

PODOCES

2011

Vol. 6, No. 1

Journal homepage: www.wesca.net



First Record of the Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* on Sheedvar Island, Northern Persian Gulf, Iran

Meysam Ghasemi¹, Fahimeh Goudarzi¹ & Bagher Nezami^{2*}

1) Hormozgan Provincial Office of the Department of the Environment, Bandar Abbas, Iran

2) Faculty of Energy and Environment, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

Article Info

Short Communication

Received 3 July 2011

Accepted 30 September 2011

Abstract

This note reports on the first confirmed record of the Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* in Iran: a bird observed on Sheedvar Island on 8–9 June 2011. Probably the same bird was observed at the same location on 11–12 July 2011.

1. Introduction

During a census of nesting Bridled Terns *Sterna anaethetus* and White-cheeked Terns *Sterna repressa* on Sheedvar Island in the Persian Gulf on 8 June 2011, we observed a single Brown Noddy (or Common Noddy) *Anous stolidus*. Sheedvar Island is an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a Ramsar Site, and has one of the biggest breeding colonies of terns in the south of Iran, with large numbers of Bridled Tern, White-cheeked Tern, Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* and Great Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*. We were able to approach the bird to within 3 m, enabling us see the species' identification characteristics and obtain a series of photographs (Figs. 1–2).

2. Study Area

Sheedvar Island is a small uninhabited island located some 1,500 m to the east of Lavan Island in the Persian Gulf. The island has long been known as a haven for birds and was designated as a Protected Area in 1971. It was upgraded to a Wildlife Refuge in 1972 and designated as a Ramsar Site in 1999 because of

its internationally important breeding colonies of waterbirds and coral reefs. With an area of 98 ha, this sandy, rocky and coral island has a maximum elevation of only 8 m. The climate is hot and dry, with a mean annual temperature of 29°C and a mean annual precipitation of 150 mm. The island provides suitable breeding habitat for a variety of birds, especially White-cheeked Tern and Bridled Tern, and is also an important egg-laying location for Hawksbill Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata* *biss* and Green Turtle *Chelonia mydas japonica* (Darvishsefat 2006).

3. Description and Identification

We were able to take a number of photographs of the Brown Noddy in company with Bridled Terns and compare the two species closely. The Brown Noddy was a medium-sized tern, approximately the same size as Bridled Tern, with mostly dark brown plumage. The crown was grayish-brown, with a paler forehead. There was an incomplete white eye-ring around the big black eyes; the wings were long and narrow; and the under-wing was slightly paler than the blackish upperparts. The upper-wing

* Corresponding: Baghernezami@yahoo.com



Fig. 1. Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* with Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*, Sheedvar Island, Hormozgan Province, 8 June 2011.



Fig. 2. Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*, Sheedvar Island, Hormozgan Province, 8 June 2011.

was blackish, except for the brown greater coverts and pale brown median coverts. The tail was long, wedge-shaped and darker than the tail-coverts. The legs, feet and toe-nails were

brownish black, and the feet were palmate. The bill was black and slightly curved. In flight, the bird had deep wing-beats. When flushed, the bird would return after 2 to 3 minutes to its

favourite perch on an old iron structure on the shore.

We identified the bird based on the field guide of Porter et al. (1996) and comparison with pictures of the species on the internet. We had seen a tern on Sheedvar Island in June 2006 which we had thought was possibly a Brown Noddy, and we were therefore on the lookout for this species in June 2011. Noddies *Anous* spp. are tropical seabirds with a worldwide distribution and are characterized by uniformly dark plumage and a wedge-shaped tail, features unique among terns and gulls. The genus *Anous* comprises three species: Brown Noddy, Black Noddy *A. minutus* and Lesser Noddy *A. tenuirostris*, which differ in distribution, size, bill shape and general colour. The Brown Noddy is noticeably larger than the Black Noddy, based on Camacho & Torres (2010); it differs in tail and bill shape, as well as plumage colouration. The Brown Noddy has a shorter, heavier bill and a longer tail than the Black Noddy.

A single Brown Noddy was observed at the same location on 11–12 July 2011 (observed by M.G., A. Barati, F. Etezadifar, N. Sadeghi), and was almost certainly the same individual as that seen a month earlier on 8 and 9 June.

4. Distribution of Brown Noddy

The Brown Noddy ranges worldwide across the tropics, in both inshore and pelagic waters (Camacho & Torres 2010). It breeds mainly on islands. In the Middle East, the Brown Noddy breeds along the south coast of the Arabian Peninsula (Porter & Aspinall 2010). There have been a few observations of non-breeding birds in Oman, the United Arab Emirates and northern Indian Ocean. It seems that noddies

seen on mainland coasts are probably vagrants (Camacho & Torres 2010). Although, this is the first confirmed record of this species in Iran, it was first reported from Iran by Zarudny (1911). However, Zarudny's record was not adequately documented and was rejected by Scott et al. (1975) and Roselaar & Aliabadian (2008). The occurrence of the Brown Noddy in Iran was, therefore, not unexpected, but simply awaited confirmation.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Hormozgan Provincial Office of the Department of the Environment, Abdolrahman Rostaghi, Dehghan and Lavan Oil Company for providing financial and logistical support for field surveys. We also thank Abolghasem Khaleghizadeh for reviewing an early draft of the paper and providing useful information on the identification of the species, and Ahmad Barati, Farzaneh Etezadifar, Najibeh Sadeghi for their companionship in the July observation.

References

- Camacho C. & Torres S. 2010. First record of Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* for the South American Pacific coast. *Cotinga* **33**: 73–75.
- Darvishsefat A.A. 2006. Atlas of Protected Areas of Iran. University of Tehran, Tehran, 170 pp.
- Porter R.F. & Aspinall S. 2010. Birds of the Middle East. Helm, London, 384 pp.
- Roselaar C.S., & Aliabadian M. 2009. Review of rare birds in Iran, 1860s–1960s. *Podoces* **4(1)**: 1–27.
- Scott D.A., Moravej Hamadani H., & Adhami Mirhosseyni A. 1975. *The Birds of Iran*. Iran Department of the Environment, Tehran, 409 pp. [In Persian with scientific names, English introduction]
- Zarudnyy (Sarudny) N. 1911. Verzeichnis der Vögel Persiens. *Journal für Ornithologie*. **59**: 185–241. [In German]