

High elevation records of Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* in northern Iran

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Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* is a rare-in-Iran, diurnal, mainly insectivorous, migratory, gregarious, monogamous and medium-sized falconid. It mainly breeds in Libya, Egypt, and the Arabian peninsula and the vertical distribution range of the species is 0–1500 m asl (Aspinall 2010, BirdLife International 2017, Cramp & Simmons 1980, Frumkin & Pinshow 1983, Javed *et al* 2012, Kaboli *et al* 2016, McGrady *et al* 2016, Shah *et al* 2008). Records of Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* in Iran, 1912–2015, are presented in Table 1.

We recorded the species at a relatively high elevation in northern Iran. Our observation site was the mountainous area near Tar and Havar lakes in the southern valleys of the Central Alborz mountain range (Figure 1). Average annual precipitation is 500 mm (300–800 mm) and the temperature range is –20 to 30°C in the area. Observations of the falcons occurred opportunistically during bird-watching and photography in summer 2013 and 2015. On 2 August 2013, 10.32 h in the morning, a Sooty Falcon was recorded in the open V-shaped valley (2900 m asl) near Aroo village, Tehran province (Plate 1, Figure 1, Table



Figure 1. Distribution of Sooty Falcon records *Falco concolor* in Iran: 1. Chabahar, 2. Bandar Abbas, 3. Qeshm island, 4. Naybandan, 5. Zarin Abad, 6. Central Alborz.

Table 1. Records of Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* in Iran 1912–2015.

Observation	Location	Coordinates	Date	Source/Reference
A male collected	Chabahar, Sistan & Baluchestan province	25° 17' 31" N 60° 38' 35" E	31 August 1912	Quetta Museum, Ticehurst (1926–27), Roselaar & Aliabadian (2009)
Single recorded	Chabahar, Sistan & Baluchestan province	25° 17' 31" N 60° 38' 35" E	31 August 1912	Quetta Museum, Ticehurst (1926–27), Roselaar & Aliabadian (2009)
Single captured	Chabahar, Sistan & Baluchestan province	25° 17' 31" N 60° 38' 35" E	August 1927	Moreau (1969), Hüe & Etchécopar (1970), Scott (2008)
Single recorded	Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan province	27° 11' 0" N 56° 16' 0" E	1 November 2000	Khaleghizadeh et al (2011)
Three breeding pairs recorded	western part of Qeshm island, Hormozgan province	26° 40' 0" N 55° 34' 0" E	Summer 2002	Khaleghizadeh et al (2011)
Two recorded	Naybandan area near Tabas, Yazd province	32° 13' 52" N 57° 30' 13" E	August 2005	Fahimi & Jowkar (2010), Khaleghizadeh et al (2011)
A single recorded	Naybandan area near Tabas, Yazd province	32° 29' 08" N 57° 25' 14" E	20 July 2008	Fahimi & Jowkar (2010), Khaleghizadeh et al (2011)
A single recorded	Naybandan area near Tabas, Yazd province	32° 13' 52" N 57° 30' 13" E	1 August 2010	Fahimi & Jowkar (2010), Khaleghizadeh et al (2011)
One recorded	Central Alborz	35° 40' 57" N 52° 23' 02" E	2 August 2013	This paper
An injured individual on ground	Zarin Abad, Pahleh, Dehloran, Ilam province	33° 0' 30" N 46° 51' 45" E	Late August 2014	DoE, Ilam Office of Department of the Environment (unpublished)
Two individuals recorded	Central Alborz	35° 42' 58" N 52° 18' 48" E	22 June 2015	This paper



Plate 1. Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* near Aroo village, Central Alborz, northern Iran, 2 August 2013.

1). On 22 June 2015 at 14.02 h in the afternoon, two Sooty Falcons were documented in the U-shaped valley (2500 m asl) near Havar village (Figure 1, Table 1).

According to the literature (Table 1), our observations are the northernmost records in Iran. For both records, at first look, we thought that our falcons were Hobbies *F. subbuteo*, but with closer inspection of the photographs, it was clear that the falcons were Sooty Falcons. In fact, we did not expect to observe Sooty Falcon in the Alborz mountains and at that high altitude, 1400 m above the previous highest reported elevation (BirdLife International 2017).

Jennings (2010), for the Arabian peninsula, and Shirihai (1996), for Israel, are agreed that eggs are not laid until well into July, or even August. The species is known to wander extensively in the pre-breeding period. Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonorae* wanders over very large areas, far from the nesting islands and appears in habitats totally unsuitable for breeding, including at high altitude. There is no reason for Sooty Falcon not to do likewise.

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