

Mosul Lake (IQ009)

Dohuk & Nineveh – 36.741111°N
42.786111°E

IBA Criteria: **A1 and A4i**

Area: **48128 ha** - Altitude: **287-380 m**
Ecoregion: **Middle East Steppe**
(PA0812)
Status: **Unprotected**



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Site Description: This site consists of a large freshwater lake reservoir created by the Mosul Dam southwest of Dohuk city. This earthen embankment dam was completed in 1984 but has been under constant repair as it is built upon gypsum, a material that dissolves in water. A US Army Corps of Engineers report (Paley, 2007) stated that due to the possibility of the foundation eroding, “Mosul Dam is the most dangerous dam in the world.”

Due to security concerns, the survey focused on the eastern (Dohuk Governorate) side of the lake in a limited area. The

area around the lake here consists of moist steppe habitat with approximately 50% non-vegetated (similar habitat is likely on the western side of the lake). The features of area were a gentle slope and sandy clay soils and the geology is a mix of siltstone and sandstone.

There is little human activity other than gravel mining, wheat and barley farming, and some net fishing on the lake. Access to the survey area was from a water station that serves Dohuk City.

Important Bird Area Criteria	Observations made 2007-2010.	
A1. Globally threatened species	Breeding	Wintering/ Passage
Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> (Summer visitor)	7-15 pairs (counts 2009-2010)	
A4i. 1% or more of biogeographical population of a congregatory waterbird species	Breeding	Wintering/ Passage
Ruddy Shelduck <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i> (Winter visitor)		1200-9000 (counts); (2.4%-18% of regional population)
Collared Pratincole <i>Glareola pratincola</i> (Summer visitor)	500-1200 (counts 2008 and 2010); (0.5%-1.2% of regional population)	

Additional Important Bird Observations: During the 2007-2010 surveys, 87 species were observed. European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (Near Threatened) was breeding and Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (Vulnerable) occurred in winter, but at levels that did not meet IBA criteria. In winter the site held up to 2500 of the *armenicus* race of Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*.

Other Important Fauna: Data were only collected for fish in 2007 and 2008, when 14 species were reported. Significant species, according to Coad (2010), were: *Acanthobrama*

marmid, *Barbus grypus*, *Carassius auratus*, *Cyprinion kais*, *Cyprinion macrostomum*, *Cyprinus carpio*, *Heteropneustes fossilis*, *Liza abu*, *Luciobarbus esocinus*, *L. xanthopterus*, and *Silurus triostegus*.

Conservation Issues: The Mosul Dam is under constant maintenance. The proposed solution for the dam is both expensive and untried. Agriculture and livestock production/ grazing, gravel mining, and fishing are have significant impacts on Mosul Lake. In addition, road development and human disturbance due to boat, auto and tractor movement in the

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area were also considered high. Runoff from the surrounding lands also means that pollution due to the accumulation of trash and other pollutants is a problem as well.

Recommendations: It is imperative that a long-term, viable solution is found to address the stability of Mosul Dam.

All potential solutions, including dam removal, should be considered to determine what is most cost effective. Regardless of the final actions, biodiversity protection should be taken into account as the site currently supports several important species. Regulations and controls regarding agriculture and grazing, fishing and boating (and other human disturbance) in and around the lake need to be implemented, but some of this will largely be dependent on improved security.

