

Short Communication

Observation of Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* in Gomishan Wetland and its Status in Iran

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Jervis Read (1958) does not include the Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* in his checklist of the birds of Iran, but Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) state that it is [erratic and occasional in the south Caspian (Iran)]. Schüz (1959) seems not to have been convinced of the occurrence of the species in the south Caspian region, and casts doubt on the report by Bodemeyer (1927) of a Snowy Owl near Rasht on 4 May. However, Schüz notes that Zarudny considered the species to be a vagrant in the south Caspian and knew of a record of a bird at the “Gürgen-mouth” (presumably the mouth of the Gorgan River in Golestan Province) at the beginning of March 1903.

On 4 December 1996, the author observed an immature Snowy Owl at Gomishan wetland, about 1 km from the beach of the Caspian Sea and about 6 km from Iran’s border with Turkmenistan, in

Golestan (Gorgan) Province (Figures 1 & 2). It is clear from the heavy barring on the bird (Figure 1) that it was an immature (first-winter) bird. There have been two other reports of Snowy Owls in Iran in recent decades, both from Golestan Province. Ali Adhami and Derek Scott observed and photographed an adult female Snowy Owl on the Turkaman Steppe 15 km north of Gomishan on 20 December 1974 (D.A. Scott *per* A. Khaleghizadeh *in litt.* 2006). This bird was perched on a small mound at the boundary between the cultivated plains north of Gomishan and the *Salicornia* flats to the north, and was in the same area and same month of the year as the author’s observation in 1996. Jamshid Mansoori observed a Snowy Owl at Daneshmand wetland near Iran’s border with Turkmenistan in the early 1990s.



Figures 1-2. The immature Snowy Owl, Gomishan wetland, Golestan Province, 4 December 1996.

(Nyctea scandiaca)

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(Cramp & Simmons 1988)

(Cramp & Simmons 1988)

(Jervis Read 1958)

() Hüe & Etchécopar

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Schüz (1959)

Bodemeyer (1927)

Zarudny

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