

On the diet and population of the Alexandrine Parakeet, *Psittacula eupatria*, in the urban environment of Tehran, Iran

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Abstract. Observations on the Alexandrine Parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*), an alien species, at Keshavarzi Garden, Tehran, during 2000-2003, showed that the preferred food items were seeds of Pine (*Pinus eldarica*), Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), Plane (*Platanus orientalis*), Elm (*Ulmus carpinifolia*), and fruits of Quince (Goldenapple) (*Cydonia oblonga*), Pear (*Pyrus communis*), Kaki (Persimmon) (*Diospyros kaki*). 78% and 59% of pine cones collected from two stations in the garden were certainly cut by *P. eupatria*. An estimation of the number of birds in Tehran gave at least 200 birds, based on a count in selected areas in winter 2003/2004. *P. eupatria* contributed 97% to the population of the two parakeets (*P. eupatria* and *P. krameri*) for some large parks, but only comprises c. 10% of the birds in some aviaries and pet shops.

Kurzfassung. Beobachtungen in den Jahren 2000-2003 an verwilderten Populationen des Alexandersittichs (*Psittacula eupatria*) im Keshavarzi-Park, Teheran, zeigten, dass sich die Art vorwiegend von Samen von Pinien (*Pinus eldarica*), Zypressen (*Cupressus sempervirens*), Platanen (*Platanus orientalis*) und Feldulmen (*Ulmus carpinifolia*) sowie von den Früchten der Quitte (*Cydonia oblonga*), Birne (*Pyrus communis*) und Kaki (*Diospyros kaki*) ernährt. 78% bzw. 59% der Pinienzapfen, die in zwei Stationen innerhalb des Parks gesammelt wurden, wurden mit Sicherheit von *P. eupatria* zumindest angefressen. Basierend auf einer Zählung in ausgewählten Gebieten im Winter 2003/2004 ergab eine Schätzung des Bestandes in Teheran mindestens 200 Vögel. *P. eupatria* macht dabei in den großen Parks 97% der Population der beiden Sittiche (*P. eupatria* und *P. krameri*) aus; in Tiergeschäften ist dagegen der Alexandersittich nur zu 10% vertreten.

Key words. Alexandrine Parakeet, *Psittacula eupatria*, *Psittacula krameri*, alien species, diet, population, Tehran, Middle East.

Introduction

The first record of the Alexandrine Parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*) in Iran is of two specimens on Kharg island, Bushehr province, in the 1970s (SCOTT et al. 1975). MANSOORI (2001) mentioned the occurrence of the species in the Bushehr and Bandar Abbas areas on the Persian Gulf coast. Records in the north of Iran are confined to the Tehran area, where it was observed first by the author at Niavaran Palace in 1997. Twenty-five individuals were recorded in the district of Evin in the early 2000s (KHALEGHIZADEH & SEHHATI 2004), and the species has been seen subsequently on a regular basis. A new record is also documented for Karaj, c. 30 km west of Tehran, in 2003. The recent population increase of the Alexandrine Parakeets in Tehran may be due to a variety of factors, including the abundance of food, abundance of safe nesting and roosting sites, lack of predators and/or persecution, warming of the city environment in winter, or even simply high rates of escape from captivity. In this paper, I studied the population size and the diet of the species in Tehran.