

Recent records of *Hypocolius ampelinus* further north in Iran and an apparent breeding colony in Tehran province

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The *Hypocolius ampelinus* is a resident bird species in southern and central Iraq and southern areas of Iran in Ilam, Khuzestan, Bushehr, Fars, Hormozgan, Kerman and Sistan & Baluchestan provinces (Kaboli *et al* in press, Porter & Aspinall 2010, Salim *et al* 2012). It has bred in Kuwait (Al-Ghanem & Al-Sirhan 2015). Here we report records of *Hypocolius* further north in Iran. *Hypocolius* is also an uncommon breeding summer visitor to an area in southeast Turkmenistan and possibly in southern Afghanistan (Ayé *et al* 2012, Rustamov 2015).

In the Tehran area, a single male *Hypocolius* was observed and photographed by N Azari in Qasre-Bahram, Kavir national park, in 2004. A male was observed and photo'd by A Bahri in the no-hunting area of Howz Soltan, Qom–Tehran road, Qom province, 26 June 2012. On 4 June 2013, a flock of 3 males and 2 female *Hypocolius* was observed by A Farahnasab in Abbas-Abad, Naein, Esfahan province (Plate 1). In September 2013, a flock



Figure 1. Map of Iran showing location of records reported in the present note. Solid circles, sightings; solid square, location of apparent breeding colony Tehran province.



Plate 1. Three male and two female (one bird outwith photo) *Hypocolius ampelinus* Abbas-Abad, Naein, Esfahan province, 4 June 2013. © Amir Farahnasab



Plate 2. *Hypocolius ampelinus* in Kavir, southeast of Tehran city, 3 June 2016. © M Tohidifar

of four *Hypocolius* was observed near the Varzaneh river (part of Zayandeh-Rud river), Esfahan province. On 22 May 2016, two individuals were seen by Hossein Mahmudian at Shir-Ahmad protected area, Sabzevar, Khorasan-e Razavi province. Locations of records reported in the present note are shown in Figure 1.

In May 2015, we heard from some birdwatchers about an observation of a *Hypocolius* colony, of nearly a hundred individuals, in southeast Tehran province. The area was visited by MT on 17 July 2015 and a scattered colony of 15–20 individuals was observed. It seems this species will establish a breeding population there. The site is actually part of Kavir protected area and near Bandali-Khan marsh, 20 km south of Varamin and 45 km southeast of Tehran city. The area is covered by dense *Tamarix* trees and there is a permanent wastewater stream. This area was visited again on 3 June 2016 and c35 individuals (see Plate 2) were observed there, including a flying male carrying twigs. Possibly *Hypocolius* is invading the flatter areas of central Iran.

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