

Gasr Muhaiwir (AN6), (IBA 012)



Surveyed in summer 2009, and in winter and summer 2010

Admin Area: Anbar

Coordinates: N 33°32'13.94"E 41° 4'20.77"

Area: 1268 ha

Altitude: 42 m

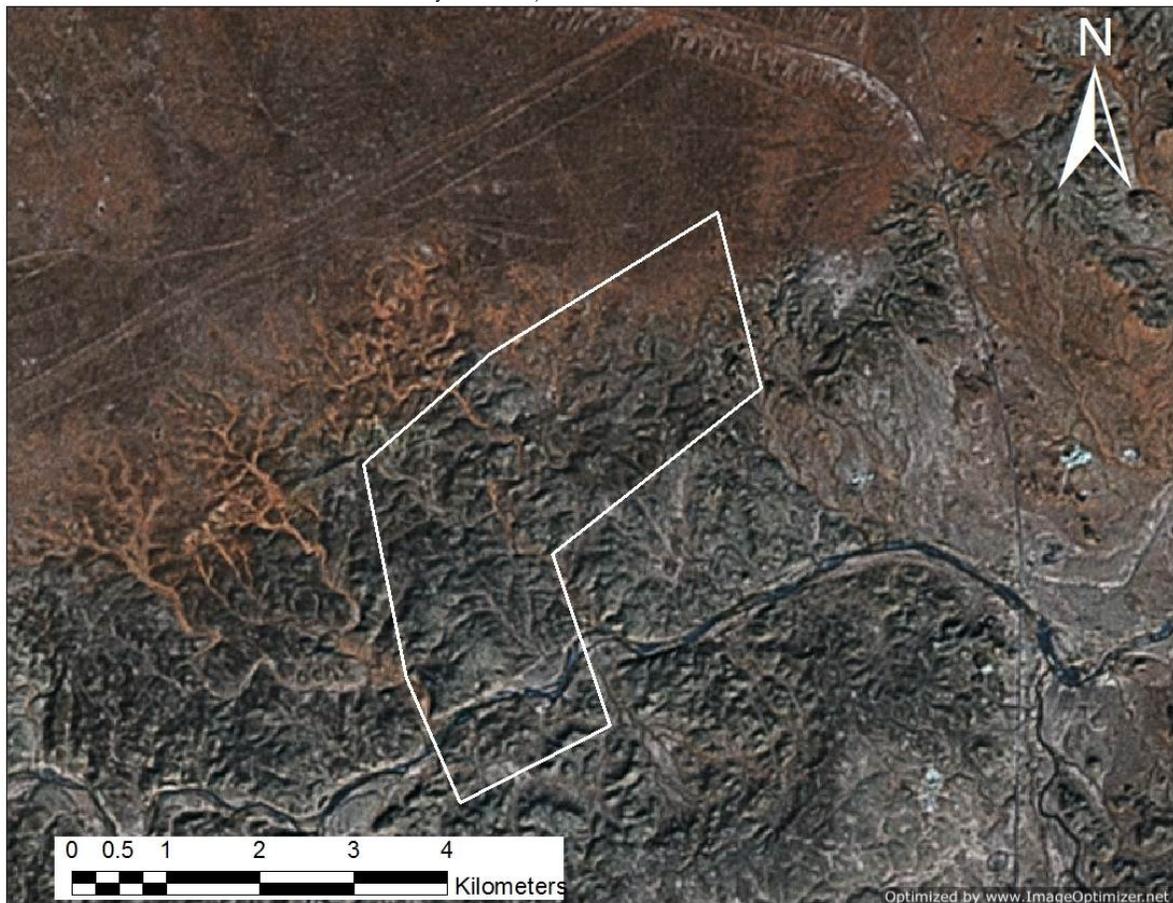
KBA Criteria: Not assessed

IPA Criteria: Not assessed

Status: Unprotected

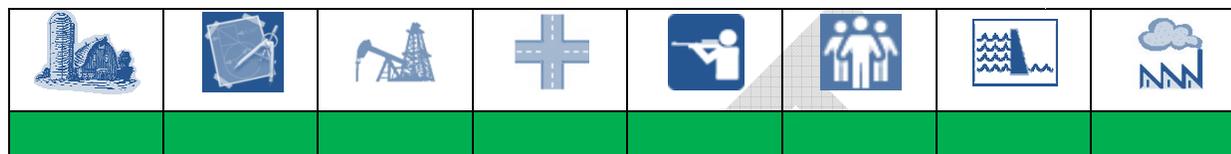
Ecoregion: Mesopotamian Shrub Desert (PA1320)

Directional information: This site is located to the northwest of Ramadi the capital of Anbar province on the eastern side of the main Highway road linking Ramadi to Rutba near Taliha, also it can be reached from Hit and Kubaissa toward the valley of Amij.





General landscape in the vicinity of Gasir Muhaiwir (Photo by Omar F. Al-Sheikhly, 2009)



Site Description: Gasr Muhaiwir was originally listed as an IBA site (IBA012) by Evans (1994). It is an ancient site of biological and historical importance located in the Western Iraqi desert. It is known for the castle-like ruins, from which the site name is derived, located on the eastern edge of Wadi Horan, the main valley that leads towards the western desert and the Euphrates River flood plain. The area was also used as a field base by British forces participating in the Arabian Revolution of 1916 against the Ottoman Empire and the tracks of the military caravans remain to the present day.

The site is dominated by desert and semi-desert steppes, with a variety of typical desert vegetation. In the distance, the rocky valleys and limestone slopes of the Wadi Horan can be clearly seen, a landmark used by Bedouins as a guidepost during desert navigation. Seasonal pools of ground and rainwater are scattered throughout the site, which are difficult to locate during the winter and are a popular resting point for migrant birds. The extreme temperatures at this site limit the number of species it can harbor - while summer days are extremely hot, the temperature gradually drops at night to eventually reach freezing levels during the winter.

Important Bird Observations: During the surveys a total of ninespecies were recorded. In addition the site had breeding populations of four Sahara-Sindian Desert biome-restricted species (Table xx) but these did not trigger inclusion under criterionA3.

Other Important Fauna: Only the Egyptian spiny-tailed Lizard *Uromastyx aegyptia* was observed.

Plants& Habitats: Desert and semi-desert vegetation occurs, consisting mainly of *Artemisia*, *Astragalus*, *Achillea*, *Acacia* and *Albagi* species.

Conservation Issues: No serious threats were identified. The site has seen very little human activity in recent decades and appears to retain its original ecologyand can be considered a unique example of desert habitat. The KBA summer survey conducted on 19 May 2009 was considered the first field visit to this IBA since the 1980s, with this report constituting the first up-to-date written documentation of the site's biological status.

Recommendations: The site is located near Wadi Huaran-Al Hussayniyah KBA (AN4) and shares a similar habitat and security concerns thus the same conservation issues and recommendations regarding site AN4 should be applied to this site as well.