

## Short Communication

### The First and Second Records of Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* in Iran

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On 9 May 2007, accompanied by Ali Reza Motesharrey, Ali Reza Naderi and Hamid Reza Bostanchi, A.O. visited Shoor Ghale village in the vicinity of Payam Airport, southwest of Karaj, Tehran Province. This is a dry lowland desert area with a small clay hill range (1200 m a.s.l.).

While going through the village, a small bird similar to a Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* attracted their attention, at a distance of about 35 metres. After looking through a telescope, they were surprised by what they saw - a splendid male Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*. Initial efforts to take a photograph of it failed, as it flew 50 metres away, and subsequently did not let the observers go closer than about 70 metres. However, at about 13:30 hrs A.O. managed to take just one rather poor photograph with his analogue camera (Canon-A1) (Fig. 1). The bird then flew away over an oasis and disappeared – the flight was direct and high. A.O. visited the locality many times subsequently, and showed the photograph of the bird to the local people, but without anybody positively recognizing it.

The bird was similar in size to a Laughing Dove or perhaps a little smaller, but the colour on the back was greyer, and the underparts were whitish. The face, throat and chest were black. The long tail was black with white tips to some of the feathers; the flight was very fast and direct. A.O.

was satisfied that the identification was correct – this species is unmistakable and resembles no other dove (Porter *et al.* 1996).

It is worth mentioning that A.O. saw a similar bird on 1 May 2002 beside the main road about 50 km south of Tehran. This bird also had a long tail, but it flew off more or less immediately and no more details could be obtained. As this area is very similar to where the 2007 bird was found, it is possible that this bird may also have been a Namaqua Dove, but clearly there is no proof of this.

Four months later, on 8 September 2007, M.J. observed a male Namaqua Dove near the abandoned village of Zirud, Bard-Khun District, in the Core Zone of Mond Protected Area, Dayyer, Bushehr Province. The bird was found at about 10:00 hrs amongst a flock of about 10 Laughing Doves *Streptopelia senegalensis*, and was photographed in a *Prosopis* tree (Fig. 2). It remained in the area for four days.



Figure 1. Male Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, Karaj area, Tehran Province, 9 May 2007, © A. Osaei.



**Figure 2.** Male Namaqua Dove, Mond Protected Area, Bushehr Province, 8 September 2007, © M. Jamadi.

It is clear from recent articles in the literature that this species has been expanding its range in recent years as far north as Cyprus (Lamsdell & Lamsdell 2000), Turkey (Veyrunes 2005), Lebanon (Haraldsson 2008) and Iraq (Salim 2008).

These first two records for Iran thus fit the general pattern of expansion, but further study into range extension, colonization and population growth of this species in the Middle East would certainly be worthwhile.

#### REFERENCES

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