodland along the Hari-Rud near Sarakhs in northeastern Khorasan: one in woodland 28 km south of Sarakhs on 11 June 1973 (DAS); a pair in the same area on 20 September 1974 (DAS); and a pair in the forest just north of Sarakhs on 21 September 1974 (DAS). A pair was observed in similar habitat at Shilagan, 10 km east of Lotf-Abad, Khorasan, on 13 June 1973 (DAS).

**Oriental White-eye** *Zosterops palpebrosus* (1)

Status uncertain; possibly a scarce resident in mangroves in eastern Hormozgan. First recorded in 1978.

P.M. Reynolds observed “large flocks” in the mangrove forest on the east side of East Jask Bay, eastern Hormozgan, on 14 May 1978 (Reynolds 1978). The species is known to breed in eastern Afghanistan (Hüe & Etchécopar 1970) and also in the Indus Delta near Karachi and in northwestern Pakistan (Grimmett *et al.* 1998).

**Cinereous Bunting** *Emberiza cineracea* (5)

A scarce and local summer visitor to the northwest of Iran. Zarudny (1911) lists the form *semenowi* as a breeding bird in the Zagros, a passage migrant in extreme southwestern Iran, and a passage migrant and winter visitor on the Persian Gulf coast. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) give the breeding range as southwestern Iran in Lorestan and Chaharmahal &

Bakhtiari in the Zagros, following Zarudny. Énard & Etchécopar (1970) also refer to an old record from northern Khuzestan.

Recorded during the breeding season at four sites in the western Zagros: two females on a wooded hillside near Lake Zaribar, Kordestan, on 13 July 1974 (DAS); a male in oak scrub in a valley northwest of Ilam, on 29 June 1975 (DAS); a pair with a recently fledged juvenile in scrubby woodland on a ridge north of Nowsud, Kordestan, on 3 July 1975 (DAS); and a male in wooded hills east of Marivan, Kordestan, on 4 July 1975 (DAS). A female or immature on Kabudan Island, Lake Urumiyeh, Azarbaijan, on 4 August 1972 (DAS) was presumably on passage.

**White-capped Bunting** *Emberiza stewarti* (1)

Status uncertain; possible a rare summer visitor to the Kopet-Dagh mountains in northern Khorasan. Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a vagrant in winter in southern Khorasan and a rare passage migrant in the Parapomusis. Jervis Read (1958) included it in his list of the birds of Iran, and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that it possibly reaches eastern Iran.

A male was found in song in juniper woodland at 2,370 m in the Kopet-Dagh in Sarani Protected Area, Khorasan, on 17 June 1973 (DAS). The bird was watched at close range for several minutes as it sang from an exposed perch on top of a small juniper. The song was described at the time as about eight identical notes repeated in Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* rhythm: “whing whing whing etc.”

**Cretzschmar’s Bunting** *Emberiza caesia* (1)

A rare vagrant in the Zagros in southwestern Iran, listed by Zarudny (1911), Jervis Read (1958) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970).

Two were observed moving northwest with about 100 Ortolan Buntings *E. hortulana* in the hills west of Gachsaran (Do-Gonbadan) in the southwestern Zagros, Fars, on 9 April 1978 (C.D.R. Heard).

**Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* (4)

A very scarce passage migrant in northern and eastern Iran. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a very rare passage migrant in northern and southern Khorasan, and also as a scarce winter visitor to Khuzestan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) apparently dismiss the wintering records and state only that there have been occasional observations in the northeast of Iran.

A male was seen at Lashgarak, Tehran, on 13 March 1975 (DAS). The other three records in the 1970s were in all eastern Khorasan during the period 23–29 October 1975. A female or immature male in a garden in Khunik, Khorasan, on 23 October 1975 (DAS & F.B. Argyle); another female or immature

male in a garden in Shusf, south of Birjand, Khorasan, on the same day (DAS & F.B. Argyle); and one in a garden in a village just north of Birjand, Khorasan, on 29 October 1975 (DAS & F.B. Argyle). There was also one record in the early 1960s: a male at Dasht-e Arjan, Fars, on 27 November 1965 (P.A.D. Hollom).

**Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* (1)

A vagrant to the north and east of Iran. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a vagrant or rare passage migrant in northern Baluchestan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), following Zarudny, state that the species has been noted from Persian Baluchestan. The only other record of this species in Iran appears to be of a female at Ashuradeh at the east end of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 19 September 1961 (Feeny *et al.* 1968).

A female or immature was seen in a garden in the hills north of Sabzevar, Khorasan, on 18 September 1974 (DAS).

**European Serin** *Serinus serinus* (1)

A vagrant to the western Zagros. This species was not listed by Zarudny (1911) or Jervis Read (1958), but according to Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), it has occurred as an accidental in southwestern Iran on the Iraqi border.

A male was found on a bushy hillside near the southeast corner of Lake Zaribar, Kordestan, in the morning of 2 January 1972 following a heavy fall of snow (DAS, J.W. F. Davis). The bird was watched for about 30 minutes and spent part of its time with two Common Linnets *Carduelis cannabina*.

**Common Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* (2)

Status uncertain; perhaps only a rare vagrant, although the species has occurred as far south as central Fars and Sistan & Baluchestan. The Common Crossbill breeds quite widely in northern Turkey, but there seems no reason to suppose that it does so in the extreme northwest of Azarbaijan, as implied by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970). It was not listed for Iran by Zarudny (1911), Jervis Read (1958) or Schüz (1959a).

There were only two records in the period under review: two females or immatures in juniper forest in Parvar Protected Area, Semnan, on 28 July 1972 (DAS); and a female or immature in a garden in Zahedan, on 8 February 1973 (L. Cornwallis). There is also one confirmed record from central Fars in the mid-1960s (L. Cornwallis pers. comm.), but no details are available.

**Eurasian Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (8)

A scarce resident in the Kalibar Mountains in northern

East Azarbaijan, and probably only an irregular winter visitor to the forests of the south Caspian region east to Gorgan. Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a breeding bird and winter visitor in the south Caspian region, and a rare breeding bird and winter visitor in Khorasan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) also give the breeding range as extending from northern Azarbaijan through the south Caspian region to northwestern Khorasan. However, Kirwan (2006) has recently summarised the distribution of this species in Iran, and points out that the sole evidence for breeding in the south Caspian region is an immature male collected at Dimalu near Gorgan, Golestan, on 23 July 1940. As this could have been a wandering bird from elsewhere, or perhaps even a bird that had escaped from captivity, Kirwan concluded that the Eurasian Bullfinch is best considered only as a non-breeding visitor to the south Caspian region.

Five of the eight records in the 1970s were from deciduous woodland in the Kalibar Mountains in Arasbaran Protected Area in East Azarbaijan: five birds on 30 November 1971 (DAS); a pair in the south of the Protected Area on 2 July 1974; a pair in the central portion of the Protected Area on 3 July 1974; a male in the same area on 4 July 1974 (DAS); and one near Makidi, Arasbaran Protected Area on 20 April 1977 (F.B. Argyle). The other three records probably relate to wintering birds: one in juniper forest 5 km north of Manjil Dam, Gilan, on 31 January 1969 (D.A. Ferguson); a party of five in the coastal dunes near Lisar, Gilan, on 16 January 1972, during a period of heavy snowfall (DAS, J.W.F. Davis); and one near Manjil Dam, Gilan, sometime between 18 and 25 March 1976 (K.G. Rogers).

**White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carnipes* (6)

A scarce and local resident in juniper forest in the eastern Alborz and Kopet-Dagh. Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a resident in the south Caspian region (where scarce) and northern Khorasan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), following Zarudny, state that it breeds in the south Caspian region and northern Khorasan.

Érard & Etchécopar (1970) observed seven in degraded woodland near Dasht on the east side of Golestan National Park, Golestan, on 29 May 1967. Four of the five records in the 1970s were from Parvar Protected Area in the Alborz Mountains north of Semnan, Semnan Province: a pair in juniper forest in the central valley on 27 July 1972 (DAS); a pair in tall juniper forest at 2,800m on 22 August 1975 (DAS); 4–6 birds in the central valley on 17 May 1978 (C.D.R. Heard); and at least three birds in the central valley on 21 May 1978 (P.A. Walton). Three groups totalling 20 individuals were observed in juniper forest in Sarani Protected Area in the Kopet-Dagh, Khorasan, on 6

May 1977 (L. Cornwallis, P.A.D. Hollom & R.F. Porter).

**Red Avadavat** *Amandava amandava* (3)

Status uncertain; first recorded in the 1970s, although two of the three records undoubtedly relate to birds that had escaped from captivity.

A male at Lashgarak, Tehran, on 14 October and 3 November 1974 (DAS), and a male in song in reed-beds at Ghale-Now Marsh, southeast of Tehran, on 3 October 1975 (DAS) were presumably escaped cage-birds. However, a flock of eight seen by Desfayes & Praz (1978) in an area of reeds and tamarisk 8 km north of Zahedan, on 6 June 1975 may have been of natural origin. The previously known western limits of this species were in the Sind Valley and Quetta in Pakistan (Desfayes & Praz 1978).

**Indian Silverbill (White-throated Munia)** *Lonchura malabarica* (7)

A fairly common resident in extreme southeastern Baluchestan in the 1970s; also recorded in eastern Hormozgan. The first record for Iran was a specimen collected on Tunb Island in the Persian Gulf on 7 April 1921 (Ticehurst *et al.* 1925). Érard & Etchécopar (1970) did not find the species themselves, but refer to four specimens collected by Koelz at Isin, about 15 km north of Bandar Abbas, on 17 and 18 December 1939 and an observation by J. Vielliard in the same area on 22 February 1969, and speculate that these birds may have originated from escaped cage-birds.

The only record in the late 1960s was the record of J. Vielliard mentioned above. Five of the six records in the 1970s were in the Gandu (Bahu-Kalat) Protected Area on the Pakistan border in southeastern Baluchestan: three pairs and a nest at Kolani on 4 March 1971 (DAS); a pair in the Sarbaz Valley 8 km north of Garmabit on 12 April 1972 (DAS *et al.*); at least 19 in riverine vegetation and gardens at Baftan on 15 October 1975 (DAS & F.B. Argyle); a pair in the Sarbaz Valley 10 km south of Bahu-Kalat on 21 October 1975 (DAS); and two pairs at Garmabit on 22 October 1975 (DAS). The only other record was of a flock of 20 in an old date garden in Minab, Hormozgan, on 16 October 1973 (DAS).

**Jungle Sparrow (Sind Jungle Sparrow)** *Passer pyrrhonotus* (4)

A scarce and local resident in extreme southeastern Baluchestan. Zarudny (1911) lists it as a breeding bird in southern Persian Baluchestan, as do Hüe & Etchécopar (1970). According to Érard & Etchécopar (1970), Zarudny saw a small group near Kutsche (100 km southeast of Nik-Shahr) on 6 March 1901, and six



individuals at Lekuball (150 km southeast of Nik-Shahr) on 9 March 1901.

The four records in the late 1960s and 1970s were apparently the first records in Iran since 1901. Énard & Etchécopar (1970) found “half a dozen” in a stand of acacias and tamarisks by a wadi near Nik-Shahr, Baluchestan, on 13 May 1967. A male was seen in the hills 40 km north of Tis, Baluchestan, on 4 April 1972 (D.I.M. Wallace); another male was found in tamarisk woodland 10 km south of Bahu-Kalat village, Gandu (Bahu-Kalat) Protected Area, Baluchestan, on 10 April 1972 (D.I.M. Wallace *et al.*); and there was a group of three birds, including one male, in the same area on 21 October 1975 (DAS & F.B. Argyle).

#### **Dead Sea Sparrow** *Passer moabiticus yatii* (3)

The form *mesopotamicus* (often considered to be a synonym of *moabiticus*) is locally abundant in the Khuzestan lowlands, and has been recorded as far east as the Marun (Zohreh) River at Bid Boland (Cramp 1971). However, the form *yatii* (‘Afghan Scrub Sparrow’), which has been proposed for full specific status (Kirwan 2004), has a very restricted range in the Sistan basin on the border of Iran and Afghanistan and in neighbouring Pakistani Baluchestan. It was originally described from specimens taken in the Sistan basin in 1884–86 (Kirwan 2004). Zarudny (1911) lists this form as a breeding bird in the Sistan basin, a passage migrant in Kerman, and a passage migrant and winter visitor in Persian Baluchestan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) give the range of *yatii* as Iranian and Afghan Sistan.

There is one published record of *yatii* in the late 1960s: Énard & Etchécopar (1970) saw about 10 individuals in tamarisks near Zabol in the Sistan basin on 20 May 1967. Although the Ornithology Unit carried out 12 surveys in the wetlands of the Sistan basin in the 1970s, there were only two observations of *P. moabiticus yatii*: at least 15 in a public garden in Zabol on 25 October 1975 (DAS), and 12 in the same garden on 17 January 1976 (DAS). On the latter date, what appeared to be old nests of the species were found in bushes on the eastern edge of the Hamoun-e Sabari. It is probable that this species suffered badly from the extreme drought in this region in the early 1970s, and was only just beginning to recover in numbers by 1975.

#### **House Crow** *Corvus splendens* (6)

The House Crow was not listed by Zarudny (1911) or Jervis Read (1958), but Baker (1919) mentions the species for the coast of Baluchestan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that the species nests on the south coast of Iran, and show the breeding range extending all along the Mekran coast of Persian Baluchestan. However, in the 1970s, the species was

largely confined to Khark Island in the northern Persian Gulf, where it was fairly common and increasing rapidly.

House Crows were first recorded on Khark Island, Bushehr, on 7–9 May 1970, when about 10 pairs were observed by W.H. Dady. At least forty were present around the town on 26 August 1973 (M. Smart) and again on 29 May–1 June 1974 (DAS). By 4–5 May 1977, the numbers had increased to about 500 (F.B. Argyle), and the species was recorded as common on the island on 20 April 1978 (D.L. Howell). The only record away from Khark Island was a single bird at Bandar-e Lengeh on the Persian Gulf coast on 7 June 1978 (C.D.R. Heard).

The population on Khark Island is assumed to have originated from escaped cage-birds or birds arriving from the Indian subcontinent on board ships. The record from Bandar-e Lengeh in 1978 and old records from southern Baluchestan may also refer to escaped or ship-assisted birds.

#### **Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone orientalis* (3)

A scarce winter visitor and irregular or former breeding bird in northeastern Iran. Zarudny (1911) lists *corone* as a breeding bird in the Parapomusis, a scarce breeding bird in the south Caspian region, and a possible breeding bird in southern Khorasan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that the form *orientalis* breeds in southeastern Khorasan.

Énard & Etchécopar (1970) found small numbers of *C. corone orientalis* around Hosein-Abad (Nehbandan) and Khoshareh (between Hosein-Abad and Khunik) in southern Khorasan on 23 May 1967, and assumed that they were breeding in this area. They recorded about ten birds at each site, and collected a juvenile at Hosein-Abad. However, no crows (*orientalis* or *cornix*) were observed in this area during several visits in the 1970s. The only records of *orientalis* in the 1970s were a bird collected near Mashad, on 16 November 1970 (Department of the Environment Natural History Museum), and at least five birds seen with a large flock of Hooded Crows *C. c. cornix*, Rooks *C. frugilegus* and Western Jackdaws *C. monedula* in fields on the eastern outskirts of Mashad, on 1 February 1975 (DAS).

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**APPENDIX I:** Species recorded in Iran prior to 1960 but not during the 1960s or 1970s

**Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a vagrant to southern Persian Baluchestan. Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny and state that it has wandered to the region of Bampur in Persian Baluchestan.

**Lesser Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus minor*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a rare vagrant to the Persian Gulf coast and southern Baluchestan. Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny and state that it occasionally wanders to the south coast of Iran

**Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a rare winter visitor to the Sistan basin, Kerman and northern Baluchestan. Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny and note that it has wandered to southeastern Iran, but there do not appear to have been any records since Zarudny's time.

**Velvet Scoter** *Melanitta fusca*: Zarudny (1903, 1911) collected three specimens in Iran and listed it as a winter visitor to the south Caspian region and a possible visitor to the northwest. Jervis Read (1958) includes it in his checklist, and Schüz (1959a), Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) list it as a winter visitor to the Caspian Sea, but give no details of records. H.J. Speyer recorded three small parties totalling nine individuals off Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 7 February 1964 (Nielsen & Speyer 1967). The form concerned is nominate *fusca*.

**Red-necked Falcon** *Falco chicquera*: Zarudny (1911) listed it as a rare breeding bird in southern Baluchestan. Jervis Read (1958), Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) list it for Iran on the basis of Zarudny's records, and there do not appear to have been any records of this species in Iran since then.

**Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor*: One was captured at Chahbahar, Baluchestan, in August 1927 (Moreau 1969). This record seems to have been overlooked by Jervis Read (1958) and Vaurie (1965), but was reported by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970). These authors state that the species has been observed on islands in the Persian Gulf where it may breed.

**Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a rare winter visitor to the Mesopotamian lowlands of Iran (Khuzestan) and very rare winter visitor to the Zagros. Jervis Read (1958), Vaurie (1965) and Hue & Etchécopar (1970) list the species for southwestern Iran on the basis of Zarudny's old records, and there do not appear to have been any other records in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Solitary Snipe** *Gallinago solitaria*: Zarudny (1911) listed the species as a passage migrant and possible breeding bird in the south Caspian region and a passage migrant and winter visitor in Khorasan, the Sistan Basin and Kerman. The species was also listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958). According to Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), it may breed in the mountains of northeastern Iran and migrates in small numbers south to southeastern Iran. The most recent record appears to be of a bird shot near Mashad, on 25 November 1956 (per S. Jervis Read).

**Pin-tailed Snipe** *Gallinago stenura*: Zarudny (1911) lists the Pin-tailed Snipe as a rare passage migrant in the Sistan basin and "Kuhestan, Kerman". He noted the species in Sistan in late September (or perhaps early October) 1898, and collected it at Mohammad-Abad, over 100 km northeast of Birjand, Khorasan, on 24 October 1898 (Zarudny 1903). Cumming (1905) described it as "numerous" with Common Snipe *G. gallinago* in Sistan in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and W. Koelz collected one at Chahar-Farsakh, between Kerman and Shahdad, Kerman Province, on 15 January 1940 (Kratochwill & Kirwan 2004). Jervis Read (1958) included it in his checklist, but the species was not mentioned for Iran by Vaurie (1965) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970). There were no confirmed records of this species in Iran in the 1960s or 1970s, but two snipe thought to be this species were seen near Kolani in Gandu (Bahuh-Kalat) Protected Area, Baluchestan, on 6 April 1972 (D.I.M. Wallace *et al.*).

**Far Eastern Curlew** *Numenius madagascariensis*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) under the name *Numenius cyanopus* as a rare vagrant to the Sistan basin, and listed by Jervis Read (1958) under the name Australian Curlew *N. madagascariensis*. Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), following Zarudny, state that the species has wandered to eastern Iran.

**Indian Skimmer** *Rynchops albicollis*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a rare vagrant to the "littoral of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea". This may refer to an old record from the mouth of the Sarbaz River, southeast Baluchestan, mentioned by Ticehurst (1926–27). This record seems to have been overlooked by Jervis Read (1958), Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970).

**Jacobin Cuckoo** *Oxylophus jacobinus*: Zarudny (1911) listed it as scarce breeding bird in southern Baluchestan, but there do not appear to have been any further records in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny and give Persian Baluchestan in the range.

**Brown Fish Owl** *Ketupa zeylonensis*: Zarudny (1911) lists the species as a resident in the Zagros. There are old records from the region of Dezful, Khuzestan (Paludan 1938) and the western Zagros in Fars (Capito 1931). Vaurie (1965) gives the range in Iran as the southern foothills of the Zagros in southwestern Iran, and states that the species also occurs in Sind and North West Frontier Province in Pakistan.

**Indian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus asiaticus*: According to Zarudny (1911), it probably breeds in the valley of the Hari-Rud in northeastern Khorasan, and occurs as a rare vagrant in southern Persian Baluchestan. Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) refer to the records of Zarudny (1911), and note that it also occurs in neighbouring

northwestern Afghanistan.

**White-winged Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucopterus*: Not listed by Zarudny (1911), but included by Jervis Read (1958) in his checklist of the birds of Iran. According to Vaurie (1965), it occurs in southeastern Transcaspiya in the valleys of the Hari-Rud and Tejen River (present-day Turkmenistan) and therefore perhaps in neighbouring Khorasan in Iran. Énard & Etchécopar (1970) saw a bird that they believed could have been this species near Dasht, Khorasan, on 29 May 1967, and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) concluded that it might breed in northern Khorasan.

**Scaly-bellied Woodpecker** *Picus squamatus*: Zarudny (1911) lists the species as a breeding bird in the Parapamiris, a scarce breeding bird in the Sistan basin, and a possible breeding bird in northern Persian Baluchestan. The species is also listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958). Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) give the range as Sistan and eastern Khorasan, following Zarudny (1911). The form concerned is *flavirostris*, which is also known to breed in northern Baluchestan (Pakistan) and southern and western Afghanistan (Vaurie 1965).

**Long-tailed Shrike** *Lanius schach*: Zarudny (1911) lists it as a breeding bird and passage migrant in northern and southern Khorasan, but there do not appear to have been any records since then. The species is also listed by Jervis Read (1958) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), who state that it breeds in Khorasan in northeastern Iran, following Zarudny.

**Güldenstadt's Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythrogaster*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a breeding species and possible resident in the south Caspian region. The species is also listed by Jervis Read (1958) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), who state that according to Zarudny, it breeds to the south of the Caspian Sea in northern Iran.

**White-crowned Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a rare vagrant in the Mesopotamian region of Iran, and also mentioned by Jervis Read (1958). Vaurie (1959) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), following Zarudny, state that it is known from Ahwaz in the southwest of Iran.

**River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a rare passage migrant in the south Caspian region, and also listed by Jervis Read (1958). According to Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), it occurs on migration in the Zagros.

**Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli*: According to Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), it has occurred as an accidental in the Zagros in Lorestan in southwestern Iran.

**Yellow-breasted Tit** *Parus (cyanus) flavipectus*: According to Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), there is one record of a bird of the form *carruthersi* in winter near Mashad, northeastern Iran.

**Cirl Bunting** *Emberiza cirlus*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a rare vagrant in the Zagros. A report by Misonne (1955) from the Dasht-e Moghan in the southwest Caspian on 15 August was dismissed by Schüz (1959a). According to Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), the species is "erratic" in the southwest of Iran.

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*: One was seen near Bandar Gaz, Mazandaran, on 2 December 1953 (Misonne 1953), and according to Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), the species has also been recorded in Kerman (specimen examined).

**Saxaul Sparrow** *Passer ammodendri*: According to Zarudny (1911), the subspecies *korejewi* occurs as a winter visitor in the Parapamiris. Also listed by Jervis Read (1958) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), who state that it breeds in the valley of the Hari-Rud in the extreme northeast of Iran near the Afghanistan border.

**Desert Sparrow** *Passer simplex*: According to Zarudny (1903, 1911), the subspecies *zarudnyi* possibly breeds in "Kuhistan" in Kerman, where he saw several individuals in the region of Sirkuh (Daryacheh Namakzan) on 28 April 1898. This is the only record for Iran. Listed by Jervis Read (1958) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) on the basis of Zarudny's old record.

**Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus*: Zarudny (1911) listed it as breeding in small numbers in southern Baluchestan, and Vaurie (1959) refers to specimens obtained in the Bampur Valley, Baluchestan. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), following Zarudny, state that it breeds in the southeastern Iran in the Mekran and Baluchestan. The species is also listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958).

**Eurasian Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a very rare winter visitor to the south Caspian region, but not mentioned by Jervis Read (1958). Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) follow Zarudny and state that the form *macrorhynchos* occurs irregularly in the south Caspian region.

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus macrorhynchos*: According to Zarudny (1911), breeds in the Hari-Rud valley in northeastern Khorasan, and in small numbers in Sistan. There do not appear to have been any records since then. Jervis Read (1958) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) list it for Iran on the basis of these old records. The form concerned is *intermedius*.

**APPENDIX II:** Doubtful records

**European Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*: Listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958), but not by Vaurie (1965) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), and rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita*: Listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958), but not by Vaurie (1965) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), although the latter note that it could have occurred in northern Iraq. The species was rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Snow Goose** *Anser caerulescens*: Zarudny (1911) lists it as a rare winter visitor to the south Caspian region. Schüz (1959a) also lists it for the south Caspian region, although he mentions only two records from Kizil-Agach and the Talysh coast. Both Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) note that it has wandered to the south Caspian region “two or three times”, but are presumably referring to these old records in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

**Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla*: A single bird of the light-bellied form *hrota* was reported by H.J. Speyer on the Caspian beach near Bablosar, Mazandaran, on 29 October 1960 (Nielsen & Speyer 1967), but as no further details were available, the record was rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Upland Buzzard** *Buteo hemilasius*: Hollom *et al.* (1988) state that there is an “old record from SE Iran”, but this appears to have been an error as Porter *et al.* (1996) make no mention of the species in the Middle East. It is not mentioned by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) or Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*: Kratochwill & Kirwan (2004) draw attention to a report by Zarudny (1916) of one having been shot at Chahbahar, southeast Baluchestan, between 25 and 27 March 1901, but note that the specimen is no longer available and that some doubt exists as to the identity of the bird. The species is not mentioned by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), and the old report was rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta*: Listed by Scott *et al.* (1975) and Porter *et al.* (1996) on the basis of a bird seen by D.I.M. Wallace, D.A. Scott *et al.* at Chahbahar, southeast Baluchestan, on 5 April 1972. However, as further information became available on the identification of this species in the field, the identity of the bird came into question and the record is no longer considered to be acceptable.

**Oriental Cuckoo** *Cuculus saturatus*: Zarudny (1911) states that this species breeds in southeastern Iran south to Sistan, but this has never been confirmed, and Vaurie (1965) concluded that it was probably erroneous. The species was listed by Jervis Read (1958), but is not mentioned by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) and was rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Collared Scops Owl** *Otus bakkamoena*: According to Ticehurst, there is one specimen in the collection at the Karachi Museum labelled “Bushehr” (Vaurie 1965). There have been no other reports from Iran, but the species is said to breed in Baluchestan Province of Pakistan (Hüe & Etchécopar 1970). The species was listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958), but not by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), and was rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Hume’s Tawny Owl** *Strix butleri*: Both Vaurie (1965) and Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) referred to an old report from the Mekran coast in Baluchestan (Pakistan), and concluded that the species probably occurred along the coast of the Persian Gulf and Persian Baluchestan. Jervis Read (1958) included it in his list of the birds of Iran, as did Scott *et al.* (1975). However, there do not appear to have been any confirmed records of the species in Iran, and the validity of the report from the Mekran coast in 1920 has been questioned.

**White-backed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucotos*: Listed by Jervis Read (1958), but dismissed by Schüz (1959a) and Scott *et al.* (1975). According to Vaurie (1965), the form *lilfordi* extends eastwards to Transcaucasia, western Armenia and the region of Lagodekhi in the central Caucasus. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) show the breeding range extending into the extreme northwest of Iran, but in their text, these authors give the breeding range in the Middle East as Asia Minor east to Transcaucasia and western Armenia, with no mention of Iran.

**Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Picus canus*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a scarce resident in the south Caspian region. Included by Schüz (1959a) on the basis of old reports by Zarudny (1911) for the south Caspian and by Ménétries (1832) for Kizil-Agach and Lenkoran in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Vaurie (1965) clearly doubts the old reports from the Caucasus, indicating that the species has “probably” occurred as a wanderer in the Caucasus. The species is not listed for Iran by Jervis Read (1958) or Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), and was rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum*: Listed by Zarudny (1911) as a scarce breeding bird in the south Caspian region and rare passage migrant in northwestern Iran, but these reports were considered by Schüz (1959a) to be erroneous. Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) indicate that it occurs in the south Caspian districts of Iran, presumably following Zarudny (1911), but give its status there as uncertain. The species is not mentioned by Jervis Read (1958), and the old records were rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis*: Passburg (1959) mentions having seen several birds which he believed to be this species in the Caspian forest between Chalus and Babolsar, Mazandaran, in January and February 1956. These observations were questioned by Schüz (1959b), and in an unpublished note dated 17 May 1966, Passburg withdrew his records of this species in Iran.

**Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata*: Listed by Jervis Read (1958), but not by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), and rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Marsh Tit** *Parus palustris*: Listed by Jervis Read (1958), but not by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), and rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975).

**Corsican Nuthatch** *Sitta canadensis*: Listed by Jervis Read (1958), but not by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), and rejected by Scott *et al.* (1975). This presumably refers to Krüper’s Nuthatch *Sitta krueperi*, which was at one time considered to be a race of the Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*, along with the Corsican Nuthatch *Sitta whiteheadi*. Krüper’s Nuthatch is known to occur as close to Iran as the Black Sea coast in northeastern Turkey and the Caucasus in Georgia (Cramp & Perrins 1993).