

## WHAT'S NEW IN THE LITERATURE

### Book Review: *The Complete Fauna Of Iran*

by Eskandar Firouz and published by IB Taurus & Co, London in 2005 (322 pages, price 90\$US).

Dr Eskandar Firouz is a well-known and respected Iranian naturalist who founded Iran's Game and Fish Department in 1957 and the Department of the Environment in 1971. Dr Firouz has also played a leading role in establishing the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, better known as the Ramsar Convention.

The book is divided into the following sections:

#### Introductory Chapters

- Summary of zoological work in Iran
- Iran's wildlife past and present
- Conservation and protection
- Iran's present network of reserves
- The land
- Zoogeography

#### Chapters on the Fauna of Iran

- Mammals
- Birds
- Reptiles
- Amphibians
- Freshwater fish

I enjoyed reading this book, particularly the Introductory chapters that provide a fascinating historical and cultural background to the wildlife of Iran. However, it is not possible to read this book without feeling saddened by the descriptions of the massive population reductions and extinctions of so many Iranian species in recent years.

- The last Asian lion was seen in Iran in 1942.
- Three generations ago tigers ranged across Iran from Turkey to the Caucasus - the last Caspian tiger was shot in Iran in 1953.
- The cheetah is in danger of becoming extinct, although there is one reserve (Naibandan Wildlife Reserve) where an estimated 12-15 animals live.

Indeed Firouz's descriptions of the changes to habitat quality and the range and numbers of species that have occurred in his lifetime make depressing reading. He estimates that there has been an 80-90% decline in the overall wildlife population in Iran over the last 27 years.

One criticism I have is that there are not enough images for this to be considered a comprehensive field guide. Additionally, future editions would benefit from organising species accounts more thoroughly – many species are listed with little or no information – but perhaps these gaps represent challenges for future Iranian biologists to fill in? While all threatened species are marked in accordance with the relevant IUCN status symbol, it would also have been useful to have included an indication of the Iranian status of every species.

I had not realised that Paradise is a word derived from the old Persian word "Pardis". To the ancient Persians this word signified a royal garden where "all good things the earth provides might be enjoyed". In the 1970's the Iranian government had plans to develop an ambitious ecological theme park in Tehran called the "Pardisan" or Paradise Project. It was to be a comprehensive centre for research in all environmental and scientific fields. Plans were abandoned after the revolution, but now almost a generation on the project is being resurrected. Interesting that in the UK we now have the ambitious and well-respected Eden project with similar goals.

This is a tremendous piece of work, providing a stimulating overview of the current status and conservation of wildlife in Iran and with plenty of good quality images and illustrations. The author has faced many problems, not least of them the political turbulence of the past 30 years. As such I heartily recommend this book to anyone with an interest in the wildlife of the Middle East region.

Reviewed by Tom Bailey, Dubai Falcon Hospital, Dubai, UAE.



## THE COMPLETE FAUNA OF IRAN



Eskandar Firouz and published by IB Taurus & Co

### Breeding Success for World's Rarest Parrots

Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation (AWWP) in Qatar successfully hatched their first Lear's macaw (*Anodorhynchus leari*) in 2006 from four pairs of birds on loan from the Brazilian Government. This species has proved challenging to breed in captivity and this is the world's first recorded breeding success since 1984. AWWP's Lear's macaw breeding program is part of an international effort, in cooperation with the Brazilian Government's Natural Heritage Department (IBAMA), to establish a viable captive population as part of the conservation efforts to secure the long-term future of this critically endangered species. This successful breeding will provide other institutions involved in the breeding program with valuable data and hopefully encourage further captive breeding breakthroughs.

AWWP also successfully bred seven Spix's macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) chicks in 2006. All chicks were hand reared with the hope that later clutches could be left with the parents.

For further information see [www.alwabra.com/awwp](http://www.alwabra.com/awwp)



Fig 1. Lear's Macaw chick at 34 days old. (©Catrin Hammer)