

# On waterbirds in the Anzali Wetlands, Iran, in 1999/2000

by Abolghasem Khaleghizadeh and Behrouz Behrouzi-Rad

**Abstract.** Regular counts of waterbirds between October 1999 and April 2000 and in June 2000 at Selke and Espand wetlands in the Anzali wetland complex, Gilan Province, in north-western Iran, produced 55 species of waterbirds. The total numbers of waterbirds reached their highest levels at Selke on 27 December (11,442 individuals) and at Espand on 9 January (6,087 individuals). Three of the species recorded are globally threatened or near threatened (LR/nt): Dalmatian Pelican, *Pelecanus crispus* (4 on 27 December), Ferruginous Duck, *Aythya nyroca* (17 on 3 October), and Pygmy Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* (217 on 15 November). Peak numbers of some waterbird species included Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*, over 1500 individuals roosting during mid-autumn to midwinter, Garganey, *Anas querquedula*, 3,794 on 3 October, Teal, *Anas crecca*, 5,625 on 29 November, Coot, *Fulica atra*, 3,645 on 16 November, Avocet, *Recurvirostra avosetta*, 131 on 8 February, and Little Gull, *Larus minutus* 570 on 14 March.

**Kurzfassung.** Bei regelmäßigen Wasservogelzählungen in den Feuchtgebieten von Selke und Espand im Anzali-Feuchtgebietskomplex in der Gilan-Provinz im Nordwestiran wurden zwischen Oktober 1999 und April 2000 sowie im Juni 2000 55 Arten erfasst. Die höchsten Zahlen wurden in Selke am 27. Dezember mit 11.442 Exemplaren ermittelt, und bei Espand am 9. Januar mit 6.087 Exemplaren. Drei der nachgewiesenen Arten sind global gefährdet bzw. fast gefährdet: Krauskopfpelikan, *Pelecanus crispus* (4 am 27. Dezember), Moorente, *Aythya nyroca* (17 am 3. Oktober) und Zwergscharbe, *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* (217 am 15. November). Unter den Maximalbeständen einiger Arten sind z.B. Kormoran, *Phalacrocorax carbo*, mit über 1500 Exemplaren an einem im Herbst und Winter benutzten Rastplatz, Knäkente, *Anas querquedula*, mit 3.794 Exemplaren am 3. Oktober, Krickente, *Anas crecca*, mit 5.625 am 29. November, Bleßhuhn, *Fulica atra*, mit 3.645 Exemplaren am 16. November, Säbelschnäbler, *Recurvirostra avosetta*, mit 131 Exemplaren am 8. Februar, und Zwergmöwe, *Larus minutus*, mit 570 Exemplaren am 14. März.

**Key words:** Waterbirds, Anzali, Wetland, Iran.

## Introduction

Midwinter waterbird censuses have been conducted in Iran on an annual basis since 1967 (EVANS 1994), and they have revealed wide fluctuations in the numbers and diversity of bird species in the Caspian lowlands (MANSOURI 1994, DOE 1996). The Anzali wetland complex is situated in the south Caspian lowlands, in Gilan Province in north-western Iran. This important wetland, which covers about 15,000 ha, was designated as a Ramsar Site on 23 June 1975. The present study was carried out in two areas of this Ramsar Site (Selke and Espand) to monitor the fluctuation in numbers of waterbirds over a six-month period spanning the winter of 1999/2000.

Selke Wildlife Refuge (37°23'N, 49°27'E, 77.3 ha) and Espand wetland (37°24'N, 49°19'E, 44.9 ha) comprise shallow freshwater lagoons and marshes with adjacent flood meadows, to the south of the main lagoon of Anzali. Selke is closely linked to the open