

Some Observations of Birds in Northern Iran

By

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(Med et dansk resumé: Iagttagelser af fugle i det nordlige Iran).

INTRODUCTION

The bird notes summarized in this paper are based on observations made by Mr. OLE GEERTZ-HANSEN and us. The observations were made on a number of excursions during the years 1959–1964. The greater part of this time Mr. ALAN DAVIDSON lived in Teheran and on many occasions visited the same places, to which we paid so much attention. Mr. DAVIDSON has very kindly given us his permission to publish some of his important notes.

The districts dealt with here are the three lowland provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran and Gorgan. The names of places may be found on the map (fig. 1). We have concentrated on two main areas: Lake Mordab at Pahlavi in the west and Gorgan Bay with the Meyan Koleh peninsula in the east. We also made some observations on the coast between these two areas.

LAKE MORDAB

In the Gilan province the port of Pahlavi is situated where the famous Lake Mordab has its outflow into the Caspian Sea (fig. 1). This paper is not the place to give an exact description of the lake and its surroundings, professor SCHÜZ has made an excellent one in his book "Die Vogelwelt des südkaspischen Tieflandes", which is based mainly on Gilan. After this fine work, which should be consulted by everyone interested in the subject, our notes from the lake can be nothing but small contributions. Nevertheless, since this part of the world is certainly not too often visited by ornithologists, we find all observations valuable.

When visiting Lake Mordab we espe-

cially studied the bird life on the narrow isthmus, which separates the lake from the sea. About 11 kilometers west of Pahlavi the isthmus is less than one km wide and here, at the farm Gulega, there are extraordinarily fine conditions for watching birds, especially the spring migration. At this place (fig. 2) we observed the migration on March 29 and 30, 1963. The results may be seen in table 1. The observations were made on an extremely small part (approx. 50 × 200 m) of the north coast of Lake Mordab.

The isthmus is simply ideal for studying the spring migration, which has also been pointed out by previous authors (SCHÜZ 1959, PASSBURG 1959).

Table 1 shows the great concentration of birds on a very little part (approx. 50×200 m) of the north coast of Lake Mordab in late March 1963. The Caspian Sea is half a mile to the north but not visible from here. → means migration to WNW.

Table 1 viser den store koncentration af fugle på et meget lille areal (ca. 50×200 m) på nordkysten af Mordabsøen sidst i marts 1963. Det Kaspiske Hav er mindre end en km mod nord, men ikke synligt herfra. → betyder træk mod WNW.

Species	Art	March 29	March 30			
<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		15-20	?	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	20	numerous
<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>		2-3	?	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>		1
<i>Podiceps ruficollis</i>		1		<i>Columba oenas</i>	15→	200→
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		hundreds	hundreds	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		25→
<i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>		50-100	less than 50	<i>Otus scops</i>		heard at night
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		5	3	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	2	1
<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		very common	very common	<i>Upupa epops</i>	3	
<i>Egretta alba</i>		very common	very common	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	30→	a few→
<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>			1→	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	50→	14→
<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		3→	6→	<i>Corvus corone</i>	25	a few
<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		50→	15→	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		numerous→ 200→
<i>Anas crecca</i>		2	10	<i>Pica pica</i>	2	common
<i>Anas penelope</i>		10	a few	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	3	
<i>Anas clypeata</i>		10	19	<i>Parus major</i>	1	1
<i>Aythya ferina</i>		15		<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	8	5
<i>Aquila heliaca</i>		1	1	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	a few	
<i>Aquila clanga</i>		4	2	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	2	2
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		2	2	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1	1
<i>Buteo buteo</i>		1		<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		1
<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		15-20→	29→	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	1	
<i>Milvus migrans</i>		numerous	28	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	2	1
<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		at least 4	5-10	<i>Turdus merula</i>	2	
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>		2♂♂ →	7♂♂ →	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	a few	1 ♀
<i>Circus macrourus</i>		at least 1♂	2♂♂ →	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	5	1
<i>Circus sp. non aeruginosus</i>			1♀ →	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	2	2
<i>Pandion haliaeetus</i>		1	2	<i>Luscinola melanopogon</i>	at least 10	at least 10
<i>Falco subbuteo</i>		1→		<i>Sylvia mystacea</i>		1♂
<i>Falco columbarius</i>			1→	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	1	a few
<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		1→	1→	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		1
<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>		1		<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		2→
<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		3♀♀	heard	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	15	
<i>Grus grus</i>		19→ NNW		<i>Motacilla alba</i>	10	6
<i>Grus leucogeranus</i>		1→		<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		2→
<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>		5		<i>Motacilla flava</i>	2	8
<i>Porzana porzana</i>		2		<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		flocks 11
<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>		1		<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	1→	
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		5-10	5-10	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	a few	common
<i>Fulica atra</i>		heard		<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	2→	2
<i>Chettusia leucura</i>		1→		<i>Acanthis cannabina</i>	5-10	
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		25	10	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	hundreds →	thousands→
<i>Limosa limosa</i>			1	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	3→	1→
<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		11	1	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		7→
<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>		1		<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	a few	1
<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>		15		<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	numerous	numerous
<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		10→	6→	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	1	2

The fact that we during these two days in March on a diminutive area saw nine species:

Platalea leucorodia

Aquila heliaca

Grus leucogeranus (see p. 32)

Chettusia leucura (see p. 32)

Himantopus himantopus

Otus scops

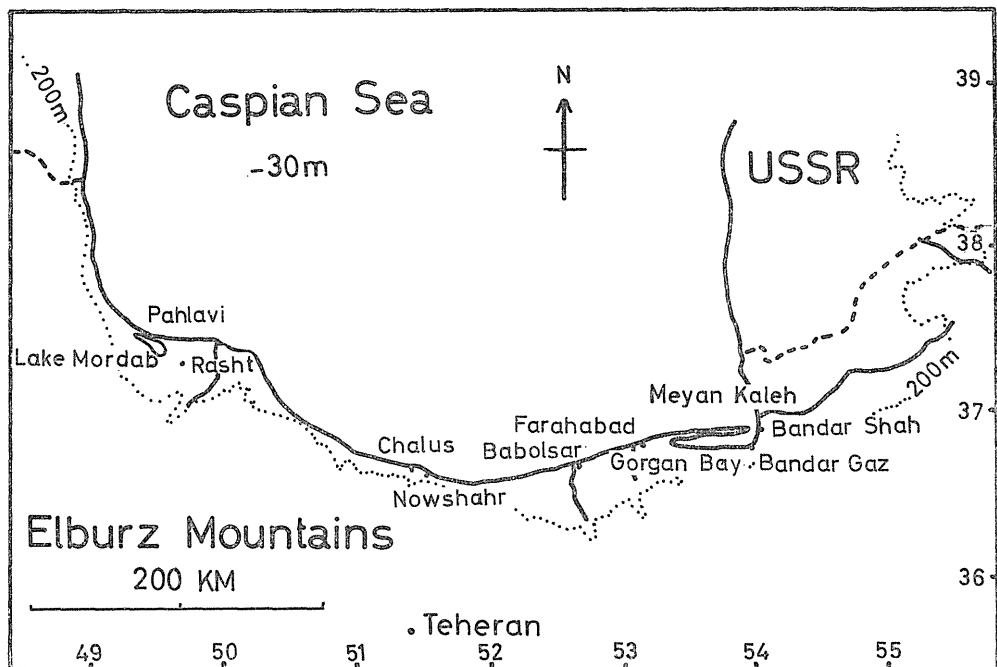


Fig. 1. Sketch map of the three Caspian lowland provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran and Gorgan.
Kort over lavlandsprovinserne Gilan, Mazandaran og Gorgan.

Remiz pendulinus (see below)

Cettia cetti

Carduelis spinus

which were not seen by Mr. SCHÜZ at all in Gilan during the whole spring of 1956, deserves notice. Future investigations will no doubt bring still more of interest to light, especially in the autumn.

Some of our most interesting observations from the lake and the Gilan province are the following:

Ciconia ciconia White Stork

One flying south about 40 km south of Rasht on January 30, 1964. The temperature was about 0° C, and the ground was covered with snow.

Grus leucogeranus Siberian White Crane

One migrating west low over Lake Mordab was seen at a few hundred m's range at Gulega on March 29, 1963. The cry seemed to resemble that of the Common Crane (which we saw and heard a few hours later), but otherwise the bird was quite different: The snow-white body and wing coverts made a beautiful contrast to the dark flight feathers. One of us saw the red face. Neck,

legs and wings were longer than those of the Common Crane, and the wings were also more slender. On the whole it was a larger, more slender and more beautiful bird than the Common Crane. Certainly one of the most elegant birds we have ever seen.

Chettusia leucura White-tailed Plover

The one seen at Gulega (table 1) was seen in bad light, but it certainly was this genus. We noticed the very long legs, and we are convinced that it could not be a Sociable Plover (*Chettusia gregaria*).

Calidris ferruginea Curlew Sandpiper

One among other waders at Pahlavi, September 19, 1962.

Remiz pendulinus Penduline Tit

On March 29 and 30, 1963 one pair was seen in search of nest materials in the reeds at Gulega. They belonged to the dark-headed group of the species.

Panurus biarmicus Bearded Tit

A single one seen at Gulega on December 11, 1962.

Monticola solitarius Blue Rock Thrush

A male was sitting on one of the buildings of the farm Gulega on March 22, 1964. It is a breeding bird of the Elburz Mountains, but this is the first record for the lowland.

Fig. 2. The north coast of Lake Mordab at Gulega. Here we watched the migration on March 29 and 30, 1963 (Table 1).

Nordkysten af Lake Mordab ved Gulega, hvor vi iagttag trakket den 29. og 30. marts 1963 (tabel 1).



MEYAN KALEH and GORGAN BAY

Not much has been written about the bird life of Gorgan Bay. Even in the last decades only few ornithologists have visited the bay. In the thirties PETER SCOTT visited the great goose marshes south of Gorgan Bay (SCOTT 1938). In the early fifties MISONNE studied the migration on the south coast, especially geese, ducks and waders, but never in the spring (MISONNE 1953, 1954). SCHÜZ has been here a few days in May 1956 (SCHÜZ 1959), but PASSBURG did not come so far east. The Meyan Kaleh peninsula has hitherto been a terra incognita.

The fields around Gorgan Bay may in many ways be compared with those of Lake Mordab. The most conspicuous resemblance is, from an ornithological point of view, the great masses of wintering ducks. Both territories lie north of a large lowland and quite near the Caspian east and west coast respectively, which should offer fine conditions for comparative migration studies.

One of the differences is the water, which is salt in Gorgan Bay, but fresh, or at least brackish, in Lake Mordab. Another one is the climate, which is drier in the east than in the west. This of course has some influence on the vegetation.

Meyan Kaleh (or Myiankaleh) is

passable by car on the entire north coast. A few decades ago the eastern part was separated in small islands, but since the lowering of the water level in the thirties and the forties it is now possible to go to the easternmost point, at which there is a little fishing port. From here there is only a few km to the port of Bandar Shah in Gorgan.

The beach is not very wide, except in these places of former sea bottom. These flat beaches with several small pools offer splendid feeding grounds for waders. The dunes are low and locally without any vegetation. Behind the dunes grow high and stiff grass, after which comes the wide zone with thorny pomegranate scrub (fig. 3), a few trees rise here and there, they often contain a nest of Black Kite or White-tailed Eagle. On the southern side of the peninsula the scrub zone is separated from the bay by a belt of meadows and locally clayey areas, which may reach a width of 200 meters. These areas also provide excellent grounds for waders. Meyan Kaleh is between 2 and 4 kilometers wide.

In the following we deal with the bird life as we have observed it. The excursions mostly took place in the winter and spring seasons. If no locality is stated, it shall be Meyan Kaleh.

Order Podicipedes

Grebes winter in great numbers, especially Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*). On March 22, 1963 we drove along the whole north coast of Meyan Koleh. Everywhere were Great Crested Grebes, singly or in flocks. We gave up counting, but there must have been thousands. There were some Black-necked Grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*) among them, but this species and the Little Grebe (*Podiceps ruficollis*) prefer more still water. On that day we saw 15 *nigricollis* and 50 *ruficollis* in the fishing port at the east point. Also Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps griseigena*) has been noted, and DAVIDSON saw on April 13, 1963 two Horned Grebes (*Podiceps auritus*) in full breeding plumage close inshore.

Order Pelecani

Of cormorants we have only seen the Common Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*). Pelicans have been seen in flocks but never large ones. White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) has not been identified with certainty, whereas Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*) has been identified twice: February 14, 1963 (8 + 42) and March 23, 1963 (9).

Order Ciconiidae

We have seen herons almost everytime, most frequently the Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) and Great White Heron (*Egretta alba*), but also Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) and Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*). Other species may no doubt be found.

Ciconia nigra Black Stork

Two east of Bandar Gaz, May 12, 1961.

At least a dozen birds wading in a lagoon at the western end of Gorgan Bay, April 13, 1963 (A.D.)

Platalea leucorodia Spoonbill

14 east of Bandar Gaz, May 12, 1961.

Flock of about 20 feeding in a lagoon at the western end of Gorgan Bay, April 13, 1963 (A.D.)

Phoenicopterus ruber Flamingo

Seen commonly in the cold season and even rather late in spring, e.g. 30 on April 27, 1961 at Bandar Gaz, and 25 a few miles west of Farahabad on April 14, 1963.

Order Anseres

Gorgan Bay is known as a wintering place for immense flocks of ducks and coots. MISONNE estimates the number to 2.5–3 millions. To this we can bring nothing new, though it should be noted, that there may be very large flocks also north of Meyan Koleh, mainly Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and Tufted Ducks (*Aythya fuligula*), for instance

on February 7, 1964 the following flocks of *A. fuligula* were observed: 10,000 + 5,000 + 10,000, but it is extremely difficult to have a general view as the ducks are often very far from land. Ducks may be found rather late in spring. On April 14, 1963 2,500–3,000 Wigeons (*Anas penelope*), somewhat fewer Teals (*Anas crecca*), Shovelers (*Anas clypeata*) and Gadwalls (*Anas strepera*) were observed in the bay. On May 12, 1961 there were still several hundreds *Aythya fuligula* east of Bandar Gaz.

Netta rufina Red-crested Pochard

15 + 200 + 100 + 50 were seen on February 7, 1964.

Melanitta fusca Velvet Scoter

3 + 2 + 4 seen close inshore on February 7, 1964.

Since PETER SCOTT in 1938 wrote his "Wild Chorus", in which he enthusiastically tells about 30,000 or more Lesser White-fronted Geese (*Anser erythropus*) south of Gorgan Bay, it has been clear to every bird lover, that this must really be one of the greatest goose marshes of the world. It still is, although we can show no such figures as SCOTT's. The other predominant species is the White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), which also is present in thousands. Greylag (*Anser anser*) and Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis*) are not so common. Even Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) may occur, but was never seen by us. On February 2, 1961 7,000–8,000 *A. erythropus* and also considerable numbers of *A. albifrons* were seen about 5 miles south of Bandar Shah, and they were still present on March 8. On March 22, 1963 we saw a flock of 100 *A. erythropus* make an attempt to migrate north over Meyan Koleh, but they turned south again. However, in the beautiful and clear night that followed we heard migrating geese.

Branta bernicla Brent Goose

A little west of the peninsula, at Babolsar, one of us on October 29, 1960 saw a Brent Goose standing on the beach. It was easily identified as the light-bellied subspecies *hrota*. Some small dark geese, which were seen flying over the sea, were possibly also this species. The observation is very interesting, as the species has not been recorded in Iran before, and *hrota* should be the least expected subspecies.

Order Accipitres

As we had expected the most common raptor is the Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*), it is found everywhere at the seashore, often in flocks of 10–15. Another common raptor is the White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*). It is met with all along the coast, and on March 22, 1963 we counted about 30 on the 40 miles north coast of Meyan Koleh, once 8 in a flock. The Osprey (*Pandion haliaeetus*)

Fig. 3. Our camp in the scrub on the western end of Meyan Kaleh, March 23, 1963. Habitat of *Phasianus colchicus*, *Sylvia mystacea* and *Passer hispaniolensis*.

Vor lejri i kratzonen på den vestlige del af Meyan Kaleh den 23. marts 1963. Biotop for *Phasianus colchicus*, *Sylvia mystacea* og *Passer hispaniolensis*.



seems to be common but not so numerous as the White-tailed Eagle and heavy losses in breeding strength have been observed by ÖSTERLÖF in 1964 (ÖSTERLÖF 1965). We have also noted the more common hawks, harriers (migrating Marsh Harriers (*Circus aeruginosus*) and Hen Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*)) and falcons.

Aquila heliaca Imperial Eagle

One seen by DAVIDSON at the western end of Gorgan Bay on February 16, 1963. We saw two immatures over Meyan Kaleh on March 23, 1963. A few hours later we saw an extremely light eagle of about the same size. The coverts were not yellow-brown as in the two previous *heliaca* but simply cream-coloured. When the bird eventually came quite near we could see some brown spots on the cream-coloured coverts and that the line between coverts and flight-feathers was very uneven, so it was no doubt a moulting bird. The tail was barred and very worn. Had we seen it in Morocco we should perhaps have identified it as a young *Aquila rapax belisarius*, but as far as we know the young *Aquila rapax orientalis*, which may be expected here, is never so extremely light coloured. So the eagle remains unidentified.

Orders Galli and Otides

Phasianus colchicus Pheasant

Seems to be common in the scrub.

Perdix perdix Partridge

On March 23, 1963 we flushed a Partridge on Meyan Kaleh. It was seen at dusk, but the size was that of a Partridge, and the horseshoe mark on the lower breast was visible.

Otis tetrax Little Bustard

5 + 40 on February 7, 1964 on Meyan Kaleh. A little further east, on the Turkmenian steppe, this species winters in thousands.

Order Charadrii

It is clear that Meyan Kaleh and Gorgan Bay offer much larger and better wader localities than Lake Mordab and its surroundings. The autumn migration was described by MISONNE, and it can now be stated that the spring season by no means is less rich in waders. Some fine localities exist on the north-eastern and southern side of Meyan Kaleh, in the western end of Gorgan Bay, at Bandar Gaz, and south of Bandar Shah. On April 27, 1961 we saw in the latter place the following waders: Several Whimbrels (*Numenius phaeopus*), hundreds of Greenshanks (*Tringa nebularia*), several thousands of Ruffs and Reeves (*Philomachus pugnax*), about 700 Black-winged Stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*) and at least 10,000 Red-necked Phalaropes (*Phalaropus lobatus*). This mass-concentration of Phalaropes has previously been published in this journal (NIELSEN 1963 & SCHÜZ 1965).

Chettusia gregaria Sociable Plover

A flock of about 12 seen at close range at the western end of Gorgan Bay, February 16, 1963. Seen again in the same place, April 13, 1963 (A.D.).

Chettusia leucura White-tailed Plover

Small party seen at the western end of Gorgan Bay, February 16, 1963. Seen again in the same place, April 13, 1963 (A.D.).

Charadrius leschenaultii Greater Sand Plover

This species may be seen commonly but in small numbers on the north coast of Meyan Kaleh, frequently in company with Kentish Plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus*). Also seen in May and is most probably a breeding bird.

Charadrius asiaticus Caspian Plover

Several adults and young among a big flock of *Ch. alexandrinus* and *Ch. dubius* near Farahabad, August 21–24, 1961 (A.D.).

Arenaria interpres Turnstone

A single bird in winter plumage seen on March 22, 1963.

Tringa stagnatilis Marsh Sandpiper

Several birds seen at the edge of the western end of Gorgan Bay on April 13, 1963 (A.D.).

Tringa terek Terek Sandpiper

A few seen at Bandar Shah, May 12, 1961.

Fairly common along the Caspian shore a few miles west of Farahabad, where it was in company with Dunlins (*Calidris alpina*) and Curlew Sandpipers (*Calidris ferruginea*), August 23–25, 1961. A single bird observed at very close range at the western end of Gorgan Bay, April 13, 1963 (A.D.).

Calidris canutus Knot

Small party seen along the shore west of Farahabad, August 23, 1961 (A.D.) A single bird in winter plumage on the north coast, March 22, 1963.

Calidris ferruginea Curlew Sandpiper

A few seen at Bandar Shah on May 12, 1961 (see also under *Tringa terek*).

Calidris alba Sanderling

West of Meyan Kaleh, at Babolsar, 20–30 were seen together with small plovers, October 26, 1960. Small parties at the edge of pools close to the eastern end of Meyan Kaleh, April 13, 1963. They were still in full winter plumage (A.D.).

As expected many gulls winter on the coasts. On February 14, 1963 the Great Black-headed Gull (*Larus ichthyæetus*) was seen in flocks, but on March 22 only 8 birds were left on the whole 40 miles north coast, although there were still many Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*), Common Gulls

(*Larus canus*), Slender-billed Gulls (*Larus genei*) and Black-headed Gulls (*Larus ridibundus*). These five species are common winter visitors.

Sterna hirundo Common Tern

A colony consisting of at least 100 nests was found on a small sandy islet just east of Bandar Gaz, May 12, 1961.

Order Striges

Otus scops Scops Owl

Heard at night on March 22, 1963.

Bubo bubo Eagle Owl

A single bird flushed in the dunes at the western end of Meyan Kaleh, April 14, 1963 (A.D.).

Strix aluco Tawny Owl

One seen at dusk on March 23, 1963.

Order Passeres

Unfortunately we know as yet very little about this order. We do know that several larks, thrushes (e.g. 2 Black-throated Thrushes (*Turdus ruficollis atrogularis*) on March 23, 1963), pipits and finches winter, and we also know that Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella cinerea*), Calandra Lark (*Melanocorypha calandra*), Ménétries' Warbler (*Sylvia mystacea*) and Spanish Sparrow (*Passer hispaniolensis*) are breeding birds here, but further research is needed and would undoubtedly give interesting results. In March 1963 we watched migrating flocks of Lesser Short-toed Larks (*Calandrella rufescens*), Crested Larks (*Galerida cristata*), Spanish Sparrows (*Passer hispaniolensis*) and very large flocks of Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*).

NOTES ON THE MIGRATION

As shown by PASSBURG there may be a considerable concentration of migrating and resting birds in the coastal lowland between Lake Mordab and Gorgan Bay (PASSBURG 1959). We have a few contributions:

At the southernmost point of the Caspian Sea, about 10 miles east of the port of Nowshahr, we saw during two hours at noon on April 24, 1959 a migration consisting of 50–100 Rollers (*Coracias garrulus*), somewhat fewer Bee-eaters (*Merops apiaster*), thousands of Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) and some flocks of Yellow Wagtails (*Motacilla flava*). They were all flying east.

Another huge swallow migration took place between Rasht and Chalus on September 20, 1962. The birds flew west, and the number was estimated to 10,000–30,000.

It is obvious that the isthmus west of Pahlavi is an excellent place for watching the spring migration, and if daily countings could be undertaken for a whole spring season, we would undoubtedly see large figures for some species (e. g. raptors and passerines). But for other species (waders and most probably others too) the Meyan Kaleh peninsula may prove

to be a much better locality, and further studies are much needed in this part of the country. Best of all it would be, of course, if comparative studies could be

organized. It should be of great interest if in the same spring season the migration of Pahlavi could be compared with that of Meyan Kaleh.

DANSK RESUMÉ

Iagttagelser af fugle i det nordlige Iran.

Iagttagelserne i denne artikel er gjort under en række ekskursioner foretaget af hr. OLE GEERTZ-HANSEN og forfatterne i årene 1959–1964, mange af dem dog af SPEYER alene. Desuden har Mr. ALAN DAVIDSON, som på det tidspunkt også boede i Teheran, stillet sine notater til vor rådighed.

Alle ekskursioner, som er omtalt her, blev gjort i de tre kaspiske lavlands-provinser Gilan, Mazandaran og Gorgan. Vi har især koncentreret os om Mordab-søen i Gilan og Gorgan-bugten med halvøen Meyan Kaleh i Gorgan.

Mordab-søen

Søen Mordab ligger ganske nær Det Kaspiske Hav og har sit udløb gennem havnebyen Pahlavi. En nærmere beskrivelse af området kan findes hos SCHÜZ: „Die Vögelwelt des südkaspischen Tieflandes“. Vore notater må betragtes som bidrag til denne indgående oversigt.

Vi har navnlig interesseret os for den smalle landtange, der adskiller søen fra havet (vi skriver med vilje havet uden anførelsestegn, idet Det Kaspiske Hav på mange måder må betragtes som et rigtigt hav). Ved gården Gulega er tangen mindre end en km bred, og på dette sted har vi gjort mange interessante iagttagelser, f. eks. går der et ret betydeligt træk over tangen, hvilket skulle fremgå af tabel I. Prof. SCHÜZ observerede her ved Mordab-søen og i det øvrige Gilan hele foråret 1956, så det overraskede os noget, at vi på to tilfældige dage i marts 1963 på et ca. 50 × 200 m stort område kunne se 9 arter (Skestork, Kejserørn, Snetrane, Sumpvibe, Stylteløber, Dværghornugle, Pungmejse, Cettisanger, Grønsikken) som SCHÜZ slet ikke så i foråret 1956 i Gilan.

Af vore iagttagelser i denne provins vil vi omtale: Hvid Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*): 1 set den 30. januar 1964 ved Rasht. Temperaturen var omkring 0, og jorden var dækket af sne.

Snetrane (*Grus leucogeranus*): Ved Gulega sås en Snetrane den 29. marts 1963. Den er helt forskellig fra Tranen. Med undtagelse af de mørke svingfjer og det røde ansigt er fuglen helt hvid. Desuden er den større og slankere, især synes den at være meget langbenet, og vingerne er lange og smalle. Stemmen er som Tranens.

Sumpvibe (*Chettusia leucura*): 1 trækkende ved Gulega den 29. marts 1963.

Krumnæbbet Ryle (*Calidris ferruginea*): 1 mellem andre vadere ved Pahlavi den 19. september 1962. Pungmejse (*Remiz pendulinus*): 1 par sås på jagt efter redemateriale ved Gulega den 29. og 30. marts 1963. De tilhørte en af de mørkhovede racer. Skægmejse (*Panurus biarmicus*): 1 set ved Gulega den 11. december 1962.

Blådrossel (*Monticola solitarius*): 1 han set siddende på taget af gården Gulega den 22. marts 1964. Første iagttagelse i lavlandet, men alm. ynglefugl i bjergene.

Meyan Kaleh og Gorganbugten

Ikke mange ornithologer har besøgt disse områder. I 30'erne studerede PETER SCOTT gæs lige syd for bugten, og i begyndelsen af 50'erne iagttog MISSONNE trækket om efteråret. Halvøen Meyan Kaleh har ikke tidligere været besøgt af ornithologer.

En sammenligning mellem Mordab og Gorganbugten er naturlig, men man må gøre sig klart, at der er visse landskabsmæssige forskelle, f. eks. er vandet i Gorganbugten salt, mens det er fersk i Mordab, og klimaet er mere tørt i Gorganbugten. Men begge områder huser enorme mængder af ænder om vinteren. Måske vil halvøen også vise sig at være et lige så godt træksted som tangen ved Mordab.

Man kan køre i bil på hele nordkysten af halvøen, hvilket vi har benyttet os af. Tager man et tværsnit af Meyan Kaleh fra nord til syd har man først stranden, derefter de lave klitter, så en ret smal zone med højt stift græs, derefter et bredt område med kratbevoksning (enkelte fritstående træer), og til slut på sydsiden et op til 200 m bredt bælte af strandeng og lerede partier.

Ekskursionerne har for det meste fundet sted vinter og forår, og vi har kun et meget ufuldstændigt billede af fuglelivet, men af vore dagbøger kan vi uddrage flg.:

Lappedykkere, især Toppet Lappedykker (*Podiceps cristatus*), overvintrer i stort antal, vi så f. eks. tusinder af denne art den 22. marts 1963 ligge langs nordkysten, og samme dag så vi i den lille fiskerihavn på østspidsen 15 Sorthalsede (*Podiceps nigricollis*) og 50 Små Lappedykkere (*Podiceps ruficollis*). Også de to andre arter er set, f. eks. 2 Nor-

diske Lappedykkere (*Podiceps auritus*) i sommerdragt den 13. 4. 63 set af DAVIDSON.

Af skarver har vi kun set den alm. Mellemskarv. Pelikaner er set ved flere lejligheder, men med sikkerhed er kun Krøttoppet Pelikan (*Pelecanus crispus*) identificeret.

De almindeligste hejrearter har været Fiskehejre (*Ardea cinerea*) og Sølvhejre (*Egretta alba*), men også Silkehejre (*Egretta garzetta*) og Purpurhejre (*Ardea purpurea*) har vi set. De andre arter må uden tvivl kunne ses.

Sort Stork (*Ciconia nigra*): 2 øst for Bandar Gaz den 12. maj 1961.

Mindst 12 i den vestlige del af Gorganbugten den 13. 4. 63 (A.D.)

Skestork (*Platalea leucorodia*): 14 øst for Bandar Gaz den 12. maj 1961.

En flok på ca. 20 rastende i en lagune i den vestlige del af Gorganbugten den 13. april 1963 (A.D.)

Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*): Set alm. i vinterhalvåret og endda ret sent om foråret, f. eks. 30 den 27. april 1961 ved Bandar Gaz, og 25 vest for Farahabad den 14. 4. 63.

Gorganbugten er kendt som overvintringsområde for uhyre mængder af ænder og Blishøns. MISONNE anslår antallet til 2,5–3 mill. Der kan også forekomme store mængder nord for Meyan Kaleh, hvilket vi har set eksempler på. Nogle af ænderne kan blive i bugten til hen på foråret, således sås den 14. april 1963 en flok på næsten 3.000 Pibeænder (*Anas penelope*), knap så mange Krikænder (*Anas crecca*), Skeænder (*Anas clypeata*) og Knarænder (*Anas strepera*). Den 12. maj 1961 var der endnu adskillige hundrede Troidænder (*Aythya fuligula*) øst for Bandar Gaz.

Rødhovedet And (*Netta rufina*): 15 + 200 + 100 + 50 ved Meyan Kaleh den 7. februar 1964.

Fløjsand (*Melanitta fusca*): 3 + 2 + 4 nær land den 7. februar 1964.

PETER SCOTT har begejstret fortalt om 30.000 eller endnu flere Dværggæs (*Anser erythropus*) syd for Gorganbugten. Denne art er den talrigste overvintrende gås, men Blisgåsen (*Anser albifrons*) kan også træffes i tusinder. Grågås (*Anser anser*) og Sædgås (*Anser fabalis*) er ikke så talrige. Rødhalsed Gås (*Branta ruficollis*) skal også kunne ses. Den 2. februar 1961 var der 7.000–8.000 Dværggæs og adskillige Blisgæs syd for Bandar Shah, de var der endnu den 8. marts. Vi så en flok på 100 Dværggæs gøre trækforsøg over Meyan Kaleh den 22. marts 1963, og natten derpå hørte vi flere gange trækende gæs.

Knortegås (*Branta bernicla*): Lidt vest for halvøen, ved Babolsar, sås den 29. oktober 1960 en Knortegås stående på stranden. Det var tydeligt, at det var en Lysbuget Knortegås (*Branta bernicla hrota*).

Samme dag sås over havet nogle små mørke gæs, der muligvis også har været denne art. Det er første gang arten er set i Iran.

Den mest alm. rovfugl er Sort Glente (*Milvus migrans*), som ses overalt ved kysterne, ofte i flokke på 10–15. Også Havørn (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) er meget alm., og vi talte ca. 30 langs hele nordkysten af halvøen den 22. marts 1963. Fiskeørn (*Pandion haliaeetus*) er alm. men ikke så talrig som Havørnen.

Foruden de almindelige høge, kærhøge og falke kan nævnes, at DAVIDSON har set en Kejsørørn (*Aquila heliaca*) den 16. 2. 63, og vi så to ungfugle af samme art den 23. marts 1963 over Meyan Kaleh. Samme dag sås en helt utrolig lys ørn af nogenlunde kejsørørne-størrelse. Den blev ikke bestemt, men vi gættede på enten ung Kejsørørn eller ung Steppeørn (*Aquila rapax*).

Fasan (*Phasianus colchicus*): Er tilsyneladende ret alm. i krattet på Meyan Kaleh.

Agerhøne (*Perdix perdix*): Vi så en Agerhøne på Meyan Kaleh den 23. marts 1963.

Dværgtrappe (*Otis tetrax*): 5 + 40 på Meyan Kaleh den 7. februar 1964. Lidt længere østpå, på den turkmeniske steppe, overvintrer denne art i tusindvis.

DAVIDSONS og vore erfaringer taler for, at de her omtalte områder har langt bedre vadefuglelokaliteter end områderne ved Mordab. MISONNE har studeret efterårstrækket, men også om foråret ser der ud til at være store mængder af vadere. Således sås den 27. april 1961 syd for Bandar Shah bl.a. fig. vadere: Adskillige Småspover (*Numenius phaeopus*), hundreder af Hvidklirer (*Tringa nebularia*), adskillige tusind Brushøns (*Philomachus pugnax*) (både hanner og hunner), ca. 700 Stylteløbere og omkring 10.000 Odinshøns (*Phalaropus lobatus*).

Af de ialt 35 arter vadefugle, vi har set, kan desuden nævnes:

Steppevibe (*Chettusia gregaria*): Flok på ca. 12 i den vestlige del af bugten den 16. 2. 63 og igen samme sted den 13. 4. 63 (A.D.).

Sumpvibe (*Chettusia leucura*): Mindre flok samme sted og tider som ovenstående (A.D.).

Ørkenpræstekrave (*Charadrius leschenaultii*): Kan ses almindeligt men i ringe antal, for det meste i selskab med Hvidbrystet Præstekrave (*Charadrius alexandrinus*). Vistnok ynglefugl.

Kaspisk Præstekrave (*Charadrius asiaticus*): Adskillige ad. og juv. i en stor flok af Lille Præstekrave (*Charadrius dubius*) og Hvidbrystet Præstekrave nær Farahabad den 21. 8. 61 (A.D.).

Stenvender (*Arenaria interpres*): Den 22. marts 1963 sås en i vinterdragt på nordkysten.

Damklire (*Tringa stagnatilis*): Adskillige i den vestlige del af bugten den 13. 4. 63 (A.D.).

Tereklire (*Tringa terek*): Nogle få ved Bandar Shah den 12. maj 1961.

Ret alm. på kysten nogle miles vest for Farahabad, hvor de var sammen med Ryler (*Calidris alpina*) og Krumnæbbede Ryler, 23.-25. august 1961. En enkelt sås på meget nært hold i den vestlige ende af bugten den 13. 4. 63 (A.D.).

Islandsk Ryle (*Calidris canutus*): Lille flok vest for Farahabad den 23.-25. 8. 61 (A.D.). En enkelt i vinterdragt på nordkysten den 22. marts 1963.

Krumnæbbet Ryle (*Calidris ferruginea*): Nogle få ved Bandar Shah den 12. maj 1961 (se også under Tereklire).

Sandløber (*Calidris alba*): 20-30 blev set sammen med præstekraver ved Babolsar den 26. 10. 60. Småflokke i vinterdragt på den østlige del af Meyan Kaleh den 13. 4. 63 (A.D.).

Mange måger overvintrer i området, og flg. fem arter kan træffes almindeligt: Stor Sorthovedet Måge (*Larus ichthyaëtus*), Sølvmåge (*Larus argentatus*), Tyndnæbbet Måge (*Larus genei*), Stormmåge (*Larus canus*) og Hættemåge (*Larus ridibundus*).

Fjordterne (*Sterna hirundo*): En koloni på mindst 100 reder blev fundet på en lille sandø øst for Bandar Gaz den 12. maj 1961.

Dværghornugle (*Otus scops*): Hørt om natten den 22. marts 1963.

Stor Hornugle (*Bubo bubo*): En set af DAVIDSON i klitterne på Meyan Kaleh den 14. 4. 63.

Natugle (*Strix aluco*): En set i skumringen den 23. marts 1963.

Vi ved endnu kun lidt om spurvefuglene på Meyan Kaleh. En hel del småfugle overvintrer,

f. eks. lærker, drokler (bl. a. sås 2 Sortstrubede Drokler (*Turdus ruficollis atrogularis*) den 23. marts 1963), pibere og finker. Endvidere ved vi, at Korttået Lærke (*Calandrella cinerea*), Kalanderlærke (*Melanocorypha calandra*), Ménétries' Sanger (*Sylvia mystacea*) og Spansk Spurv (*Passer hispaniolensis*) yngler her, men det er klart, at der må findes mange andre arter. I marts 1963 så vi trækkende flokke af Dværglærker (*Calandrella rufescens*), Toplærker (*Galerida cristata*), Spanske Spurve samt meget store flokke af Råger (*Corvus frugilegus*).

Noter om trækket.

PASSBURG bemærkede, at der også langs kysten mellem Pahlavi og Gorganbugten kan ses store koncentrationer af trækkende og rastende fugle. Vi har et par bidrag hertil:

Ca. 10 miles øst for Nowshahr så vi i løbet af et par timer den 24. april 1959 et østgående træk bestående af 50-100 Ellekrager (*Coracias garrulus*), knap så mange Blædere (*Mergus apiaster*), i tusindvis af Landsvaler (*Hirundo rustica*) og nogle småflokke af Gul Vipstjert (*Motacilla flava*). Et andet meget stort landsvaletræk observeredes den 20. september 1962 mellem Rasht og Chalus, dette træk var vestgående.

At tangen vest for Pahlavi er et meget fint træksted er helt afgjort, og hvis man kunne gennemføre daglige optællinger gennem en hel forårssæson, ville vi sikkert komme op på store tal for en hel del arter (f. eks. visse rovfugle og småfugle). Men for andre arter (f. eks. vadere og måske andre også) kan Meyan Kaleh meget vel vise sig at være et bedre sted. Opmærksomheden bør derfor i fremtiden rettes mod denne endnu så ukendte halvø. Allerbedst ville det naturligvis være, hvis samtidige trækstudier kunne organiseres de to steder.

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