

Naqadeh wetlands host up to 100,000 migratory birds annually

Iranica Desk

The wetlands of Naqadeh in West Azarbaijan Province, a vital ecological hub in Iran's northwestern region, annually host between 50,000 and 100,000 native and migratory birds during autumn and winter, announced Akbar Qaemi, head of the city's Department of Environment. This influx is drawn to the area's unique environment, characterized by a continental climate with cold, snowy winters and relatively mild summers. The seasonal precipitation, particularly snowmelt from surrounding highlands, is crucial for sustaining the region's network of wetlands, which serve as essen-

tial oases along major migration flyways.

Referring to the satisfactory water levels this year, Qaemi recalled that last season, the wetlands provided refuge for approximately 15,000 flamingos. "Various species of waterfowl and shorebirds choose these wetland shores and water bodies for both temporary stopovers and permanent residence," he added, according to a report by chtn.ir.

While this year's conditions have improved, Qaemi emphasized the ongoing vulnerability of the ecosystem. "Environmental efforts are squarely focused on legally securing the wetlands' water rights," he stated, "but these measures must

be underpinned by consistent and adequate rainfall."

Highlighting recent conservation work, Qaemi noted the completion of dredging over eight kilometers of channels leading to the Dargah Sangi Wetland and several other sites this year, aimed at improving water flow and habitat quality. Nevertheless, significant challenges persist. The head of the Department of Environment identified insufficient rainfall — a symptom of broader climatic variability and drought cycles impacting the region — and a critical shortage of environmental patrol officers as the primary obstacles to the long-term protection and management of these invaluable natural assets.



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North Khorasan's museums feature 7,400 artifacts

Iranica Desk

About 7,400 historical artifacts are housed in the storage facilities of museums across North Khorasan Province. In an interview with ISNA, Ali Akbar Vahdati, the Head of the Historical Artifact Preservation and Restoration Group at the North Khorasan Province's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization, elaborated on museum management. He emphasized that a local museum should not be a static entity. Its aesthetic presentation must evolve across different periods, artifacts should not remain permanently in place, and a regular rotation of items should be implemented to keep



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the exhibits dynamic.

"Not every discovered artifact can be put on public display," Vahdati added.

"For instance, 3,750 coins unearthed during excavations in the province include many similar specimens. Therefore, a

single representative coin from such a group is selected and allocated for exhibition in the museum."

Highlighting the defining characteristic of the province's museums, he stated that their most important feature is the presentation of North Khorasan Province's documented history. He continued that North Khorasan has been one of the provinces subjected to the most extensive archaeological excavations and studies. Consequently, the artifacts stored in the museums' repositories belong to various historical periods and are indigenous to this region.

Regarding the Museum of Documents and Manuscripts, he noted,

"The majority of holdings in this museum, ranging from endowment deeds (Vagnameh) and peace treaties (Solhnameh) to sale contracts (Mobaya'eh Nameh), originate from within the province itself." Discussing the chronological range of the stored collections, Vahdati explained, "The oldest artifacts currently in the provincial museum storage date back to the Neolithic period. This era marks humanity's first steps towards communal living, transitioning from a nomadic life of cave-dwelling and hunting to settled village life and agriculture."

"Artifacts from this period have been recovered from sites such as Khan Hill in Samalqan and Pahlavan Hill in Jajarm," he detailed.

"Subsequent discoveries include items from the Chalcolithic (Copper-Stone) period, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age." Vahdati confirmed that artifacts from all historical epochs are represented in the province's museums.

"During recent surveys, a series of stone tools were discovered in the province. Preliminary analysis suggests they may belong to the Epipaleolithic period, which would make them approximately 50,000 years older than the Neolithic artifacts. This classification, however, is still awaiting final confirmation."

He noted that plans are now being made to conduct a formal archaeological excavation at a cave site located in Samalqan.

Reading Room

Introduction to the book:

The Architect and Architecture in the Social History of Iran

Patrons, builders, social order

The book "The Architect and Architecture in the Social History of Iran," authored by Gholamreza Jamal al-Din, was published in 2023 by Rozaneh Publications. This research work, employing a social history approach, examines and analyzes lesser-discussed aspects of the social status of the architect and the esteem and concept of architecture in Islamic-era Iran. The primary goal of the book is to move beyond merely descriptive historiography of architectural works and toward a more precise understanding of the roles, status, authority, and limitations of both the creators and patrons of these works within their social context.

In an interview with IBNA, the author states that the main motivation for writing this book was a sense of research gap in this field. Although historical texts from the Islamic period frequently mention diverse titles such as Me'mar (architect), Mohandis (engineer), Banna (builder), Ostadkar (master craftsman), and Sanna'tgar (artisan), researchers in Iranian architectural history have paid little attention to the actual share, role, and real position of these groups

in the complex process of creating an architectural work. This neglect is particularly evident concerning professional hierarchies, scopes of authority, and supervision over architects' work.

Jamal al-Din believes that analysis without attention to this social standing has led to incorrect generalizations and theoretical confusion. Citing sources that report on guilds and professions, he demonstrates that architects and engineers were not a uniform or homogeneous group. In fact, during a given historical period, several groups with different social statuses — from court-affiliated masters to urban guild-based artisans — could exist, playing varied roles depending on their connections to the government and political conditions.

The book is organized into four main discourses:

The social status of the architect-engineer: This discourse analyzes the different classes and groups of architects, their varying social statuses, and consequently, their authority and limitations in the design and construction process. It also briefly touches on the role of

governmental patrons and supervisors who oversaw the work of urban and guild-affiliated architects.

The esteem of architecture in Islamic texts: The focus of second chapter is examining the concept and value of architecture, development, and urbanization (Omran va Abadi) in the thought of writers and historians of the Islamic era. It analyzes the importance that architecture held for a government and society, as well as the criteria and components that historians considered and how they recorded them when describing architectural works from different periods.

Architecture in the context of Sufism and Fotovat (spiritual chivalry): This discourse examines the social structure of Sufism in Iranian history. It explores the descriptions and reports in various mystical texts regarding the group and social structure of Sufism, and investigates the architecture of Khanqahs (Sufi lodges) and related buildings. Following this, it briefly considers the status of shrines (Mazar) and pilgrimage (Ziyarat) based on historical texts.

Female patrons and founders: The fourth and final discourse of the

book focuses on the status of female patrons and supporters. It offers a look at women's entry into the field of architecture and the active role they played in the financial and spiritual patronage of architectural works. Reports dedicated to women in various books from the Islamic period, which speak of their services and support in the realm of architecture, can bring a fresh perspective to architectural historiography.

In general, the book attempts to answer fundamental questions such as: What social status and rank did the architect have in Iran's social history, and what responsibilities did they undertake in erecting architectural works? What structure did the guild of architects have in Iranian history, and who were their supervisors? What individuals or groups were the patrons and founders of architectural works? What descriptions and accounts of architects and their conditions are found in historical texts? And what esteem and prestige did the very act of architecture hold?

The process from starting to write to publishing the book took about ten years. The content originated from

notes and articles written and published between 2014 and 2016. It was intended for publication at that time but, for various reasons, was not completed until 2023. However, due to the passage of time and the evolution of the author's perspective on the subjects, the material was repeatedly reviewed, refined, and revised. In fact, the writing process spanned approximately a decade.

