

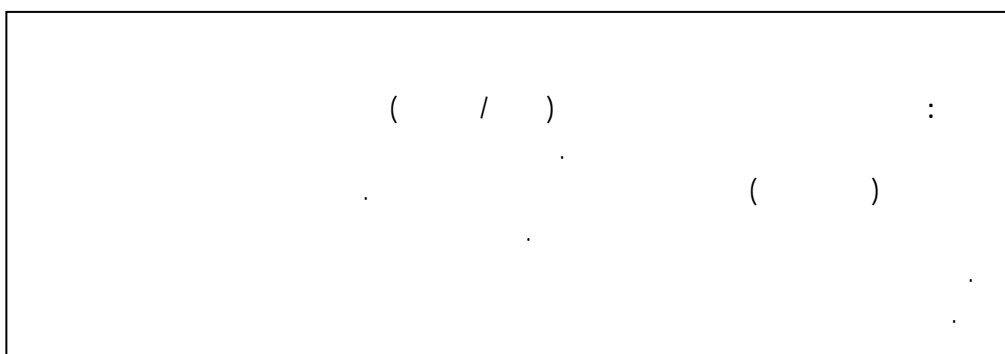
Short Communication

Waterbirds in Lahijan Pond, Gilan Province, Northern Iran

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Lahijan Pond is located between Mount Sheitan-Kouh and Sabze-Meidan Square in the city of Lahijan, Gilan Province and is supposed to have been constructed by the Great Shah Abbas. In the past, its area was about 700 m in length and 200 m in width (c. 14 ha), and then increased to about 1000 by 450 m (c. 27.5 ha), respectively, as a result of reconstruction by Lahijan municipality. In the past this water reservoir was used for paddy fields irrigation (Ghorbani 1996, Khomamizadeh 1971). There is a small island in the centre of this pond and an artificial waterfall was constructed in the mid-1990s.

A survey of waterbirds was conducted in this pond (Fig. 1) once every two weeks from November 2005 to September 2006. There were a few additional surveys up to late September 2006. During the study period, thirteen waterbird species were identified. The maximum number of birds was 92 individuals on 28 January 2006. Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* and Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* were the most abundant species, with maximum 44 and 38 birds, respectively. The Common Pochard was the species recorded most frequently, occurring in all months. Twenty species of land birds were observed,

including a single Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* on (12 March) and two Blue-cheeked (Persian) Bee-eaters *Merops persicus* and one Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* on 7 October. Additional birds were Common Swift *Apus apus*, European Bee-eater *M. europaeus*, Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, House Martin *Delichon urbicum*, White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis*, Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, warbler spp., Great Tit *Parus major*, Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Pa. montanus*, European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*, Rook *Corvus frugilegus* and Hooded Crow *Corvus corone cornix*.

Previous bird observations in autumn 1994 and winter 1995 (A. Khaleghizadeh, pers. obs.) showed that the main waterbirds from November to January included 18–43 Common Pochard, 5 Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*, 2 duck sp. and 20–200 gull sp. Also, there is a record of a single Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* observed from 5 January to mid-February 2005 at this pond (Sehhatiasabet *et al.* 2006).

Table 1. Results of waterbirds observed in the Lahijan Pond, November 2005–September 2006.

| Date | 7 Oct | 21 Oct | 3 Nov | 13 Nov | 25 Nov | 8 Dec | 15 Dec | 26 Dec | 1 Jan | 13 Jan | 28 Jan | 10 Feb | 23 Feb | 12 Mar | 19 Mar | 4 Apr | 23 Apr | 15 May | Jun-Sep ¹ |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------------------|
| Species/Weather ² | R | C | C | S | C | S | C | C | S | C | S | C | C | C | C | S | S | C | S |
| <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Podiceps grisegena</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i> | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 38 | 13 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Phalacrocorax pygmeus</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Ardea cinerea</i> | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Anas strepera</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Aythya ferina</i> | 0 | 2 | 2 | 15 | 33 | 27 | 31 | 17 | 15 | 37 | 42 | 44 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Fulica atra</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Larus cachinnans</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Larus ridibundus</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Total No of waterbirds | 2 | 6 | 3 | 19 | 42 | 36 | 38 | 24 | 29 | 57 | 92 | 67 | 1 | 33 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 0 |

1. Including 3 & 21 June, 8 & 27 July, 15 August and 21 September 2006.

2. C= Cloudy, R=Rainy, S=Sunny.



Figure 1. A view of Lahijan Pond, © A. Khaleghizadeh.

Observations also show that the diversity of waterbirds present at the site increased during the past decade. However all the waterbirds observed are migrants wintering on the southern plains of the Caspian Sea. No waterbirds were observed during June to September 2006. It is important to discover whether passage migrants around this pond remain (as non-breeders) in spring and summer.

Recording local observations is a vital part of understanding bird behaviour, not only within Gilan Province, but also in Iran.



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