

# An annotated checklist of the birds of Iraq

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This checklist summarises the status of birds recorded in Iraq up to January 2012. It is based on an extensive review of the ornithological literature, the results of seven years of surveys throughout the country by Nature Iraq and comments received following the publication of our provisional checklist (Porter *et al* 2010). A further stimulus for the preparation of this checklist was the publication of a field guide to the birds of Iraq in Arabic (Salim *et al* 2006).

During the last century many of the ornithological advances were made by non-Iraqis visiting the country for relatively short periods. Much of this was captured in two classic publications by Bashir Allouse, *Avifauna of Iraq*, published in English in 1953, and *Birds of Iraq* in Arabic in three parts in 1960, 1961 and 1962. From the late 1970s few bird surveys were made until Nature Iraq started its extensive Key Biodiversity Areas programme in 2005 with the goal of identifying those sites that are important for their biological diversity. These systematic surveys, the first of their kind in Iraq, have been conducted in summer and winter in three main regions of the country: the Mesopotamian marshlands and coastal habitats of southern Iraq (2005–2010), the lakes, grasslands, woodlands and mountains of Kurdistan (2007–2011), and the desert region of central and western Iraq (2009–2011). The greatly increased knowledge of the country's breeding birds arising from this work appeared in Ararat *et al* (2011). Since that paper six further breeding species have been determined: Pharaoh Eagle Owl *Bubo ascalaphus*, Plain Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus neglectus*, Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe albonigra* (overlooked in Ararat *et al* 2011), Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (ditto Ararat *et al* 2011) and Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani*.

Little attempt has been made to include subspecies, though this will be an important action for future revisions. Furthermore, with ever-evolving taxonomy, we have been careful not to call this a *species* checklist. Whilst essentially that is what it is we are aware that it includes taxa where the subspecies of a 'parent species' have been recorded (eg Eastern Greylag Goose *Anser anser rubrirostris* and Baltic Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus*) or where there is continuing discussion on the merits of giving a taxon full species status (eg Turkestan *Lanius phoenicuroides* and Daurian *L. isabellinus* Shrikes or Hooded *Corvus cornix* and Mesopotamian *C. capellanus* Crows). We have followed Porter & Aspinall (2010) and the Ornithological Society of the Middle East Regional List ([www.osme.org](http://www.osme.org)) for taxonomic order and nomenclature. For completeness, we conclude the checklist with records that are no longer considered acceptable (lack of supporting detail).

In 2009, the Nature Iraq Bird Records Committee was established in order to objectively assess claims of new bird taxa in Iraq and to examine past published records where doubt has been expressed over identification or provenance. All rarity records since 2005 have been considered by the NIBRC but the review of past observations will be an on-going process.

Generally Iraq can be divided into five major habitat regions (Figure 1):

- The mountainous region: located in the north and northeast of the country. Includes mountains of up to 3600 m asl with dense woods, valleys and cliffs.
- The undulating region: located southwest of the mountainous region and along the east of the country from south Sulaimaniya to east Missan along the Himreen foothills.

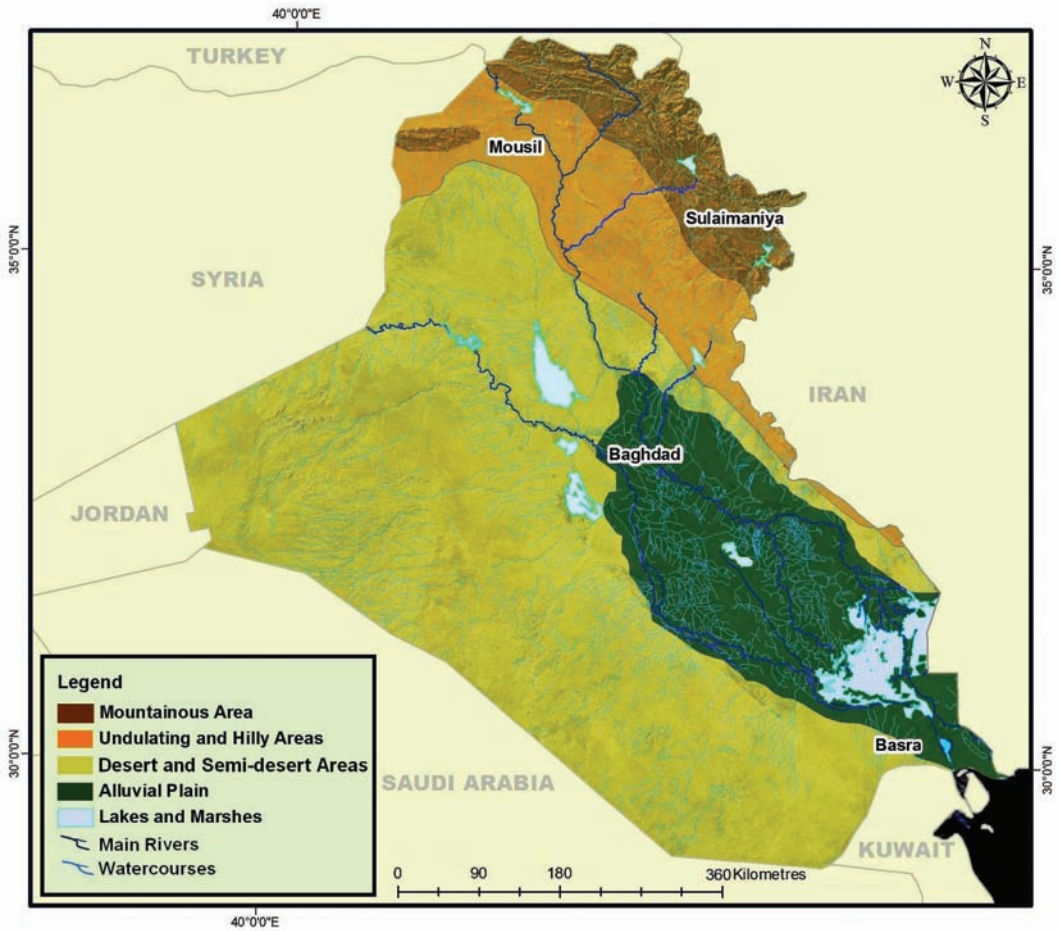


Figure 1. The major habitat regions of Iraq.

- The desert and semi-desert areas: this covers much of the country especially in the west and south and in some more northern areas between the Tigris and Euphrates. It includes some of the largest lakes in Iraq.
- Lower Mesopotamia and the marshlands: this includes the alluvial plain that extends from Baghdad southeastwards. It includes the largest marshland complex of Iraq and the Middle East.
- The Iraqi coastline: c55 km of seashore at the head of the Gulf.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

### *Terminology and abbreviations*

Vagrant: species recorded on three or less occasions. Details of vagrancy records are not given. Rare: used rather generally for species which appear to have been recorded on four to ten occasions. Uncommon: only occasionally seen even if the observer is in suitable habitat during the appropriate season. Local: used mostly for breeding birds to imply

a very scattered distribution. NIBRC: Nature Iraq Bird Records Committee. KBA: Key Biodiversity Areas programme in Iraq.

The references cited at the end of each species account are the main ones that support the status statement. As several are frequently repeated we have used the following abbreviations: A60–62 for Allouse (1960, 1961 & 1962); Ar11 for Ararat *et al* (2011); MB56, MB57 for Moore & Boswell (1956, 1957); NI for the Nature Iraq database (which houses all the records collected during the KBA and other surveys) and SC82 for Scott & Carp (1982). Allouse (1960, 1961 & 1962, incorrectly referred to as 'Allouse 1963' in Ararat 2011) are in Arabic and thus not accessible to many readers. We therefore recommend also referring to Allouse (1953). Whilst not as comprehensive as the Arabic volumes and it does not include new observations 1953–1960 it is, nevertheless, an important and helpful reference.

Species globally threatened with extinction or near threatened are indicated either as CE (critically endangered), E (endangered), V (vulnerable) or NT (near threatened) on the basis of BirdLife International (2011). All publications directly referred to in the present paper are listed in 'References consulted' as well as all publications used during this paper's preparation.

**Caspian Snowcock** *Tetraogallus caspius*.

Status uncertain; apparently a breeding resident in high mountains in extreme north (M&B 56, reports of hunters collected by Nature Iraq).

**Chukar Partridge** *Alectoris chukar*. Local breeding resident in hills and mountains in north and northeast (A60–62, NI).

**See-see Partridge** *Ammoperdix griseogularis*. Fairly widespread breeding resident in hills and mountains in northern and eastern Iraq (A60–62, M&B 56, NI, Plate 1).

**Black Francolin** *Francolinus francolinus*. Breeding resident, mainly in the north, northeast and along the Tigris and Euphrates (A60–62, Sage 1960, NI).

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*. Local breeding summer visitor to northern Iraq, reported breeding in south; widespread on passage, occasional in winter (A60–62, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Eastern Greylag Goose** *Anser anser rubrirostris*. Local breeding resident in small numbers in the southern marshes; widespread winter visitor to wetlands and agricultural land (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons*. Winter visitor to northern wetlands and agricultural land, also southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).



**Plate 1.** See-see Partridge *Ammoperdix griseogularis*, Kurdistan, Iraq, April 2011. © RF Porter



**Plate 2.** Lesser White-fronted Geese *Anser erythropus*, Kurdistan, Iraq, January 2010. © Korsh Ararat Majeed

**Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* V. Rather local winter visitor in northern Iraq, rare in southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI, Plate 2).

**Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* E. Rare winter visitor to wetlands in northern and southern Iraq (A60–62, NI).

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*. Rare or uncommon winter visitor mainly to the southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*. Rare or uncommon winter visitor to the southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*. Rare or uncommon winter visitor to southern marshes (Al-Robaae 1996, OFA-S, NI).

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*. Winter visitor to wetlands throughout Iraq (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*. Local breeding resident in wetlands in northwest and central Iraq; fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Cotton Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus coromandelianus*. Vagrant (George & Vielliard 1970).

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor, especially frequent in southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Falcated Duck** *Anas falcata* NT. Vagrant (A60–62).

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor; some remain in summer (A60–62, SC82, NI).



**Plate 3.** Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, southern marshes, Iraq, May 2009. © Mudhafar Salim

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor, especially frequent in southern marshes; some remain in summer (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor, especially frequent in southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*. Fairly widespread passage migrant, rare in winter; may breed (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor, especially numerous in southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Marbled Duck** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* V. Local breeding resident in wetlands in central Iraq, more widespread in the southern marshes, where wintering population is probably largest in the world (A60–62, SC82, NI, Plate 3).

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*. Very local breeding resident in the southern marshes; fairly widespread but generally uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, Ar11, NI).

**Common Pochard** *Aythya farina*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor, especially frequent in southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* NT. Local breeding resident in southern and central Iraq; uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, Ar11, NI, Plate 4).



**Plate 4.** Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, middle Euphrates, Iraq, June 2009. © Mudhafar Salim

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor, especially numerous in southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila*. Rare winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Common Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*. Uncommon winter visitor in northern Iraq (A60–62, NI).

**Smew** *Mergellus albellus*. Uncommon winter visitor to northern Iraq; also uncommon in the southern marshes but over 1000 recorded there in 1979 but not since (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Goosander** *Mergus serrator*. Vagrant (A60–62, MB56).

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus merganser*. Vagrant (A60–62, MB56).

**White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* E. Rare or uncommon winter visitor to central and southern marshes (A60–62, NI, Salim *et al* 2009).

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*. Widespread breeding resident in the southern marshes and central wetlands; widespread winter visitor. Resident birds are of the endemic race *iraquensis* (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*. Very local breeding resident in marshes and lakes of southern Iraq; widespread winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*. Very local breeding resident in central Iraq wetlands; winter visitor in small numbers (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus*. Passage migrant and winter visitor, especially to southern marshes, where also summers; formerly bred in the southern marshes but apparently not in recent years (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*. Rare or uncommon passage migrant (A60–62, NI).

**Western White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*. Breeding summer visitor to northern and eastern Iraq; passage migrant, occasional in winter (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**African Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus*. Very local breeding resident in dense reedbeds in the southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI, Plate 5). The southern marshes hold the only regular breeding colony in the Middle East, though there is a feral colony in the United Arab Emirates (Pedersen & Aspinall 2010).

**Northern Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita* CE. Formerly very rare passage migrant or vagrant in central Iraq but only recorded in 1910s and early 1920s (Ticehurst *et al* 1922, 1926, A60–62); in 2006 satellite signals from tagged birds from the tiny Syrian



**Plate 5.** African Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*, southern marshes, Iraq, July 2005. © Mudhafar Salim

breeding colony suggest one bird may have passed close to, or through, extreme western Iraq on its southerly migration (Chris Bowden RSPB pers comm).

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*. Resident, breeding very locally in dense reed vegetation in the southern marshes; also a passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, Ar11, NI).

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*. Resident, breeding locally in dense reed vegetation in the southern marshes; also a passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Eurasian Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*. Passage migrant and winter visitor to the southern and central marshes, also occasionally in north Iraq; may breed in southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus*. Breeding summer visitor to many wetlands throughout Iraq, but rather local outside the southern marshes; also a passage migrant, with a few wintering (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*. Breeding summer visitor or resident in southern and central wetlands; local breeding summer visitor in north; passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides*. Breeding summer visitor to southern marshes, more local in central and north Iraq; widespread passage migrant, occasional in winter (A60–62, SC82, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Western Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis*. Local breeding resident in central and southern wetlands; widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor to southern and central Iraq; a few breed in southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI, Salim 2004).

**Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath*. Rare and very local breeding resident in dense reed beds of the southern marshes (A60–62, reports to Nature Iraq).

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*. Breeding summer visitor to southern marshes and probable breeder, very locally, in central and northern wetlands; passage migrant, a few in winter (A60–62, SC82, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Western Great Egret** *Ardea alba*. Passage migrant and winter visitor, most common in southern marshes, where some remain in summer (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*. Resident or breeding summer visitor to the dense reed beds of the southern marshes, also to one site in northern Iraq; widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis*. Local resident in tidal areas on the Gulf coast, where probably breeds (A60–62, NI).

**Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*. Fairly widespread passage migrant; also winter visitor to southern and central wetlands (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Dalmatian Pelican** *Pelecanus crispus* V. Uncommon and possibly irregular winter visitor to the southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).



**Plate 6.** Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, Al-Qadissiya lake, Anbar province, Iraq, May 2011. © Omar Fadhil Al-Sheikhly

**Pygmy Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*. Breeding resident in dense reed vegetation in southern marshes; fairly widespread winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI, Plate 6).

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**European Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*. Vagrant (A60–62).

**African Darter** *Anhinga rufa*. Very local breeding resident in dense reed vegetation in the southern marshes; recorded twice in summer in wetlands of central Iraq (A60–62, NI, Plate 7). The southern marshes hold the only breeding colony in the Middle East (Porter & Aspinall 2010).

**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*. Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, NI).

**European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*. Uncommon passage migrant, but probably overlooked (A60–62, NI).

**Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*. Uncommon and local breeding resident in central and southern Iraq; numbers increasing and recently recorded in northern Iraq. Breeds near cultivated fields nesting especially in *Eucalyptus* and date palms (Salim 2002, Ar11, NI).

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* NT. Vagrant (Harrison 1955, NI; see also MB56).



**Plate 7.** African Darter *Anhinga rufa*, southern marshes, Iraq, June 2010. © Mudhafar Salim

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Black-eared Kite** *Milvus (migrans) lineatus*. Status uncertain; has been recorded in winter with flocks of Black Kites (A60–62, MB56, NI).

**Pallas's Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* V. Former rare or uncommon winter visitor, not recorded since 1940s (A60–62, MB56).

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*. Former winter visitor in small numbers, not recorded since 1940s (A60–62, MB56).

**Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus*. Very local breeding resident in the northern mountains; possibly also winter visitor there (A60–62, MB56, Ar11, NI).

**Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* E. Breeding summer visitor to the mountains and rocky hills in northern and western Iraq; also a passage migrant (A60–62, NI).

**Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus*. Resident, breeding locally in the mountains of northern Iraq; more widespread winter visitor (A60–62, NI).

**Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* NT. Rare winter visitor to northern and central Iraq with one in summer in northeast (A60–62, George & Mahdi 1969, Sage 1960).

**Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus*. Breeding summer visitor to the mountains of northern Iraq; also a passage migrant (MB56, Ar11, NI).

**Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* NT. Vagrant (Harrison 1955).

**Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*. Local breeding resident in southern marshes and possibly central wetlands; also a passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*. Rather uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* NT. Passage migrant and winter visitor, fairly widespread (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*. Fairly widespread passage migrant; some winter (A60–62, MB56, SC82, NI).

**Levant Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter brevipes*. Very local breeding summer visitor to woodlands of northern Iraq; uncommon or rarely recorded passage migrant (Marchant 1962, Ar11, NI).

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*. Widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*. Vagrant (Randel Rogers pers comm, Lahony *et al* 2008).

**Steppe Buzzard** *Buteo buteo vulpinus*. Local resident or breeding summer visitor in the hills and mountains of northern Iraq; more widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, Marchant & Macnab 1962, Ar11, NI, Plate 8). There is evidence to suggest that the breeding birds may be of the race *menetriesi* (see Ar11).

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*. Breeding resident in the mountains and hills of northern Iraq; widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, MB56, Ar11, NI).

**Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* V. Rather uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor, widespread but most frequent in the southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* V. Uncommon, but fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI, Plate 9).



**Plate 8.** Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus*, Kurdistan, Iraq, April 2009. © RF Porter



**Plate 9.** Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*, southern marshes, Iraq, 2008. © Omar Fadhil Al-Sheikhly

- Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*. Local breeding resident in the mountains of north and northeast Iraq; probably also a winter visitor (A60–62, MB56, Ar11, NI).
- Booted Eagle** *Aquila pennata*. Very local breeding summer visitor in small numbers to the northern mountains of Iraq; also a passage migrant with birds occasionally wintering (A60–62, SC82, Ar11, NI).
- Bonelli's Eagle** *Aquila fasciatus*. Very local breeding resident in mountains and cliffs in northern Iraq; post breeding dispersal over a wider area (A60–62, NI).
- Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni*. Rather local breeding summer visitor in colonies in northern cliffs and mountains; a few breed in central Iraq; widespread passage migrant (A60–62, Ar11, NI).
- Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*. Widespread breeding resident; also winter visitor (A60–62, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).
- Merlin** *Falco columbarius*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*. Fairly widespread passage migrant; there is no evidence of breeding, though this is likely as birds have been observed during the summer in northern Iraq, and the species breeds fairly commonly in southeast Turkey (A60–62, NI, Kirwan *et al* 2008).
- Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* NT. Rare passage migrant (Al-Sheikhly in press, NI).
- Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus*. Rare visitor (A60–62, NI).
- Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug* V. Apparently a rare resident in northwest Iraq; uncommon or rare winter visitor. Formerly much commoner, reported breeding in the northwestern mountains and eastern foothills and fairly widespread in winter. The big decline is probably linked to the development of trapping techniques that targeted this falcon so prized for falconry in Iraq and Arabia (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI, Al-Sheikhly 2011).
- Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*. Breeding proven at one site in northern mountains of Iraq; fairly widespread winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, Ar11, NI).
- Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides*. Resident, breeding locally in the northern mountains, eastern foothills and central/western arid lands; more widespread in winter (A60–62, Al-Dabbagh 1998, Ar11, NI). No attempt has been made to distinguish between the very similar *F. p. pelegrinoides* and *F. p. babylonicus*. Both appear to breed in Iraq but their range, status and ecological separation requires critical study (see Ar11).
- Great Bustard** *Otis tarda*. Status uncertain; formerly bred in northwest Iraq; winter visitor in small numbers (A60–62, MB56, MS); hunted with falcons (Al-Sheikhly 2011).
- Macqueen's Bustard** *Chlamydotis macqueenii* V. Winter visitor mainly in the dry grasslands and deserts of western and southern Iraq; breeding frequently reported by hunters in southern and western Iraq (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI, Reports by hunters to Nature Iraq, Plate 10). Heavily hunted with falcons (Salim 2011, Al-Sheikhly 2011).
- Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* NT. Rare or uncommon winter visitor to northern and western Iraq, probably not annually (A60–62, MB56, NI); hunted with falcons (Al-Sheikhly 2011).



**Plate 10.** Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii*, central Iraq, October 2010. © Omar Fadhil Al-Sheikhly

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Little Crane** *Porzana parva*. Passage migrant and winter visitor; one breeding record from central Iraq (A60–62, SC82, Ar11, NI).

**Baillon's Crane** *Porzana pusilla*. Rare winter visitor and passage migrant (A60–62).

**Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana*. Passage migrant, but rarely observed (A60–62, MB56).

**Corncrake** *Crex crex*. Scarcely observed passage migrant (A60–62, MB56, NI).

**Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio*. Breeding resident in dense reed beds and dense aquatic vegetation along rivers in southern and central Iraq, very locally in wetlands in the north (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*. Widespread breeding resident in wetlands in southern and central Iraq, locally in north; also a passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra*. Breeding resident in very small numbers mainly in the south; widespread passage migrant and winter visitor, especially in southern marshes (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo*. Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor to wetlands and dry grasslands (A60–62, Marchant & Macnab 1962, NI).

- Common Crane** *Grus grus*. Fairly widespread passage migrant with few remaining in winter; found in wetland and dry grassland areas (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Eurasian Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus*. Fairly widespread breeding resident and breeding summer visitor, mainly in the dry grasslands and semi-desert of southern, western, northeastern and central Iraq; passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, MB56, Sage 1960, NI).
- Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*. Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor; occasionally recorded in summer (A60–62, Marchant 1961, SC82, NI).
- Crab-plover** *Dromas ardeola*. Breeding resident in coastal Gulf (A60–62, NI).
- Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*. Widespread breeding resident in southern, central and western wetlands; passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, MB56, NI).
- Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*. Breeding resident in the southern marshes; passage migrant and winter visitor, but rarely in northern Iraq (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*. Winter visitor in small numbers, more common in the north (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus*. Breeding resident in central and southern Iraq; passage migrant (A60–62, MB56, NI).
- Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus*. Widespread breeding resident in south, central, western and northeast Iraq in wetlands and farmland; may breed in north where present in summer (A60–62, SC82, Sage 1960, NI).
- Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* CE. Rare passage migrant, some may winter, formerly common (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).
- White-tailed Lapwing** *Vanellus leucurus*. Local breeding resident in the wetlands of southern, central and western Iraq; more widespread passage migrant, including to northern Iraq where also found in summer and may breed (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Eurasian Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*. Vagrant (A60–62, MB56).
- Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*. Status uncertain; probably a rare winter visitor (A60–62, MB56).
- Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*. Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, NI).
- Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*. Widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*. Widespread breeding summer visitor mostly to northern and central Iraq, may breed in south; passage migrant with some remaining in winter (A60–62, MB56, NI).
- Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*. Breeding resident in central and southern Iraq; passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, MB56, NI).
- Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius atrifrons*. Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor mostly in southern Iraq (A60–62, SC82).
- Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii*. Passage migrant and winter visitor in southern and western Iraq (A60–62, SC82, NI).

- Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus*. Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor, formerly commonly observed in central Iraq (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus*. Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, MB56, SC82, Salim *et al* 2006, NI).
- Eurasian Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*. Uncommon winter visitor especially to northern Iraq but not recorded recently; also recorded on autumn passage (A60–62, SC82, Sage 1960, Salim *et al* 2006).
- Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus*. Passage migrant and winter visitor but few recorded in recent years (A60–62, MB56, SC82, NI).
- Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* NT. Rare passage migrant (A60–62, MB56).
- Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*. Widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* NT. Passage migrant and winter visitor mostly to southern and central Iraq; some remain in summer (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*. Passage migrant and winter visitor in small numbers mainly in southern Iraq (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*. Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor to southern Iraq (A60–62, MB56).
- Slender-billed Curlew** *Numenius tenuirostris* CE. Historically very rare or vagrant, latest record 1979 (A60–62, SC82).
- Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* NT. Passage migrant and winter visitor to wetlands in the south especially in coastal areas (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*. Passage migrant and uncommon winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*. Widespread passage migrant and winter visitor; some remain in summer (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*. Passage migrant and winter visitor mainly in the south and east (A60–62, SC82, Sage 1960, NI).
- Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*. Widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*. Widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*. Passage migrant and winter visitor in small numbers mainly to the south (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus*. Passage migrant and winter visitor mainly to southern Iraq (A60–62, MB56, SC82, NI).
- Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor; a few remaining in summer; may breed in the mountains of northern Iraq (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*. Passage migrant and winter visitor to southern and central Iraq with some remaining in summer in extreme south (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Red Knot** *Calidris canutus*. Vagrant (Cramp & Simmons 1983). The Iraq information in this BWP volume was supplied by PV George Kainady.

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba*. Passage migrant mainly in the southern tidal areas, some remaining in winter (A60–62, MB56, Salim *et al* 2006).

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*. Passage migrant and winter visitor to southern and central Iraq (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*. Passage migrant and winter visitor to southern and central Iraq in smaller numbers than Little Stint (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*. Passage migrant and winter visitor mainly to central and southern Iraq (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*. Passage migrant and winter visitor mainly in the south and east; some remain in summer (A60–62, SC82, Sage 1960, NI).

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*. Rare or uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, MB56, SC82, NI).

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*. Fairly widespread passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*. Passage migrant in small numbers (A60–62, MB56, NI).

**Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius*. Vagrant (MB56).

**Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor*. Breeding resident in the desert and semi-desert areas of northwest, central and southern Iraq (A60–62, NI).

**Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola*. Fairly widespread breeding summer visitor to dry grassland areas near wetlands; passage migrant (A60–62, NI).

**Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* NT. Reported breeding in 1920s in southern Iraq but not recorded since (see A60–62).

**Slender-billed Gull** *Chroicocephalus genei*. Breeding resident in central and southern Iraq; breeding resident or summer visitor to the north; passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI, Plate 11).

**Common Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*. Local breeding resident or summer visitor in northern Iraq; widespread winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, Ar11, NI).

**Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*. Vagrant (A60–62).

**Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus*. Fairly widespread winter visitor generally in small numbers (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*. Uncommon winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

### **The large white-headed gulls.**

The status of the large white-headed gulls in Iraq is not fully understood. There has been no detailed study and the situation is further confused by changes in taxonomy and nomenclature in the last two decades. All records until the time of the Nature Iraq surveys



**Plate 11.** Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*, Razzaza lake, Karbala province, Iraq, January 2009. © Mudhafar Salim

placed all grey-backed gulls in the taxon *Larus argentatus* Herring Gull. Furthermore, Ticehurst *et al* (1922, 1926) listed *Larus fuscus taimyrensis* and *Larus argentatus vegae*, taxa that are now known not to occur in the Middle East; furthermore Allouse (1953) mentioned *Larus argentatus heuglini*, giving Ticehurst *et al* (1922) as the reference; however Ticehurst did not include it.

The accounts given below should therefore be regarded as provisional. It is likely that further study will reveal that other taxa in this genetically closely-linked group occur in Iraq, some probably regularly. Detailed discussion and examination of photographs taken by OFA-S and MS show birds in autumn and winter in southern Iraq that are possibly Steppe Gulls *Larus barabensis*; indeed that taxon and Heuglin's Gull *Larus heuglini* will surely pass through Iraq as both occur in the Gulf in winter. It is also likely that Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus michahellis* will occur though none have been positively identified in photographs taken by OFA-S and MS.

**Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*. Passage migrant and winter visitor (Ticehurst *et al* 1922, A60–62, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Armenian Gull** *Larus armenicus*. Widespread winter visitor and passage migrant (OFA-S, NI).

**Baltic (Lesser Black-backed) Gull** *Larus fuscus fuscus*. Uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant (Ticehurst *et al* 1922, A60–62, NI).

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica*. Local breeding summer visitor in the extreme south; passage migrant, a few in winter (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia*. Local breeding resident in small numbers in south and central Iraq; passage migrant and winter visitor (A60–62, SC82, NI).

**Swift Tern** *Sterna bergii*. Local breeding summer visitor in small numbers on Gulf coast (A60–62, NI).

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis*. Local breeding summer visitor on Gulf coast, but no records there since 1940s; a single summer bird in northeast Iraq (A60–62, Sage 1960).

**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons*. Fairly widespread breeding summer visitor and passage migrant (A60–62, MB56, NI).

**Saunders's Tern** *Sternula saundersi*. Known from birds collected on or near the Gulf coast of Iraq in 19th century (Ticehurst *et al* 1922, see also Harrison 1983) but more recent status uncertain due to difficulty of separation from Little Tern, though it has been suspected to occur (NI).

**Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus*. Status uncertain; breeding summer visitor to islands at the head of the Gulf (A60–62) but not recorded in recent years (NI).

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*. Local breeding summer visitor to inland wetlands; passage migrant with a few remaining in winter (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**White-cheeked Tern** *Sterna repressa*. Status uncertain; breeding summer visitor to islands at the head of the Gulf (A60–62) but not recorded in recent years (NI).

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*. Resident and breeding summer visitor in central and southern Iraq, also possibly northeast; fairly widespread passage migrant; winter visitor, but not in north (A60–62, SC82, Sage 1960, NI).

**White-winged Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus*. Local breeding summer visitor to wetlands in southern Iraq; fairly widespread passage migrant (A60–62, MB56, NI).

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*. Vagrant (A60–62, NI).

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*.  
Vagrant (A60–62).

**Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus*. Vagrant (Rolf Williams *in litt*).

**Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** *Pterocles alchata*. Widespread but local breeding resident in dry grasslands (A60–62, SC82, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI, Plate 12).

**Spotted Sandgrouse** *Pterocles senegallus*. Very local breeding resident in deserts and semi-deserts in southern and western Iraq (A60–62, SC82, NI).



**Plate 12.** Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*, central Iraq, March 2011. © Omar Fadhil Al-Sheikhly

- Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis*. Passage migrant and winter visitor in small numbers (A60–62, SC82, NI).
- Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse** *Pterocles lichtensteinii*. Status uncertain; probably a rare winter visitor in 1920s (A60–62), none recorded since (NI).
- Rock Dove** *Columba livia*. Fairly widespread breeding resident; domesticated form common in cities (A60–62, NI).
- Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*. Uncommon winter visitor (A60–62, MB56).
- Common Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus*. Widespread breeding resident in woodlands, orchards and date palms; winter visitor (A60–62, MB56, NI).
- European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*. Local breeding summer visitor to woodlands in north and central Iraq; passage migrant. There has been a noticeable decline in numbers over the past few decades (A60–62, MB56, NI).
- Rufous Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia meena*. Vagrant (Bunni 1988).
- Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*. Widespread breeding resident (A60–62, MB56, NI).
- Laughing Dove** *Spilopelia senegalensis*. Fairly widespread breeding resident. Contrary to Ar11, breeding was first recorded in 1988 (Al-Dabbagh *et al* 1992); until at least 1960s it was a rare winter visitor (A60–62, NI).
- Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis*. Vagrant (Salim 2008).
- Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*. Very local breeding resident, most found in the dense date-palm orchards of central Iraq (A60–62, MB56, NI). A few birds in northeast Iraq March 2011 (MS) and January 2012 (Sarbagh Salih pers comm). The Iraq population originated from escapes (Salim *et al* 2006).
- Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius*. Very local breeding summer visitor in open woodland in northern Iraq; passage migrant (A60–62, MB56, NI, Marchant 1961, 1962).
- Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*. Fairly widespread passage migrant; recorded in summer in northern open woodland and farmland, in pairs and singing, which suggests it also breeds (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).
- Western Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*. Local, but fairly widespread breeding resident (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).
- Pallid Scops Owl** *Otus brucei*. Local resident or breeding summer visitor (A60–62, Marchant 1961, 1962, SC82, Plate 13).
- Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops*. Fairly widespread breeding summer visitor and passage migrant (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).
- Eurasian Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo*. Breeding resident in northern, eastern and southern Iraq mainly in the wooded mountains and hills (A60–62, MB56, Marchant 1962, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).
- Pharaoh Eagle Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus*. A rare breeding resident in the deserts of western Iraq where one specimen was collected by R Clawson (Vaurie 1960), and a young bird (age c40 days), which had been taken from a local nest, was discovered in a market cage in 2009 (NI, Balmer & Harrison 2011, Al-Sheikhly 2012).



**Plate 13.** Pallid Scops Owl *Otus brucei*, central Iraq, October 2010. © Omar Fadhil Al-Sheikhly

**Brown Fish Owl** *Bubo zeylonensis*. Not recorded since 1920s but could still occur as a very rare resident (Salim *et al* 2006, A60–62).

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*. Status uncertain; possibly a rare breeding resident in northern wooded hills as birds heard singing February–April; also a rare winter visitor (A60–62, Ticehurst *et al* 1926, NI).

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*. Fairly widespread breeding resident in north and central Iraq, uncommon in south (A60–62, NI). All identified have been of the race *bactriana* (but see Lilith Owl text).

**Lilith Owl** *Athene (noctua) lilith*. Status uncertain; a pair photographed at a nest site in June 2010 by MS in the southeastern desert showed characters typical of *lilith* (Claus König pers comm) and indicates that this taxon breeds in Iraq.

**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*. Rare breeding resident (one site) in northern pine woodland; winter visitor to north in small numbers and historically to southern Iraq (Ticehurst *et al* 1922, A60–62, MB56, Marchant 1961, Ar11).

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*. Uncommon but widespread winter visitor (A60–62, MB56, Marchant 1961, 1962, NI).

**European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*. Uncommon breeding summer visitor to open woodlands in northern Iraq; widespread passage migrant (A60–62, MB56, Marchant 1961, 1962, NI).



**Plate 14.** Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*, middle Euphrates, Iraq, July 2011. © Mudhafar Salim

**Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius*. Breeding summer visitor to semi-deserts and arid areas of southern and central Iraq, and possibly northeast; passage migrant in south and central Iraq (A60–62, MB56, Marchant 1961, 1962, Sage 1960, NI, Plate 14).

**Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba*. Very local breeding summer visitor to mountains in northern Iraq; passage migrant throughout (A60–62, Ar11).

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*. Widespread breeding summer visitor to towns and villages in north and central Iraq; widespread passage migrant (A60–62, NI).

**Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus*. Uncommon breeding summer visitor to central and southern Iraq; passage migrant (A60–62, NI).

**Little Swift** *Apus affinus*. Breeding summer visitor to two known colonies in north Iraq; also probably a rare passage migrant (MB56, Ar11).

**Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis*. Breeding resident and breeding summer visitor to southern and central Iraq, with post-breeding dispersal (A60–62, NI, Plate 15).

**European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* NT. Uncommon breeding summer visitor, but absent western Iraq; widespread passage migrant (A60–62, NI).

**White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis*. Breeding resident on rivers and in wetlands of southern, central and northeast Iraq, very local elsewhere (A60–62, MB56, Sage 1960, NI, Plate 16).



**Plate 15.** Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*, middle Euphrates, Iraq, February 2010. © Mudhafar Salim

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*. Uncommon breeding resident in southern and central Iraq possibly also in northern Iraq; winter visitor and passage migrant (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbagh 1998, NI).

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis*. Widespread breeding resident on wetlands and water courses (A60–62, MB56, NI).

**Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis*. Vagrant (A60–62).

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus*. Breeding summer visitor to southern and central Iraq, locally in northern Iraq; passage migrant (A60–62, MB56, NI).

**European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*. Breeding summer visitor to northern and eastern Iraq; widespread passage migrant (A60–62, MB56, NI).

**Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*. Breeding summer visitor to north, northeast and central Iraq; widespread passage migrant with some wintering in south (A60–62, MB56, Al-Dabbah 1998, NI).

**Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*. Passage migrant in small numbers (A60–62, MB56, NI).

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos minor*. Very local breeding resident in northeastern montane woodland (Ar11).

**Middle Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos medius*. Very local breeding resident in montane oak woodlands in northeast (Ar11).

**Syrian Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos syriacus*. Fairly widespread breeding resident in northern woodland (A60–62, MB56, NI).



**Plate 16.** White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*, southern marshes, Iraq, January 2010. © Mudhafar Salim