

Fishkhaboor (IQ001)

Dohuk – 37.111944°N 42.38333°E

IBA Criteria: **A4ii**

IPA Criteria: **A4, B1 and C**

Area: **4179 ha** - Altitude: **329-410 m**

Ecoregion: **Eastern Mediterranean
Conifer-Sclerophyllous-Broadleaf
Forest (PA1207)**

Status: **Unprotected**



Site Description: This site consists of foothills and lowlands including a narrow riparian strip along the Tigris and Fishkhaboor (Khabour) Rivers. A pontoon bridge and a bridge cross the river approximately 6.3 km downstream of the point where the Tigris River enters Iraq, which allows access to the Syrian border. This is the only KBA site that falls within the Iraqi portion of the Eastern Mediterranean Ecoregion (PA1207) as defined by the World Wildlife Fund, however Fishkhaboor

does not clearly show the key features associated with this ecoregion. The main habitat here is Riverine Forest of the Plains. The site is located in the moist steppe zone, and the geology is sandstone, clay, and sandy gravels and the soil type is sandy clay. There are extensive gravel mining operations throughout the area on the Tigris and Fishkhaboor Rivers. Two sub-sites were visited in this area.



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Important Bird Area Criteria	Observations made 2008-2010.	
A4ii. 1% or more of global population of a congregatory seabird or terrestrial species	Breeding	Wintering/Passage
Dead Sea Sparrow <i>Passer moabiticus</i> (Resident/summer visitor)	1400 (count 2008) (1.5% of regional population)	
Important Plant Area Criteria		
A4. Site contains national endemic, near endemic, regional endemic and/or regional range-restricted species or infraspecific taxa	One nationally rare species (<i>Typha lugdunensis</i>) was found in this site.	
B1. Site is a particularly species-rich example of defined habitat type	Riverine Forest of the Plains (Al-Ahrash) habitat type.	
C. The site is identified as an outstanding example of a globally or regionally threatened habitat type.	This site represents a good example of the habitat type: Riverine Forest of the Plain (Al-Ahrash) habitat type, which extends throughout the country along the Tigris-Euphrates River Basins and their tributaries. Tigris-Euphrates riparian woodland is globally unique and threatened by developments and human activities along these rivers and habitats. The threats include gravel mining, cutting woodlands for different uses, and the residential and agricultural development along the rivers.	

Additional Important Bird Observations: During the survey a total of 36 species were recorded. The site held breeding populations of one Mediterranean, two Irano-Turanian and one Sahara-Sindian biome-restricted species but these did not trigger inclusion under criterion A3.

Other Important Fauna: Mammal data were collected in summer 2010. According to local interviews, the significant

mammals seen at the site include Grey Wolf *Canis lupus*, and Golden Jackal *Canis aureus*. Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra* (Near Threatened) tracks were found along the river.

Fish: *Alburnus mossulensis*, *Cyprinion kais*, *C. macrostomum*, *Garra rufa*, and *Liza abu* were recorded in 2008.

Additional Plant & Habitat Information: Two species, *Centaurea pseudosinaica* and *Brassica kaber*, were recorded in Iraq for the first time at this site.

Conservation Issues: Gravel mining along both the Fishkhaboor and Tigris Rivers has caused damage to in-stream habitats and riparian areas and transportation, especially road building in areas where most gravel mining occurs is a very high threat. This site is likely to be highly impacted by major dam construction on-going in Turkey as well. Border police reported

hunting in the area and minefields are found along the Iraqi-Turkish border in areas near Tuwan such as Cheae Bekher and Ware Smaili. Sewage from the city of Zakho and other villages upstream also impact both rivers.

Recommendations: This site adjoins a Turkish IBA site (Cizre ve Silopi, TK180) and, with additional cooperation and coordination from Syria, represents a unique opportunity to develop a tri-nation "Peace Park" that could protect the biodiversity here for all three countries. A proper land use management scheme should

be developed that addresses the many threats, with gravel mining and road construction being primary issues. As this is a sensitive border area for all three countries, significant cooperation and coordination is required for any future survey and conservation work.

