

Short Communication

Recent Observations of the Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* at Boujagh National Park, Gilan Province, and Agh Gol Wetland, Hamedan Province and its Status in Iran

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در این مقاله وضعیت شناگر بلوطی *Phalaropus fulicarius* که در ایران کمیاب می‌باشد مورد بررسی قرار گرفته است. برای اولین بار در تالاب بوجاق کیشهر در تاریخ ۲۳ آبان ۱۳۸۵ مشاهده و گزارش شده است و گزارش بعدی از تالاب آق‌گل همدان در تاریخ ۲۴ مهر ۱۳۸۶ می‌باشد.

The Red Phalarope (or Grey Phalarope) *Phalaropus fulicarius* has a circumpolar breeding range in the high Arctic of Siberia, Europe and North America, and winters at sea mainly in the Pacific off South America and in the Atlantic off west and southwest Africa. It has a large global population estimated at 1,100,000–2,000,000 individuals (Wetlands International 2006). In Iran, the Red Phalarope occurs as a rare passage migrant in the south Caspian region and may be regular in small numbers offshore in the Persian Gulf (Mansoori 2001, D.A. Scott *in litt.*). When feeding on the water, a Red Phalarope in winter plumage recalls a very small gull, with its unmarked grey upperparts (paler and more uniform than in the Red-necked Phalarope *P. lobatus*). The behaviour and flight pattern are similar to Red-

necked Phalarope, but the wing-beats are less jerky (Porter *et al.* 1996).

At about 10 am on 14 Nov. 2006, while carrying out a bird survey of the various riverine, estuarine and coastal habitats in



Figure 1. Red Phalarope in Boujagh National Park, Gilan, 14 Nov. 2006, © A. Ashoori.

Boujagh National Park, AA observed a single Red Phalarope feeding in wetland shallows about 20 cm deep, at 37°27'55"N, 49°54'43"E about 200–250 m from the sea coast. The bird was photographed at a distance of less than 5 metres (Fig. 1). As AA approached the bird, it flew a little distance away, and began to feed again in the manner typical of phalaropes when feeding, *i.e.* it was spinning round rapidly to stir up bottom-living invertebrates, which it then picks out as they approach the surface. AA also observed a Red-necked Phalarope *P. lobatus* about 700 m distant from the Red Phalarope. On this day, the sea water was stormy and the weather was cloudy and rainy. This constitutes the first record of the species in Boujagh National Park and the third record for Gilan Province. The Boujagh area has been protected by the Gilan office of the Iran Department of the Environment as a Non-hunting Area since 1998 and as a National Park since 2002.

On 16 Oct. 2007, during a bird survey of Agh Gol in Hamedan Province, H-RR observed a Red Phalarope swimming about and feeding in the shallow margins of the wetland (Fig. 2). This constitutes the first record of Red Phalarope for Hamedan Province and also the first record for western Iran. Agh Gol is a seasonal freshwater wetland covering between 450 and 1500 ha, depending on annual rainfall. It is located near the village of Islam-Abad (34°29'N, 49°02'E), about 30 km SE of Hamedan on the border of Markazi Province.



Figures 2. Red Phalarope, Agh Gol wetland, October 2007, © H.R. Reihanian.

The wetland is of considerable importance for waterbirds such as Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, White Stork *C. ciconia*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*, Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*, Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (A. Barati unpubl. data), but has no formal protection.

The principal threat comes from human activities around the wetland, especially the abstraction of water for agricultural purposes and resulting wetland drainage.

Table 1 lists the eight previous observations of Red Phalaropes in Iran. The majority of the birds observed in the southern Persian Gulf in April 1967 were in breeding plumage. In addition, Feeny *et al.* (1968) saw two phalaropes which were probably this species at Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran, on 28–29 Aug. 1961, and another eleven ‘probables’ on 11 September 1961.

Table 1. Records of Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* in Iran

Location	Date	Number	Observer	Reference
Tir Tash, Mazandaran	19-20 Oct. 1953	2	X. Misonne	Schüz (1959)
On the sea between Bandar Abbas and Qeshm Island	26 Apr. 1967	c.100 birds, amongst much larger numbers of <i>P. lobatus</i>	C. Erard & R.D. Etchécopar	Erard & Etchécopar (1970)
On the sea near Hormoz Island	29 Apr. 1967	c. 30	C. Erard & R.D. Etchécopar	Erard & Etchécopar (1970)
Bandar Anzali, Gilan	7 Jan. 1970	1	H. Kowalski	D.A. Scott <i>in litt.</i>
Caspian shore at west end of Miankaleh Peninsula, Mazandaran	30 Oct. 1971	1	D.A. Scott	D.A. Scott <i>in litt.</i>
Bandar Kiashahr Lagoon, Gilan	17 Nov. 1971	1	D.A. Scott	D.A. Scott <i>in litt.</i>
Caspian shore west of Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Mazandaran	18 Nov. 1972	1	R. Smith	D.A. Scott <i>in litt.</i>
West end of Gorgan Bay, Mazandaran	12 Sep. 1975	1	D.A. Scott	D.A. Scott <i>in litt.</i>

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