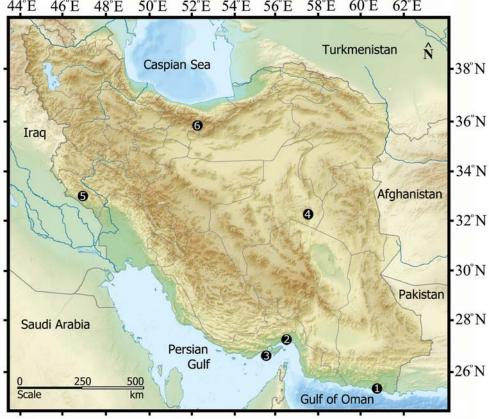
High elevation records of Sooty Falcon Falco concolor in northern Iran

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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 Havir 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 $-20 \text{ to } 30^{\circ}\text{C}$ 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



58°E 48°E 50°E 52°E 54°E 56°E 60°E 62°E 46 E

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

| 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 | I 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 | I 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 |

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



Plate I. 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 Havir 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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