

A breeding record of Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* at a Caspian coastal area, Iran

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The Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* nests at relatively few locations in Anatolia, Iraq and Iran (Porter & Aspinall 2010). It also breeds in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (Ayé *et al* 2012). In Iran, the Black-headed Gull is a locally common breeding bird in the northwest. Several small colonies totalling 200–500 pairs were located in marshes in West Azerbaijan province 1970–1977 (Scott 2007). In 2015, c1150–1250 pairs were found breeding in the marshes of West Azarbaijan: 500 pairs on islets in Shahed Kazemi reservoir, 250–300 pairs in marshes near Mahabad, 300 pairs in marshes near Naghadeh and 100–150 pairs on islets in a marsh near Miandoab (Omid Yousefi pers obs, Figure 1).

The Black-headed Gull is a common winter visitor to all the wetlands on the southern coast of the Caspian sea in Gilan province, Iran (Ashoori & Abdoos 2013). In the winter of 2015/2016, more than four thousand Black-headed Gulls overwintered in Gilan's Anzali wetland complex (37° 25'–37° 30' N, 49° 25'–49° 30' E), a 19 300 ha Ramsar site. Black-headed Gulls were present in this wetland throughout spring and summer 2015, and 38 immatures were observed 7 June, but no nests were located. However, on 29 May 2016, one nest with two eggs was found on a small reed islet in the west lagoon of Anzali



Figure 1. Black-headed Gull breeding sites in Iran: established sites in West Azerbaijan province (blue dots) and the new site in Anzali wetland, Gilan province (red dot).



Plate 1. A pair of Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* defending their nest in Anzali wetland, Iran, 29 May 2016. © H Watanabe



Plate 2. A Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* nest on a small islet of reeds in the west lagoon of Anzali wetland, Iran, 29 May 2016. © H Watanabe



Plate 3. The Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* nest, with two eggs, Anzali wetland, Iran, 29 May 2016. © H Watanabe

wetland (Plates 1–3, Figure 1). This is the first record of Black-headed Gull nesting in the south Caspian region of Iran. Two other pairs of Black-headed Gulls were observed in the same area, and we suspect that there were several breeding pairs in the Anzali wetland. Disturbance by fishermen and tourists in motorboats may cause disturbance to the gulls in the breeding season.

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