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A continental rendezvous of the Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* in Iran

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The most recent handbooks (Glutz von Blotzheim et al. 1977, Cramp & Simmons 1983) report that the Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (L.) has three main pelagic overwintering areas, the northern European birds migrating to the Arabian Sea. This is evident from the SE-directed recoveries of the birds ringed in Fennoscandia (Fig. 10 in Cramp & Simmons 1983) and from the lack of alternative areas in that main direction. Cramp & Simmons (1983) note that "Overland part of this movement probably (takes place) largely in non-stop flight", and that in the spring migration, in late May, up to 600 000 birds have been observed on Lake Tengiz in Kazakhstan, U.S.S.R. Hagman et al. (1986) mention that the birds are present in the Arabian Sea from late July to the third week of May. We wish to report an observation that may throw light on the general manner and phenology of the migration of phalaropes in its southern part.

On 13 April 1990, we visited Lake Moharlu in Fars, southern Iran, SE of Shiraz, about 120 km inland from the Persian Gulf. In the calm conditions of the forenoon it was easy to see that the central parts of the salt lake, some 8 × 15 km in size but only 50 cm in depth, were filled with swimming birds. With a telescope and reference to some smaller flocks nearby, we concluded that the open-water birds were almost exclusively Red-necked Phalaropes (there were only a few tens of ducks). One part of this bird mass took off when a Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* approached, and we estimated that there were 10 000 birds in this flock alone. Our estimate for the part of the lake visible to us was about 100 000 phalaropes. In the afternoon, a fresh wind arose from the SW and the phalaropes moved in large numbers to the W, seemingly closer to the shore vegetation and protection from the wind.

At the time in question, there were 5–6 weeks left till the main passage of Red-necked Phalaropes in Fennoscandia, and in western Siberia the birds presumably arrive still later. According to Cramp & Simmons (1983) "main spring departures (take place) from Arabian Sea in April". As a feeding flight from the ocean more than 100 km away seems improbable, we assume that this inland occurrence represents an early part of the spring migration. Ringing recoveries show rates of movement towards the SE of 1750 km in 5 days and 2950 km in 14 days. Therefore we assume that the Red-necked Phalaropes regularly spend a few weeks on this and other Iranian salt lakes (there are two very large ones east of Lake Moharlu). Our observation emphasizes the conservation value of the salt lakes.

Selostus: **Vesipääskyn mantereinen viivähdyspaikka Etelä-Iranissa**

Etelä-Iranissa, Shirazin itäpuolella olevalla Moharlun suolajärvellä havaittiin 13.4.1990 n. 100 000 vesipääskyä. Linnut olivat ilmeisesti peräisin Arabian meren pelagiselta talvehtimisalueelta ja matkalla Fennoskandiaan tai Länsi-Siperiaan. Ajankohdasta päätellen vesipääskyt viipyvät järvellä kohtalaisen pitkään; tällaisia mantereisia viipymispaikkoja ei liene havaittu aikaisemmin. Havainto korostaa suolajärvien suojeluarvoa.

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Group of Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica* preparing for the autumn migration

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In this report I describe presumably seldom observed group behaviour of the Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*, which proved to be associated with migration.

A group of Black-throated Divers caught my attention on Lake Ala-Kivijärvi in Luumäki, SE Finland (Finnish national grid 676:53) on 15 September 1990 at about 09.30. Such gatherings are not unusual in late summer. In this case, however, there was no typical wide arc of fishing birds chasing and diving after their catch, but a compact group of eleven individuals. It was precisely this formation and the unusual bustle within the group which first surprised me and kept me by the window watching the group. As the lake was completely calm, the conditions for observation with binoculars were ideal. The movements of individual birds could be clearly seen at a distance of about 100–150 m.

The group was moderately dense and comparatively indefinite at the outset. The age of the group members could be easily determined from the posture of their heads. The heads of the peacefully behaving adults rose over the numerous, restlessly moving heads of the juveniles, which did not keep their necks erect. The adult birds,