

SOUTHERN two-thirds of IRAN, 11 – 29 April, 2019

Visited sites

Isfahan, Yazd, **desert south of Yazd**, Zoroastrian Towers of Silence, Kerman, Arg-e Bam, **Minab**, **Hara Tiab and Minab Protected Area**, **Hara-e Roud-e Gaz Protected Area**, Darabgerd, Neyriz, **Bahram Gour National Park**, Shiraz, Persepolis, Naqsh-e Radjab, Naqsh-e Rostam, Pasargadae (all four near Shiraz), Desh-e Ardashir (Firuzabad), **Bushehr**, **Shush**, Chogha Zanbil, **Karkheh Wildlife Refuge**, Shushtar, Chogha Mish, Dezful, **Zagros mountains north of Andimeshk**, Khorramabad, Bisotun, Taq-e Bostan (both Kermanshah), Isfahan

Highlighted = birding site

Legend Visited sites

Underlined = place where we spent the night

All others = cultural / archaeological site

Participants

Remco Hofland (report), Edward van IJzendoorn, Marijke Roos & Paul Schrijvershof from the Netherlands

Introduction

From the onset, this was a cultural/archaeological trip more than a birding trip, focused on c 70% culture, 30% nature. Having been smitten with the Middle East (culture as well as birding) from my early teens, visiting Iran had always been my dream. As quite often happens, it surpassed our expectations, the people being extremely friendly and hospitable, the cultural sites quiet with visitors (with the exception of Persepolis and Shiraz, that we happened to visit during a national holiday), the birding excellent and Iran is an extremely cheap country to visit for westerners. Because of the limited time (2.5 weeks) we decided to focus on the archaeologically (and avifaunistically) most interesting two-thirds of the country: everything south of Isfahan.



Our first Asian Wild Ass *Equus hemionus onager*, Bahram Gour NP, 18 April 2019 (Edward van IJzendoorn)

Highlights

Pleske's (Iranian) Ground Jay, Sind Woodpecker, Mesopotamian Crow, Afghan Babbler (ssp *salvadorii* and *huttoni*), *tschitscherini* Western Rock Nuthatch & *persica* Mourning Wheatear were all most-wanted lifer taxons (whether species or not; more localised subspecies were seen, see List of recorded birds), and so were good numbers of the endemic Kaiser's (Lorestan) Newt and Asian Wild Ass (Onager), the endemics Laristan Sheep & gazelle Western Jebeer, the gorgeous Odalisque *Epallage fatime* and the localised butterfly *Hypermnestra helios*. Supporting cast were many localised species such as Hypocolius, Macqueen's Bustard, Egyptian Nightjar, Grey-necked Bunting,

Pale Rockfinch, See-see Partridge, Iraq Babbler, Greater Spotted Eagle, Pallas's Gull, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Semicollared Flycatcher, White-throated Robin, Streaked Scrub Warbler, dozens breeding-plumaged Broad-billed Sandpipers and, **especially if you count Iran as being part of the Western Palearctic**, Great Stone-curlew, Bay-backed Shrike, Grey Francolin, Sand Lark, Spotted Owlet, White-breasted Waterhen, Pied Bush Chat, Common Myna, Crested Honey-Buzzard, Sykes's Warbler, Shikra, Saunders's & White-cheeked Tern, Variable & Hume's Wheatear, Indian Roller, White-eared Bulbul & Indian Silverbill. Hundreds of Black-headed Bunting heading north one morning was also a memorable sight, as was personal favorite Greater Hoopoe-Lark (displaying). And all that in 30% of our time.



Mesopotamian Crows (or Hooded Crow ssp *capellanus*) near the roost south of Shush (Edward van IJzendoorn)

Cultural highlights

For me, the highlights were the cities of Isfahan and Shiraz and the Zoroastrian Towers of Silence near Yazd, Arg-e Bam, Persepolis and the Chogha Zanbil ziggurat.



Persepolis and Isfahan (Remco Hofland)

Trip Totals

We recorded 203 species of bird (incl two heard-onlies, one introduced species, five ssp of Western Yellow and two ssp of White Wagtail); 7 species of mammals; identified 16 reptiles & amphibians, 25 butterflies and 25 dragonflies; furthermore, we photographed a few moths, crabs, fish, a bug, a hoverfly and a range of flowering desert plants. All these are listed at the end of this report.

Most noticeable dips

Basra Reed Warbler: despite much searching in the right habitat and areas south of Shush in the Mesopotamian southwest (near the Iraq border), this highly desired lifer for all of us just did not seem to have returned to the breeding grounds yet. Unfortunately, the very best areas for the species were unreachable because of the massive flooding of this part of Iran during the spring we visited. Crab Plover: tried for on the tidal areas near Hara Tiab and Minab Protected Area (hereafter: Tiab), Hara-e Roud-e Gaz Protected Area (hereafter: Gaz) and Bushehr (where good numbers are seen in winter) but failed to find any. Western Brown Fish Owl was not found at Gaz river bed (only found a feather) nor did we see Omani Owl that widely occurs in Iran but we failed to find a site for it when preparing. We were also somewhat surprised not to find clear signs of migration: somehow I expected scores of birds like Eurasian Wrynecks and flycatchers. According to the few guides we spoke to, the unprecedented rainfall of the spring seemed to have halted migration; and perhaps we just didn't encounter a migrant trap or fall. We did see some migrants (such as White-throated Robin, Masked Shrike, Grey-necked and Ortolan Buntings), and sometimes saw flocks of species like Whiskered Tern, Lesser Kestrel or Red-throated Pipit.

Acknowledgements

In no specific order, I would like to thank Geerda van Nunen for identifying butterflies, Peter Mudde for ID'ing reptiles & amphibians, dr. Reza Naderloo for ID'ing crabs, Hans Verdaat for the use of his Ground Jay images, Daan Drukker and Peter Maaskant for their help with scientific names of mammals, Carlos Bocos for assuring us on a few tricky ID's, Garry Bakker for assisting in adding pictures to this report, dr. Klaas-Douwe Dijkstra for checking my *Ischnura* ID text, Johan van 't Bosch for providing valuable general Iran information and Gholamreza Ghaderi for proofreading.

Preparation

We scanned Observation.org for sightings of species of interest to us. Most helpful were Johan van 't Bosch's hint to have Gholamreza Ghaderi guide us in Bahram Gour NP, and the tripreports listed under Literature. Few birders have undertaken independent trips to Iran but those who have were in unison about the birding potential and several have returned since their first visit. So will I.

The Facebook site **See you in Iran** is very helpful on a range of subjects, varying from how to obtain a visa, where to stay, what to see (cultural as well as natural) etc. A number of guides also present themselves on this site among which Farhad Arashk (see Guides), a hiker we hired to show us Kaiser's Newts in the beautiful Zagros mountains around Khorammabad.

Another informative Facebook site is **Birding Iran**. Through it, you might be able to contact observers of records of interest to you. One of the posts redirect you to a blog by Keramat Hafezi Birgani about Hour-al-Azeem wetland near Shush, that shows great pictures of most-wanted birds such as Basra Reed Warbler, Hypocolius, Egyptian Nightjar, African Darter, African Sacred Ibis & Goliath Heron: https://osme.org/2020/05/the-wonderful-marshes-of-khuzestan-an-iranian-treasure/?fbclid=IwAR0D3YX4TcWPwET6UkbisW8qwSxJfMLew1nzPrKOBjQ_ostZhq9fYc1R3Y.

You may also want to check the website <http://iranbirdrecords.ir>. Here, the Iranian Bird Records Committee gives an overview of rarities seen. Besides usual suspects like Cotton Pygmy Goose, Asian Koel & Black Drongo, recent records of note incl 10 Sociable Lapwings at Bamdezh wetland and 45 African Darters at Hour-al-Azeem (Shush area) on 15 October 2020, five Brown Fish Owls at Dezful (Shush area) on 17 October 2020 and 100 Crested Honey Buzzards wintering on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf on 15 December 2020. The website also noted the arrival date of the last Siberian White Crane *Grus leucogeranus* of the western population, Omid, at Fereidoun-Kenar, at 4 November 2020. Many of the records are also mentioned on Birding Iran so this website is most significant for people who are not on Facebook.

Visa

We opted for a visa-on-arrival (hereafter: VOA). This was fairly easily obtained (but see below for UK and USA nationals). The cost of our VOA was € 75, to be paid in cash EUR or the equivalent in cash USD. We needed proof of a travel insurance including health care, and the statement should specifically state it is valid in Iran (a country like Russia requires a similar statement). See you in Iran mentioned that if you fail to produce this specific proof of insurance, you are required to buy

an Iranian insurance. Paul and Marijke both did not bring this specific insurance and were indeed charged an extra € 13 each. Also bring printed proof of your return ticket, your first pre-booked accommodation and passport-sized photos.

The four of us arrived at Isfahan international airport at 3.30 am and the only other tourists were two elderly ladies. By 4.15 am all our VOAs were ready. I suspect the capital Tehran sees more tourists and therefore obtaining a VOA will probably take longer there.

Our VOA was called Electronic Visa and mentions E-visa System in the upper left corner; it was valid for 20 days. It is an A4 page with information in Farsi and English and a black-and-white photograph in the top right corner; it was asked for at hotels and, like our passports, photocopied. Needless to say you better not lose it. Since my passport was not stamped I should not have major problems accessing countries who try to discourage tourism in Iran. I visited Israel for a five-day birding trip (Basalt Wheatear) c nine months later and had no problems entering, although I later learned I could have been refused entry.

An exception to the easy VOA process is made for US, Canadian and UK nationals among others (see below), who have to undergo a lengthy visa process through their local embassies and who reportedly have to produce more documents. It is said they can only travel in Iran when in a group or accompanied by a special Iranian guide, whose cost needs to be covered as well. **Always check for the latest details regarding visa regulations**, for example on See you in Iran.

Obtaining a tourist visa in advance through a website and the Iranian consulate is your surest bet to avoid pre-trip stress; on See you in Iran a good many stories are told by those who were going for VOA but were refused entry into the country without an explanation. Apparently proof of health insurance covering Iran is not asked for when applying for an Iranian tourist visa in advance.

Several sources mention the necessity of getting an e-visa (€ 55) before departure, although on See you in Iran many discouraged it, stating it only adds to your cost as in some cases one also needs to get their VOA. We did not get an e-visa and it worked fine for us.

January 2020 update: See you in Iran now operates a website with visa information, with a very informative world map: https://seeyouiniran.org/iranian-visa-application/?fbclid=IwAR0O0QKep0yn9VYmpRgX2xTNkzXw5sP45vRtB_FZSAec_sktrCQIZRyqKRE. The world map indicates which countries are visa-free (e.g. Turkey), which countries are eligible for VOA or online visa (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden) and which countries require a visa obtained in advance (e.g. USA, UK, Colombia, India). The website states that a VOA is now issued for 30 days and it can be issued either as a sticker or a stamp in one's passport. The main page limits the number of airports where a VOA can be issued to five – here, Isfahan Shahid Beheshti International Airport is not mentioned. However, a drop-down menu at the bottom of the page does mention Isfahan International Airport as an option for VOA. Note also the highly informative "What will increase my chance of rejection?" – one of the answers pertains to not observing Islamic dress code when applying for VOA at the airport of arrival.

Language

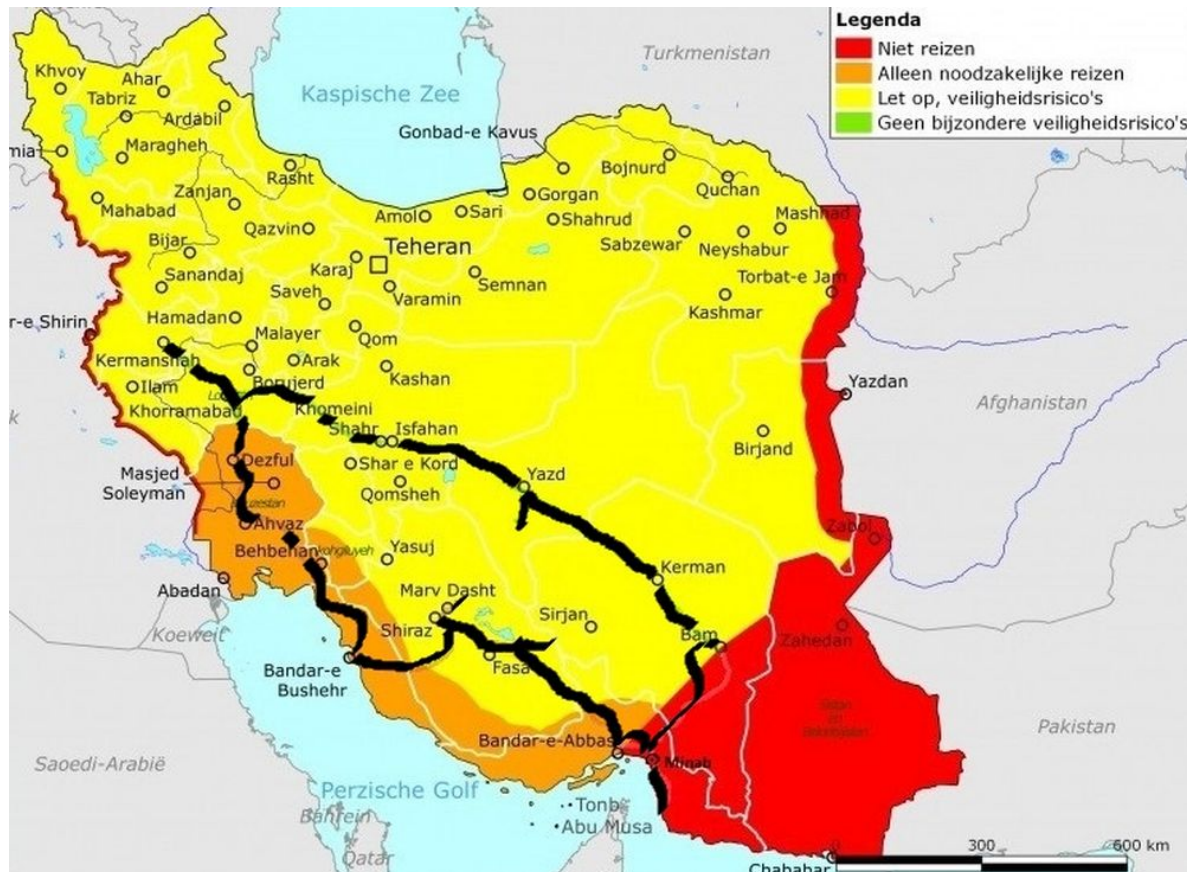
The language spoken in Iran is Farsi. As a rule English is not widely spoken, not even in hotel lobbies and this included the Ibne Sina Guesthouse in Isfahan and sev ITTIC / Tourist Hotels. Notable exceptions to the rule were the people at Saadat Rent, desk clerks at top hotels such as the 5* Isfahan Parsian Kowsar Hotel and Persian Kermanshah Hotel, guides Gholamreza Ghaderi and Farhad Arashk, an Isfahan souvenir shop owner who used to travel the world as kamancheh player, and a bank clerk that changed money. The fact not many people speak English did not pose a problem however since all people encountered were friendly and hospitable and to sleep, eat, rent a boat or fill up a car one really only needs hands (to gesture) and cash rials.

Safety & religion

Primarily because of the western boycott Iran is thought to be an unsafe country to travel to/in by many. "Wow, you're going to Iran?! Is that not very dangerous?" was the most common remark when we told family, friends and colleagues what our next destination would be. The answer is: no, it is not dangerous at all.

People were very friendly everywhere and we could drive, visit archaeological sites and watch birds wherever we wanted. Do however read the Self-drive paragraph below if you are planning to rent a car.

Western boycott aside, another reason for not visiting Iran might be the perception that the country is highly religious, to the extent that travel/tourism for women can be less pleasant. While I read stories about religious police poking women with sticks to make them cover up their hair, this practice appears to be most common in highly religious centers like the cities of Qom and Mashhad (neither of which we visited) and perhaps the capital Tehran (not visited either). Marijke, like many local women, wore a scarf loosely draped over her head and this worked fine. In fact we never saw women bothered by anyone, nor did we ever see religious police, and especially in the Minab area even saw women without head scarfs. For Marijke and Paul, an unmarried couple, we were able to secure double rooms wherever available without them having to show proof of marriage. In all, it was a pleasant holiday without difficulties whatsoever.



Route travelled, clockwise from Isfahan. Map by the Dutch Foreign Office. The local situation may change although in the red area travel is fairly constantly discouraged.

We decided against going further east than Bam or Gaz. The southeastern province Beluchistan probably provides the best birding from a "corner-of-the-WP" perspective (although Iran is not generally regarded as part of the Western Palearctic) but this province, as well as the border area with Afghanistan, is a 'red' area according to the Dutch Foreign Office, for one meaning our travel insurance wasn't valid there. This is also the reason why, after much contemplation, we decided against visiting the Zahedan area, where Sistan (Afghan) Scrub Sparrow *Passer yatii* (formerly a subspecies of Dead Sea Sparrow *P. moabiticus*) occurs and White-crowned Penduline-Tit *Remiz coronatus* winters. Technically, the Minab and Gaz areas are also 'red' but all birders visit without problems and so did we. In fact, these are highly pleasurable and productive birding areas, warranting a longer stay if you have the time.

Money

The local currency is the Iranian rial. At the time of travel (April 2019), € 1 was officially worth 47,000 rials but unofficially, c 150,000. The exchange office at the airport was not open, perhaps unsurprising given the time of arrival of 3.30 am, but since we happened to arrive on a Friday nor were the banks in the center of Isfahan. We exchanged some money on the street and this went a long way. **ATM's are absent in the entire country** so bring all the money you need in cash EUR or USD. It is said there's a 10% commission on changing USD so EUR are probably your best bet. Credit cards may be accepted in some hotels and even shops but only in the tourist areas/cities like Isfahan and Shiraz; don't ever count on this being possible. Traveller's cheques are not accepted

anywhere. Changing money was not possible at the Bam Tourist Hotel and at Hotel Pasargad in Bushehr.

When I changed money at Bank Tejarat in Bushehr the clerk warned me I'd get a better rate on the street opposite the bank, an unusual event. I didn't bother for a few EUR difference.

For us, Iran was incredibly cheap. Hiring a boat to take us out into the sandflats/mangroves near Minab for three hours cost the equivalent of less than € 2. A twin room in a proper hotel frequently cost € 20 and we had nice meals for around € 2. A full tank of petrol cost 400,000 rial, c € 4.

Note that prices can be quoted in Toman, an alternative for rial minus a factor 10. So a quoted price of 1,000 might very well be 1,000 Toman (the equivalent of 10,000 rial).

Travel arrangements

(International flight) We took straightforward flights with Turkish Airlines: our A330 from Amsterdam to Istanbul took 2.5 hrs, a stopover at Istanbul c 3 hrs, and Istanbul to Isfahan took c 3.5 hrs. Arrival time at Isfahan International Airport was 3.30 am. Brand new top-of-the-bill airplanes both stretches, with sat-nav vision screen on the route taken. Turkish Airlines allowed 30 kg checked baggage (and 8 kg carry-on), for a price of € 520 return. We arrived on the brand-new massive Istanbul airport that, only days before, moved from the old one entirely in 48 hours, probably one of the biggest logistical feats in recent human history.

(Rental car) I hired a Peugeot Parsa saloon car from Saadat Rent in Tehran through e-mail (info@saadatrent.com) and whatsapp. Incl full insurance and unlimited mileage we paid € 425 for two weeks for a spacious sedan; I paid in cash EUR upon arrival. The cost broke up into € 272 rental, € 60 pick-up and € 60 drop-off fee (the rental company is based in Tehran but we arrived at and departed from Isfahan), € 21 windscreen, lights and tire protection and € 12 for a wireless internet modem that should enable us to websurf from the car (to navigate and book hotels while on the road). The modem however didn't charge so we were refunded the € 12 – back at Isfahan airport in cash rials (that we could, with difficulty, spend at Isfahan airport while waiting to depart; the airport bank was also closed on departure). A € 200 deposit was returned in full (cash EUR) at the drop-off. When exiting Isfahan International Airport around 4.30 am a man was waiting for us with the car, I signed some documents and we were on our way. Not likely to overlook him: he was the only person and ours almost the only car parked outside the terminal (one of the smallest international airports I ever saw). In all, we drove 5.727 kms in two weeks. A nice gesture by the rental company was a complimentary cd with beautiful Iranian music, that we often played in the car (and back home). We were also given some English leaflets about certain cultural highlights.

Note that Paul Vossen (Jan 2019) mentions car rental is not an option but it was in April 2019!

(Boats hired) We hired a boat into the tidal areas/mangroves on two occasions, at Tiab (near Minab) and at Gaz, south of Minab, primarily to search for Crab Plover and Great Stone-curlew. At Tiab we ran into the only other (Polish) birder we saw on the trip, and his Iranian guide assisted us in hiring a boat, for which we were charged 250,000 rial (€ 1.60) for three hours. When we overran the agreed time by an hour I had difficulty getting the boatman to accept an additional 100,000 rials. Hiring a boat at Gaz required some gesturing, and a half-hour wait because local police needed to check that we were allowed to go out. With the boatmen not understanding what we wanted, after having found a distant Great Stone-curlew on a large mudflat bordering the Persian Gulf, the boatmen took off to open sea to collect a friend from a fishing vessel a few kms out. It was unclear what else he had in mind, so I gestured we had a plane to catch and within 15 mins we were back at the jetty. Here, we paid 200.000 rials (€ 1,30) for the trip.

Self-drive

The following text that I posted on See you in Iran two days after returning home basically says it all. Most of the 30 responses to my post agreed with my observation.

"Two days ago I completed a self-drive 2.5 week holiday in Iran (..). A word of warning is in place however. After India and China I consider Iranians the worst drivers in the world. They basically act like the road is theirs, and theirs alone. They ignore, no, violate every international traffic rule on a large scale - the reason probably being that no rule is enforced (I frequently saw people performing hefty traffic violations in front of police who stood by and did not act). So, please only consider self-drive if you are an experienced driver able to anticipate other people's most unlikely traffic decisions.

The country is lovely though, and self-drive will get you to many far-off places visited by few people - such as Chogha Zanbil, Darabgerd, Firuzabad etc. The roads are generally in good condition, so even though the maximum speed limit is 110 km/hr (120 on some highways) one can easily drive faster than that."

Guides

We used guides in three places. Gholamreza Ghaderi (ghaderigholamreza@yahoo.com) guided us on 18-19 April 2019 at **Bahram Gour National Park** (an hour east of Neyriz, 300 km southeast of Shiraz). Gholamreza is a ranger at Bamou NP (close to Shiraz) specialized in mammals who studies Leopards in particular. Oscar Campbell (2017), see Literature, recommends him and so did Johan van 't Bosch (pers. med.) who visited a slaughterhouse with him attracting many eagles in winter. Gholamreza was indeed great, fluent in English, and a fabulous mammal and bird finder. Though Gholamreza is still learning the birds, he knows **Pleske's Ground Jay & Macqueens Bustard** very well and was keen to pick up on things he rarely sees, like the Masked Shrike we found at Bahram Gour NP (apparently the second record there).

Gholamreza arranged access to Bahram Gour NP well in advance and while there he drove us around in his rental 4WD, accompanied by a ranger in a 4WD (for which we paid an additional 3 million rials, € 20). We paid Gholamreza € 170 per day (cash EUR), this incl the cost of his rental car and all arrangements. Prior to meeting him I communicated with Gholamreza through whatsapp, and when we notified him we were travelling ahead of schedule he was able to change our access to Bahram Gour NP to a day earlier. For details of what we exactly saw at Bahram Gour NP, see Day-to-day and Sites visited. Gholamreza can guide many other parts of Iran as well, such as the greater Shiraz area, the Bandar Abbas area and the Zagros mountains – perhaps even Touran NP in the northeast, where Cheetah still occurs.

When after one-and-a-half day at Bahram Gour NP (we dipped on the Ground Jay the first day) we drove to Shiraz, Gholamreza took us to the north end of Maharlu Lake east of Shiraz where we searched for but failed to find an endemic fish. When all hotels in Shiraz proved fully booked Gholamreza eventually succeeded in securing us a place to stay in a private home.

Gholamreza put us in contact with a local guide in **the Mesopotamian Shush area** (north of Ahvaz, southwest Iran, close to the border with Iraq), where we stayed 22-24 April 2019. Mohammad, who hardly speaks any English, knows sites for **Basra Reed Warbler** (BRW), **Mesopotamian Crow** (a.k.a. Hooded Crow ssp *capellanus*), **Hypocolius**, **Egyptian Nightjar**, **African Darter** etc. Mohammad (+98 918 345 3019) brought along Ahmad Zali, who speaks English (+98 916 342 330 62), to translate. The crow and Hypocolius we easily found ourselves, the former at sites found on Observation.org and in tripreports, as well as bumping into them in other places. Mohammad arranged access into **Karkheh Wildlife Refuge**, where we found Egyptian Nightjar (as well as Hypocolius and plenty more). Our detailed Shush sightings are found under Sites visited. Mohammad charged 3 million rial per day (€ 20, to be divided by four) for his guiding.

The severe rainfall and consequent flooding of March 2019 meant the prime area for Basra Reed Warbler and African Darter (Hour-al-Azeem wetland) could not be reached and to cut a long story short, we dipped both despite trying for the BRW in places where they are normally seen during the third week of April. See Preparation for a mouth-watering blog about Hour-al-Azeem wetland.

Note that **Hour-al-Azeem wetland**, like **Bahram Gour NP (and Bamou NP)**, **do not accept walk-ins so contact** Gholamreza Ghaderi or Ahmad Zali **weeks in advance** if you want to secure access.

In the **Zagros mountains between Andimeshk and Khorramabad**, Farhad Arashk (+98 935 723 1581, active on Facebook Messenger, bakhtyarifa@gmail.com) is an enthusiastic hiker with a keen interest in waterfalls and nature. He guided us to the endemic **Kaiser's (Lorestan) Newt** *Neurergus kaiseri* on 25 April 2019. Farhad knows where this rare, highly localised and attractive species of salamander occurs, and let us choose between sites one to three hours walk. Pretrip Farhad sent me pictures through Facebook Messenger so I could select the valley we wanted to visit; he even sent pictures of endemic cave fish he knows sites for (we unfortunately lacked the time). Other endemics seen with Farhad incl *tschitscherini* Western Rock Nuthatch and Zagros Wall Brown *Lasiommata zagrossicus*. We paid Farhad 200 USD for the day and it was definitely worth it.

We unfortunately could not go out with guide Masoud Yousefi (masoud.yousefi52@gmail.com and active on Facebook Messenger) who guides all over Iran for reptiles, amphibians, mammals and birds. Masoud knows where to find the Spider-tailed Horned Viper (*Pseudocerastes urarachnoides*),

whose tail-tip resembles a spider. Shaking it helps the snake to catch unsuspecting passerines (there is some excellent footage of it on YouTube). This snake is endemic to the Zagros mountains in Iran. If you are interested in herping Iran, check out this blogpost by Bobby Bok, who was accompanied by Masoud: <https://www.herpsafari.nl/trip-reports-outside-eu/2016-4-iran/>.

Wifi and cell phone coverage

Good all around. Unfortunately, the modem we hired with our rental car didn't work (it didn't charge on the car battery nor in hotel sockets), otherwise we could have more easily googled hotels and book them while underway.

Lodging

In general, the so-called ITTIC or Tourist Hotels are good options for reasonable prices. All hotels required payment in cash rials except for the 5* Isfahan Parsian Kowsar Hotel, that accepted cash EUR. Never making reservations in advance to remain flexible, our visit to Shiraz coincided with a national holiday and literally everything was fully booked. We therefore had to resort to staying in a private home one night, something that is apparently discouraged by the government as it was very hush-hush.

[Isfahan: Ibne Sina Guesthouse, € 20 per double/twin room, did not stay the night]

Yazd: Firoozeh Guesthouse, € 46 per room

Kerman: Motevali Bashi Traditional Hotel, € 20 per double/twin room

Minab: Minab Tourist Hotel (ITTIC), € 15 per room

Neyriz: Hotel Neyriz (Taleghani St), € 31 for 3 rooms

Shiraz: first night, private home for € 10 each (spacious, mattresses on the floor, cold shower); second night ITTIC Hotel, € 44 for apartment with double room and two single rooms

Bushehr: Hotel Pasargad, € 28 for apartment with three rooms, incl breakfast

Shush: Dourantash Traditional Hotel, € 19 for three rooms

Dezful: Dez Hotel, € 28 for three rooms

Khorramabad: ATR Hotel, € 30 for a double and a twin room

Isfahan: 5* Isfahan Parsian Kowsar Hotel, € 100 for the royal suite with three rooms, incl breakfast

Frequently we had dinner at our hotels for the equivalent of € 2 (300,000 rials) each.

Legend

Ssp = subspecies; mts = mountains; kms = kilometres; hrs = hours; mins = minutes; incl = including/included; btw = between; temp = temperature; c = circa (approximately).

Weather

Temperatures were OK at the start of our trip (around 17 C in Isfahan) and slowly rising as we progressed with 20 C in Bam, 23-25 C in Minab & Gaz, 20-25 C in the higher Shiraz and Bahram Gour NP areas, 26 C in the Shush area and c 20 in the Zagros mts area of Khorramabad and Bisotun. It was generally cool in the morning with temperatures around 12 C in all areas except for Minab, where in early morning it was around 15 C. A cold wind was sometimes present, like at Bisotun. We only experienced rain one morning when departing Kerman, and one sand storm, at a roadside stop btw Isfahan and Yazd.

In March 2019 (only weeks before our visit), unprecedented rainfall caused severe flooding in most of Iran, especially in the Shiraz region (images of cars flowing down the streets made headlines worldwide) and even more so in the southwest. During our visit a state of national emergency was called in and around the cities of Abadan, Mahshahr and Khoramshahr, and indeed we witnessed massive flooding even when bypassing those cities by dozens of miles, sometimes to the effect of sandbanks protecting the highway from flooding, while fishermen literally rode their boats only meters away from us. The flooding meant some prime areas for birding could not be reached.

Literature

We took the following on the trip

* Birds of the Middle East, 2nd edition, by Richard Porter and Simon Aspinall (2010). ISBN 978-0-7136-7602-0

* Birds of Iran (in Farsi), 2nd edition, by J. Mansoori (2008). ISBN 978-964-7239-53-0

* Important Bird Areas in the Middle East, BirdLife Conservation Serie no 2, compiled by M.I. Evans (1994). ISBN 0-946888-28-0

* Mammals of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East (English version) by Aulagnier, Haffner, Mitchell-Jones, Moutou & Zima (2009). ISBN 978-1-4081-1399-8

* Iran, Bradt guide, 5th edition by Hilary A. Smith (2017). ISBN 978-1-78477-021-1

- * Iran, Lonely Planet Guide, 2nd edition, by Paul Greenway & David St Vincent (1998)
- * Iran, Dumont Kunstreiseführer (in German) by Mahmoud Rashad (1998). ISBN 3-7701-3385-4

as well as the following tripreports (all in English)

- * Paul Vossen: Shiraz, Yazd, Bam & Minab, 24 Dec 2018 – 7 Jan 2019
- * Sander Bruylants: Autumn birding in Iran, 12-26 November 2017
- * Henk Hendriks: Iran, 19 April – 2 May 2017
- * Oscar Campbell: Shiraz, Febr 2017
- * Jens Thalund: Iran, 29 June – 13 July 2014
- * Björn Anderson: Iran, 8-18 April 2011

Other interesting tripreports and blogs I think are

- * Jouko Hogmander, S Iran, 22-29 November 2016
- * Jos Stratford: April 2014, Dec-Jan 2011-2012 and Aug 2010
- * Seyed Babak Musavi, Hormozgan province, March-Oct 2004
- * Philippe Dubois, 20 Febr – 7 March 2000

Birdsounds

Pre-trip I downloaded some 300 soundrecordings from Xeno-canto. We didn't use them much, although they came in handy at our first Sykes's Warbler (both to identify it and lure it in) and near Shush when looking for Basra Reed Warbler.

I made a few sound recordings myself, with a small microphone and my iPhone, most noticeably of Mesopotamian Crow (recordings 2-4 of this taxon for Xeno-canto) and of *salvadorii* Afghan Babbler, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Corn Bunting, Eastern Rock Nuthatch near the nest, House Sparrow, Pale Rockfinch, Sind Woodpecker, Sykes's Warbler and Eastern Tree Frogs (*Hyla orientalis*).

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Day-to-day

For details on lodging see Lodging.

Thu Apr 11 Amsterdam -> Istanbul -> towards Isfahan

Departed Amsterdam Schiphol Airport with a Turkish Airlines A330 at 2.40 pm, arriving at the brand-new Istanbul Airport 2.5 hrs later. Local time one hr later in Istanbul; 3-hr stopover. Departed Istanbul Airport with a Turkish Airlines flight at 10.10 pm.

Fri Apr 12 Isfahan - Yazd

Arrived Isfahan International Airport 3.30 am. The four of us plus two other tourists secured our visa-on-arrival by 4.15 am. Our rental car was waiting outside: I checked the car, signed the papers, paid € 625 in cash (incl € 200 deposit) and we were on our way. Left the airport at 5.15 am, arriving near the pre-booked Ibne Sina Guesthouse at 5.50 am. Checked into the guesthouse and freshened up. Walked towards Isfahan old city center 7.30 am. Changing money, impossible at airport, also proved difficult in the center (note: don't arrive in an islamic country on a Friday). Admired the bazaar (closed), Naqsh-e Jahan square (empty), several mosques (off-limits), Si-o-se Pol bridge over the river (filled with water, I later learned that is a rare occasion nowadays). Walked back to our guesthouse and checked out at 2 pm, eager to see more (and perhaps already bird Yazd desert the next morning). Heading towards Yazd, we stopped twice along the road: once at a blossoming almond grove (**Semicollared Flycatcher, Syrian Woodpecker**) and once at an old kervansaray. Here we encountered our first (and, thankfully, only) sand storm of the trip. Yazd was busy and windy; arranging a place to stay was difficult, but Firoozeh Guesthouse had space.

Sat Apr 13 Yazd - Kerman

Departed the hotel at 6 am, arriving at a known site for Pleske's Ground Jay along the '82', 125 km south of Yazd, at 7.30 am. Birds encountered along the way and on-site incl **See-see Partridge**, Desert Wheatear, **Bar-tailed Lark**, **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Trumpeter & Desert Finch**; also encountered the **localised butterfly *Hypermnestra helios*** and the **localised Gray Toadhead Agama *Phrynocephalus scutellatus***. At 10.30 am we drove back towards Yazd without having seen a trace of the Ground Jay (none of this desert had the higher bush typical of the Ground Jay's breeding habitat we later saw at Bahram Gour NP, however). Back at the highway '71' we drove c 20 kms back north to the southwest of Yazd city to visit the Zoroastrian Towers of

Silence. Like most archaeological sites admission here was the equivalent of € 1.30 each. These towers were, until the mid 1970's, used by the zoroastrians to lay out their dead on top, for the vultures to make sure they would be recycled (exarnation). Very impressive site, for me one of the highlights of the trip. At 1.40 pm we drove towards Kerman, stopping along the highway at a rest stop for lunch (where encountered our first **singing Common Myna**) and to change drivers (our first **singing Sykes's Warbler** of the trip). We arrived at the southern end of Kerman's ring road at 7 pm but could not locate the ecolodge, nor a nearby b&b, mentioned on GoogleMaps. Stayed at the Motevali Bashi Traditional Hotel, where had dinner for € 2 each.

Sun Apr 14 Kerman - Bam - Minab

Steady rain in the morning. 6 am breakfast, 6.45 am departure in the rain. Brief stop at roadside ruined castle (finally dry), arriving at Arg-e Bam 9.15 am. Despite the damage of the destructive 2003 earthquake clearly visible, one is trying to repair this ancient city with mud and straw. Dry and c 21 C, no other tourists encountered, entry € 1.30. Birds of note incl our first **Indian Rollers** of the trip, **breeding** in Bam's citadel walls, Desert Lark singing from the citadel walls; **White-eared Bulbul**, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin and **singing Purple Sunbird & Sykes's Warbler** in the neighbouring park. Lunch btw 11.30 am – 1 pm in Bam Tourist Hotel, then changed € 500 at Melli Bank (€ 1 = 148.000 rial). Of the 2-3 afternoon birding stops, the 3 pm in the mountains north of Jiroft was most interesting, with a **pair of Variable Wheatear** seen. Arrived at Minab Tourist Hotel 8.35 pm (good wifi and **Persian Leaf-toed Gecko** *Hemidactylus persicus*). Dinner at hotel.

Mon Apr 15 Minab (Sind Woodpecker), Tiab (mangrove/sandflat boat trip)

Morning started relatively slow while looking for the best locality to observe Sind Woodpeckers; saw none along the dry river bed but two **Grey Francolins** were flushed here. Great birding all morning once we found very birdy palm gardens, where highlights incl several **Sind Woodpeckers**, **Spotted Owlet**, *bogdanovi* **Black Francolin**, *huttoni* **Afghan Babbler**, **Shikra**, Yellow-throated Sparrow, Green Bee-eater; **Jungle Cat & Indian Grey Mongoose**; Small Skimmer, Citrus Swallowtail, Dark Grass Blue & African Monarch. The afternoon boat trip through the Tiab mudflats west of Minab (12.30-3.30 pm) was equally memorable, especially since I had a hard time getting the boatman to accept 350.000 rials (€ 2.5) for the 4-hr trip. A Polish birder we encountered here tipped us about Cream-coloured Coursers he'd seen that morning at a petrol station near Bandar Abbas. The Tiab highlights incl **Sand Lark**, **two imm Greater Spotted Eagles**, **an adult summer Pallas's Gull**, **22-40 Dalmatian Pelicans**, **60+ summer-plumaged Broad-billed Sandpipers**, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested, Gull-billed, Caspian, White-winged & Little Tern and migrant Pied & Isabelline Wheatears. Evening was spent at some vegetable fields outside Minab where we connected with **Pied Bush Chat**, flushed another Grey Francolin and saw Daurian Shrike and our first **Iranian Earless Toad** *Bufo surdus*. Paid the hotel bill since we didn't know where we'd stay the next night: € 21 each for two nights' stay and two dinners.

Tue Apr 16 Hara-e Roud-e Gaz Protected Area (boat trip; Great Stone-curlew), Minab

Departed 5.30 am to head in the direction of Gaz Protected Area, an area of mudflats and mangroves known for its Great Stone-curlews and wintering Crab Plovers. Around 6.30 am we noticed large flocks of Black-headed Buntings migrating north and to count them we stopped at a few roadside (rainwater?) ponds near Bondaran (GPS 26.6457, 57.0852). This place proved to be quite birdy, the highlight being our only **Bay-backed Shrike** of the trip. In all, we witnessed **c 620 Black-headed Buntings migrating north**, some temporarily coming down to drink. Further south we saw beautiful geological rock formations along the road, especially tall diagonal slate formations and tuff reminiscent of the Cappadokia area of central Turkey. A little try-and-error got us to a boat jetty, where six migrant **Ortolan Buntings** were nice. Between 9.20 and 10.20 am we did a boat trip towards the river mouth where among the many large crabs we indeed found the hoped-for **Great Stone-curlew**. Communication with the boatman was difficult and we couldn't really make clear to him we wanted to go nearer the sandflats to check the gulls, terns and waders. When he steered his boat out to sea to pick up a friend from a fishing vessel a few kms offshore and afterwards appeared to head further out to sea I gestured we had a plane to catch and in 15 mins we were back at the jetty. On our way back to Minab we stopped north of Gaz at a spectacular river that looked excellent for (Western) Brown Fish Owl but all we found was a feather. Lunch at Minab Tourist Hotel while enjoying the wifi and checking in for the night. From 3.30-6.30 pm the birding at Minab palm gardens was slower than the previous morning, although a **Crested Honey Buzzard** and a vagrant (?) **White-breasted Waterhen** made up for that. An evening search for a pizzeria resulted in us being invited to having tea with a bunch of women and children, none of whom spoke a language we master.

Wed Apr 17 Minab -> Darab -> Neyriz

Departed at 6 am. Failed to find the Cream-coloured Coursers seen at a petrol station east of Bandar Abbas two days earlier. From Bandar Abbas we drove the '71' north and at Gahkom turned west onto the '92'. A random stop at a roadside well turned out to be productive for dragonflies especially, the **localised *Ischnura intermedia*** being the highlight. Pressed on to the old city of Darabgerd (next to Darab) that on aerial pictures we googled appeared to have 12-m high walls and a 50-m wide moat. The site was heavily degraded however and apart from the many potscherds not worthwhile. After a bit of searching we found the beautiful rock relief south of Darab (GPS 28.7140, 54.5534), and the surrounding countryside was nice with close-ups of European Bee-eaters, Corn Buntings and a Black-headed Bunting – contrasting with Indian Roller also present. From Darab we took the scenic route northwest towards the '86' east of Estahban; this mountainous road held more in store avifaunistically, with a few **Hume's Wheatears**, a singing Sykes's and a **singing Upcher's Warbler**. Arrived at Hotel Neyriz in the daylight at 7.30 pm.

Thu Apr 18 Bahram Gour National Park

Departed Neyriz 6.30 am in Gholamreza's 4WD. Arrived at Bahram Gour NP entry gate at 7.25 am, the paperwork there taking almost an hour (during which we had breakfast). Drove off from the gate in two 4WD's at 8.20 am, arriving at Ground Jay habitat at 10.30 am. Despite extensive searching did not see any Ground Jays though the scenery and general birding were great, with **Grey-necked & Ortolan Buntings, singing Pale Rockfinches, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, *striata* Streaked Scrub Warbler, Chukar, Trumpeter & Desert Finch, Humes', Variable, Pied, Desert, Eastern Black-eared & Isabelline Wheatear, Daurian (Isabelline) & Levant Grey Shrike (*aucheri*), Bar-tailed & Greater Short-toed Lark**; also (lizards) **Brilliant Ground Agama** and **Persian Racerunner**. Had a brief lunch at 1.30 pm next to an orchard not yet blossoming; here we only saw Syrian Woodpecker. At 2.45 pm the ranger's 4WD broke down after which we proceeded with Gholamreza's 4WD, mainly targeting mammals. The tally was **443 Asian Wild Ass** (incl a herd of 271), **23 Laristan Sheep, 3 Western Jebeer, a Tolai Hare** and furthermore, the second **Masked Shrike** for Bahram Gour NP, **5 Macqueen's Bustards, 12 Black-bellied Sandgrouse, a female White-throated Robin** and a **Steppe Agama**. Departed Bahram Gour NP at 7.30 pm, arriving back at Neyriz 8.40 pm. Again checked into Neyriz Hotel.

Fri Apr 19 Bahram Gour National Park (Pleske's Ground Jay), -> Shiraz

Departed Neyriz 5.05 am, arriving at Bahram Gour NP gate 6.55 am. Great windless weather until 10 am, which helped to secure **Pleske's Ground Jay at two sites**. Supporting cast today were more **Pale Rockfinch, Humes', Pied & Desert Wheatear**, Afghan Babbler, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Chukar, Trumpeter Finch, Desert Lark, **Asian Wild Ass** and Brilliant Ground Agama. At noon headed back to Neyriz where packed and did grocery shopping before departing towards Shiraz, where arrived at 4 pm. Along the road we saw many people enjoying the water and green spring at the south end of Maharlu Lake. Still with Gholamreza, we drove to the north shore of Maharlu Lake to have a better look at the **c 5,000 Greater Flamingos**, check waterbirds (**Ferruginous Duck**, Eurasian Spoonbill) and even search for an endemic fish (dipped). At 6.30 pm we entered Shiraz, where all hotels were fully booked because of the holiday season. Unfortunately, Gholamreza's favorite restaurant was also full; we enjoyed dinner together at another, traditional restaurant. Stayed the night at a private home, arranged by Gholamreza.

Sat Apr 20 Persepolis, Naqsh-e Radjab & Naqsh-e Rostam, Pasargadae

Departed Shiraz at 7.15 am to be at Persepolis at 8 am (opening time). This was, as anticipated, one of the archaeological highlights of the trip. The temples and reliefs aside, it also made for nice birding: one rock temple had an **Eastern Rock Nuthatch' nest** in it where I made some sound recordings of communicating adults taking turns nestbuilding. **Eastern Olivaceous Warblers** had obviously just arrived as we suddenly saw and heard them everywhere. A **Daurian Shrike** was present in scrub surrounding the Persepolis restaurant. Stayed at Persepolis until 2 pm; when (first) departing around noon we noticed other tourists wearing virtual reality glasses and decided to rent a few ourselves and head back in; nice feature. Spent half an hour at the nearby three reliefs of Naqsh-e Radjab and an hour at the reliefs of Naqsh-e Rostam. Lastly, drove an hour to Pasargadae, where stayed from 4.30 to 6.15 pm (**Masked Shrike**, Sykes's & Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Calandra Lark, many Isabelline Wheatear). Back in Shiraz, checked into ITIC Hotel where we stayed in an apartment with three rooms and had dinner on-site.

Sun Apr 21 Shiraz-Firuzabad-Bushehr

At 6.30 am we drove to Azari Park in Shiraz, since Gholamreza told us it could be good for passerines during migration. Apart from Blackcaps, a **Common Myna** overhead and many stray cats we saw little else unfortunately. Admired the citadel (from the outside) and walked the bazaar; then drove around the city center to visit the famous Nasr al-Molk mosque: its colourful stained windows attract many tourists, especially photographers. At 1 pm we departed Shiraz and

drove to Firuzabad, where we visited the impressive Sassanid castle Desh-e Ardashir Papakan (hereafter: Ardashir castle), from 3-4.15 pm. The stream next to the castle held **Clamorous Reed Warbler** and dragonflies (best was **Ivory Featherleg**). Driving from Firuzabad to Bushehr, a large oil harbour city on the Persian Gulf, took from 4.15 to 7.30 pm. Along the way we saw a few birds (Red-rumped Swallow, European Roller, Brown-necked Raven, White-eared Bulbul). Checked into Hotel Pasargad and were given a three-room apartment; dinner at hotel. Contacted Mohammad, our intended Shush area guide whose English was almost non-existent, by whatsapp. Learnt that the city of Mashahr (SW Iranian Mesopotamia) was still in a state of emergency because of flooding and so decided to bypass that city the next day on our way to Shush.

Mon Apr 22 Bushehr-Shush (Mesopotamian Crow)

7 am breakfast, then changed money at Bank Tejarat (near the bus station) in N Bushehr. Contrary to Bam, this time my passport and visa were copied. The bank clerk advised us to change money in the street as that would give us a slightly better rate but for a few EUR difference I didn't bother. Changing € 600 into 90,000,000 rials took 50 mins. During the search for a bank able to change money Edward and I had a quick look at the boulevard where we witnessed a House Crow catch a House Sparrow in flight. At 9 am we drove E and then N of Bushehr to take the causeway onto an island that according to Important Bird Areas in the Middle East (1994) holds Crab Plovers in winter – we hoped to bump into a long-stayer. None seen, but **summer-plumaged White-cheeked & Saunders's Terns** were a good consolation prize. At 10.15 am we started heading N, stopping around noon at a roadside pond that looked promising – and it delivered. Goodies found here incl 5 possible Indian Pond Herons and a **male Pied Bush Chat** that appeared to be a bit far W/N of its usual breeding range; **White-tailed Lapwing**, Eurasian Spoonbill, (*feldegg*) Black-headed Wagtail and female **White-throated Robin**. Because of the massive floods we did not drive by Bandar-e Mahshahr but passed Omidiyeh instead. Upon reaching the eastern ring road of Ahvaz we witnessed massive floods however, with earth dams along the highway to prevent water from flooding the road. Sev fishing boats were only meters from the highway; electricity park pylons were half-submerged and all this went on for at least 15 km. The highway btw Ahvaz and Shush was closed in one direction since the other direction was flooded. The southern sites for **Mesopotamian Crows** were unreachable because of the floods but we needn't have worried, as we saw c 15 at an evening roost near Chogha Zanbil (and sev daily in the next couple of days). The roost was located in a nice scrubby area that I'm sure can turn up nice stuff in the morning/migration (we recorded **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**, **salvadorii** **Afghan Babbler**, **iranica** **Common Wood Pigeon**, *arabistanicus* Black Francolin, singing European Turtle Doves, Eurasian Blackbirds & Common Nightingales). About **380 Collared Pratincoles** were hawking over a small roadside pond nearby at 8 pm. Stayed and had dinner at Dourantash Traditional Hotel in Shush.

Tue Apr 23 Birding south and west of Shush

At 12 C a cold morning, temp rising to 26 C during the day. Departed 6.15 am with Mohammad and Ahmad Zali, visiting a site known to hold a few pairs of Basra Reed Warbler in previous years (but dipped)(**Iraq Babbler**, Moustached Warbler). Chogha Zanbil ziggurat proved another archaeological highlight (**Hypocolius** and flocks of **salvadorii** **Afghan Babbler** to boot) and Karkheh Wildlife Refuge was also productive, with btw 12.30-2 pm **Egyptian Nightjar**, **Hypocolius**, **Menetries's Warbler**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**, **Dead Sea Sparrow** & Red-backed Shrike. Lunch at Shush, then tried other sites for Basra Reed Warbler but dipped again (did see **Mesopotamian Crow**, **Iraq Babbler**, Moustached Warbler, Pygmy Cormorant, Little Bittern, **lutea** and **beema** **Western Yellow Wagtails**; Caspian Pond Turtle; dragonflies **Oasis Bluetail**, Ivory Featherleg and **Dark-winged Groundling**).

Wed Apr 24 Shush-Shushtar-Dezful

Our last attempts at finding Basra Reed Warbler also failed. Aside from previous sites, we drove a bit further east but encountered lots of flooding so reaching good habitat was difficult. Nice birding though, with c **150 Collared Pratincoles**, **White-tailed & Red-wattled Lapwing**, **irakensis** **Graceful Prinia**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**, **Iraq Babbler**, Clamorous Reed Warbler (common), regular White-throated Kingfishers, Little Bittern; Marsh Bluetail (common), Oriental Scarlet, Slender Skimmer, **Stinging Catfish**; another visit to Karkheh WR produced **Mesopotamian Crow**, **Hypocolius**, **Yellow-throated & Dead Sea Sparrow** and a **singing Mountain Chiffchaff**; Ivory Featherleg & Violet Dropwing. From 2.45 to 5 pm we visited the historical hydraulic system in Shushtar (trip-exclusive **Pallid Swifts** and **Booted Eagles**) that perhaps saw the most water in ages so access to the actual site was prohibited because of fear of collapsing; it made for spectacular videos though. Afternoon tea at a restaurant near the ancient bridge. Checked the ancient site Chogha Mish (6-6.45 pm), not signposted and in the middle of nowhere, but apart from a hill there was nothing there but a **flock of Red-throated Pipits**, **flava**, **beema**, **lutea** & **thunbergi** **Western Yellow Wagtails**, **salvadorii** **Afghan Babbler**, skink **Heremites**

septemtaeniatus and annoying dogs. Arrived Dezful 7.15 pm where both Hotel Dezful & Avan Hotel were full. Spent 45 mins looking for Dez Hotel but only found it when a taxi drove ahead: it is located W of the main road through Dezful, surrounded by a large park behind a guarded neon orange barrier. Had some difficulty ordering dinner in the hotel but it eventually worked out.

Thu Apr 25 Dezful-Zagros mts (Kaiser's Newt)-Khorammabad

Drove to Andimeshk and onwards towards Khorammabad through the beautiful Zagros Mts. Occasional toll added up to c € 2. Met with guide Farhad Arashk along the highway at 9 am and drove 25 mins into the mts over an unsurfaced track (**persica Mourning Wheatear**). Started hiking at 10 am, following a beautiful birdy canyon with a nice mixture of local (sub)species and European migrants (*blanfordi* Great Tit, **persicus Eurasian Blue Tit**, **sanctijohannis Middle Spotted Woodpecker**, Eastern & **tschitscherini Western Rock Nuthatch**, *anatoliae* Eurasian Jay, **Yellow-throated Sparrow**, trip-exclusive Eurasian Crag Martin, breeding Little Swift, Blue Rock Thrush, **Short-toed Eagle**, Whinchat). Started seeing **Kaiser's (Lorestan) Newts** **Neurergus kaiseri** as of 11.50 am. Found in small shallow pools below waterfalls, we primarily saw pied individuals; Farhad told us he also knew caves where many congregated and more orange individuals could be seen. The beautiful **Odalisque** (damselfly) was also seen. Lunch at 2.30 pm with cherry tea at 4 pm. The hike back to the car took two hrs. From 8-9.20 pm drove to ATR Hotel, Khorammabad, where had dinner.

Fri Apr 26 Khorammabad-Bisotun-Taq-e Bostan-Khorammabad

7 am breakfast, 8 am departure (*personata* White Wagtail), 10 am arrival Bisotun relief east of Kermanshah where the rock face held **Finsch's Wheatear**, Blue Rock Thrush and Eastern Rock Nuthatch, while the small willow trees held 2f **Semicollared Flycatcher**, *personata* White Wagtail, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler and some more European birds like Cetti's Warbler, Common Cuckoo, Eurasian Penduline Tit & Spotted Flycatcher. The wind made it colder than usual. Had lunch with great view (& good wifi) on 6th floor of Persian Kermanshah Hotel. Ahmad Zali informed us by whatsapp that his final attempt of securing access to Hour-al-Azeem wetland failed – we would have driven back for another attempt at Basra Reed Warbler but this one will have to wait. Admired the Taq-e Bostan rock reliefs in N Kermanshah from 3.15-4 pm (**Common Myna**, trip-exclusive Eurasian Sparrowhawk), had an icecream and then returned to Khorammabad, to the ITTIC Hotel this time. I was a little sick (of the icecream?) so went to bed early.

Sat Apr 27 Khorammabad-Isfahan

Up at 8 am, departed 9.30 am, 12.30-1.15 pm lunch at traditional restaurant in Aligadurz. Sunny and c 13 C, scenic route through high Zagros mts with snow c 1 km from the road. Occasional birding stops yielded **Red-tailed (Persian) & Pied Wheatear**, **White-throated Robin**, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Rook (common) and **Snake-eyed Lizard**. Arrived Isfahan ITTIC Hotel 5 pm, but it clearly closed years ago. Asked a taxi driver to show us an 'adequate hotel' and he delivered us at 5* Isfahan Parsian Kowsar Hotel. At c € 100 a night the spacious royal suite, with three beds, was not a bad deal (and also the only availability) so we booked our last two nights. Dinner at hotel.

Sun Apr 28 Isfahan

8 am elaborate breakfast. Took a 150,000 rial taxi to the Naqsh-e Jahan square where we visited a palace and two mosques. Paul and I birded Rajayi park (**Syrian Woodpecker**) and walked back to the hotel (migrating **Short-toed Snake Eagle** and European Bee-eaters, with **800+ Common Swifts** feeding low over the river) while Marijke and Edward tried three museums (all were closed). Enjoyed the hotel wifi, dinner at 5.30 pm in the hotel and slept from 6.30 to 10 pm.

Mon Apr 29 Isfahan -> Istanbul -> Amsterdam

Checked out at midnight, driving through Isfahan in 50 mins. Parsa of Saadat rent had arrived by bus from Tehran to collect the rental car. We were refunded 1,500,000 rials (c € 10) for the modem that hadn't worked. At 1.15 am the security check opened, with a separate line for women. We requested and were given seats at row 11, as we only had a 1hr10min layover in Istanbul. Paul (1.6 mln) and I (1.5 mln) had some difficulty spending our last millions of rials but we managed in the end to buy some souvenirs. Departed Isfahan 4 am, arriving in Amsterdam 9.50 am local time.

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List of important GPS waypoints

All our sightings are found at Observation.org, including GPS location, time of sighting, pictures and/or sound-recording where applicable, number of birds etc. Here, I give a limited number of interesting waypoints, most noticeably those of the best birding sites and the most interesting wildlife we recorded. Some waypoints are also mentioned in the Sites visited section below.

CENTRAL IRAN

Desert south of Yazd (dipped Pleske's Ground Jay; Bar-tailed Lark,
Hypermnestra helios (localised butterfly), **Gray Toadhead Agama**): 30.9105, 54.2148
 Singing **Common Myna** (along highway '71' southeast of Yazd): 31.2672, 54.8853
 Northernmost singing **Sykes's Warbler** (highway '71' west of Rafsanjan): 30.4590, 55.6645

SOUTHEAST IRAN

Mountains north of Jiroft (random stop: **Variable Wheatear**): 28.8063, 57.8373
 Minab Tourist Hotel (Persian Leaf-toed Gecko, Alcides Skipper): 27.1345, 57.0841
 Minab palm gardens (**Sind Woodpecker, Spotted Owlet, Jungle Cat, White-breasted Waterhen**, Crested Honey-buzzard, Indian Silverbill): 27.1657, 57.0543
 Minab vegetable fields (**Pied Bush Chat**): 27.1486, 56.9730
 Tiab mudflats jetty (waders, gulls, Dalmatian Pelicans, **Sand Lark**): 27.1122, 56.8607
 North of Gaz (**Bay-backed Shrike**, Black-headed Bunting migration): 26.6457, 57.0852
 Gaz mudflats jetty (migrant Ortolan Buntings): 26.3283, 57.1070
 Gaz mudflats (**Great Stone-curlew**): 26.3084, 57.0905

SOUTH-CENTRAL IRAN

Roadside well btw Gahkom and Darab (damselflies ***Ischnura intermedia***, **Odalisque**; Epaulet Skimmer; orchid *Epipactis ventrifolia*): 28.4039, 55.1908
 Hotel Neyriz: 29.1961, 54.3337
 Bahram Gour NP entrance: 29.1698, 54.6846
 Bahram Gour NP, Pleske's Ground Jay site (nest deserted; one bird seen
 distantly only by RH; **4 Pale Rockfinch singing**): 29.2413, 54.7182
 Bahram Gour NP, **Pleske's Ground Jay** site (two birds seen): 29.2353, 54.6297
 Bahram Gour NP, **Macqueen's Bustards**: 29.2418, 54.6293
 Bahram Gour NP, **Variable Wheatear**: 29.2310, 54.7127
 Bahram Gour NP, **78 Asian Wild Ass**: 29.3035, 54.6467
 Bahram Gour NP, **19 Laristan Sheep**: 29.2837, 54.6924
 Bahram Gour NP, Steppe Agama: 29.3822, 54.7442

SOUTHWEST IRAN

Bushehr Bay mudflats (**White-cheeked & Saunders's Tern**): 29.0440, 50.8732
 North of Bushehr (**Pied Bush Chat**, Indian Pond Herons?): 29.7010, 50.3690
 Shush (**Mesopotamian Crow roost**): 32.0547, 48.5238
 Shush, site for Basra Reed Warbler (we dipped; **Iraq Babbler**): 31.9612, 48.4421
 Karkheh Wildlife Refuge (**Egyptian Nightjar, Hypocolius**): 32.0722, 48.2410
 Chogha Zanbil ziggurat (**Hypocolius**): 32.0091, 48.5203

Note that I suppress the location of Kaiser's Newt to protect Farhad Arashk's income as guide.

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Sites visited

I give a brief site description of places where we encountered birds and other creatures of note. Sites like Minab palm gardens, Tiab mangroves & mudflats and Karkheh Wildlife Refuge are well-known and are visited by most birders; however, by doing our pretrip homework and a little try-and-error while in Iran we bumped into good sites ourselves, like Minab vegetable fields, a roadside well between Gahkom and Darab and the Zagros mts between Andimeshk and Khorramabad. I discuss the sites below in chronological order.

Desert c 125 kms south of Yazd: according to Observation.org, Shahrzad Fattahi saw two **Pleske's Ground Jays** at GPS 30.9051, 54.2165 in the evening of October 19, 2018 and three at GPS 30.9055, 54.2165 in the early morning of October 20, 2018, while Paul Vossen saw one in the same general area on December 29, 2018. We therefore tried here in the morning of April 13, 2019 but unfortunately saw none. We did not see any of the 1.6-m tall bushes that were evident in the two areas we later saw the species at Bahram Gour NP, one such bush holding an old nest. Species we did see south of Yazd along road '81' around GPS 30.9416, 54.2100 include Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Bar-tailed Lark, Desert Wheatear, *gaddi* Rock Dove, Trumpeter & Desert Finch, as well as the **localised butterfly *Hypermnestra helios*** and the **localised Gray Toadhead Agama**. A single **See-see Partridge** was seen along the same road further north as we drove in.

After visiting Bam in the morning of April 14, 2019 we headed towards Minab, making a random stop in the **mountains north of Jiroft** since a relict population of *tschitscherini* Western Rock Nuthatch occurs in the area. At GPS 28.8063, 57.8373 we saw a pair of *picata* morph **Variable Wheatear**, Chukar, Desert Lark, Sykes's Warbler and *personata* White Wagtail. Another random stop in the scrubby **lowlands south of Jiroft** at GPS 28.3310, 57.9059 in early evening produced the hoped-for *huttoni* Afghan Babbler as well as two pairs of Desert Finch, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Purple Sunbird, Indian Roller, White-eared Bulbul, European Bee-eater and Graceful Prinia.

Minab palm gardens: Hendriks (2017) and Anderson (2011) indicate their Sind Woodpecker sightings and, judging by the picture in his report, we birded Henk Hendriks's place. The vicinity of GPS 27.1657, 57.0543 on the morning of April 15 and the afternoon of April 16, 2019 is where we located the following specialties: **Sind Woodpecker, Spotted Owlet, White-breasted Waterhen, Crested Honey-buzzard, Indian Silverbill, Shikra, huttoni** Afghan Babbler, Purple Sunbird, *bogdanovi* Black Francolin, *beludschicus* Green Bee-eater, Indian Roller, Yellow-throated Sparrow (common), White-eared Bulbul, Red-wattled Lapwing, White-throated Kingfisher, Alpine Swift, *lepida* Graceful Prinia; **Jungle Cat** (twice), **Indian Grey Mongoose**; Persia Rock Gecko; Small & Slender Skimmer, Violet Dropwing, Broad Scarlet; Lime Swallowtail, African Monarch, Dark Grass, Mediterranean & Long-tailed Blue, Blue Pansy. Just south of this location, along a dry riverbed, I flushed two **Grey Francolins** at GPS 27.1639, 57.0545; Common Myna was HO here.

Hara Tiab and Minab Protected Area's mangroves & mudflats (Tiab) is an excellent species-rich wader paradise conveniently located about 20 mins drive west of Minab. Crab Plover is likely present in winter; we didn't see it in the afternoon of April 15, 2019. We birded the vicinity of the jetty at GPS 27.1125, 56.8613 for about 1.5 hrs before heading out towards the mudflats in a rented boat for four hours. Near the jetty specialties seen incl **Sand Lark, Terek & Broad-billed Sandpipers**, Gull-billed Tern, *schistacea* Western Reef Heron, (migrant) female Pied Wheatear and, flying overhead, an ad summer Pallas's Gull (that we later saw next to the boat), Dalmatian Pelicans and two first-winter Greater Spotted Eagles.

While being out by boat, between 12.30 and 4.30 pm, we had an incredible time with close-up views of two perched imm **Greater Spotted Eagles** (possibly the same birds as the ones seen flying distantly from the jetty), an ad summer **Pallas's Gull** (definitely the same bird), **Sand Lark**, up to 40 **Dalmatian Pelicans**, Greater & Lesser Crested, Caspian, Gull-billed, White-winged & Little Tern and a probable White-cheeked Tern flying past over the Persian Gulf, Heuglin's & Slender-billed Gulls, Broad-billed, 2,000 Terek & Curlew Sandpipers, Temminck's & Little Stints, 30 *orientalis* Eurasian Curlews, Greater & Lesser Sand and Kentish Plovers, *longipes* Eurasian Oystercatcher, sev other 'European' waders, more *schistacea* Western Reef & *brevipes* Striated Heron; we also saw some beautiful Purple-clawed Shore Crabs. The furthest west we went was a sandbank in the Persian Gulf that held (the) roosting **100+ Greater & 1 Lesser Crested, 43 Caspian & 80 Gull-billed Terns**.

Driving back to Minab we spotted a flock of sandpipers feeding next to the road and the next hour we enjoyed excellent views of no less than **52 breeding-plumaged Broad-billed Sandpipers**; this was at GPS 27.1027, 56.8653.

Minab vegetable fields: driving back to Minab from Tiab mudflats, we saw a **Pied Bush Chat** fly across the road. Here, at GPS 27.1486, 56.9730 in the evening of April 15, 2019, we saw Pied Bush Chat, *mecranensis* **Grey Francolin**, *beludschicus* Green Bee-eater, sev Sykes's Warblers, Purple Sunbird, *lepida* Graceful Prinia, Yellow-throated Sparrow, *huttoni* Afghan Babbler, White-eared Bulbul, Daurian Shrike, Red-wattled Lapwing & *magna* Crested Lark. **Iranian Earless Toad** were also present.

A **random roadside stop between Minab and Gaz mudflats** (see below) was necessary to check out what these large flocks of birds migrating north were. In the early morning of April 16, 2019, between 6.50 and 7.50 am at GPS 26.6457, 57.0852, we confidently identified the large flocks as **c 620 Black-headed Buntings** & some Tree Pipits **migrating overhead**. We happened to stop at a pond where we saw a single **Bay-backed Shrike**, Turkestan Shrike, Sykes's Warbler, Purple Sunbird, *huttoni* Afghan Babbler, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin and Green Bee-eater. Iranian Earless Toad, Eastern Tree Frog (HO), Desert Locust & Long-tailed Blue were also present.

Hara-e Roud-e Gaz Protected Area (Gaz mudflats) probably resembles Tiab in species though the mudflats did not appear as stretched-out as the ones at Tiab. That said, our boatman at Tiab was instructed by an Iranian man (guiding a Polish birder we bumped into) so he knew what we wanted exactly (to get close to sandbanks full of birds in order to identify, enjoy and photograph),

and we spent almost four hours cruising the Tiab mudflats. In comparison, we only spent an hour at Gaz mudflats on April 16, 2019 between 9.20 and 10.20 am: after seeing our main quarry, Great Stone-curlew, we soon returned to the jetty. Apart from the **single Great Stone-curlew** surrounded by hundreds of Rounded Ghost Crabs *Ocypode rotundata*, interesting birds seen at Gaz mudflats included 28 Greater & 20 Lesser Crested, 17 Caspian, 12 Gull-billed and 8 Sandwich Tern, with two probable Saunders's Terns perched on a sandbank. A single Slender-billed Gull here, and small numbers of waders compared to Tiab (but again, we spent much less time here and the boatman did not (want to) understand we wanted to approach the birds). Additional beauties were a displaying and singing **Greater Hoopoe-Lark** and an adult feeding a juvenile Levant Grey Shrike between Gaz and Gaz jetty, and six confiding **Ortolan Buntings** at the gate of Gaz jetty premises.

Returning to Minab on April 16, 2019 we stopped at the impressive **Gaz river**, home to a breeding pair of **Western Brown Fish Owl**. We parked at a quarry just north of the bridge over the river bed (GPS 26.4477, 57.2050) and made our way to the upper edge of the wadi wall – the wrong choice since we saw nothing apart from a single WBFO feather and a great view; surely the owls were perched below us, out-of-view. Hiking up the riverbed looked like a time-consuming wet undertaking however, so we decided against it. We only saw few birds here, like Pale Crag Martin, *gaddi* Rock Dove and Desert Lark, as well as Dark Grass Blue.

We made a random roadside stop on April 17, 2019 **near the village of Shahabi along the '92'** that connects Gahkom (north of **Bandar Abbas**) & **Darab**, at a scrubby palm stand to stretch our legs. At GPS 28.1559, 55.4280, c 10 am, we saw **40+ Lesser Kestrel**, Long-legged Buzzard, **Afghan Babbler**, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Indian Roller, **Yellow-throated Sparrow** and **Green Bee-eater**. *Euchloe transcaspica*, **Desert White**, **African Caper White** & African Monarch were the butterfly highlights here.

We made another random roadside stop at a **well along the '92' further west** around noon on April 17, 2019 (GPS 28.4040, 55.1907). Dragonfly-wise we hit the jackpot here, with a single male of the localised little-known **Persian Bluetail** the highlight, as well as 10 **Epaulet & Keeled Skimmer**, my first-ever (male) **Odalisque**, Vagrant Emperor, Broad Scarlet & Indigo Drowning. Other surprises were 25 beautifully blossoming **orchid Epipactis veratrifolia**, a singing Purple Sunbird and a Globe Thistle Capitulum Weevil.

Bahram Gour NP is an arid, high altitude desert national park with rocky outcrops and, during our visit, abundant blossoming plant life. This NP is located roughly three hours east of Shiraz and about an hour east of Neyriz and can only be visited with a guide who secures access (weeks) in advance. We visited 1.5 days, 18-19 April 2019, in the company of excellent guide Gholamreza Ghaderi (see Guides). This is a fantastic place to bird and enjoy nature in general; the mammals are awesome, too. We saw the endemic **Pleske's Ground Jay** in two places, and furthermore enjoyed **5 Macqueen's Bustards**, Ortolan & **Grey-necked Buntings**, singing **Pale Rockfinches**, *striata* **Streaked Scrub Warbler**, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Chukar, Trumpeter & Desert Finch, **Humes', Variable, Pied, Desert, Eastern Black-eared & Isabelline Wheatear**, Levant Grey (*aucheri*), Daurian & the National Park's second **Masked Shrike**, **White-throated Robin**, Desert, Bar-tailed & Greater Short-toed Lark, Afghan Babbler & Syrian Woodpecker; **c 450 Asian Wild Ass** (Onager), **23 Laristan Sheep**, **3 Western Jebeer**, **Tolai Hare**; Brilliant Ground & Steppe Agama and Persian Racerunner; butterflies included the **localised Hypermnestra helios**, Caucasian Vernal Copper, *Euchloe transcaspica* and over 400 Painted Ladies; beetles *Adesmia anthracina* and *Omophlus spec* and the hoverfly *Scaeva albomaculata*. Flowering plants we were able to identify included Hollow-leaved Asphodel, Giant Tangier Fennel, *Leontice armeniaca*, *Salvia spinosa*, *Onobrychis cornuta* and Tournefort's Gundelia, with a few dozens as yet unidentified (see pictures on Observation.org and e-mail me your ID suggestions!).

Bamou NP, located 5 kms from Shiraz, unfortunately was off-limits at the time of our visit due to the mammals' reproduction season. However, similar mammals occur at Bahram Gour NP, most importantly Asian Wild Ass, Laristan Sheep, Western Jebeer and Caracal (the latter is rarely seen at both sites). Pleske's Ground Jay and Macqueens Bustard do not occur at Bamou NP.

Note that Hans Verdaat saw Pleske's Ground Jay near the '86' road through the park on 21 January 2007 near GPS 29.166, 54.824. Hans also saw Asian Wild Ass from the road.

Maharlu Lake, southeast of Shiraz holds large numbers of waterfowl; of special note are the **c 5,000 Greater Flamingos**. We visited the northwestern shore in the afternoon of April 19, 2019 (GPS 29.5493, 52.7487) and noted, apart from the flamingos, Eurasian Spoonbill, Slender-billed Gull, Black-winged Stilt, Little Ringed Plover, Ferruginous Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal,

Great & Little Egret, Grey Heron, Daurian Shrike, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Common Myna, European Bee-eater, Crested Lark & Barn Swallow. Note that the actual shore of the lake is quite far from the north shore road so checking the waders and ducks thoroughly involves a lengthy hike to the water's edge.

Note that we did not visit the slaughterhouse in the southwest corner of the lake that can attract up to 300 Steppe Eagles and Eastern Imperial & White-tailed Eagles in winter; it's located at GPS 29.4556, 52.6995, see <https://observation.org/observation/146981170/> and Campbell (2017).

Azadi Park in Shiraz is found at GPS 29.6296, 52.5368: this park can be good for migrants. We did not encounter much in the morning of 21 April 2019, aside from Eurasian Blackcaps, *personata* White Wagtail, Red-rumped Swallow, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Common Myna and Rose-ringed Parakeet (the latter two probably feral here although the Myna could be spreading west).

Bushehr Bay is said to hold Crab Plover and Pallas's Gull in winter and breeding Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Gull-billed, White-cheeked & Saunders's Tern in summer (see paragraph 091 in the Islamic Republic of Iran section in Important Bird Areas in the Middle East, 1994). We only spent between 9.20 and 10.20 am on 22 April 2019 at GPS 29.0440, 50.8732 and indeed saw 17 Gull-billed, **2 White-cheeked & 4 Saunders's Tern** with little else, as the edge of the mudflats with feeding waders was c 2 kms from the road. We may have seen extremely distant Crab Plovers but couldn't be sure.

The Iranian southwest bordering Iraq is part of the **Mesopotamian plain** (in this report called **Shush area**), an area with specialties Mesopotamian Crow, Basra Reed Warbler, Hypocolius and Iraq Babbler, as well as other interesting birds like Egyptian Nightjar, *salvadorii* Afghan Babbler, *irakensis* Graceful Prinia, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater & Moustached Warbler. Apart from the Karkheh Wildlife Refuge (that we visited) Hour-al-Azeem wetland, located closer to the Iraqi border, deserves a visit (with a chance of seeing the relict c 50 African Darters, Goliath Heron or African Sacred Ibis that breed either here or in nearby Iraq). Sadly, we couldn't reach Hour-al-Azeem because of the heavy flooding in this part of Iran in the spring of 2019. Also, we didn't secure access pretrip so we would probably have had to wait a few days for access anyway. Mesopotamian Crow, Hypocolius and Iraq Babbler are fairly common and you'll bump into them in a two-day visit to the area; this could be also true for Basra Reed Warbler when it's back on the breeding grounds and/or these are not flooded. Egyptian Nightjar however requires a guide and/or more time I think.

We reached the Shush area in the evening of 22 April 2019, focusing on a **Mesopotamian Crow roost** south of Shush we had found on Observation.org (GPS 32.0547, 48.5238), that turned out to be located in a beautiful scrubby area. Here we saw (and sound-recorded) **c 15 Mesopotamian Crows**, as well as *iranica* Common Wood Pigeon, **380 Collared Pratincole**, *salvadorii* Afghan Babbler, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, *arabistanicus* Black Francolin, singing European Turtle Doves, Eurasian Blackbirds & Common Nighthawks and trip-exclusive **Spur-winged Lapwing**.

After bagging the crow we spent the next two days (23-24 April 2019) primarily searching for most-wanted lifer Basra Reed Warbler. Guided by Mohammad and Ahmad Zali (see Guides), we mainly focused on a **small marsh south of Shush** that despite the flooding was reachable, where they'd seen Basra Reed Warbler in previous years, at GPS 31.9626, 48.4411. Despite returning here several times, we never saw or heard a BRW here (nor did we anywhere else). The marshy area was quite small and easily birded, yielding **Iraq Babbler**, **Little Crane**, Clamorous Reed, Moustached, Cetti's & Willow Warbler, White-throated Kingfisher, Purple Heron, with a Great Reed Warbler HO (song) and a **Black-winged Kite** and two **Mesopotamian Crows** flying overhead; odonates here were Oasis Bluetail, Violet Dropwing, **Dark-winged Groundling** & **Black Percher**.

Chogha Zanbil ziggurat (23 April 2019, 10.20-11.25 am, GPS 32.0076, 48.5240) proved, besides being one of the archaeological highlights of the trip, quite birdy with several **Hypocolius**, **Mesopotamian Crow**, Red-wattled Lapwing, *arabistanicus* Black Francolin, vocal and inquisitive flocks of *salvadorii* Afghan Babblers, *irakensis* Graceful Prinia, Yellow-throated & *persicus* House Sparrow; Mediterranean Blue, an *Erodia* beetle and trip-exclusive dragonfly **Black Pennant**.

Karkheh Wildlife Refuge (23 April 2019, 12.30-2 pm, GPS 32.0730, 48.2422) was also productive, with **Egyptian Nightjar**, **Mesopotamian Crow**, **Hypocolius**, **Iraq Babbler**, **Menetries's Warbler**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**, *iraquensis* Little Grebe HO, Daurian Shrike, Little Bittern, Pied Kingfisher, Yellow-throated & **Dead Sea Sparrow** and trip-exclusive **Red-backed Shrike**; odonates of note were Ivory Featherleg, Oasis Bluetail & Violet Dropwing.

From 2.45 to 5 pm on 24 April 2019 we visited the historical hydraulic system in Shushtar (GPS 32.0449, 48.8585) where the only avifaunistically interesting records were trip-exclusive **Pallid Swift** and distant **Booted Eagles**; two ad Black-crowned Night Herons posed nicely for pictures of the historical hydraulic system as well.

At the ancient site **Chogha Mish** (6-6.45 pm on 24 April 2019, GPS 32.2240, 48.5540) we encountered a migrant flock of **18 Red-throated Pipits**, *flava*, *beema*, *lutea* & *thunbergi* **Western Yellow Wagtails** and *salvadorii* Afghan Babbler & skink *Heremites septemtaeniatus*.

We visited the **Zagros mts btw Andimeshk and Khorramabad** in the company of mountain guide Farhad Arashk (see Guides). The area visited consists of beautiful lush mountain canyons with waterfalls, caves and clear streams. These streams hold the vulnerable and beautiful endemic **Kaiser's (Lorestan) Newt**, as well as the endemic but common **Persian Freshwater Crab**. On April 25, 2019 we encountered a nice mixture of European and more Middle Eastern birds such as the **endemic tschitscherini Western Rock Nuthatch**, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, *sanctijohannis* **Middle Spotted Woodpecker**, *persica* **Mourning Wheatear**, **White-throated Robin**, Yellow-throated Sparrow, *persicus* **Eurasian Blue Tit**, *blanfordi* Great Tit, **Little Swift**, *anatoliae* Eurasian Jay, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Red-billed Chough, Blue Rock Thrush, *gaddi* Rock Dove, Long-legged Buzzard, Eurasian Crag Martin, Northern Raven, Red-rumped Swallow, Grey Wagtail, Whinchat and even a White-eared Bulbul; aside from the newts, interesting reptile & amphibians were **Iranian Earless Toad** (seemingly guarding strings of eggs), Eurasian Marsh Frog & Yellow-headed (Large-scaled) Rock Agama; the **endemic butterfly Zagros Wall Brown** & Wall Brown, **Aegean Meadow Brown** and Long-tailed Blue; Lesser & Blue Emperor, Small Skimmer, Red-veined Darter, Oriental Scarlet and the beautiful **Odalisque**.

Sites not visited

Just to give an idea, Iran holds more avian specialties, most noticeably the almost endemic **Caspian (Hyrcanian) Tit** *Poecile hyrcanus* in the Elbruz mts of the north, **Black-headed Penduline-Tit** *Remiz macronyx* in only a few marshes along the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, **Caucasian (Black) Grouse** *Tetrao mlkosiewiczzi* and **Caspian Snowcock** *Tetraogallus caspius* in the utmost northwest, with the Snowcock also being found further south in the Zagros mts and east in the Elbruz mts; **Sistan (Afghan) Scrub Sparrow** *Passer yatii* and **White-crowned Penduline-Tit** *Remiz coronatus* are found in lakes near Zahedan on the Afghanistan border in the southeast, the latter only in winter. Lastly, **Yellow-eyed Pigeon** *Columba eversmanni* is seen near Mashhad, northeastern Iran, in winter. See especially Hendriks (2017) and Anderson (2011) for more details on how to find some of these specialties.

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List of recorded birds

Taxonomy more or less according to IOC 10.2. In the annotated checklist below I mention the subspecies occurring in the regions we visited, as per the IOC World List on www.dutchbirding.nl (updating my own taxons listed there in the process). When I also checked Birds of the World (that eBird took over from Lynx Editions' Handbook Birds of the World Alive in 2020, hereafter: BOW) I found that in a number of cases, BOW mentions subspecies/occurrence that differ from IOC. For example, BOW states that in C and S Iran Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* ssp *ivanowi* occurs, a ssp that IOC does not recognize. IOC gives subspecies *magna* for C Iran, while BOW states *magna* starts in S Kazakhstan. Confusing!

All sightings (birds, mammals, insects, plants etc) of RH and PS are found at Observation.org in more detail, including GPS location, date & time of sighting, pictures and/or sound-recording where applicable, number of birds etc. In the lists below, I indicate species that are only seen by one or two observers mentioning initials (RH, EIJ or PS).

Recognisable subspecies highlighted (e.g. *Columba palumbus iranica*) Legend lists
Localised or sought-after species (on a world or WP scale) highlighted (e.g. **Pleske's Ground Jay**)
E = endemic; **NE** = near-endemic; **(N)Essp** = (near-)endemic subspecies; **VU** = Vulnerable; sev = several; m = male; f = female; p = pair; ind = individual(s); HO = heard only; N = north; E = east; SE = southeast; S = south; NW = northwest; ad = adult; imm = immature; cy = calendar-year; max = maximum

1. Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar werae*: 2 N of Jiroot (EIJ); up to 7 daily Bahram Gour NP
2. See-see Partridge *Ammoperdix griseogularis*: 1 desert S of Yazd
3. Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus bogdanovi*: 7 Minab in the morning, 1 in evening

- Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus arabistanicus*: up to 9 daily Shush area
4. **Grey Francolin** *Francolinus pondicerianus mecranensis*: 1p flushed near dry riverbed Minab, 1 flushed Minab vegetable fields
 5. Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*: 1 eclipse Maharlu Lake (Shiraz)
 6. Mallard *Anas p. platyrhynchos*: 2p river in Isfahan
 7. Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*: 7 Maharlu Lake (Shiraz)
 8. Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*: 2 Maharlu Lake (Shiraz)
 9. **Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus a. aegyptius*: 1 Karkheh WR
 10. Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba (tuneti)*: 2 over Minab
 11. Common Swift *Apus apus*: 1,664 recorded, seen on most dates. Highest numbers c 300 Isfahan Apr 12, 200 Neyriz (incl occupied nest), 150 Khorramabad, 800 Isfahan Apr 28
 12. Pallid Swift *Apus p. pallidus*: 20 feeding over Shushtar historic hydraulical system
 13. Little Swift *Apus affinis (galilejensis)*: 16 feeding and calling along '92' SE of Darab, 1 at nest in mts N of Andimeshk
 14. **Macqueen's Bustard** *Chlamydotis macqueenii* **VU**: 5 Bahram Gour NP
 15. Common Cuckoo *Cuculus c. canorus*: 2 Shush area (1 brown, 1 grey), single grey ones Kermanshah & Khorramabad
 16. Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis arenarius*: 2 over desert S of Yazd, 18 and 9 respectively on both dates in Bahram Gour NP
 17. Rock Dove *Columba livia gaddi*: 15 desert S of Yazd, 1 btw Yazd & Kerman, 10 btw Kerman & Bam, 3 Gaz river, 2 SE of Darab, 7 Bahram Gour NP, 1 Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), 1p mts N of Andimeshk
 18. Common Wood Pigeon *Columba p. palumbus*: 30 Karkheh WR, with singles elsewhere in Shush area, 6 Bisotun
Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus iranica*: 1 flying past N of Jiroft, 8 Mesopotamian Crow roost S of Shush, 1 ATR Hotel (Khorramabad)
 19. European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur arenicola* **VU**: 1 flying N, N of Bushehr, 5 HO at Mesopotamian Crow roost, 16 Shush area (incl sev singing and 9 seen at Karkheh WR)
 20. Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: few seen on most dates; 12 flying N btw Minab & Gaz were probably migrants, largest numbers c 35 at Mesopotamian Crow roost S of Shush and c 30 at Karkheh WR
 21. Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis cambayensis*: frequent in cities, sev in Karkheh WR
 22. Common Moorhen *Gallinula c. chloropus*: 3 roadside pond N of Bushehr, 6 Shush area, 1 found dead Bisotun
 23. Little Crane *Zapornia parva*: 1 ad S of Shush (GPS 31.9608, 48.4423)
 24. **White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus*: 1 Minab palm gardens. Probably considered a vagrant in Iran; the species is not mentioned in Mansoori (2008) for example.
 25. Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis iraquensis* **NEssp**: singles SE of Shiraz and Karkheh WR
 26. Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*: c 5,000 Maharlu Lake (Shiraz)
 27. **Great Stone-curlew** *Esacus recurvirostris*: 1 Gaz mudflats, bordering the Persian Gulf; surrounded by hundreds of Rounded Ghost Crabs *Ocypode rotundata*.
 28. Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus longipes*: c 280 Tiab (most on sandbank bordering the Persian Gulf), 3 Gaz
 29. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: 24 Maharlu Lake (Shiraz), 4 N of Bushehr, 13 Shush area
 30. Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*: 1, Mesopotamian Crow roost S of Shush
 31. Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus aigneri*: 1 HO from Bam citadel walls, 6 Minab, 1 Tiab, 1 btw Minab & Gaz, 1 E of Bandar Abbas, 20 Shush area (incl 1 NW of Omidiyeh)
 32. White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*: 1 N of Bushehr, 18 Shush area
 33. Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*: 13 Tiab, 1 Gaz, all in breeding plumage
 34. Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*: 127 Tiab, 1p chasing a Gull-billed Tern at Bushehr Bay
 35. **[HO]** Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: 1 displaying Maharlu Lake (Shiraz)
 36. Kentish Plover *Charadrius a. alexandrinus*: 1m Tiab, 1f Gaz
 37. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*: 24 Tiab, 2 Gaz
 38. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*: 15 Tiab
 39. Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius p. phaeopus*: 32 Tiab, 5 E of Bushehr
 40. Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata orientalis*: 30 Tiab, 3 Gaz, 1 Bushehr Bay
 41. Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*: 10 Tiab, 5 Gaz
 42. Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria i. interpres*: 1 Tiab, 2 Gaz
 43. Ruff *Calidris pugnax*: 4 N of Ahvaz
 44. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Calidris f. falcinellus*: 63 Tiab, incl a flock of 52 (videod)
 45. Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*: 6 Tiab
 46. Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*: 1 Tiab, 5 S of Shush

47. Sanderling *Calidris alba*: 40 Tiab, 50 Gaz, 2 Bushehr Bay
48. Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: 13 Tiab, 7 Gaz, 1 Bushehr Bay
49. Little Stint *Calidris minuta*: 6 Tiab
50. Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*: c 2,275 Tiab, 3 Gaz, 5 Bushehr Bay
51. Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: 3 Tiab, 5 Shush
52. Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*: 1 Minab, 1 Shush
53. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: 9 Tiab, 1 Gaz
54. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: 56 Shush area
55. Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: 8 Tiab
56. Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*: 2 btw Bushehr & Ganaveh, 1 N of Ahvaz, c 560 Shush area. Largest numbers c 380 feeding at dusk near Mesopotamian Crow roost S of Shush and two flocks of c 150 and 25.
57. Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*: 16 Tiab, 1 Gaz, 110 Maharlu Lake (Shiraz), 1 Bushehr Bay, 21 N of Ahvaz
58. **Pallas's Gull** *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*: 1 ad breeding plumage Tiab jetty
59. Heuglin's Gull *Larus fuscus heuglini*: 7 Tiab
60. Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon n. nilotica*: 93 Tiab, 12 Gaz, 19 Bushehr Bay, incl one chased by a pair of Common Ringed Plovers
61. Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*: 43 Tiab, 17 Gaz
62. Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii velox*: 100+ Tiab, 28 Gaz
63. Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis emigratus*: 1 Tiab, 20 Gaz
64. Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*: 8 non-breeding Gaz
65. Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*: 4 Tiab, 2 N of Bushehr
66. **Saunders's Tern** *Sternula saundersi*: 2 probable, non-breeding, Tiab; 4 breeding plumage Bushehr Bay
67. **White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa*: 1 probable Tiab, 2 breeding plumage Bushehr Bay
68. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*: 1 N of Bushehr, 170+ Shush area, where largest number a flock of 130 feeding above a flooded field
69. White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*: 1 non-breeding Tiab, 4 breeding plumage N of Ahvaz
70. White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*: 1 over Bisotun
71. Pygmy Cormorant *Microcarbo pygmaeus*: 7 Shush area of which 6 Karkheh WR
72. Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: 12 Tiab (1 badly oiled), 2 E of Shiraz, 1 Bushehr boulevard, 7 Shush area
73. Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: 2 Maharlu Lake (Shiraz), 3 N of Bushehr
74. Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*: 6 Shush area of which 4 Karkheh WR
75. Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax n. nycticorax*: regular sightings in the Shush area, with 10 carrying nesting material to an apparent colony in Karkheh WR, and 2 ad at Shushtar historic hydraulical system. In all, c 50 seen.
76. Striated Heron *Butorides striata brevipes*: 1 ad Tiab mangroves
77. Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*: only summer-plumaged ones were noted as Squacco (due to possible confusion with Indian Pond Heron). 1 roadside pond N of Bushehr, 5 Shush area
- (..) Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*: 5 non-breeding ind flushed from roadside pond N of Bushehr may have been this species. Unfortunately they landed too distant for positive ID or clinchable photos
78. Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: 1 N of Bushehr, few singles Shush area but no less than c 100 nest-building Karkheh WR
79. Grey Heron *Ardea c. cinerea*: 9 imm Tiab, 2 ad Maharlu Lake (Shiraz), 22 Shush area
80. Purple Heron *Ardea p. purpurea*: 1 roadside pond N of Bushehr, 6 Shush area
81. Great Egret *Ardea a. alba*: 6 Tiab, 2 Gaz, 2 Maharlu Lake, 2 SE of Shush
82. Little Egret *Egretta g. garzetta*: 6 Tiab, 19 Maharlu Lake, 2 N of Bushehr, c 130 Shush area
83. Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis schistacea*: 12 Tiab, 1 Gaz, 1 Bushehr (all at mudflats)
84. **Dalmatian Pelican** *Pelecanus crispus*: 22-40 Tiab mudflats (22 seen at once but probably as many as 40 individuals involved)
85. Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: 1 over Gaz mudflats
86. Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus vociferus*: 2 daily in the Shush area
87. **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*: 1 Minab in the evening
88. Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus g. gallicus*: singles over Maharlu Lake (Shiraz), mts N of Andimeshk and Isfahan
89. **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Clanga clanga VU*: 2 first-winters Tiab mudflats: one perched in a mangrove tree and one on a mudflat. Two seen in flight two hours earlier may have been other individuals.
90. Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*: 3 flying over Shushtar, seen distantly
91. **Shikra** *Accipiter badius cenchroides*: 5 Minab incl a displaying pair and a 2cy

92. Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: 1 over Kermanshah
93. Western Marsh Harrier *Circus a. aeruginosus*: 1f Tiab, 4 Shush area
94. Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo r. rufinus*: dark ad over Shahabi S of Darab, imm Bahram Gour NP, ad N of Persepolis, a dark and a light ad mts N of Andimeshk, rufous ad Bisotun
95. **Spotted Owlet** *Athene brama*: 1 in a Loquat tree in the Minab palm gardens
96. Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa e. epops*: singles in Bahram Gour NP and Karkheh WR
97. **Indian Roller** *Coracias b. benghalensis*: c 5 around Bam old city, incl an occupied nest in the walls of the citadel, 1 S of Jiroft, c 4 daily Minab, few btw Bandar Abbas & Darab, 2 Darab relief
98. European Roller *Coracias garrulus semenowi*: 8 btw Shiraz & Bushehr, 2 daily Shush area incl an occupied nest in a riverbank near Karkheh WR
99. White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon s. smyrnensis*: 2 HO from Bam citadel, 6 Minab, up to 6 daily Shush area
100. Common Kingfisher *Alcedo a. atthis*: singles Tiab & Gaz mudflats, N of Ahvaz and at Karkheh WR
101. Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis syriacus*: frequently encountered in Shush area, c 22 seen. One chasing a European Roller.
102. **Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis beludschicus*: 3 Minab, 5 btw Minab & Gaz, 1 along the '92' SE of Darab near Shahabi
103. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops p. persicus*: max 12 daily Shush area, incl Karkheh WR
104. European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*: 73 recorded during the trip, in all corners of the country, even seen over cities like Isfahan; largest flock 13 over Persepolis.
105. Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocoptes medius sanctijohannis*: 2, accidentally flushed out of a tree in Zagros mts N of Andimeshk
106. **Sind Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos assimilis NE*: 7, incl ads feeding young, Minab palm gardens. Sound-recorded, videod and photographed.
107. Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*: singles in a roadside almond grove E of Isfahan, in a grove in Bahram Gour NP and in Rajayi Park in Isfahan
108. Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*: 42 along the '92' SE of Darab near Shahabi
109. Eurasian Kestrel *Falco t. tinnunculus*: 17 recorded during the trip, in all corners of the country; details of sightings are found on Observation.org
110. **[INTRO]** Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*: 2 in Shiraz
111. Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*: 1m Karkheh WR
112. Daurian (Isabelline) Shrike *Lanius i. isabellinus*: 1m ad Minab vegetable fields, 3 Bahram Gour NP, 1 Maharlou Lake, 1 first-summer Persepolis, 2 Karkheh WR
113. Turkestan (Isabelline) Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides*: singles btw Minab & Gaz and at Bahram Gour NP
114. **Bay-backed Shrike** *Lanius vittatus*: 1 ad btw Minab and Gaz (random roadside stop at GPS 26.6457, 57.0852).
115. Levant Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor aucheri*: ad & imm btw Gaz & Gaz jetty, 1 Bahram Gour NP
116. **Masked Shrike** *Lanius nubicus*: 1f Bahram Gour NP (second record for Bahram Gour according to Gholamreza), 1m Pasargadae
117. Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius anatoliae*: 2 mts N of Andimeshk
118. Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica bactriana*: 57 recorded, seen on most dates but not recorded in Bushehr area (where House Crow occurs) or Mesopotamia (Ahvaz/Shush area, where Mesopotamian Crow occurs)
119. **Pleske's Ground Jay** *Podoces pleskei E*: 1 at a known stake-out in Bahram Gour NP, near a deserted nest that held two old eggs (this individual only seen distantly in flight, only by RH on day 2); 1p west of the mountain in Bahram Gour NP. After a fruitless search on day one our guide Gholamreza called a researcher who told him the known stake-out was quite possibly too busy (indeed, cars and motorcycles drove past in the morning) so we needed to find a quieter area. Gholamreza knew one such area so we tried there the next morning and saw two Pleske's Ground Jays. They were skittish so my very poor digiscopes are all we have; we had good views in the scope though.
120. Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax docilis*: 1p Bahram Gour NP, 1 HO Persepolis, 2 Pasargadae, 45 (incl a flock of 28) mts N of Andimeshk
121. House Crow *Corvus splendens zugmayeri*: 10 at rest stop S of Yazd, 2 Bushehr (of which one caught a House Sparrow in flight!)
122. Rook *Corvus f. frugilegus*: frequent in Zagros mts E of Khorramabad; a colony holding c 100 occupied nests near Aligudarz, colonies of c 40 and c 50 nests near Damaneh

123. Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix sharpii*: small numbers seen daily, highest number 42 on Isfahan central square on Apr 12; not seen in Mesopotamia (Shush area) where replaced by Mesopotamian (Hooded) Crow *Corvus (cornix) capellanus*
124. **Mesopotamian (Hooded) Crow** *Corvus (cornix) capellanus* **NE**: 24 recorded, all in Mesopotamia (the Shush area); highest numbers c 15 near a (pre)roost SE of Shush (c 7.30 pm), 3 Karkheh WR, also 1 at Chogha Zanbil ziggurat
125. Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis*: 21 recorded, usually pairs or singles, always in open areas (never in cities); seen on most dates although not after Apr 22 (so not in Mesopotamia (Shush area) or Zagros mts)
126. Northern Raven *Corvus corax laurencei*: 6 mts N of Andimeshk, 2 btw Khorramabad & Kermanshah
127. **Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus*: 27 recorded in the Shush area, usually in pairs, seen for example at Chogha Zanbil ziggurat (1p) and Karkheh WR (3p, 2m)
128. Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus persicus*: 4 mts N of Andimeshk
129. Great Tit *Parus major*: 1 Taq-e Bostan (Kermanshah)
Great Tit *Parus major blanfordi*: 20, mts N of Andimeshk
130. Eurasian Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus menzbieri*: 2p Bisotun (PS)
131. Greater Hoopoe-Lark *Alaemon alaudipes doriae*: 1 displaying btw Gaz & Gaz jetty
132. Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti iranica*: 1 on the citadel of Bam; 2 in mountains between Bam & Minab; 1 near Gaz
Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti darica*: 1 singing Bahram Gour NP
133. Bar-tailed Lark *Ammomanes cinctura zarudnyi*: 7 in desert S of Yazd, 1 Bahram Gour NP
134. Crested Lark *Galerida cristata magna*: omnipresent, with 271 recorded on almost all dates. Most common in Bahram Gour NP where c 200 were noted in a day. Note that Handbook Birds of the World Alive, that was taken over by eBird in 2020, states that in C and S Iran Crested Lark ssp *ivanowi* occurs, a ssp that IOC does not even recognize.
135. Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla longipennis*: 5 Bahram Gour NP
- (...) Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*: only seen caged, sev in Neyriz
136. Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra psammochroa*: 4 Pasargadae, 2 btw Khorramabad & Kermanshah
137. **Sand Lark** *Alaudala raytal adamsi*: 2 singles Tiab mudflats
138. **White-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus leucotis mesopotamia*: 12 Bam (1 carrying nesting material), 21 S of Jiroft, 35 Minab, 1 SE of Darab, 3 btw Darab & Estahban, 2 Bahram Gour NP, 5 SE of Shiraz, 1 Naqs-e Rajab, 1 btw Shiraz & Firuzabad, 2 btw Firuzabad & Bushehr, 1 Bushehr boulevard, 15 Shush area
139. Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*: 10 Shush area
140. Barn Swallow *Hirundo r. rustica*: 168 recorded on the trip, highest number 35 feeding above the river in Shush
141. Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*: 2 mts N of Andimeshk
142. Pale Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne o. obsoleta*: 1 Gaz river, 6 SE & 2 NW of Darab, 1 Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), 2 flying N over Bushehr boulevard
143. Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum meridionale*: 4 Shushtar, 2 colonies (of c 30 and c 60 occupied nests) in mts N of Andimeshk
144. Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica rufula*: 8 btw Bandar Abbas & Estahban, 3 Bahram Gour NP, 1 Naqs-e Rajab, 1 Pasargadae, 2 Azadi Park (Shiraz), 2 btw Firuzabad & Bushehr, 3 Shush area
145. Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti orientalis*: 3 Shush area, 2 HO singing Bisotun
146. **Streaked Scrub Warbler** *Scotocerca inquieta striata*: 2 Bahram Gour NP
147. Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*: 4 Isfahan, 3 Tiab, 1 singing Shahabi, 8 Shush area
148. **Mountain Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus sindianus*: 1 singing Karkheh WR
149. Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*: 1 N of Bushehr, 3 Bisotun
150. Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*: 1 in blossoming almond orchard E of Isfahan, 4 Shush area. Subspecific identity of birds involved not established.
151. Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus brunescens*: 5 Tiab, 5 Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), c 42 Shush area. In all cases, mostly singing birds.
152. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon mimicus*: 4 S of Shush, 1 Karkheh WR (sev singing)
153. **[HO]** Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus fuscus*: 10 song Karkheh WR
154. **Sykes's Warbler** *Iduna rama*: 25 recorded btw Rafsanjan & Shiraz, usually singles singing or feeding. One seen N of Ahvaz. Highest numbers 3 Minab & 2 Persepolis.
155. Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida elaeica*: 38 recorded btw Shiraz & Kermanshah (Apr 20-26). I wouldn't be surprised if Apr 20 was their date of arrival

- nationwide, as of that date we started hearing and seeing them - in numbers. For example, on Apr 20 we recorded 12 in Persepolis and 11 in trees lining the walkway to Pasargadae.
156. **Upcher's Warbler** *Hippolais languida*: 1 singing along road btw Darab & Estahban
 157. Graceful Prinia *Prinia gracilis lepida*: sev Minab area; 1 at Darabgerd probably of this subspecies
Graceful Prinia *Prinia gracilis irakensis*: common Shush area
 158. Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*: 2m singing, Azari Park (Shiraz), 1f N of Bushehr, 1m Shush area, 2m Bisotun
 159. Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*: 2 Bisotun
 160. Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca*: 1 Persepolis
 161. **Menetries's Warbler** *Curruca mystacea rubescens*: 1f S of Yazd (EIJ, unknown ssp), 1m Karkheh WR, 1f mts N of Andimeshk (PS)
 162. **Iraq Babbler** *Argya altirostris* **NE**: 11 Shush area, incl 2 Karkheh WR; most were calling or singing
 163. **Afghan Babbler** *Argya h. huttoni* **NE**: 1 S of Jiroft, fairly common Minab region (18 recorded); 4 Bahram Gour NP likely to pertain to this ssp but not noted as such.
Afghan Babbler *Argya huttoni salvadorii* **NE**: 3 N of Bushehr, c 60 Shush area incl c 35 Chogha Zanbil ziggurat & 8 Karkheh WR
 164. Western Rock Nuthatch *Sitta neumayer tschitscherini* **Essp**: 6, mts N of Andimeshk, incl a singing ind and an occupied nest
 165. **Eastern Rock Nuthatch** *Sitta tephronota*: 1 HO btw Darab & Estahban, 1 Bahram Gour NP, 7 Persepolis (incl a pair nestbuilding; sound-recorded), 2 Naqs-e Rajab, 1 HO Naqs-e Rostam, 10 mts N of Andimeshk, 1 Bisotun, 1 E of Khorammabad
 166. **Common Myna** *Acridotheres t. tristis*: 1 singing at rest stop S of Yazd, 2 S of Kerman, 1 HO calling Minab, 1 HO singing Maharlu Lake (Shiraz), 1 over Azadi Park (Shiraz), 1 Taq-e Bostan (Kermanshah)
 167. Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris caucasicus*: 9 Isfahan, 1 Bahram Gour NP, 1 Pasargadae, 3 btw Khorammabad & Kermanshah, 1 SE of Aligudarz
 168. Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula syriacus*: 3 HO singing Mesopotamian Crow roost S of Shush, 3m feeding + 1 HO garden of Dez Hotel (Dezful)
 169. Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes familiaris*: 25 btw Bam & Shush area; not recorded in the Zagros Mts or Isfahan; surprisingly, given the time spent scrub birding there, also not recorded in Minab. Highest number 4 Bahram Gour NP.
 170. Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: 2 Bisotun
 171. Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*: 11 recorded, all but one HO, singing: 1 btw Darab & Estahban, 3 Persepolis (1 seen), 1 Naqs-e Rajab, 1 ITTIC Hotel Shiraz, 2 Mesopotamian Crow roost (Shush area), 1 Karkheh WR, 1 Persian Kermanshah Hotel garden, 1 Rajayi Park (Isfahan)
 172. **White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis*: 1f Bahram Gour NP, 1f N of Bushehr, 1m mts N of Andimeshk, 1m E of Khorammabad
 173. **Semicollared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata*: 1m E of Isfahan (EIJ), 2f Bisotun
 174. Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: 18 noted in ones and twos in all corners of the country; max number 4 Bisotun. Likely to have all been of the ssp *samamensis*, but none noted as such.
 175. Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius longirostris*: 1m Bahram Gour NP, 1m S of Shiraz, 1m mts N of Andimeshk, 2m singing Bisotun
 176. Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*: singles Karkheh WR & mts N of Andimeshk
 177. **Pied Bush Chat** *Saxicola caprata*: 2m, 1f Minab vegetable fields, 1m N of Bushehr (the latter slightly out-of-range)
 178. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*: 1 Tiab jetty, 1 btw Minab & Gaz, 4 edge of Bakhtegan Lake (E of Estahban), 6 Bahram Gour NP, 8 Pasargadae
 179. Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe d. deserti*: 1 desert S of Yazd, 4 (incl a first-summer male) Bahram Gour NP
 180. Eastern Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe melanoleuca*: 6m Bahram Gour NP
 181. Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*: 1f Tiab jetty, 3m Bahram Gour NP, 1m, 1f (in seemingly suitable breeding habitat) in Zagros mts E of Khorammabad
 182. **Variable Wheatear** *Oenanthe picata*: 1p N of Jiroft; 1f Bahram Gour NP. All belonged to the white-bellied form *picata*.
 183. **Hume's Wheatear** *Oenanthe albonigra*: 2 S of Neyriz; 1-2 Bahram Gour NP
 184. Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii*: 1m Bisotun
 185. **(Persian) Mourning Wheatear** *Oenanthe lugens persica* **Essp**: 1, mts N of Andimeshk (RH)
 186. **Red-tailed Wheatear** *Oenanthe chrysopygia*: 1m singing mts E of Khorammabad

187. **Purple Sunbird** *Cinnyris asiaticus brevirostris*: 2m singing Bam, 1m calling S of Jiroft, c 30 Minab, 1f btw Minab & Gaz, 1m singing roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab. Note that its song can sound remarkably similar to that of Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*.
188. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus persicus*: frequently encountered in cities and at archaeological sites
- House Sparrow *Passer domesticus indicus*: 1m Yazd (photographed)
189. Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus*: 2p (singing male and female nestbuilding) Karkheh WR
190. **Pale Rockfinch** *Carpospiza brachydactyla*: 11m singing Bahram Gour NP, sound-recorded
191. Yellow-throated Sparrow *Gymnoris xanthocollis*: c 35 Minab, 16 SE of Darab near Shahabi, c 26 Shush area (incl 20 at Karkheh WR), 1m singing mts N of Andimeshk
192. **Indian Silverbill** *Euodice malabarica*: flock of 13 Minab palm gardens
193. Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava flava*: 4 Chogha Mish, S of Dezful (Shush area)
Yellow-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava lutea*: 2m Shush area
Sykes' Wagtail *Motacilla flava beema*: 7 Shush area
Black-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava feldegg*: 1m, 1f N of Bushehr
Grey-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava thunbergi*: 2m Shush area
194. Grey Wagtail *Motacilla c. cinerea*: 1f Bahram Gour NP, 2 mts N of Andimeshk
195. White Wagtail *Motacilla a. alba*: 2 Isfahan
Masked (White) Wagtail *Motacilla (alba) personata*: 1m N of Bam, 1m N of Jiroft, 1f Azadi Park (Shiraz), 1 Khorramabad, 2 Bisotun
196. Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*: 2 over roadside ponds btw Minab & Gaz (HO), 1 Bisotun
197. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*: flock of 18 in breeding plumage, Chogha Mish S of Dezful (Mesopotamia)
198. Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus crassirostris*: 4, desert S of Yazd, 7 Bahram Gour NP
199. Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta*: 2 flying over desert S of Yazd, 1p S of Jiroft, 4 Bahram Gour NP
- (..) European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis paropanisi*: 1 caged in Neyriz (not likely to have been caught locally as this ssp occurs in NE Iran)
200. Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*: 9 singing, primarily from wires, Darab relief (sound-recorded), 1 Pasargadae
201. **Grey-necked Bunting** *Emberiza bucharani*: flock of 8, Bahram Gour NP
202. Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*: 6, Gaz jetty, 3 (1 with Grey-necked Buntings) Bahram Gour NP
203. Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*: c 620 migrating N btw Minab & Gaz (6.30-7.45 am, Apr 16, flocks up to 100), 1m singing Darab relief, 7 Bahram Gour NP

List of recorded mammals

- (..) Indian Crested Porcupine *Hystrix indica*: feeding holes seen Bahram Gour NP
1. **Tolai Hare** *Lepus tolai*: 1 Bahram Gour NP
2. **Jungle Cat** *Felis c. chaus*: 2 Minab
3. Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii montanus* **NEssp**: 3 Minab
4. Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes (flavescens?)*: 1 all-grey ind crossing the road btw Bam & Jiroft
5. **Asian Wild Ass (Onager)** *Equus hemionus onager*: 447 Bahram Gour NP
6. **Western Jebeer** *Gazella (bennettii) shikarii* **E**: 3 Bahram Gour NP
7. **Laristan Sheep** *Ovis laristanica* **E**: 19 subadults and 4 ad males Bahram Gour NP. In Iranian literature the wild sheep of Bahram Gour NP are called Shiraz Mouflon *Ovis orientalis shirazica* (Gholamreza Ghaderi pers.comm.)..

List of observed reptiles & amphibians

1. Caspian Pond Turtle *Mauremys caspica*: 4 Karkheh WR
2. Yellow-headed Rock Agama *Laudakia n. nupta*: 2, mts N of Andimeshk
3. Small-scaled Rock Agama *Laudakia microlepis*: 1 Darab relief, 1 Persepolis
4. **Gray Toadhead Agama** *Phrynocephalus scutellatus* **E**: 4 desert S of Yazd
5. **Brilliant Ground Agama** *Trapelus agilis*: 2 Bahram Gour NP
6. Steppe Agama *Trapelus sanguinolentus*: 1m Bahram Gour NP
7. Persian Leaf-toed Gecko *Hemidactylus persicus*: 1 Minab Tourist Hotel

8. Persia Rock Gecko *Pristurus rupestris*: 1 Minab
9. Snake-eyed lizard *Ophisops elegans*: 1 btw Aligudarz and Isfahan
10. Persian Racerunner *Eremias persica*: 1 Bahram Gour NP
11. Southern Grass Skink *Heremites septemtaeniatus*: 1 Chogha Mish S of Dezful (PS)
12. Eurasian Marsh Frog *Pelophylax ridibundus*: few Zagros mountains and Kermanshah
13. **Kaiser's (Lorestan) Newt** *Neurergus kaiseri* **VU, E**: 58, mts N of Andimeshk
14. **Iranian Earless Toad** (Iranian Toad, Pakistan Toad) *Bufo surdus*: singles at Minab and btw Minab and Gaz
15. **[HO]** Eastern Tree Frog *Hyla orientalis*: 20+ btw Minab and Gaz (sound-recorded)
16. **Lorestan Toad** *Bufo luristanicus* **E**: 2 subad Karkheh WR, 30 subad at Chogha Zanbil

List of observed dragonflies

1. Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens intermedia*: 4m, 2f Karkheh WR
2. Odalisque *Epallage fatime*: 1m roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab, 10 mts N of Andimeshk. A most-wanted lifer!
3. Common Bluetail *Ischnura elegans*: 3 Minab, c 50 Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), 10 N of Bushehr, 1 S of Shush
4. Oasis Bluetail *Ischnura fountaineae*: 1m Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), c 30 Shush area, incl 9m Karkheh WR
5. **Desert Bluetail** *Ischnura evansi*: 1m S of Shush (PS)
6. **Persian Bluetail** *Ischnura intermedia* **VU**: 1m roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab. Note that *I. intermedia* is indistinguishable from Forked Bluetail *Ischnura forcipata* based on this photograph but according to literature at this location it should be *I. intermedia*.
- (..) Unidentified Bluetail *Ischnura spec*: 135+ S of Shush were either *I. evansi* or *I. fountaineae*
7. Ivory Featherleg *Platycnemis dealbata*: 12 incl 1 copula Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), 7 Shush area, incl 3m Karkheh WR
8. Vagrant Emperor *Anax ephippiger*: 1m roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab, 1 Darabgerd, 1 Karkheh WR
9. Blue Emperor *Anax imperator*: 1f ovipositing Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), 2 mts N of Andimeshk
10. Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope*: 2m Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), 1 mts N of Andimeshk
11. **Dark-winged Groundling** *Brachythemis fuscopalliata* **VU**: 45 Shush area
12. Broad Scarlet *Crocothemis erythraea*: 13 Minab, 1m roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab, 1m Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), 2 N of Bushehr, 6 Karkheh WR
13. Oriental Scarlet *Crocothemis servilia*: abundant Shush area, 1m mts N of Andimeshk
14. Black Percher *Diplacodes lefebvrei*: 31 Shush area
15. Epaulet Skimmer *Orthetrum chrysostigma*: 8m, 2f ovipositing roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab
16. Keeled Skimmer *Orthetrum coerulescens*: 1m roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab
17. Slender Skimmer *Orthetrum sabina*: 7 Minab, 1 Maharlu Lake (Shiraz), 1 N of Bushehr, 38 Shush area incl 19 Karkheh WR
18. Small Skimmer *Orthetrum taeniolatum*: c 80 Minab, 2m mts N of Andimeshk
19. Wandering Glider *Pantala flavescens*: 65+ Minab
20. Black Pennant *Selysiothemis nigra*: 1 Chogha Zanbil ziggurat
21. Sandy Darter *Sympetrum arenicolor*: 1 S of Shush (PS)
22. Southern Darter *Sympetrum meridionale*: 1 Karkheh WR (PS)
23. Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii*: 1 Darab, 6 Maharlu Lake (Shiraz), 1 Shiraz, 1 Bushehr, 30 N of Bushehr, 1m mts N of Andimeshk, 4 Kermanshah
24. Violet Dropwing *Trithemis annulata*: 2 Minab, 1m Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), c 60 Shush area incl 25 Karkheh WR
25. Indigo Dropwing *Trithemis festiva*: 1m roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab

List of identified butterflies

1. Alcides Skipper *Eogenes alcides*: 1 Minab Tourist Hotel
2. Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*: 2 Shahabi (SE of Darab)
3. Lime Swallowtail *Papilio demoleus*: 6 Minab (RH, EIJ)
4. **Hypermnestra helios** **NE**: 18 desert S of Yazd, 4 Bahram Gour NP
5. Large Salmon Arab *Colotis fausta*: 1 roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab (PS)
6. Small White *Pieris rapae*: 1 btw Bandar Abbas & Darab, 8 Shush, 5 Shushtar, 1 Bisotun
7. Large White *Pieris brassicae*: 1 Chogha Zanbil ziggurat

8. Eastern Bath White *Pontia edusa*: 4 Darab relief, 1 Bahram Gour NP
9. Desert White *Pontia glauconome*: 1 SE of Darab near Shahabi
10. Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*: 1 Kermanshah (PS)
11. African Caper White *Belenois aurota*: 2 SE of Darab near Shahabi
12. *Euchloe transcaspica*: 3 SE of Darab near Shahabi, 1 Bahram Gour NP
13. Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*: 5 SE of Darab, 1 Darab relief, 2 Shiraz, 1 Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), 3 Chogha Zanbil ziggurat, 6 Shushtar, 4 mts N of Andimeshk, 4 Bisotun
14. **Caucasian Vernal Copper** *Tomares callimachus*: 1 Bahram Gour NP (PS)
15. Mediterranean Blue *Tarucus rosaceus*: 2 Minab, 1 Chogha Zanbil ziggurat
16. Long-tailed Blue *Lampides boeticus*: 1 btw Minab & Gaz, 2 Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), 1 mts N of Andimeshk
17. Dark Grass Blue *Zizeeria karsandra*: sev Minab, 1 btw Ahvaz & Shush (PS)
18. Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*: 1m Persepolis
19. Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*: 1 Karkheh WR (PS)
20. Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*: commonly encountered, highest numbers 400+ in Bahram Gour NP, c 300 in blossoming almond grove E of Isfahan, c 40 Bisotun
21. African Monarch *Danaus chrysippus*: 6 Minab, 1 btw Minab & Gaz, 1 roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab, 1 Ardashir castle (Firuzabad), 2 Bushehr Bay
22. Aegean Meadow Brown *Maniola telmessia*: 1 mts N of Andimeshk (PS)
23. **Zagros Wall Brown** *Lasiommata zagrossicus* **E**: 3 mts N of Andimeshk
24. Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*: 1 mts N of Andimeshk
25. Blue Pansy *Junonia orithya*: 1 S of Jiroft, 11 Minab, 4 Gaz river, 1 SE of Darab near Shahabi

List of identified moths

1. Vestal *Rhodometra sacraria*: 3 Minab, 2 Darab relief, 1 Karkheh WR
2. Gem *Nycterosea obstipata*: 1 Khorramabad (PS)
3. Crimson Speckled *Utetheisa pulchella*: 1 btw Minab & Gaz, 1 SE of Darab
4. Pale Shoulder *Acontia lucida*: 1 Chogha Zanbil ziggurat (PS)
5. Large Yellow Underwing *Noctua pronuba*: 1 dead, Bahram Gour NP
6. *Nomophila noctuella*: 1, mts N of Andimeshk
7. *Armada panaceaorum*: 1 Isfahan (PS)
8. *Mocis spec*: 2 Minab (PS)
9. *Streblote spec*: 1 Minab Tourist Hotel
10. Marbled Clover *Heliothis virescens*: 1 SE of Aligudarz (PS)

A variety of photographed unidentified moths are on PS's pages at Observation.org.

List of photographed beetles

1. Globe Thistle Capitulum Weevil *Larinus onopordi*: 1 well btw Bandar Abbas & Darab (RH)
2. *Epicauta spec*: 20 Minab
3. *Arthrodisia spec*: 2 Minab
4. *Erodus spec*: 7, incl a copula, Chogha Zanbil
5. *Omophlus spec*: 3 feeding on Giant Tangier Fennel *Ferula tingitana*, Bahram Gour NP
6. *Tentyria spec*: 1 Pasargadae
7. *Adesmia anthracina*: 1 Bahram Gour NP
8. *Adesmia dilatata*: 1 NW of Isfahan
9. Unknown beetle: 2 Shushtar ancient bridge
10. 7-spot Ladybird *Coccinella septempunctata*: 1, mts N of Andimeshk
11. *Calosoma maderae*: 1 mts N of Andimeshk

Other insects/molluscs photographed

1. *Scaeva albomaculata* (Hoverfly): 1f feeding on Giant Tangier Fennel *Ferula tingitana*, Bahram Gour NP
2. *Dasyscolia ciliata* (Wasp): 1 E of Khorramabad (PS)
3. *Megachilidae indet* (Wasp): 1 digging a hole in wall of Ardashir castle (Firuzabad)
4. Desert Locust *Schistocerca gregaria*: 5 btw Minab & Gaz, 1 SE of Darab near Shahabi
5. *Sphingonotus rubescens* (Grasshopper): 1 Minab (RH)

6. *Aiolopus spec* (Grasshopper): 1 Minab (RH)
7. *Unidentified* (Grasshopper): 1 beige-white, desert S of Yazd
8. *Omanocoris versicolor* (Leaf-footed Bug): c 200 Darab relief
9. *Isopod spec*: 1 Minab (RH)
10. *Arion spec* (Slug): 1 Minab (PS)

Observed fish

1. Stinging Catfish *Heteropneustes fossilis*: 1 inundated field N of Ahvaz (Mesopotamia)
2. *Pagellus affinis*: 1 jumped in our boat, Tiab
3. Walton's Mudskipper *Periophthalmus waltoni* (probably): 50+ Tiab

Observed crabs

1. Rounded Ghost Crab *Ocypode rotundata*: 500+ Gaz of this large, beige-lilac species, that was targeted by Great Stone-curlew
2. Persian Freshwater Crab *Potamon persicum* **E**: 10, mts N of Andimeshk
3. Purple-clawed Shore Crab *Metopograpsus thukuhar*: 6 Tiab mangroves

List of identified plants

1. Desert Hyacinth (Broomrape) *Cistanche tubulosa*: deserts S of Yazd and SE of Darab (EIJ)
2. Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis foemina*: 300 flowering, mts N of Andimeshk
3. Hollow-leaved Asphodel *Asphodelus fistulosus*: 10,000+ flowering, Bahram Gour NP
4. *Bellevalia longistyla*: 120 flowering, Pasargadae
5. *Campanula humillima*: 1 flowering, mts N of Andimeshk
6. Chicory *Cichorium intybus*: 1 flowering, S of Shush
7. Scarlet Synmorium *Cynomorium coccineum*: 2 Bahram Gour NP
8. Tournefort's Gundelia *Gundelia tournefortii*: Bahram Gour NP, Persepolis, mts N of Andimeshk
9. *Ebenus stellata*: 2 flowering, Bahram Gour NP
10. *Epipactis veratrifolia*: 25 flowering, roadside well btw Gahkom & Darab
11. Giant Tangier Fennel *Ferula tingitana*: 300 flowering, Bahram Gour NP
12. Siberian Lily *Ixiolirion tataricum*: 200 flowering, mts btw Bam & Jiroft
13. *Leontice armeniaca*: 1 fruit-bearing, Bahram Gour NP
14. *Leontice leontopetalum*: 1 flowering, SE of Aligudarz
15. Common Grape Hyacinth *Muscari botryoides*: 40 flowering, Zagros mts SE of Aligudarz
16. Rose Bay *Nerium oleander*: mts N of Andimeshk
17. *Rheum persicum*: 15,000 in 4 km², c 125 km S of Yazd; Bahram Gour NP
18. Milk Thistle *Silybum marianum*: c 20 flowering, Shushtar
19. *Onobrychis cornuta*: 5 flowering, Bahram Gour NP
20. *Salvia spinosa*: 1 flowering, Bahram Gour NP

Photographs of a large number (c 50) of as yet unidentified (mostly flowering) plants are on RH's and PS's pages at Observation.org. If there is one you recognise, you can send in your suggestion by using the E-mail observer button under Options.

A 58-page version of this report containing 178 photos is published separately.

Jan 17, 2021

Remco Hofland
Rotterdam, the Netherlands
platbuik@yahoo.com