


The Atlas of Mammals of Iran. Mahmoud Karami, Taher Ghadirian and Kaveh Faizolahi. 2016. Iran Department of the Environment, Tehran. 292 pp.

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Iran is a country with a very rich mammal fauna, including such iconic species as the Asiatic cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* (Griffith), the Persian leopard *Panthera pardus saxicolor* Pocock, the Mesopotamian fallow deer *Dama mesopotamica* (Brooke), and the Asiatic wild ass *Equus hemionus* Pallas. There are no less than eight species of cat (Felidae) living in Iran today, and until recently there were even two more (the Caspian tiger *Panthera tigris virgata* (Illiger) and the Asiatic lion *Panthera leo persica* (Meyer)). For comparison, the whole European continent harbours a mere three felids.

A recent atlas now adds to our knowledge on this spectacular mammalian line-up and its dissemination. The book, also available as a pdf, by Karami, Ghadirian and Faizolahi lists 183 terrestrial and 16 aquatic species of mammals (including the Caspian tiger and Asiatic lion), from the dugong and the Caspian seal *Pusa caspica* (Gmelin) to whales and dolphins, bats (Chiroptera) and rodents (Rodentia), from Perissodactyla to Lagomorpha and from Carnivora to Chiroptera.

The atlas starts with an extended introduction on the book itself, mammals in general and different habitats. Unfortunately, it is in Farsi, and the English introduction is much shorter than the one in Farsi. However, while again the introductions to the different higher taxa (Erinaceomorpha, Soricomorpha, Chiroptera, Carnivora, Cetacea, Sirenia, Perissodactyla, Artiodactyla, Rodentia and Lagomorpha) are only in Farsi, each species account of one page is given in both Farsi and English. There is a distribution map for each species, and the book boasts some stunning wildlife photography throughout. There is at least one photograph for almost every single species

listed, the exceptions being some small mammals and dolphins. It should be particularly emphasised that many of the bat and rodent photographs are excellent, which is remarkable because it is often much harder to get good shots of these species than of the iconic large mammals.

The species entries are concise and all follow the same structure, with paragraphs on External Features; Biological Features; Habitat, Distribution and Abundance; and Conservation Status. The latter as well as size (relative to humans) and habitat are also shown by means of symbols, making this information accessible with a single glance. That said, there are some inconsistencies or errors here: The tiger is given the Red List sign of Least Concern, which is of course wrong – as a species, it is Endangered, and the Caspian tiger is Extinct (even if it is merged with the Siberian subspecies, it would not be LC). Some discrepancies between the text on conservation status and the symbol at the top of the page can also be found in other species, e.g. the Red deer *Cervus elaphus* Linnaeus.

Taxonomy at the species level is a contentious matter and necessarily involves an element of arbitrariness, which explains discrepancies between the present atlas and a more recent review on Iranian mammals that was co-authored by one of the three atlas authors (Yusefi et al. 2019). Yusefi et al. (2019), only considering terrestrial mammals, list 192 species, while the present atlas includes 183 terrestrial species. Both, however, agree in classifying the Mesopotamian fallow deer as a distinct species (*Dama mesopotamica*), rather than as a subspecies of *D. dama*. Together, these two publications are the most up-to-date reviews on Iranian mammals.

I enjoyed reading and browsing through the atlas, and I salute what I believe is a very good job. The only wishes for the next edition would be to translate the complete Farsi text into English and to implement citations in the running text, which would greatly enhance the value of the atlas as a reference for practical use.

References

- Yusefi, G. H., Faizolahi, K., Darvish, J., Safi, K. and Brito, J. C. (2019). The species diversity, distribution, and conservation status of the terrestrial mammals of Iran. *Journal of Mammalogy*, 100 (1): 55–71.
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