

SOME ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON BIRDS IN AFGHANISTAN

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	226
2. Some remarks concerning the field-data	226
3. The field-data	227
4. References	235
5. Samenvatting	235

1. INTRODUCTION

From 1 July 1971—7 September 1972 I stayed in Afghanistan and because of my work, was able to travel extensively throughout the country: in total about 22 weeks were spent travelling over about 30,000 km by jeep, on horseback or on foot, very often to remote areas. These circumstances generally offered good possibilities to do a great deal of bird watching, which could be supplemented by observations made on a considerable number of spare-time trips amounting to about 60 days.

After comparing my data with those reported in the available recent publications mentioned under "References", especially with the list given by Paludan (1959), a selected number of observations seemed worthwhile to publish as additional information.

The published observations are restricted to those species which could be identified without doubt. I never collected any specimen. The difficulty to recognize eagles in the field is the reason that only some could be identified sufficient and only these have been incorporated in this report.

2. SOME REMARKS CONCERNING THE FIELD-DATA

The drought in Afghanistan in 1970 and 1971 has affected birdlife considerably. The lakes Chaman (1, Fig. 1), Abe Estade and Dashte Nawar (22) and Hamune Puzak (25) had dried up by the end of spring 1971. The lower courses of the rivers in the Seistan basin (25) were also dry. The drought was terminated by heavy precipitation in January—February 1972. Tremendous rainfall on 21 January 1972 in Farah and Helmand provinces did inundate the whole Seistan basin the next day and made it inaccessible for months.

The sequence of species is that followed by Hüe & Etchécopar (1970). The description of the locality of the observations is restricted to the district name and the number of the province between brackets or only to the province name (see Fig. 1). The province numbers and the spelling of the geographical names adopted by the Afghan Cartographic Institute are used as far as possible. The Kabul-river basin is the Kabul-river between Kabul and Jalalabad, Lake Chaman, Lake Kargah and the three reservoir-lakes in the river.

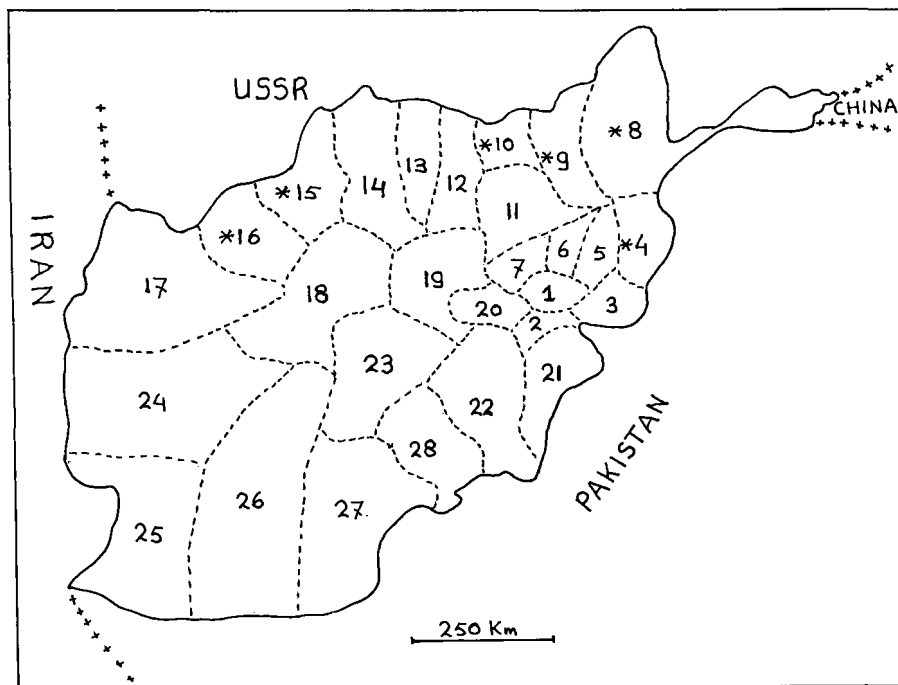


Fig. 1. Map of Afghanistan, showing the province numbers. The numbers preceded by * refer to provinces not visited by the author.

1. Kabul	* 8. Badakhshan	* 15. Faryab	22. Ghazni
2. Lohgar	* 9. Takhar	* 16. Badghis	23. Oruzgan
3. Nangarhar	* 10. Kunduz	17. Herat	24. Farah
* 4. Konar	11. Baghlan	18. Ghor	25. Nimroz
5. Laghman	12. Samangan	19. Bamyān	26. Helmand
6. Kapisa	13. Balkh	20. Maydan	27. Kandahar
7. Parwan	14. Jawzjan	21. Paktya	28. Zabul

Dates are indicated by figures, e.g. 2-72 is February 1972; 4 = 10-4-72 is 4 up to and including 10 April 1972; 11-71 = 3-72 is November 1971 up to and including March 1972. The number of birds observed is mentioned after the date.

** means not yet reported from Afghanistan.

* means only a very few observations known.

3. THE FIELD-DATA

Podiceps cristatus — Great Crested Grebe.

Lake Darunta (3); 12-71 = 4-72 and 8-72; some. 5 = 6-72; between 1 and 4. No breeding observed.

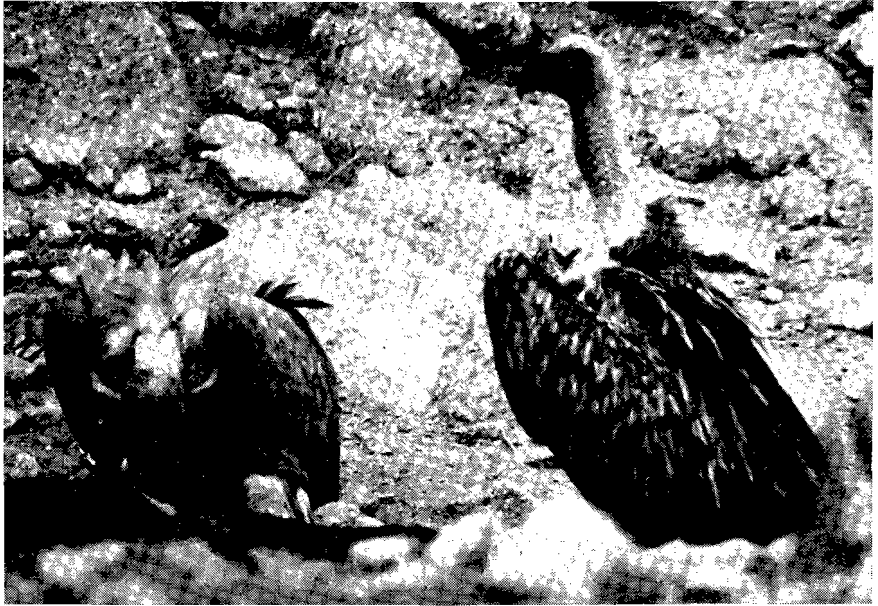


Fig. 2. *Gyps himalayensis*, center a juvenile bird, to the left an adult bird.

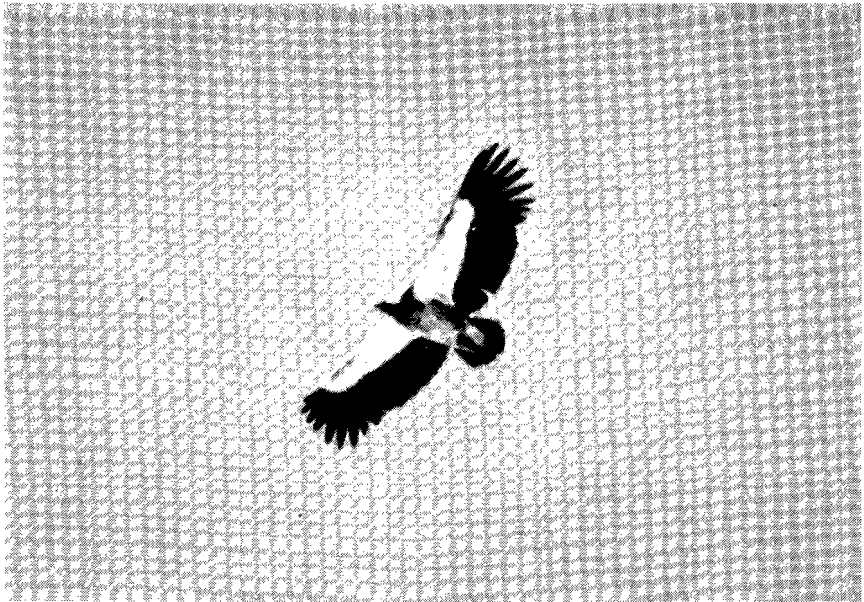


Fig. 3. *Gyps himalayensis* an adult bird.

Phalacrocorax carbo — Cormorant.

Lake Darunta (3); 3 = 4-72; some. Exceptional; 11-3-72; 25. Very few records known in the East.

* *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus* or *niger* — Pygmy or Little Cormorant.

Lake Darunta (3); 21-4-72; 4.

Ardea cinerea — Grey Heron.

Kabul-river basin; 23-7-71 = 28-4-72; not scarce, maximum about 200 in April.

Lake Darunta (3); 4 = 6-72; between 10 and 40, sometimes resting in dead palms. No breeding observed. Frequent shooting.

Charburjak (25); 22-11-71; about 20 nests on the walls of the ruins of Chel Miris 25 km East of Charburjak on the South bank of the Helmand river. About 45 birds around or on the ruins. First known breeding-colony in Seistan.

* *Egretta garzetta* — Little Egret.

Surobay (1); 8-3-72 and 26-5-72; 1. Gozara (17); 3-4-72; 1. Lake Kargah (1); 25-4-72; 1.

* *Ixobrychus minutus* — Little Bittern.

Lake Chaman (1); 2-6-72; minimum 3 males flying around. Likely breeding.

* *Ciconia nigra* — Black Stork.

Bande Amir (19); 10-7-71; 2. Surkhab (24); 11-2-72; 1. Qalat (28); 20-6-72; 1. Lake Dahla (27); 21-6-72; 3. Maruf (27); 24-6-72; 1. Outsides Bamyan also likely breeding in the high areas of Kandahar and Zabul.

Platalea leucorodia — Spoonbill.

Lake Darunta (3); 17-3-72 = 30-6-72; 60, 28, 65, 130, 40, 22. 11-8-72; none.

Anser anser — Grey Lag Goose.

Charburjak (25); 22-11-71; 140. Juwien (25); 13-1-72; 7. Lokhi (25); 15-1-72; 4.

* *Anser albifrons* — White-fronted Goose.

Lake Darunta (3) 21-4-72; 1.

** *Anas formosa* — Baikal Teal.

Surobay (1); 2-9-71; 3 pairs.

* *Nettapus coromandelianus* — Cotton Teal.

Surobay (1); 21-10-71; 2. Lake Kargah (1); 23-8-72; 5.

Neophron percnopterus — Egyptian Vulture.

Common everywhere, total about 500 seen. Winter only Chakhansur (25); 23-11-71; 2.

Kabul-river basin; Last autumn-date; 17-9-71: first spring-date; 10-3-72.

Aegyptius monachus — Black Vulture.

Kabul-river basin; 5-11-71; 2; 13-1-72; 1; 18-5-72; 5. Nimroz; 11-71 = 1-72; total 12. Status still uncertain. Breeding not known.

Gyps fulvus — Griffon Vulture.

Present everywhere, every time, total 235 seen. Large groups; Surobay (1);

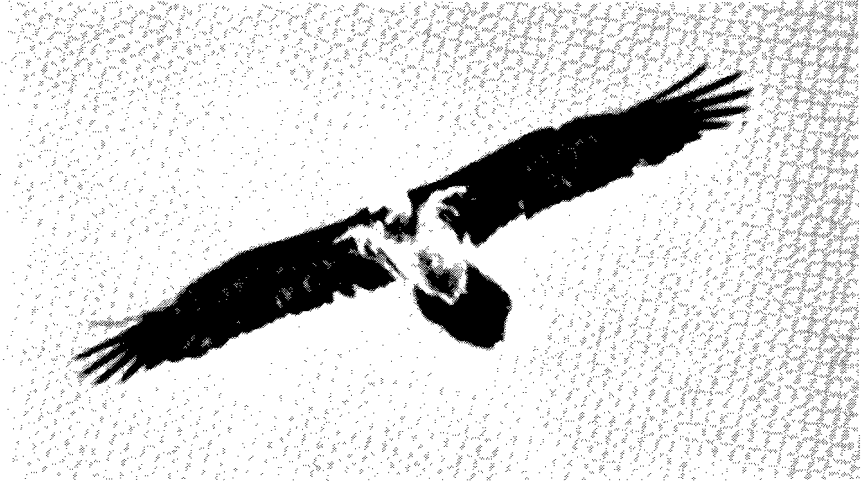


Fig. 4. *Gypaëtus*, an adult bird.



Fig. 5. *Lanius schach*, Blackheaded shrike, the most common shrike in Afghanistan.

18-2-72; 24: 22-5-72; 27. Panjaw (19); 5-8-72; 21. Salang-pass (7); 20-3-72; 22.

* *Gyps himalayensis* — Himalayan Vulture.
Surobay (1); 21-4-72; min. 2: 2-6-72; min. 3. 22-5-72; 32. (Fig. 2, 3)

** *Gyps indicus* — Long-billed Vulture.
Pulu Khumri (11); 20-3-72; 1.

Gypaetus barbatus — Bearded Vulture.
Present in small number in all mountainous areas. Total 51 seen. (Fig. 4)

Aquila chrysaetos — Golden Eagle.
Present in small number in all mountainous areas. Total 37 identified.
Nimroz and the South of Farah; winter visitor; total 11. Bamyan; only 5 = 7-72; 4. Probably breeding (Paludan).

* *Aquila heliaca* — Imperial Eagle.
Farah and Nimroz; winter visitor; total 7 identified. Ghazni (22); 13-11-71; 1. Kabul (1); 28-2-72; 1.

* *Aquila rapax* — Steppe Eagle.
In South, East and Central 9-71 = 4-72 and 8 = 9-72; 11 identified.
Shebar-pass (11); 9-5-72; 1. Bande Amir (19); 10-7-71 and 29-7-72; 1. Mountainous steppe areas of Ghazni, Kandahar and Zabul; 9 = 27-6-72; 10 (sousliks were very numerous!). Only passage migrant and winter visitor (Paludan).

* *Aquila clanga* — Greater Spotted Eagle.
Always solitary. Lake Kargah (1); 25-8-71. Surobay (1) (Kabul-river); 6-11-71. Juwien (25) (Farah river); 20-12-71. Qalat (28) (Tarnak river); 23-12-71. Arghistan (27) (Wad river); 24-6-72.

* *Hieraetus pennatus* — Booted Eagle.
22-8-71 = 28-4-72; total 14 identified. Ghazni (22); 5-7-71; 1. Muqur (22); 9-6-72; 2, hunting sousliks. Probably breeding in Nuristan only (Paludan).

Buteo rufinus — Long-legged Buzzard.
Everywhere outside the high mountains. Total 95 identified. 5-72; Bamyan; 3: Kabul; 1. 6-72; Kandahar; 3. 7-71 and 7-72; Kabul; 4: Zabul; 4. Breeding only in E. and N.E. (Paludan).

* *Butastur teesa* — White-eyed Buzzard-eagle.
Lake Chaman (dry) (1); 27-8-71; 1.

* *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* — Pallas' Fishing Eagle.
Charburjak (25); 21-11-71; 1.

Circaetus gallicus — Short-toed Eagle.
4-11-71 = 15-4-72 and 8 = 9-72; total 22 identified. 6-72; Ghazni; 4: Kandahar; 1: Zabul; 2 (all hunting sousliks). 7-72; Kabul; 1. Charkh (2); 1. Only passage migrant (Paludan). Breeding not yet recorded.

Pandion haliaetus — Osprey.
Kabul-river basin; 17-9-71 = 18-5-72; total 6 of which one winter record, 26-1-72. Enjil (17); 6-4-72; 1.

Falco cherrug — Saker Falcon.
17-8-71 = 4-72 and 8-72; total 19. Surobay (1); 26-5-72; 1. Dashte Nawur (22); 5-7-71; 1. Bande Amir (19); 30-7-72; one pair. Breeding not yet recorded.

* *Falco vespertinus* — Red-footed Falcon.
Herat and Farah; 29-3-72 = 3-4-72; 6.

Falco naumanni — Lesser Kestrel.
Gozara (Rabat Safcha) (17); 4-4-72; about 20 birds around nesting holes. Kusk (Chardabagh river) (17); 12-4-72; about 30 birds around nesting holes. No breeding colonies recorded by Paludan.

** *Francolinus pondicerianus* — Grey Partridge.
Arghestan (27); 24-6-72; 1 or 2. Breeding in Baluchestan (Pakistan and Iran).

Grus grus — Crane.
Between Akcha (14) and Balkh (13); 22-3-72; total 360 to the N.W. Between Mazara Sharif (13) and Pule Khumri (11); 23-3-72; total 830 to the N.W.

* *Haematopus ostralegus* — Oystercatcher.
Gozara (17); 4-72; total 4. Lake Kargah (1); 23-8-72; 1.

* *Charadrius hiaticula* — Ringed Plover.
Charburjak (25); 22-11-71; 2.

Charadrius leschenaultii — Large Sand Plover.
Lake Kargah (1); 25-8-71; 2.

* *Arenaria interpres* — Turnstone.
Lake Kargah (1); 17-8-72; 1.

Tringa ochropus — Green Sandpiper.
Arghestan (1600 m alt.) (27); 26-6-72; 2. Only known as migrant and winter visitor.

Tringa glareola — Wood Sandpiper.
Lake Chaman (1); 23-7-71; 300 and 25-8-71; 500. The drying out of the lake made a reliable count possible. The lake part with a dense vegetation was already dry and had a stone-hard bottom. Lake Chaman may be a moulting area for this species!

Tringa hypoleucos — Common Sandpiper.
Surobay (1); 11 = 12-71; 3. Nimroz; 11-71; 2. Winter records not known.

Tringa totanus — Redshank.
Bande Amir (19); 11-7-71; 3. Lake Dahla (27); 21-6-72; 2. Breeding only observed in N.E.

* *Tringa erythropus* — Spotted Redshank.
Charburjak (25); 22-11-71; 2.

* *Tringa terek* — Terek Sandpiper.
Lake Kargah (1); 23-7-71 = 25-8-71 and 23-8-72; total 13.

* *Calidris temminckii* — Temminck's Stint.
Surobay (1); 1-9-72; 2.

Calidris alpina — Dunlin.

Lake Kargah (1); 8-10-71; 1. Nimroz; 11-71; total 32. Herat; 4-72; total 20. The Dunlin is a very scarce migrant in Afghanistan, while the Stint is the most common of the *Calidris* species.

* *Calidris ferruginea* — Curlew Sandpiper.

Kabul-river basin; 23-7-71 = 25-8-71 and 17-8-72 = 1-9-72; total 16. Lake Kargah (1); 12-5-72; 2.

Himantopus himantopus — Black-winged Stilt.

Only June data: Lake Chaman (1); 2-6-72; 8. Kandahar (27); 24-6-72; 2. Breeding not yet recorded.

Recurvirostra avosetta — Avocet.

Only June data: Surobay (1); 2-6-72; 7. Breeding known at Abe Estade.

* *Glareola pratincola* — Pratincole.

Abe Estade (22); 9-6-72; 1. Maruf (27); 24-6-72; one or two. Status uncertain.

* *Hydroprogne caspia* — Caspian Tern.

Lake Duranta (3); 28-4-72; 2.

* *Pterocles senegallus* — Spotted Sandgrouse.

Nimroz; 11-71; total 450. Assembled to drink at waterpockets in dry bed of Helmand river. Only one previous record.

Columba leuconota — Snow Pigeon.

Shebar-pass (19); 26-6-72; one pair. First record outside N.E.

Apus apus — Swift.

Kabul-river; last autumn-date: Kabul, 1-10-71; first spring-date: Torkham (3), 10-3-72.

Apus melba — Alpine Swift.

Last autumn-date: Kabul, 24-10-71. First spring-date: Lake Duranta (3), 25-2-72; hundreds, fields still partly snow-covered.

Merops apiaster — European Bee-eater.

Last autumn-date: Surobay (1), 17-9-71; 17. First spring-dates: Herat (17), 4-4-72; 1. Surobay (1): 21-4-72, 10.

Merops superciliosus — Blue-cheeked Bee-eater.

Also in the Kabul-river valley East of Surobay a common breeding species.

Calandrella cinerea — Short-toed Lark.

Nimroz; rather common winter visitor in flocks of 10 up to 30 birds.

Calandrella rufescens — Lesser Short-toed Lark.

Nimroz; common winter visitor in flocks of hundreds. After Crested Lark (flocks of thousands) the most common lark in winter.

Calandrella acutirostris — Hume's Short-toed Lark.

Nimroz, Farah and Kandahar; rather common in winter in small numbers. Nangahar and Kabul; some in winter. More likely to be partly resident instead of only summer visitor as reported by Paludan.

* *Ammomanes cincturus* — Bar-tailed Desert Lark.

Nimroz; 1-72; total 16. Helmand and Kandahar; 2 = 3-72; total 9.

** *Lullula arborea* — Wood Lark.

Nimroz; 1-72; some.

* *Hirundo fluvicola* — Indian Cliff Swallow.

Surobay (1); 31-12-71; 5.

Riparia paludicola — Indian Sand Martin.

Kabul-river East of Surobay; 9-71 and 8-71; common, several hundreds.

Riparia riparia — Sand Martin.

Kabul-river valley East of Surobay; winter; very common, sometimes several thousands (e.g. 7-1-72).

Delichon urbica — House Martin.

Bamyan; common breeder above 3000 m and not scarce as stated by Hüe & Etchécopar.

** *Turdus pilaris* — Fieldfare.

Kabul (1); 15-2-72; 4.

** *Turdus unicolor* — Tickell's Thrush.

Surobay (1); 25-2-72; one male together with Black-throated Thrushes.

** *Saxicola rubetra* — Whinchat.

Kahmard, Sayghan and Center (19); 29-4-72 = 4-5-72; total 29.

** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* — Redstart.

Yawkalang (19); 8-5-72; 1 male; Black Redstarts around.

Phoenicurus erythronotus — Eversmann's Redstart.

Surobay, Kabul (1); 1 = 2-72; total 21, also in snow-covered areas.

** *Erithacus rubecula* — Robin.

Maywand; (27); 29-3-72; 1.

* *Prinia criniger* — Brown Hill Warbler.

Kang (25); 20-11-71; 2.

Lanius minor — Lesser Grey Shrike.

Arghandab (28); 17-6-72; 1. Arghestan (27); 24 = 26-6-72; 5. Bamyan (19); 9 = 12-7-72; 4. Panjaw, Waras (19); 3 = 5-8-72; 42. Breeding recorded from the North only (Hüe & Etchécopar).

* *Lanius senator* — Woodchat Shrike.

Girisk (26); 11-2-72; 1.

Lanius vittatus — Bay-backed Shrike.

Surobay (1); 6-72; two breeding cases, minimum. Arghandab (28); 6-72; rather common breeder in two side valleys of Arghandab river.

Leucosticte brandti — Brandt's Rosy Finch.

Shahidan (19) (2900 m alt.); 5-5-72; 7. Hajigak (19); 7-8-72; 6. Not yet recorded outside N.E.

Leucosticte nemoricola — Hodgson's Rosy Finch.

Surobay (1); 25-2-72; 38. Yakawlang (Sadbark-pass, 3200 m); 7-8-72; 4. Not yet recorded outside N.E.

Emberiza bruniceps — Red-headed Bunting.

Shahjoi, Arghandab (28); 6-72; common in small valleys, several hundreds.

Yakawlang, Waras, Panjaw (19); 1 = 6-8-72; abundant, flocks of hundreds mixed with House and Tree Sparrows.

** *Emberiza cineracea* — Masked Bunting.

Surobay (1); 26-1-72; 2.

** *Emberiza pusilla* — Little Bunting.

Lokhi (25); 14-11-71; 1 male. Surobay (1); 25-12-71; 1 male, 31-12-71; 5.

** *Emberiza rustica* — Rustic Bunting.

Surobay (1); 31-12-71; 1 male together with Pine and Rock Buntings.

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5. SAMENVATTING

Ik reisde in Afghanistan ongeveer 40.000 km per auto, jeep, te paard of te voet gedurende mijn verblijf van 1 juli 1971 tot 7 september. Tijdens de tochten werden enige duizenden vogelwaarnemingen gedaan. De waarnemingen die een aanvulling geven op de bestaande recente literatuur over vogels in Afghanistan zijn in dit artikel opgenomen. De voor het eerst in Afghanistan vastgestelde soorten zijn met ** aangegeven.

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