

# First record of Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* in Iran

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The Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* is an oriental bird species breeding in the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka (Ali 2002) and southeastern Asia. In breeding plumage, it has brown upperparts and black underparts with white wings and white forehead to the front neck, yellow from the end of crown to the nape, typically with a sickle-shaped tail. Non-breeding birds have white underparts with black necklace on the upper breast (Ali 2002). In the Middle East, Pheasant-tailed Jacana is regularly recorded in Oman (Eriksen & Victor 2013) but has been recorded only as a rare vagrant in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Qatar (Porter & Aspinall 2010) and the UAE (Smiles 2014), exclusively in winter plumage.

This species has not so far been reported from Iran even as a doubtful species (Khaleghizadeh *et al* 2017), until a bird was first seen and photographed by E.A. in the central square (Imam Khomeini) of the city of Lamerd, Fars province on 12 November 2018 (Plate 1). As E.A. was not a bird photographer known to the Iran Bird Records Committee, M Papari-Zarei, a reliable bird observer in the adjacent province of Bushehr, confirmed the news. The photo was first sent to M Moazeni who informed EA as a new species for Iran (Plate 2). The news was circulated in social media and the bird was identified as the Pheasant-tailed Jacana by both M Papari-Zarei and M Safrang. It was an adult in winter plumage. Elham Shaniti, a famous birdwatcher from Fars province, also saw the bird. The bird showed behaviour typical of wild birds, having complete and clean feathers and being wary of humans approaching it. As there was no sign that this bird had been released deliberately as an originally caged bird, it was accepted as the first record of this species for Iran and Fars province. In a rare twitching event in Iran, several birdwatchers visited the bird after circulation of the news.

The bird stayed in the square until 23 November 2018. A man working for the municipality of Lamerd told EA that he had seen it about ten days before it was first photographed on 12 November 2018. EA visited the bird every day, as the distance between



**Plate 1.** The first photo of the Pheasant-tailed Jacana in Lamerd city, 12 November 2018. © Ebrahim Abbasi



**Plate 2.** The second photo of the Pheasant-tailed Jacana in Lamerd city, 13 November 2018. © Mostafa Moazeni

his workplace and the site of the jacana was only about 100 m. The bird was not afraid of people and cars passing unless closely approached. The square is small, only about 15 by 15 m, and covered with grass. During the time the bird was present, this square had a small pond that presumably attracted the jacana.

On the morning of 24 November 2018, it was not seen. We tried to survey the reason for its disappearance. There was no evidence that the bird had been hunted or that it had been disturbed by a traffic accident. It presumably continued its migration route during the night of 23 November 2018 and was not seen again. It seems that regional storms caused this individual to migrate out of its usual range. In the UAE, it was similarly recorded at Wamm farms, Dibba, Fujairah on 31 October 2013, Zakher lake on 28 and 30 November 2013 (Smiles 2014), Saih al Salam, Al Qudra lake from 29 October to 6 November 2015 (Harrison 2016) and in Ajman sewage treatment, on 16 November 2018 (Harrison 2019).

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