

Wadi Horan - Al Hussayniyah (AN4)



Surveyed in summer 2009 and 2010

Admin Area: Anbar

Coordinates: N 33° 25', E41° 1'

Area: 816 ha

Altitude: 453 m

KBA Criteria: Not assessed

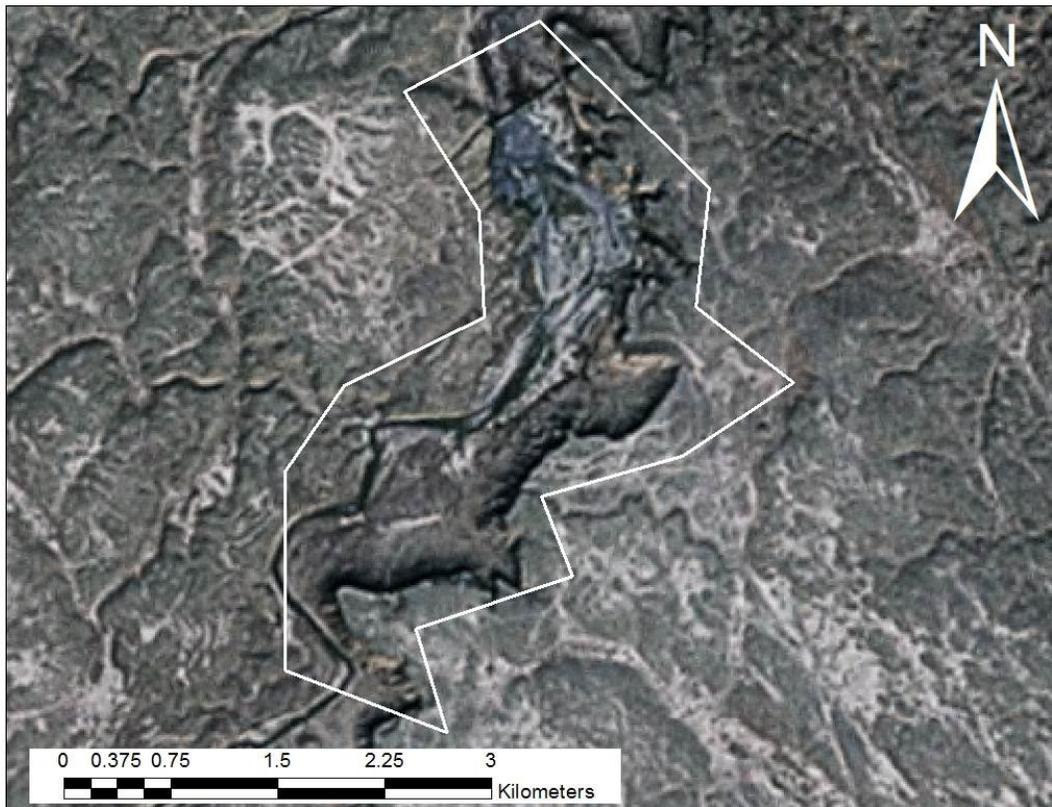
IBA Criteria: A1

IPA Criteria: Not assessed

Status: Unprotected

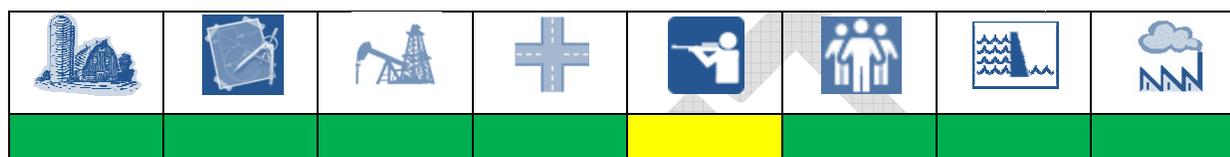
Ecoregion: Mesopotamian Shrub Desert
(PA1320)

Directional information: The site is situated to the northwest of Ramadi, on the eastern side of the main highway linking Ramadi to Rutba near Tilaha, and on the eastern side of the old highway that was used by caravans travelling to Syria. It can also be reached from Kubasa toward the Wadi of Amij.





General landscape of Wadi Horan (Photo by Omar F. Al-Sheikhly, 2009)



Site Description: The site consists of two large desert wadis in Western Iraq and the area between them. Wadi Horan, the larger of the two valleys, extends west towards Saudi Arabia and Wadi Amij extends northeast toward Kubasa Township near Hit. The dominant habitats are arid desert and semi-desert with halophytic vegetation and limestone hillsides with occasional cliff faces. There is a seasonal pool, called the Wahatt Horan or Hussaninyatt Wadi Horan. Hussaninyatt is a dam constructed by the Iraq government during the 1990s to collect runoff from the surrounding hills during the rainy season for grazing cattle herds and Bedouin caravans passing through during the hot season. The ancient highlands of Wadi Horan were formed by erosion in a previous geological age, and are a typical Iraqi desert ecosystem. Dry streambeds extend into the valley toward the survey site, forming water pathways during the spring and harboring grassy vegetation in the middle of the desert. They also provide good grazing areas and fresh grass for Bedouin camels. The tracks of large herds of camels and sheep with Bedouin shepherds were observed at the site.

Important Bird Area Criteria		
A1. Globally threatened species		
	Breeding	Wintering/ Passage
Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> (Summer visitor)	2 pairs (2009)	

Additional Important Bird Observations: During the surveys a total of 31 species was recorded. The site had breeding populations of four Sahara-Sindian Desert biome-restricted species (Table xx) but these did not trigger inclusion under criterion A3.

Other Important Fauna: Local reports that *Canis lupus* have attacked cattle herds and one Rüppell's Sand Fox *Vulpes rueppelli* was observed. Hunters report that Arabian Sand Gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa marica* are found in the area. Reptile observations included: Giant fringe-toed Lizard *Acanthodactylus grandis*, Egyptian Spiny-tailed Lizard *Uromastyx aegyptia* and Arabian horned viper *Cerastes gasperettii*.

Plants & Habitats: Mainly desert and semi-desert shrubs and vegetation, consisting largely of *Artemisia* sp., *Astragalus* sp., *Achillea* sp., *Acacia* sp. and *Albaga* species.

Conservation Issues: Trapping of birds of prey, mainly falcons such as migrant Saker falcon *Falco cherrug* and Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii* and hunting, mainly of Arabian Sand Gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa*

marica, are the main threats. The site serves as an excellent natural water source for nomadic grazing camels, cattle, and other domestic animals while the surrounding cliffs of Wadi Horan constitute a good breeding ground for resident raptors, though the latter may be affected by large gatherings of caravans collecting water and supplies for days at a time. These activities began in the 1980s with the construction of the Hussaninyatt but do not have a high impact on the site.

Recommendations: Building awareness of and implementing Iraqi hunting laws will help to improve wildlife and bird populations of the area. More detailed field surveys are strongly recommended. The site is located deep in the western Anbar desert and is frequently patrolled by both the military and tribal groups. The distance from any human settlement with paved roads and numerous critical security concerns makes this one of the most dangerous KBA sites visited. As a consequence, close co-ordination with relevant authorities is vital for access and surveys.

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