

Short Communication

Preliminary Survey of Breeding Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* in Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge, Southeast Caspian Sea

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A mixed breeding colony of Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* (c. 60 pairs) and European Bee-eater *M. apiaster* (c. 30 pairs) was found in the western Miankaleh Wildlife Refuge (36°20'34"N, 53°04'16"E, study area c. 1 hec.) in August 2005. From 26 selected nests, nestlings were counted, weighed and ringed. These nests consisted of an entrance hole, a tunnel and an enlarged chamber excavated horizontally or with a shallow slope in banks in open and sandy ground. Burrows were 120-310cm long, the average being

180cm and the entrance diameter 7.5cm. In each nest there were two disparate groups of nestlings that were of different average sizes, weights and feather development. We suggest that the clutch comprised two parts laid separately. The average weight of an unfeathered nestling was 50g, whereas fully feathered nestlings weighed 65g. Both parents shared the tunnelling effort or the rebuild of old nests, and the care of and the feeding of the brood.

(*Merops persicus*)

(Meropidae)

(Cramp & Simmons 1988)

(*M. persicus*)

(*Merops apiaster*)

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(*M. orientalis*)



Figure 1. A pair of *Merops persicus* near their nest.



Figure 2. A burrow in sandy ground in Miankaleh.



Figure 3. Measuring the length of nests.

36°20'34"

53°04'16"

(*Carex* sp.)

(Graminae)

GPS

Cowa 20*60

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(Cramp & Simmons 1988)

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REFERENCES

Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. 1988. Handbook of the Birds of Europe, North Africa and Middle East, The Birds of Western Palearctic. Oxford University Press.

Lack, D. 1954. *The Natural Regulation of Animal Numbers*. Oxford University Press, London.

Cramp & Simmons (1988)



Figure 4. Measurements of eggs.

(Cramp & Simmons 1988)

M. p. persicus ()

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(Cramp & Simmons 1988)



Figure 5. Two different ages of unfeathered nestlings.

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(clutch size)
(Lack 1954)

(bigamy)

