

## Sakran Mountain (IQ019)

Erbil–36.573889°N 44.986111°E

KBA Criteria: **V**

IPA Criteria: **A4, B1 and B2b**

Area: **6001ha** - Altitude: **1560- 3587 m**

Ecoregion: **Zagros Mountains Forest**

**Steppe (PA0446)**

Status: **Unprotected**



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**Site Description:** This mountainous area is part of the Qandil Range (a part of the Zagros Range) and is located in Choman District. The highest peak, Haji Ibrahim, reaches 3587 m and is surrounded by several other mountains, including Mt. Sakran to the south, Mt. Halgurd to the west and Mt. Gardamn to the north. The mountain peaks are covered in snow year-round. There are several streams and small rivers throughout the area. The mountain contains oak woodlands, mountain riverine forest and thorn-cushion vegetation (sub alpine area)

habitats. The geology is sedimentary limestone, and the soil type is sandy clay.

Villages include Weza, Sakran, Basan, Rezi and Ene. Its location close to the Iranian border means visits must be coordinated with the local government. It still has many minefields. This area has been locally proposed for consideration as a National Park.

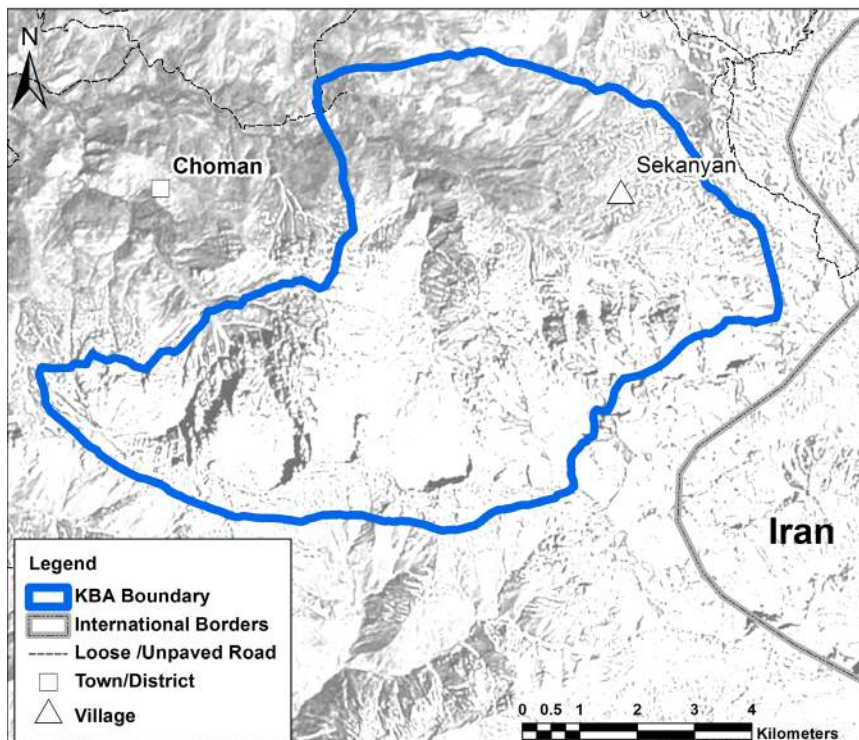
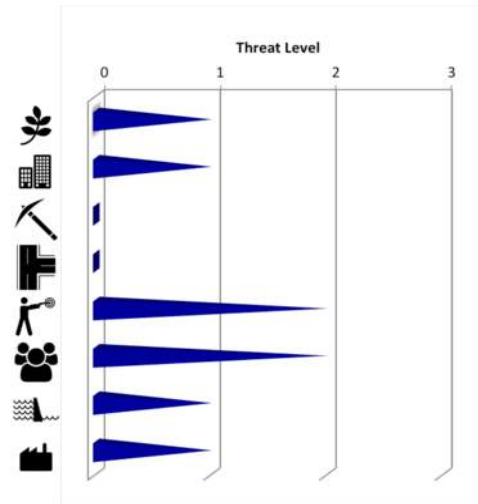
Key Biodiversity Area	Notes
<b>V. Vulnerability Criteria: Presence of Critically Endangered and Endangered species – presence of a single individual or Vulnerable species– 30 individuals or 10 pairs.</b>	
<i>Capra aegagrus</i>	Reported by locals. No direct observation were made by the team.
<i>Neuregus crocatus</i>	Recorded in 2009
<b>Important Plant Area Criteria</b>	
<b>A4. Site contains national endemic, near endemic, regional endemic and/or regional range restricted species or infraspecific taxa</b>	
<b>Note: *historically recorded; **historically recorded and seen on recent surveys</b>	
Endemics noted for this site include: * <i>Alyssum singarense</i> , <i>Astragalus helgurdensis</i> , * <i>Centaurea elegantissima</i> , ** <i>Cosinia carduchorum</i> , ** <i>C. kurdica</i> , * <i>Delphinium micranthum</i> , ** <i>Leutea rechingeri</i> , <i>Onosma albo-roseum</i> var. <i>macrocalycinum</i> , * <i>Scilla kurdistanica</i> , and <i>Tulipa kurdica</i> Near endemics for this site are: * <i>Acantholimon blacklockii</i> , * <i>Bunium cornigerum</i> , * <i>Centaurea gigantea</i> , * <i>Cousinia leptolepis</i> , * <i>Carex iraqensis</i> , * <i>Rosularia rechingeri</i> , * <i>Tragopogon bornmuelleri</i> , * <i>Trigonosciadium viscidulum</i> , * <i>Veronica davisii</i> , and * <i>Ziziphora clinopodioides</i> subsp. <i>kurdica</i> Nationally rare species are: <i>Aristolochia paecilantha</i> and <i>Fibigia suffroticosa</i>	
<b>B1. Site is a particularly species-rich example of defined habitat type</b>	
Mountain Forest Vegetation- Oak Forest- Medium Zone & Highest Zone habitat type; Mountain Forest Vegetation- Thorn- Cushion Vegetation habitat type and Mountain Forest Vegetation- Mountain Riverine Forest habitat type	
<b>B2b. The site is a refuge for: biogeographically and bioclimatically restricted plants to 'retreat to' in the face of global climate change.</b>	
This is a good example of the Thorn-Cushion Vegetation habitat type. The top of mountain can work as refugia for these Thorn-Cushion plants. Also some gorges/cliffs in the mountain can provide refuge for the Oak forests and associated plants in case of climate change.	

**Additional Important Bird Observations:** During the surveys a total of 39 species were recorded. European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (Near Threatened) was breeding but in sub-IBA-threshold numbers; in addition the site held breeding populations of four Irano-Turanian and two Mediterranean biome-restricted species, but this did not trigger inclusion under criterion A3. Eastern Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza semenowi* (Near Threatened) was also found breeding.

**Other Important Fauna:** Based on statements by locals, important mammal species can be found in good numbers at Sakran Mountain, including Wild Goat *Capra aegagrus* (Vulnerable), Striped Hyena *Hyaena hyaena* (Near Threatened), and Syrian Brown Bear *Ursus arctos syriacus*. Based on interviews, hunting is practiced intensively here. It was claimed that 22 Wild Goats had been hunted in 2009. Kurdistan Viper *Montivipera raddei kurdistanica* (Near Threatened), a subspecies restricted to the mountains of Kurdistan, is also found. In Iraq, this species is known to occur only in a small region of the northeast (Alessandrini, 2010).

**Additional Plant & Habitat Information:** This site contains a good population of *Allium akaka*, *Crataegus azarolus*, and *Rumex ribes*, which are economically important plants harvested by locals to sell as food.

**Conservation Issues:** The most critical threats are hunting and the prevalence of minefields, which remain a danger to humans and wildlife. That said, the moderately disturbed ecological condition of this site, combined with the presence of many rare and endemic plants, make this site a strong candidate for protected status (local government efforts have already been made towards the establishment of a park that covers portions of this area).



**Recommendations:** It is strongly recommended that all mines be removed from the site and efforts strengthened to control and monitor hunting in the area. In the summer of 2012, a group of locals and internationals came together to form the Sakran-Halgurd National Park Committee, with the proposal to develop this area (but also parts of Halgurd Mountain (IQ017) and Hagi Omran (IQ018) areas) into a national park. For its part, in 2014 the National Protected Area Committee (NPAC) has identified Sakran Mountain as one of its proposed protected areas. Staff have already been hired for the park and efforts to protect the area continue to be pursued with the support of the Erbil Governorate. Further environmental surveys and management actions should also take place, including (but not limited to) additional botanical and fauna surveys, awareness-raising activities, socio-economic surveys, protection of cultural sites and resolution to any land ownership issues related to the park development.